

## INSPIRING TEAM GREATNESS!

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# Inspiring Team Greatness!

## Where do you want to go?

Whether you're a new leader, a member of the workforce, or a board member responsible for oversight of an organization, developing a high-performing workforce is important to you. As a leader, the performance of the team is instrumental in achieving business results, and supporting the organization into the future. As a member of the workforce, you know that your role will be either personally and professionally fulfilling, or a challenge to get through the day, dependent upon how your work team achieves the work. As a board member, you recognize that the entire organization works best when there is an alignment of purpose and goals throughout the organization, manifested in the way the workforce works together to meet your customer's needs, to fulfill the mission.

So, if an engaged workforce is everyone's goal, what gets in the way of this, and what can be done to overcome those factors? In short, the limiting factor to workforce engagement is essentially the organization's culture, and how effectively empowered work teams are supported within the organizational structure and work processes. Recognizing that 80% of organizations with more than 100 employees have essential work performed by teams, it becomes an organizational priority to maximize the results of these efforts. A team that has the skills and resources to achieve the work, will achieve their goals, unless there is an external factor that limits their abilities and intent. When a culture is focused upon a meaningful mission, the intrinsic motivation within this culture can create a level of momentum that not only supports high level team performance, but it can also inspire teams to envision creative new ways to achieve differential market performance and customer value. That's the goal, and the sweet spot!

## Laying the Foundation

Creating a successful organization through high performing teams begins with a core foundation of trust, safety, open communication, and a clarity of purpose and mission. Leadership creates a safe and trusting culture, as well as a view of the critical importance of team performance to future organizational sustainability. Trust is built upon honesty, reliability, transparency, and a visible presence of leadership with the workforce, reflecting the importance of all roles to the success of the organization. Leadership must show a sincere interest in the workforce, and their ideas for strengthening performance, to truly engage members in bringing forward ideas for change. The goal is to nurture a sense of team ownership of the work of the organization, such that leadership provides the tools and resources, and then "gets out of the way." This may be

difficult for leaders that have been accustomed to a command and control style of leadership, yet it is truly the only way that progressive organizations have achieved breakthrough performance.

One other leadership challenge is to recognize individual versus team-required activities. Not every task is a team function, and leadership needs to appropriately guide accountability to the appropriate source. Individual task accountability given to teams will frustrate team members, and compromise both outcomes and credibility.



Leaders are team coaches!

## Developing Teams

So with a foundation of leadership trust, and interest in building high-performing teams, what happens next? There are several practice models used to build and develop effective teams. One may fit better with an organizational framework than others, so several are provided here as an overview for consideration.

A traditional model reflects four stages of Forming-Storming-Norming-Performing, that all teams move through on the path to becoming high-performing teams. Leaders are then responsible to recognize the stage of the team, and to offer guidance to help the team move through the phases, ultimately to a level of empowered high performance. Teams do not necessarily pass through all of the phases however, and they do not do so in a linear fashion, making it difficult for novice leaders to provide effective team coaching. This model is best suited to those teams with an experienced leader as a dedicated coach.

Another model, based upon a quality improvement SIPOC tool, reflects a team's involvement in work inputs, processes, and outputs. While effective management of the work processes is a great application for department-based work teams, use of this model requires a strong knowledge of work process analysis and improvement, that may be beyond the core competency of many leaders. For those skilled in these quality tools, this model is preferred and reliable.

A third model was portrayed by Patrick Lencioni, in the book, *Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. He references five stages or phases of dysfunction that challenge many teams as they are attempting to perform their work. The model is fairly straightforward, and brings forth the challenges that impact group dynamics as teams are attempting to do their work. This model may be particularly useful in identifying and addressing issues with group dynamics, impacting team performance and results. While this is helpful in recognizing barriers and challenges, it doesn't guide specific interventions, so again, is best used by a team coach with leadership expertise.

Lastly, a relatively new model has emerged that combines both a descriptive and a prescriptive approach to diagnose team function issues, and then to intervene to improve their performance. Termed the Rocket Model, it consists of eight components. According to the model, the rocket consists of six internal parts, led by a focus on results, within awareness of an external context. The internal parts include mission, talent, norms, buy-in, power and morale. Developed by Hogan and Curphy<sup>1</sup>, the model has been developed and refined through their work coaching hundreds of teams. The assessment of the primary causes of issue give direction to the areas for intervention, which then provide the guidance for the teams to become high-performing and empowered. This model represents practical insights, and relatively apparent interventions, suitable for many project-focused teams. This model is suitable to most teams and applications.

Regardless of the model selected to build high-performing teams, there are a few common requirements:

- 1) Motivation to function as a team toward a shared purpose or goal.
- 2) Commitment to the team standards and expectations.
- 3) Skills and talent within the group to achieve the task or purpose.
- 4) Core resources are provided or available to achieve the work requirements
- 5) Confidence and perseverance within the team exists, to overcome barriers and challenges.
- 6) Organizational empowerment is evident, to support action as needed to achieve results.

If any of the above items are missing, the team will face significant internal or external challenges, and will likely be compromised in their outcomes or timeline. Leaders can substantially improve the performance of the team by evaluating each of these areas, to strengthen as needed in the early stages, to support the team's performance. One of the most motivating elements for a new team, is the experience and testimony of a past team in these areas! Early successes breed

future successes, and eventually a culture of high-performing teams. Just a few of the benefits of achieving this stage are significant increases in customer and employee engagement, and organizational innovation, strongly supporting a higher-performing organization!

## Types of teams

Teams exist for two purposes typically: functional or departmental work groups, and project-based teams. While both types aspire to achieve a state of high performance, there are some important differences that may require differences in leadership approach and intervention. Teams have common goals, work interdependently, and share common leadership, fates and identities. Work groups are composed of members with individual goals, who do not work interdependently and may not share common fates. The biggest area of difference between the two is the aligned focus to a common group goal versus individual goals. It's more difficult to create an empowered work team when the group has varied individual goals. Aligning group members to a common organizational purpose and goal may be helpful, as well as showing progress over time. For the team, a continued focus on collective accomplishment of the goal can be a strong team motivator, especially if this is also intrinsically motivated.

## Project-Based Teams

Since high performing organizations often use cross-functional project-based teams to carry out key deliverables, the remaining focus will be upon developing these teams. Essential steps will be detailed for simplicity:

- 1) Purpose of the team - Determine whether the results to be achieved warrant the investment in resources to achieve them. The person who needs to approve this is the person who is requesting the project, or ultimately accountable on behalf of the payer.
- 2) Members of the team - A key part of the planning process is to determine the team leader, and the mix of skills and talents that are needed for the successful completion of the project. Determining this requires knowledge of the work to be performed, the skills needed to accomplish, and where these skills are found within internal or external resources. It is very important to select individuals carefully and thoughtfully to complement the team's talents.
- 3) Scope of the project - Where will the project begin and end, so that the potential of "scope creep" is minimized? One best practice is to include all the items in this list as a checklist, that is approved by the appropriate member of leadership before the project is approved.

- 4) Timeframe - Identify the expected results by a specific timeframe. Interval goals are very helpful to support progress within the team, such that a portion of the goal is determined by dates within the full project timeline. This can be supported with periodic reports to the organizational representative.
- 5) Metric Results - Determine what the final result will be, both quantifiably and objectively. Obtain a baseline measure at the beginning of the project, and use this to reflect interval progress to the goal.
- 6) Launching the team - At the first meeting, establish the purpose and mission of the team, the importance of each team member for their respective skills and abilities, and the confidence that the team will successfully complete their mission. Specify any interim reporting requirements or expectations, constraints, timeframes, and other parameters of the project. Identify who the project sponsor is, in the event of issues or concerns needing assistance.
- 7) Tracking performance - Someone on the team will serve as a leader, someone else will capture notes from the meetings, and action items. Someone on the team should also serve as time-keeper, to manage the actual discussion time versus the agenda plan. At the end of each meeting, assigned action items will be noted and clarified to individuals, with due dates. Minutes will be captured and sent out within 48 hours of the meeting. Metric performance to goals and deliverables will be monitored at least monthly; more often as data is available. Best practice is maintaining a single team project report that is updated at each meeting with activities, and progress to established goals and targets.
- 8) Overcoming barriers - As issues surface in the course of the project, an effective leader serves as a sounding board, but not a “fix it” center. Encourage the team leader and members to use their judgment to determine the best course of action, even if it means failure and resultant learning. As long as the team is operating under the original constraints and terms, effort should be made to listen as needed, offer support if requested, and otherwise, to encourage the team to do it’s work. If external support is needed, this often deals with personalities or behaviors within the team, which may be resolved by some specific behavioral coaching.
- 9) Reward and recognition - There are several options for recognizing the work of a team toward a target. Incremental rewards can be helpful if the project is particularly challenging or long-term, and the team needs recognition to maintain momentum. Otherwise, at a minimum, recognition by the team’s sponsor (one who originally approved the team’s establishment and purpose) at the end of the project is essential. This celebration is as much to evi-

dence the cooperation and effectiveness of the team, as it is to achieving the result(s). The end of a team's work can yield mixed emotions, especially if the team has worked well together. Consideration should be given to how the team would like to be recognized as a group, and then what next steps may be available to continue team member's growth in future team projects.

10) Building a team culture - As each team completes their work, and is rewarded, make an effort to support individual skill growth that was part of the process. Expressions of appreciation of new learning, skills and abilities as a part of project accomplishments provides motivation for others to learn and grow, building the culture of high performing teams!

Over time, the number of individuals involved in successful project teams will become a majority of the workforce, promoting a shared level of individual growth and team performance that achieves a level of horizontal integration. At this point, the structural elements for project-based teams are less critical, as the individuals have assimilated these elements into their general work flow. Teams may form and reform spontaneously and harmoniously to achieve goals, without leadership direction, in response to needs. At this point, innovation and organizational momentum is realized, and the organization's performance approaches it's best level of performance. In this phase, the job of leadership is to broadly support and coach the ongoing excellent work of the teams, and to engage all members in activities consistent with achieving organizational strategy.

### **Self Assessment**

If you'd like to see how your organization's teams are performing, please use the attached tool. When used by a single team, results can identify areas for priority team interventions. If used with multiple teams, results can indicate areas for organizational focus, to improve the effectiveness of empowered work teams. Areas of greatest strength can likewise be easily assessed.

If your results show areas of opportunity, please contact Pursuit of Excellence LLC today for a **free consultation visit**, to get your organization teams empowered, and maximally effective!

### **Resources**

Robert Hogan, Gordon Curphy. The Rocket Model: Practical Advice for Building High Performing Teams, 2012, Hogan Press.

# Enhancing Your Team’s Effectiveness

## High Performance Team Diagnostic Rating Form

Use the following questionnaire to assess the current state of your team.

Diagnostic Questions	Rating Scale: SA = Strongly Agree A= Agree PA= Partially Agree D= Disagree SD = Strongly Disagree				
Compelling Purpose, Vision & Goals	SA	A	PA	D	SD
1. The team’s purpose is clear.					
2. The team understands our customer’s needs and expectations.					
3. The team members know and understand their goals.					
4. The team uses stakeholder knowledge to guide actions & priorities.					
Clear, Coordinated Roles & Responsibilities	SA	A	PA	D	SD
5. Team members hold one another accountable for plan delivery.					
6. Accountabilities and responsibilities are assigned and clear.					
7. The team knows how it plans to achieve results.					
Effective Procedures & Systems	SA	A	PA	D	SD
8. Decision-making processes are clear and effective.					
9. The team has the necessary tools & resources to achieve results.					
10. Team meetings are organized and are of high value.					
Relationships with Other Teams	SA	A	PA	D	SD
11. The team understands its impact on departments or work units.					
12. The team coordinates its efforts with others in the organization.					
13. Team members maintain good relationships with other teams.					

Diagnostic Questions	Rating Scale: SA = Strongly Agree A= Agree PA= Partially Agree D= Disagree SD = Strongly Disagree				
Climate of Collaboration & Cohesiveness	SA	A	PA	D	SD
14. Team members are accepting of new ideas and diverse views.					
15. Team members feel free to participate fully in the team.					
16. Team members are collaborative and help one another.					
Trusting Interpersonal Behavior	SA	A	PA	D	SD
17. Team members demonstrate solid conflict resolution skills.					
18. Team members provide constructive feedback to one another.					
19. Team members recognize each other's contributions.					
Measures & Outcomes	SA	A	PA	D	SD
20. The team has meaningful and quantifiable performance metrics.					
21. The team has a process to continually reevaluate it's progress.					
22. The team evaluates team behaviors and what we accomplish.					
Skilled Team Members	SA	A	PA	D	SD
23. The team has the right people in place to achieve results.					
24. Team members have knowledge and expertise to achieve results.					
25. Team members implement decisions and assignments.					
26. The team's diversity of styles are valued and leveraged.					
Courageous Team Leader	SA	A	PA	D	SD
27. The team leader sets effective priorities.					
28. The team leader manages the performance of the team.					
29. The team leader helps to facilitate a collaborative environment.					
30. The team leader delegates effectively.					