



MindTools™

Essential skills for an excellent career



TEAM TOOLS

by James Manktelow and Felix Brodbeck

Team Tools

Build and Lead an Exceptional Team

By James Manktelow and Felix Brodbeck

This e-book is published by Mind Tools Limited.

Version 1.00

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ISBN 0-9545586-6-9

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About the Authors

James Manktelow

James Manktelow founded MindTools.com in 1995. The concept for the site started with his research into the practical skills and techniques he needed to progress his own career – he found it frustrating that so many simple but important life and career skills were so difficult to find, and so little taught.

Mind Tools exists to correct this. Our team now spans five continents, bringing these essential skills together into one place, and presenting them in a way that is accurate, easily understood, and highly accessible. More than 10,000,000 people each year now use Mind Tools to develop their careers.

As well as leading the Mind Tools team, James has written seven books: *WorkLife: Manage Your Time*; *WorkLife: Manage Stress*; *Mind Tools*; *Stress Tools*; *Make Time for Success!* (with Namita Anand); *How to Lead: Discover the Leader Within You* (with Felix Brodbeck and Namita Anand); and now, *Team Tools* (again written with Felix Brodbeck).

Prior to Mind Tools, James' career has spanned strategic analysis, business development, marketing, production and project management, business and systems analysis and consultancy for major corporations in most European countries. As a manager, he has lead teams at all corporate levels, and as an entrepreneur he has worked with others to build two successful companies.

James holds an MBA from London Business School with specialties in entrepreneurship and strategy. He lives just outside London with his wife Rachel (also an LBS MBA) and son Alex.



"We're here to help you learn the simple, practical skills that will help you to excel, whatever you choose to do."

James Manktelow, Mind Tools

Felix Brodbeck

Felix C. Brodbeck is Professor of Industrial and Organizational Psychology at Ludwig-Maximilians-University, Munich. From 2000-2007 he held a Chair at, and from 2002-2007 he served as Head of, the Work & Organizational Psychology Group at Aston Business School, Aston University, UK. His Unit was listed as "No. 1 worldwide in MBA Organization Studies" (*Sunday Times*, Nov. 2003) as well as "Best in Organizational Behavior" in European MSc Management programs (*Financial Times*, Sep. 2005).

For more than 10 years he was a member of the coordination team of the GLOBE Program (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness, Wharton School of Management). He has published eight books and more than 100 scholarly articles in the fields of cross-cultural management and psychology, leadership, organizational effectiveness and innovation, teamwork, decision making, and applied research methods.



His repertoire of experience and practice comprises experimental, applied and field research, development of theory and practical tools, as well as executive training, organizational and team development, and consulting in the above areas. He is co-owner and senior partner of a consulting company in Munich and editor of the German Journal *OrganisationsEntwicklung* (in English, "Organizational Development").

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Module 1

Understand Teams: The What, How and Why

“Tomorrow's organizations will be flatter, information based, and organized around teams.”

– Peter Drucker

Introduction

1.1 Your Team Formula: $2+2 > 5$ or $2+2 < 3$

Have you ever noticed geese flying overhead? They always fly in a “V” formation. As each bird flaps its wings, it creates uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in a “V” formation, the whole flock can fly 71 percent further than one bird flying on its own. This is a perfect example of effective teamwork!

Effective teamwork is about people working together and discovering that their collective effort is a lot more than the sum of their individual efforts.

The concept itself is not new. (Even early man had it figured out that hunting in groups made much more sense than fighting it out alone.) It is just that now, more and more workplaces are waking up to the fact that they need to harness the power of the team formula – **two plus two equals a whole lot more than five** – in order to succeed today.

The twin forces of spiraling complexity and relentless change that are sweeping through the world today are throwing up increasingly complicated and confusing performance challenges.

Speed, flexibility, innovation, multiple skills, extensive knowledge and intensive effort are vital to tackle these new-age challenges. And, since effective teams score high on all these counts, organizations the world over are adopting teams as their basic building block.

Take a moment to consider the performance challenges your own unit faces today.

- **Is the challenge complex?**

For instance, one, single project might include three components, such as *“build innovation, improve customer satisfaction and enhance productivity.”* If so, a team approach makes sense. **Effective teams have access to diversified skills, knowledge, and abilities, all of which make them better suited to meet such complicated challenges.**

- **Is the challenge chameleon-like?**

As circumstances change, the challenge may keep changing, meaning that *the* working unit needs to be extremely flexible and responsive. An effective team is well equipped to confront such a challenge. **The processes that effective teams follow – communication, participation, and “reflexivity” (more on this later) – make**

them proactive, flexible units. Effective teams can factor in new information and adjust to changes much more easily than individuals.

- **Does the challenge require behavioral change?**

Effective teams have an advantage here too. Since teams operate collectively, they are less intimidated by change. **The collective learning that occurs in effective teams gives them an edge. The trust and confidence that is built in an effective team provides a great deal of support in such situations.**

- **Does the challenge require an intense amount of commitment?**

The “unique social dimension” of effective teams helps them provide this commitment. Jon R Katzenbach and Douglas K Smith, in their book, *The Wisdom of Teams: Creating the High-Performance Organization*, explain that the **“members of an effective team reinforce each other’s commitment to the team agenda, over and above individual and functional agendas.”** The team performance gains greater and greater meaning, as members get involved in shaping the common purpose, approach, and agenda. Katzenbach and Smith also note that, **“Teams have fun”. This is important because, when people have “fun” at work, they can sustain their performance much more effectively.**

But, even though organizations recognize that teams are the way to go in the future, and they are quickly embracing the teamwork structure, there is a problem. **“Team” and “teamwork” remain extremely misunderstood, organizational concepts.**

Certain basic principles and behaviors govern teams. But, unfortunately, team members and leaders are often not sufficiently well trained in these dynamics. As a result, the team performs inefficiently. In these cases, the team formula reads, **“two plus two equals less than three”**, which defeats the entire purpose of setting up the team. Team members and leaders end up feeling frustrated

If you notice, we have repeated that it is “effective teams” that manage to harness the efficiencies of collaboration. If you want to convert your team into an effective unit, you have to understand team dynamics and practice team leadership behaviors, as this will enable you to succeed.

This course is a great way to build the knowledge you need. It explains to you the why, what, how and when of teams, and it also provides you a tool kit that enables you to translate this knowledge into actual, day-to-day practices. This fusion of theoretical and practical knowledge helps you to leverage the productivity, efficiency – and genius – of teams.

1.2 Understanding Teams: The What, How and Why

What are teams? Why are they required? How do they function? These are some of the most basic questions about teams. Yet, you find that many people, including those working in teams, do not really know the answers to these questions. Many myths surround them. This section debunks the myths, and gives you clear, comprehensive answers to all of these questions – and more.

Leading researchers have conducted a great deal of study on “Teams”, “Team Processes” and “Team Leadership” over the years. This section uses this research and theory to furnish you with three of the most important things they’ve understood about team performance.

- First, we help you establish what, exactly, defines a team. We outline **“The Seven Defining Factors”** that distinguish a team.
- Next, we discuss when and why teams are required. We give you **“West’s Six Parameters”** that help you assess when a team effort is most required.

- Finally, we arrive at the question, “how does a team work”. Here, we give you the **Input-Process-Output** model to answer this question. This model outlines the inputs required of an effective team, the processes it follows and the output it can expect.

You might be tempted to skip all of this theory. Don't: you need to get your concepts clear. Only then will you be able to effectively apply the tools provided by this course.

But what if you feel that you are already familiar with team concepts? Well, a short questionnaire is provided on the next page. Use it to assess your understanding of teams. It will help you decide your approach towards this section!

For each of the questions on the next page, check a, b or c.

Team Concepts Questionnaire

1. For a group of people to qualify as a real team, the most primary pre-condition is that:
 - a) They should be like-minded individuals who truly desire to work together as a team.
 - b) They should share the same, common goal.
 - c) They should receive organizational support.
2. A group of people seeking to working together effectively should:
 - a) Use the traditional, authoritarian, single-leader model.
 - b) Use the empowered, participative team model.
 - c) Make a conscious choice between the two models outlined above.
3. The factor that is most essential for a team to perform effectively is:
 - a) High skill team members.
 - b) High performance goals.
 - c) High charisma team leader.
4. The size of a team usually:
 - a) Should not exceed 12-15 members; less people means less confusion.
 - b) Should be at least 20 people; more people means more resources
 - c) Does not really matter; it is about teamwork, not size.
5. In an effective team, there is no space for:
 - a) Conflict.
 - b) Individualism.
 - c) Ambiguity.

Answers

1. *b: A group of people can become an effective team only when they share a common goal.*
2. *c: Different situations require different leadership styles. A group has to consciously choose whether a traditional approach or a team approach will be more effective in a given situation, and then, use that approach to handle that situation. A reassessment is required as and when the situation changes.*
3. *b: While skills and charisma are useful, it is high performance goals that really motivate a team to perform effectively.*
4. *a: A group larger than 12-15 people usually cannot achieve the close coordination that a real team requires.*
5. *c: While conflict and individualism, within limits, can actually work to a team's advantage, ambiguity eats into effectiveness.*

Your Score:

Did you get more than four answers correct? Congratulations! Your concepts about teams seem to be quite clear. Use the information below to further build upon your knowledge. Since you are already familiar with the basics, concentrate on the additional details we provide about team dynamics and processes.

Those with fewer than four answers correct would do well to devote some time to understanding the theory outlined in the sub-sections below. First, clarify your concepts, and then get into detail!

So, now that we have established the approach you need to take, let's start by addressing the first question – “What are Teams”?

1.2.1 What Are Teams? – The Seven Defining Factors

There is a tendency in the workplace today to call almost any and every group of people working together a team. Teams are the “in” thing. They have a “feel good” factor associated with them, and there is a general feeling that a group of individuals working together can be automatically labeled as a team.

However, this is a myth. Not all groups are teams. Only groups that meet certain, essential criteria qualify as a team. What are these “essential criteria”? You can identify them using the two working definitions of teams (acclaimed as the best in the field) given below.

What is a Team?

- *A team is a group of individuals who work together to produce products or deliver services. Team members share goals and are mutually held accountable for meeting them, they are interdependent in their accomplishment, and they affect the results through their interactions with one another. Because the team is held collectively accountable, the work of integrating with one another is included among the responsibilities of each member.*

– from *Designing Team-Based Organizations*, by Susan Albers Mohrman, Susan G Cohen and Allan M Mohrman.

- *A team is a **small group** of people with **complementary skills and abilities** who are committed to a **common purpose, performance goal and approach** for which **they are mutually accountable**.*

– from *The Wisdom of Teams*, by Jon R Katzenbach and Douglas K Smith.

Now, use these definitions to prepare a list of the factors that you feel differentiate a team, and write these down below.

The defining factors of a team are that its members:

Your list should read somewhat like this.

The Seven Defining Factors of a team are that its members:

1. Share a common goal and approach.
2. Are small in number.
3. Work together.
4. Are mutually accountable for delivering these goals.
5. Are interdependent; possess complementary skills and abilities.
6. Interact; the interaction would have a direct bearing on results.
7. Include integration with other team members as a responsibility.

The list above describes the seven defining factors of a team. If you are part of a team, or are planning to join a team, see if your group qualifies on all seven counts. Often, organizations tend to overlook the disciplined application of the Seven Team Basics we have outlined.

This can cost the “aspiring” team dearly: For, until and unless all of these basics are in place, the team cannot perform at an optimal level.

Given below are two examples. They provide you practice in identifying whether a team qualifies in all seven factors listed above.

Example 1: The sales team of a small pharmaceutical company.

The sales team consists of a group of 10 sales representatives. They operate out of the same workplace, have similar qualifications, have received the same training, report to a common head, and meet a collective sales target. Each rep looks after his own individual list of clients. He or she services the client’s requirements end-to-end, independently.

Is this a real team?

Answer: No. While the sales reps do have a collective target and are small in number, they are not interdependent. Each services his clients individually and independently of others.

Example 2: The top editorial team of a women’s magazine

The team consists of seven people with expertise in different areas. They are all agreed that they need to increase the readership of the magazine. They interact every morning and are mutually accountable to the management for increasing the readership. However, each has differing ideas on how readership can be raised. Each does his/her bit, but a cohesive, common strategy is still missing.

Is this a real team?

Answer: Maybe, if they can develop a process for identifying and working on the best ideas. If they can’t agree a common approach, however, then they’re not functioning as a real team.

Now that we know what a team is, let’s try to pin down why and when teams are most effective.

1.2.2 When and Why are Teams Better – “West’s Six Parameters”

“All groups should discipline themselves as teams to achieve optimal performance.” This is the second great myth. People are so enamored by the “team” concept, that they are setting up teams in situations where teams are not even required.

The rationale used is “if it is a group effort, it has to be a team effort”, and it seems as if the traditional model of a group led by a single authority is dismissed as “bad”. This is wrong. Not all small group efforts have to be disciplined as teams. Often, the traditional, single-leader, group model, where there is one boss who calls the shots and welds together individual inputs, can meet a performance challenge effectively.

Please remember, teams take a lot of work to set up, and, in many situations, teamwork can be less efficient than work carried out by a coordinated group. As such, you should implement teams only if they provide some critical advantage.

As we discussed in the very first section of this module, teams possess the advantage of multiple skills, abilities, experiences and opinions. Also, teams can respond fast, are flexible, and cope better with change. What you have to assess is how critical these advantages are in meeting the performance challenge at hand.

Can the group tackle the challenge without the benefit of these advantages? If yes, then you would probably be better off with the traditional, single-leader group. If not, a team is indicated.

In fact, the same group can keep switching between the team approach and the traditional, single-leader approach, depending on the performance challenge it faces at a particular stage.

Typically, a single-leader group is a good choice when a project has to be implemented fast and/or can be easily broken up into individual efforts. Team effort is indicated when a complex challenge needs to be met, which demands multiple skills.

However, you are often faced with situations when the choice between a team and a single-leader group isn't so clear. You can use the Six Parameters detailed below as a barometer in such situations. Based on the guidelines provided by Michael A West in his book, *Effective Teamwork: Practical Lessons from Organizational Research*, these parameters define when you should use teams to handle a performance challenge.

West's Six Parameters

- **Completeness** – The task should be whole, not simply putting the studs on the car wheels, but assembling the whole transmission system plus the wheels.
- **Varied Demands** – The task should require a range of skills that are held or best developed by a number of different individuals.
- **Significance** – The task should contribute significantly to organizational goals.
- **Learning Opportunities** – The task should provide team members with opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills.
- **Developmental Possibilities** – The task can be developed to offer more challenges to team members over a period of time.
- **Autonomy** – The task allows the team members a **sufficient** amount of say over the team decisions. (*The definition of “sufficient” is extremely important. We will discuss it in later modules.*)

If the task scores highly on any of these parameters, teams and teamwork are likely to significantly improve results.

While the fundamentals for both the single-leader group and the team approach are the same (i.e., good communication, accountability, clear roles, and clear goals), the add-on requirements change depending on the approach chosen.

In the table below, we have filled the requirement for a single-leader group. What do you think would be the corresponding requirement for an “effective team”? Note it in the space provided. Contrast your responses with the answers provided below.

Single-leader Group Requirements	Effective Team Requirements
Members work individually on distinct tasks that match their skills	
Work product equals sum of individual efforts	
Leader sets goals, shapes agenda, defines approach	
Individual Accountability	

Answers

Single-leader Group Requirements	Effective Team Requirements
Members work individually on distinct tasks that match their skills	Members work jointly on tasks that require integration of their complementary talents and skills
Work product equals sum of individual efforts	Work product exceeds the sum of individual efforts
Leader sets goals, shapes agenda, defines approach	Team sets goals, shapes common agenda, and defines a common approach
Individual Accountability	Mutual and individual accountability

These requirements are not easy to meet, and this brings us to the next question: “How does an effective team work?”

1.2.3 How do Teams Work – The Input-Process-Output Model

People sometimes tend to feel that if they are “put together in a group of reasonable, skilled, like-minded individuals, they will naturally perform as a team.” However, things aren’t quite so simple.

Reflect on your own experiences. Consider a group in which you participated – a work group, a sports team, a volunteer group, anything where teamwork was required. Was the team really effective? If not, which were the areas where it fell short – creativity, decision-taking, troubleshooting? List these problem areas below. Also, list the reasons why you think the team faced these problems.

Situation:		
Problem Area		Reason
Problem Area		Reason

Several barriers – such as an excessively hierarchical structure, conflicting personality profiles, a lack of conviction, a lack of discipline, poor ethics, poor coordination, and low motivation – can prevent a group from performing as a real team.

These barriers lead to many problems. Effort is lost, people work less hard, decision-making and problem solving become flawed, and creativity and innovation also suffer.

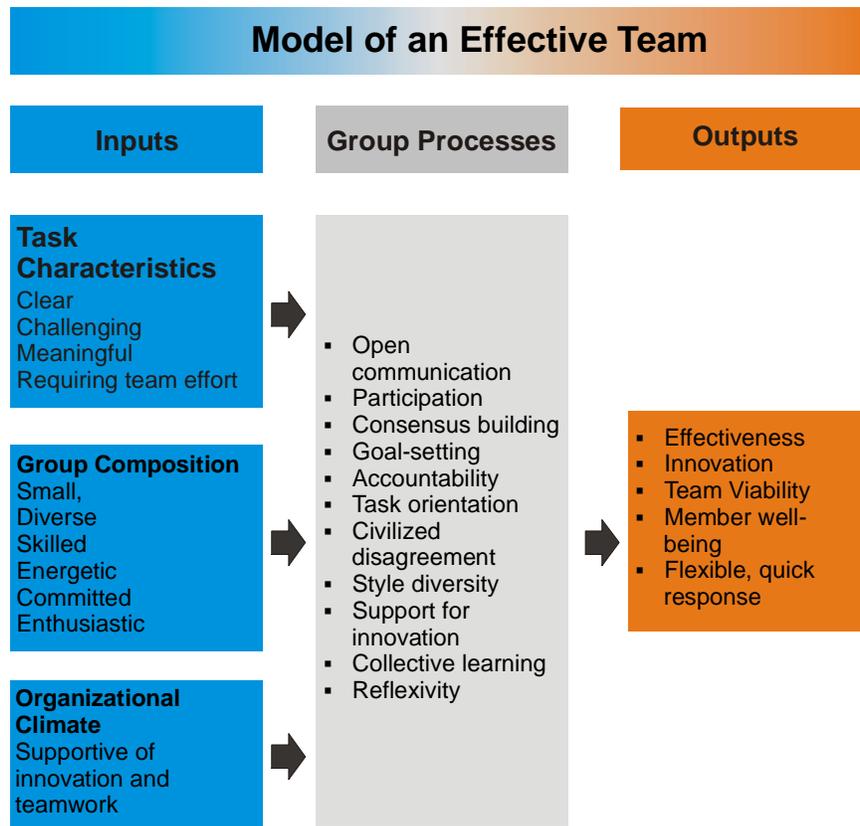
To get past these barriers and problems and convert your group into a really Effective Team, you have to ensure that your team works in the right way. You have to procure the right **inputs** and follow the right **processes**.

If you do this, your team will surpass its potential, and the collective performance of the team will be greater than the sum of the performance of individual members.

However, if you fail on the input or process front, the team will not be able to overcome the performance barriers discussed above. The collective performance of the team will be **less than** the sum of the performance of individual members.

So, what exactly are the right inputs and processes? What is the output to which they lead? Figure 1.2.3.1 summarizes these, and it is followed by detailed explanations later.

Figure 1.2.3.1 Model of an Effective Team



Now, let's take a closer look at each of these headings.

The Right Inputs

A team is defined by three, basic inputs – the task, the group, and the organizational climate. To be really effective, the team should aspire to get all three inputs right.

- **The Right Task** is a non-negotiable, essential input. If the performance challenge does not exist, or can be better served by some other means, you should not create a team.
- **The Right Group** is essential if you want “the whole to be greater than the sum of the individual parts”. For a team to be effective, it is essential that the skills and abilities of the individual parts (the group members) are complementary, and their knowledge, skills and attitudes are conducive to teamwork. The good news is that the group can acquire these inputs over a period of time. Also, the group should be small in size. Seven to eight is a good number. In any case, it should never comprise more than 12-15 people
- **The Right Climate** has to be provided, whether the team is formal (instituted by the organization) or informal (groups without a formal mandate that have sprung up in response to a performance challenge). In an effective team, the team leader is an important entity, but he/she is perceived more as a facilitator than as a manager. Diversity, healthy conflict and individualism also find space in an effective team.

The Right Processes

The processes that the team needs to follow are:

- **Open Communication** – Listening and sharing.
- **Participation** – Building involvement and ownership.
- **Consensus building** – Shaping a common purpose, and establishing a common approach.
- **Goal Setting** – Setting shared and clear goals.
- **Accountability** – Setting both mutual and individual accountability.
- **Task Orientation** – Clarifying roles, tasks and assignments.
- **Civilized Disagreement** – Hearing different viewpoints.
- **Style Diversity** – Bringing different experiences and styles to bear upon the combined team effort.
- **Support for Innovation** – Providing an environment that is supportive of innovation.
- **Collective Learning** – Helping team members to learn from and along with each other.
- **Reflexivity** – Engaging in constant reflection and review.

The Right Outputs

When a group manages to procure the right inputs and follow the right processes, it will be able to achieve the right output. It will evolve into a full-fledged Real Team that is effective, viable, innovative, and one that ensures the well-being of its members.

More on this in a moment!

1.3 This Course: A Guide for Developing Effective Teams

While the processes and disciplines that have to be applied to build an effective team can seem daunting at first glance, learning them isn't all that difficult. Use this course. It provides a simple, yet comprehensive, guide that helps you master the knowledge, tools and techniques you need in order to build an effective team.

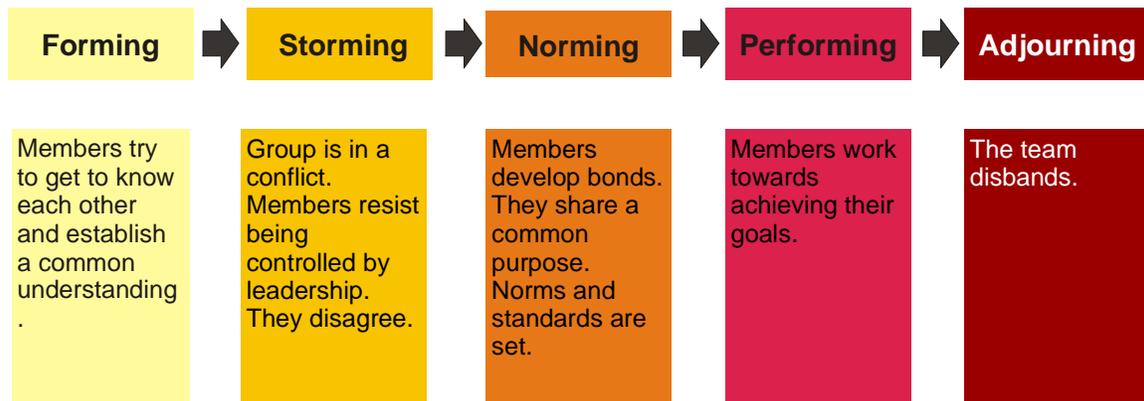
Our aim isn't to provide a single, fit-for-all solution for teams. There exists no such solution. Our objective is to:

- Give you an in-depth knowledge of the basic principles that govern teams.
- Empower you with an arsenal of tools and techniques that you can apply in everyday life.
- Help you to analyze and evaluate which tool and which principle applies in each situation.

This combination will free you to choose and build your own strategies, ones that are relevant to your particular situation.

1.3.1 The Structure of the Workbook

According to Bruce Tuckman and Mary Ann Jensen, some of the most influential researchers in team development, a team typically goes through five stages in its life:

Figure .3.1.1 Tuckman and Jensen's Model

Our course addresses teams through these five stages. The course is divided into eight modules, and while Module 1 provides you with a general overview, the remaining seven modules deal with specific stages in the team development process.

Some modules deal with more than one stage, and some stages are covered in more than one module, but teams, too, keep going back and forth between stages, revisiting different phases to deal with different problems at different levels. The linkage between the modules and the stages is simply given to provide a structure that helps you build a clearer understanding of effective team processes.

In real life, you might find yourself facing problems that straddle different stages. Familiarity with all modules will help you analyze the problems, break them into their component parts, and pick the right techniques to deal with them.

You can approach this course in several ways. Either you can go systematically and work your way from the first module to the last module, or you can read the brief module descriptions provided below, and then analyze which modules are the most relevant to you (or simply look the most interesting) and jump in.

Each module first provides a theoretical overview, and then outlines specific tools and techniques that you can apply. If you are the kind of person who learns better through actual, practical, hands-on experience, you should first go through the tools section. Try implementing them in your life. Assess the results and then understand the theory behind them.

However, if you prefer to know where you are going before actually embarking on the journey, you should go through the theory section first. This will give you the “road map” you need. At the end of each module, there are some exercises. PLEASE DO THEM. It is tempting to skip them, but they are essential if you want to build a thorough understanding, and get the practice you need.

1.4 Module Structure: What Comes Where

Together, the eight modules of this course show you how to steer your team through the five stages of team development. Module 1 is in the nature of a general manual on this, while Module 2 helps you pick the right members for your team. Module 3 starts to equip you with the skills you will need to steer your way through all five stages.

Modules 4 and 5 take you through the “norming” stage. They show you how to maintain discipline within your team. Module 5 also gives you some tips regarding the performing stage. The tools prescribed in Module 6, 7 and 8 are applicable in the storming and performing stages. These

modules focus on coping with problems that might prevent you from achieving maximum performance.

More details about the modules are provided below:

Module 1: Understand Teams – The What, How and Why

The opening module serves as a base for building an understanding of the five stages of team development. It explains what makes a team, how a team works, and why teams are better suited to meet present-day challenges. It debunks the many myths that surround teams. It shows how teams can create a result, which is greater than the sum of the individual parts, and it outlines the processes an effective team needs in order to follow and the inputs it requires.

It also provides an introduction to the course – what the topics that will be dealt with are, how it should be approached, and what the final objective is.

Module 2: Pick the Right Players – Blend a Magic Mix

This module is designed to address the formation stage of a team. It provides tools that help you select team members whose knowledge, skills, abilities and personalities are in sync with the team's mission. It shows you how to build diversity within your team. It also gives you guidance on team size, and addresses issues such as the feasibility of virtual teams and part-time teams.

Module 3: Take on the Leadership Challenge – Energize the Team

This module explains to you the essence of effective team leadership and the basic skill set required to practice it. You will require the tools outlined by this module through all five stages of your team's development. It teaches you how to build motivation, how to clarify communication and how to boost confidence within your team. It also shows you how to enhance your team's collective effectiveness.

Module 4: Provide Direction – Set Clear, Shared Goals, Point Out the Path

One of the first and most important jobs of a leader is to set direction for the team. This module equips you with what you need to tackle this challenge and to set norms for your team. It shows you how to set goals and how to factor ownership and participation within them, and it also helps you provide structure for your team. By applying the tools outlined in this module, you will be able to address the majority of the issues that affect motivation.

Module 5: Focus on Relationships – Create a Positive Team Climate

The direction being set, the leader's next job is to monitor the team climate. The leader needs to ensure that the environment within the team is always conducive for performance, and is rich with a feeling of trust, support and safety. The ways in which you can create and sustain healthy and productive relationships between team members are discussed in detail in this module.

Module 6: Boost Innovation – Develop the Creativity of Your Team

Teams today need to be innovative. However, innovation and creativity often figure as problem areas in team performances. Several factors, such as "groupthink" and "production blocking" (you'll learn what these are in the module), hamper innovation. This module helps you get past these hurdles and boost innovation and creativity in your team.

Module 7: Resolve Conflicts – Use Them to Your Advantage

Conflict is inevitable within a team. Avoiding it just compounds the issue, which is why it's better to face it and resolve it constructively to your team's advantage. This module helps you do so. It lists the types and causes of conflict, and then demonstrates how to manage and resolve them, so that you can improve the team's performance.

Module 8: Encourage Problem-Solving – Build an Adaptive and Pro-active Team

Even the best run teams get stuck sometimes. This module arms you with an arsenal of problem-solving techniques that help you to get unstuck. It also stresses the importance of building reflexivity in your team, which comes from building a team that is constantly learning, and evolving to meet the new challenges it faces.

1.5 Apply This to Your Life

One of the most important points we have made in this chapter is that a team should be created only when there is a clear, compelling performance challenge that demands team effort. This was the first and most important factor we used to define a team.

This performance challenge, "The Right Task", was an essential, non-negotiable input for an effective team. Therefore, it is vital that you consider carefully whether or not your team's task is The Right Task.

Below is a list of questions. Reflect upon them carefully. The answers will help you to evaluate whether your team's task qualifies as The Right Task. They might even provide you with some pointers on how to convert the team's task into this.

- Does the team have a clearly defined performance challenge to fulfill?
- Does the performance challenge demand a combination of different people's skills, abilities, experiences and opinions?
- Does the performance challenge represent a broad aspiration or a short-term goal? Broader aspirations are much more inspiring than short-term goals.
- Do all of the team members feel the performance challenge is significant to the organization?
- Does the team have a common agenda and approach to meet the performance challenge?
- Do all of the team members articulate the challenge, approach and agenda similarly? If not, wherein does the confusion lie and why does the confusion exist?
- Does the performance challenge represent a whole task (remember our example of not simply putting the studs on the car wheels but assembling the whole transmission system plus the wheels)?
- Does it provide team members with opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills?
- Can it be developed to offer more challenges to team members over a period of time?

Module 2

Pick the Right Team: Blend a Magic Mix

Interest: This module gives you tools and techniques that help you form a team that is of ideal size; possesses the potential to develop all the knowledge, skill, and abilities it needs in order to succeed; and has a sufficient amount of diversity.

Need: For a team to be effective, its whole has to be greater than the sum of its individual parts. This can only happen when you pick team members whose skills and abilities are complementary, and in sync with the team's requirements.

This module helps you to do just this. It also helps you tackle tricky issues, such as diversity, personality traits, and size. When addressed correctly, all of these factors can work to your advantage. However, if mismanaged, they can adversely affect your team's performance.

Timing: 2½ hours

Range: This module covers:

- The concept of “right” skill mix.
- Task Knowledge – helping you identify the task-related skills that the team needs, and identify the members who meet that requirement.
- Teamwork Skills – helping you understand which teamwork skills your team needs, so you can select team members with these skills.
- Adaptive Attitude – understanding the importance of an “adaptive attitude”, identifying members that show this.
- Personality Traits – a description of the OCEAN model, which can be used to analyze personality traits, and identify team members whose traits will support the team task.
- Diversity – the balance required, task diversity, and “relations diversity”.
- Common dilemmas, such as the finding the right team size, the practicality of virtual teams, and integration of part-time team members.

Objective: By the end of this module you will be able to:

- Evaluate the mix of skills your team needs to become effective.
- Analyze prospective members' task knowledge, teamwork skills, adaptive attitude, and personality traits.
- Identify members whose KSAs and personality traits meet the team's needs.
- Assemble a team that is of the “right” size, that has the “right” amount of diversity, and that possesses the potential to develop the “right” skill mix.

2.1 Introduction

Case Study

Axwell Finance, a company providing auto finance, spots an opportunity in cross-selling products, such as mutual funds and insurance to its clients. Axwell intends to tie up with industry majors in these segments and cross-sell their schemes to its existing base of clients.

Axwell has decided that it needs to set up a dedicated team to draw up a strategy for the cross-selling project. It has put Alan Tucker, VP, Business Development, in charge of the project. His brief is simple: Create a team that will be able to formulate and implement a cross-selling strategy that will maximize sales of mutual funds and insurance products, and deliver excellent customer service, without compromising on the company's core finance offering.

Alan has been told that he can recruit people from within the organization and, if pressed, he can even look outside the organization. This is the first time that Alan has actually been entrusted with the responsibility of creating a team. While excited about the opportunity, he is a little confused, as well.

What should be the size of the team? Should he aim to set up a small, quick, cohesive action group, or a larger, diverse, multiple skill task force? Who should select the team? Should he do it alone, or should he let the team select itself?

What kind of people should he bring in on the team? He wants people proficient in their fields, but he also wants people who are able to see the bigger picture. Should he headhunt for the right experience and knowledge or the right interpersonal and problem-solving skills? Should he give higher weight to mental ability or to integrity? Should he select the brilliant, temperamental prima donna or stick with the open, supportive personality?

Is it possible to create a team that only meets over the Internet? And should he consider taking on members that can only work part-time?

Many of us who are put in Alan's situation would face similar confusion. We all want to pick the right team. After all, getting the ingredients right is the first step in cooking a great meal. Yet, we are not quite sure as to how and what ingredients we should choose in order to "whip up the magic mix" that serves as the base of an effective team.

Common sense tells us that the brightest people with the best interpersonal skills should be our first choice for our team. However, experience tells us that choices usually don't present themselves so clearly. The brightest person may not have an iota of integrity. The most open and supportive person may only be able to work half-days. You will have to face many such quandaries.

Given this reality, how do you choose your team? This module helps you to deal with this confusion. No, we don't give you a magic, fit-for-all formula that you can implement: rather, we provide you a set of the processes and techniques that you can use as a guide for creating your team.

And where you have an existing team, we help you look at its strengths and weaknesses, so that you can identify where you need to reinforce it, and where you need to train people to achieve peak effectiveness.

First, we help you to clarify your goal. It isn't simply to find a team member who possesses all the right **Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities** (KSAs) that are required to perform a job. (Such people rarely exist and are frustrating to find.) Rather, it is to form a team whose members:

- When **considered together**, possess, or **have the potential** to develop, the KSAs needed to do the job.

- Personalities are in sync with the task in which they are required to perform.
- Reflect a sufficient amount of diversity.

Now that the goal is clear, we help you figure out the “right” skill mix that your team needs to achieve its performance challenge. We detail the basic knowledge, skills, and attitude a team requires to succeed, and then we give you tools that help you assess the specific KSAs required of your team.

We also show you how factors, such as personality, diversity and size, impact the team. Tools that will help you translate this knowledge into actionable steps are also provided.

Let us start by discussing this right skill mix.

2.1.1 The “Right” Skill Mix

Remember, the complementary skills bit discussed in the definition of teams in the previous module? Well, that’s the whole deal about teams: Different members contribute different skills and, together, these different skills add up to the “right” skill mix.

What is this right skill mix? While the specifics vary from case-to-case, the basic knowledge skills and abilities required by a team can be pegged under three categories:

- **Technical and Functional Knowledge** – the specific knowledge required to turn the input (it could be anything – sick patients, car parts, information) into output (well people, cars, newspaper).
- **Teamwork Skills** – The interpersonal and self-management skills – such as communication, conflict-resolution, collaborative problem-solving, goal-setting, performance management, and planning and task coordination – which support the effective functioning of the team.
- **Adaptive Attitude** – Traits that help a team member to adapt, evolve, and stay pro-active in the face of ongoing change and uncertainty; essential skills for success in a highly competitive environment. Adaptive attitude includes decision-taking skills, problem-solving abilities, versatility, and tolerance for ambiguity.

Only when a team possesses all of these KSAs can it become a truly effective team. Therefore, don’t make the common mistake of assembling teams on the basis of criteria, such as “personal compatibility” and “formal organizational position.”

Instead, focus on creating a team that possesses the **potential** to develop the required KSAs within a certain timeframe.

“Potential” is the keyword here. While a team needs the “right” skill mix to succeed, it doesn’t mean that you have to recruit a “dream” team that possesses all of the required KSAs right from the very start.

Effective team leaders understand that there might be some skill gaps that will have to be filled if the team is to achieve a level of high performance. In fact, these gaps often become apparent only when the team functions together as a unit.

What these team leaders count on is that if they follow the right team processes (detailed in Module 1), team members will develop the required KSAs along the way. The final result will be that the team will be armed with the full set of complementary skills it needs to fulfill its performance challenge.

So, to avoid getting bogged down at the team formation stage, use the tools and techniques detailed in the next section to:

- Identify and procure the basic minimum set of KSAs needed to start the project. (More often than not, you have to assemble most of the Technical and Functional Knowledge the task requires at the very inception).
- Ensure that the team members you select have the potential to develop the remaining KSAs as the project is implemented.

2.1.2 About Personality, Diversity and Size

While effective teams use the “right” skill mix as a starting point for assembling teams, they don’t just stop there. They go beyond skills and factor in team member’s personalities and diversities in the formation process.

Personality plays an important role in defining a team member’s performance. Is the team member open? Is she conscientious? Is she an extrovert? Is she “agreeable”? Does she display “neurotic tendencies”, such as anxiety, self-consciousness and vulnerability? All of these factors impact performance. The tools section shows you how to deal with this.

Your team also needs to reflect a sufficient level of diversity. Research proves that including a certain amount of diversity within a team raises its ability to innovate and be creative. Team members from different cultural backgrounds, possessing different kinds of task knowledge, belonging to different age groups, and coming from different geographical backgrounds bring a variety of perspectives to work. You should harness this advantage.

A word of caution, though: Diversity has a down side as well. Too much diversity might result in team members pulling in different directions and threatening the group’s integration. The team leader, therefore, has to find the right balance. He or she has to build in sufficient diversity to promote innovation, and at the same time, ensure the team’s ability to communicate and formulate a common agenda. The tools section provides you with pointers to help you maintain this balance.

We discussed size in the last chapter, as well, and we are going to revisit it now. Your team can’t be huge. Typically, effective teams are 3 to 15 members strong. So, how do you ensure that your team has the right skill mix, the right personalities, and the right amount of diversity, without becoming too big? Use the techniques prescribed in this module.

2.2 Introducing the Tools

Getting the “right” skill mix potential in place is the most crucial process in the team formation process. The first three tools of this module concentrate on this.

We give you our Team Selection Worksheet, which you can use to evaluate potential or existing team members, and then show you how to use it to evaluate:

- Technical and Functional Knowledge.
- Teamwork Skills.
- Adaptive Abilities.

Next, we look at a model that helps you analyze your team member’s individual personalities. This also shows you how to match personality traits to the type of function the team is required to perform. We also help you find the right balance of diversity.

After dealing with team composition, we move on to team size.

Finally, we answer some of the Frequently Asked Questions that keep popping up during the team formation process.

The issue of cost of team members – that is, how much you should or you can afford to spend on acquiring a member – is not discussed here.

2.2.1 Task Knowledge – Team Member Fit: Do They Know What to Do?

We defined Technical and Functional Knowledge as the specific task knowledge required to turn the input (it could be anything – sick patients, car parts, information) into output (well people, cars, newspaper). This task knowledge is essential for a team’s effectiveness, and is the most important thing to select for when choosing individuals for your team.

So which existing or potential members of your team have this knowledge? And where do you have gaps in knowledge that you need to fill?

To help you work this out, we give you our Team Selection Worksheet, which helps you analyze the technical/functional knowledge that is required of your team, and also which prospective team members can provide it.

Tip 1:

From here on, we’ll assume that you’re selecting team members for a new team. However, there should be no real difference in approach if you’re analyzing your existing team, with a view to ensuring that you have the right skills and abilities in place.

Tip 2:

For the rest of this module (only), we’re going to be working through a spreadsheet-based approach to looking at KSAs within your team. The reason we do this is that it allows you to take many different factors into account when you’re selecting the future members of your team. (Our short term memories can typically only hold between 5 and 9 pieces of information within them at any one time –by using a more “intuitive” approach, you risk making decisions based on a very limited part of the information needed for a proper decision.)

If you’re really uncomfortable with MS Excel or with numbers, use a paper-based approach, or skim the rest of this module and extract the information you’re comfortable with.

Either you can draw this up for yourself on a large sheet of paper, or you can download it in MS Excel format from <http://www.mindtools.com/courses/TeamTools/TeamSelectionWorksheet.xls>.

(We encourage you to use the Excel spreadsheet, as the worksheet will do all of the calculations for you.)

The first columns of the worksheet are shown in the screenshot below:

Figure 2.2.1.1 The “Task-Related Skills” Area of the Team Selection Worksheet

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J		
1		Team Selection Worksheet										
2												
3				Technical/Task-Related Skills								
4			Skill:								Conf Reso	
5			Experience Needed:									
6		Potential	Now/Later:									
7		Team Member	Importance:									
8	1.											
9				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
10				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
11	2.											
12				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
13				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
14	3.											
15				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
16				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
17	4.											
18				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
19				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
20	5.											
21				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
22				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
23	6.											
24				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
25				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
26	7.											
27				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
28				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
29	8.											
30				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
31				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
32			Unweighted Now:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
33		© Mind Tools Ltd.	Unweighted Later:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
34												

In this worksheet, the pale blue areas are areas where you can input information. The grey areas contain calculations that you can ignore, and the gold areas show the calculated information we’re really interested in.

Conducting Your Task Related Skills Analysis

The first step in using the worksheet is to think about the task-related skills you’ll need, when you’ll need them, and how important they are.

Start by identifying the seven or fewer most important task-related skills your team needs to perform its task effectively. (Don’t bother with listing base-level stuff, such as familiarity with computers, as we assume this is a given; focus on specific task-related KSAs.)

Enter these in the top row of the worksheet (row 4, columns D to J.)

Tip:

These may be obvious. If they’re not, conduct a brainstorming exercise with people who do the job well to see what they think the most important skills are.

The tricky bit here is that you have to stop and clearly evaluate how much diversity in task experience you want reflected in your team. For instance, if you are setting up a pharma R&D team, you have to decide whether you are okay to simply include the chemists and a marketing expert, or do you want a finance specialist there as well. (In deciding this, you might want to read the task diversity section in the Diversity tool detailed later in the module – see 2.2.6 for more on this.)

Next, in the row headed “Experience Needed” (row 5, columns D to J) make a brief note of the level of skill that you need in the area. Sometimes, of course, you’ll need in-depth skills. Other times, a basic knowledge may be enough.

In the row headed “Now/Later” (row 6, columns D to J), note whether this knowledge is required at the very beginning of the project, or whether the team afford to acquire it later as the task is implemented. This will be determined by the task duration and knowledge complexity. If the duration is short, you will need the task knowledge in place right from the beginning, since there is no time to acquire it along the way. If the knowledge is complex, then it, too, will be difficult to acquire along the way. If the skill is needed now, put an “N” in the appropriate cell. (You’ll see how this drives the phasing of skills later on.) Otherwise, put an “L” in this cell.

Finally in your skills analysis, think about how important this skill is to your team. In the row marked “Importance” (row 7, columns D to J), score how important that skill is to your team on a scale of 1 (not very important) to 5 (extremely important). Putting this in ensures that you give due weight to the most important skills.

This will give you something looking like the example in figure 2.2.1.2 below, showing the skills analysis for candidates for a team we’re looking to set up within an example publishing company.

Figure 2.2.1.2 Example Task-Related Skills Analysis for a Publishing Company

	Technical/Task-Related Skills						
Skill:	1. Writing	2. Editing	3. Technical	4. Design	5. Marketing	6. Mgmt	7.
Experience Needed:	Good writing house style	Print ready, house style	Rounded general	Good eye, clean look	Trained experienced	General	
Now/Later:	N	N	L	L	N	L	
Importance:	4	4	2	3	5	3	

Note that the company has identified six skills as being important, and has therefore left the last column blank. Also note that several skills can be ranked at the same level of importance.

Assessing Best Fit Team Members Depending on Their Skills Levels

Now that we’ve identified the skills that are important, the next stage is to look at the members of your team, or the potential members of your team, and evaluate how their skills match up against the skills you need.

Start by entering these people’s names in the blue rows of column B of the worksheet (see figure 2.2.1.1. above).

Then work along each row (for example, row 8, columns D to J) assessing each person’s technical and functional knowledge, and also their experience in the field. To assess whether a team member has the requisite task knowledge, consider whether he or she:

- Understands the business issues.
- Has the appropriate technical background.
- Knows what to do.
- Understands the broader picture.

For the team member, rate him or her from 0 (no knowledge of the skill) to 5 (exceptional knowledge of the skill.) Naturally, the member who scores the highest on all counts is the best fit in terms of task knowledge. Note that these aren’t skills rankings – as many people as you like can share the same score.

If you enter your scores on the MS Excel worksheet as recommended, you’ll see that the worksheet automatically weights the value you enter by the importance of the skill. For skills needed now, you get a value in the top grey row (for example, row 9 of the worksheet.) For skills needed now or later, this value is shown in the bottom grey row (for example, row 10 of the worksheet.)

If you've decided to do this on paper, you'll need to calculate these values for yourself.

Figure 2.2.1.3 shows this for our proposed publishing team, and figure 2.2.1.4. shows the total task-related scores for each person (note that these are shown in columns X and Y of the worksheet).

From figure 2.2.1.4 the manager of this team can see that Helen Bronson is the best-fit candidate from the skills perspective. More than this, Helen has strong marketing, editorial and writing skills, which makes her particularly valuable.

However, by looking at rows 32 and 33 of figure 2.2.1.3, the manager can see that the team is weak in technical skills – either the manager needs to find someone else with good technical skills and strengths elsewhere, or she needs to source technical skills from elsewhere.

Figure 2.2.1.3 Task Related Skills Section for the Example Publishing Company

Team Selection Worksheet									
		Technical/Task-Related Skills							
		Skill:	1. Writing	2. Editing	3. Technical	4. Design	5. Marketing	6. Mgmt	7.
		Experience Needed:	Good writing house style	Print ready, house style	Rounded general	Good eye, clean look	Trained experienced	General	
		Now/Later:	N	N	L	L	N	L	
Potential	Team Member	Importance:	4	4	2	3	5	3	
1.	Janis Smith		3	4	1	2	2	2	
			12	16	0	0	10	0	0
			12	16	2	6	10	6	0
2.	Ian Bradley		1	2	5	2	2	2	
			4	8	0	0	10	0	0
			4	8	10	6	10	6	0
3.	Tariq Ibrahim		3	3	2	5	4	3	
			12	12	0	0	20	0	0
			12	12	4	15	20	9	0
4.	Helen Bronson		4	5	2	3	4	4	
			16	20	0	0	20	0	0
			16	20	4	9	20	12	0
5.	Manuel Hernandez		5	4	1	3	3	3	
			20	16	0	0	15	0	0
			20	16	2	9	15	9	0
6.									
			0	0	0	0	0	0	0
			0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7.									
			0	0	0	0	0	0	0
			0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8.									
			0	0	0	0	0	0	0
			0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Unweighted Now:	16	18	0	0	15	0	0
		Unweighted Later:	16	18	11	15	15	14	0

Figure 2.2.1.4 Skills Totals For Each Prospective Team Member (Note column headings go A, B, C, X, Y)

A	B	C	X	Y
Team Selection Worksheet				
			Task Totals	
		Skill:		
		Experience Needed:		
Potential Team Member	Now/ Later:	Weight:		2.86
	Importance:			
1.	Janis Smith		Now: 38 Later: 52	
2.	Ian Bradley		Now: 22 Later: 44	
3.	Tariq Ibrahim		Now: 44 Later: 72	
4.	Heleen Bronson		Now: 56 Later: 81	
5.	Manuel Hernandez		Now: 51 Later: 71	
6.			Now: 0 Later: 0	
7.			Now: 0 Later: 0	
8.			Now: 0 Later: 0	

Sometimes, you might have one candidate who brings to the table knowledge about two different functions, and sometimes, you might have two candidates whose combined knowledge adds up to the ability you require. You might also have cases where no candidate possesses the required knowledge. This is a skill gap area. You will have to consciously focus on this in order to fill it.

So, what if people in your new team are close to one-another in skills, or you have more than one best-fit member for a particular type of knowledge? In this case, you should consider how the members score on teamwork skills and adaptive abilities.

2.2.2 Teamwork Skills – Team Member Fit: Will They Be Able to Pull Along as a Team?

Teamwork skills are the abilities that a team needs, over and above task knowledge, to work as a real team. If teamwork skills are present, the team’s performance is greater than the sum of the members’ individual performances. If not, the team suffers from all sorts of co-ordination problems (“process losses”), and the team’s performance as a whole may well end up being less than the sum of people’s individual performances.

Several models are used to classify teamwork skills. Here, we use the classification developed by researchers Michael Stevens and Michael Campion. They divide teamwork skills into two broad heads – Interpersonal Skills and Self-Management Skills. Under these heads fall a number of specific skill areas.

For your team to succeed, its members need to display all, or at least most, of these skill areas. Often, you will find prospective members lacking in one skill area or another. This doesn’t mean that you exclude them from the team. It just means that you have to consciously focus on developing that skill as the project progresses.

Figure 2.2.2.1 below shows these teamwork skills, and the individual attributes that define them.

While all the skills listed below are desirable in a team, some are particularly important, depending on the team's task and situation. For instance, the task might require interdependent functioning. In such a case, coordination skills are essential. If the team is a self-directed unit, with no single leader, then the self-management KSAs will be the "must-haves". Just consider how the team will be required to function to figure out the must-have KSAs.

Figure 2.2.2.1 Desirable Teamwork Skills

Teamwork Skills	Specific Skill Set	Attributes of Skill
Interpersonal Skills	Conflict Resolution	The team member can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discourage undesirable conflict. • Employ win-win rather than win-lose negotiation strategies. • Recognize types and sources of conflict and implement appropriate conflict resolution and reduction strategies.
	Collaborative Problem Solving	The team member can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify problems requiring participation and use appropriate participation strategies. • Recognize and deal with obstacles to collaborative group problem-solving. • Support and explore proposals for innovation.
	Communication	The team member can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and use communication networks. • Communicate openly and supportively. • Listen actively and non-evaluatively. • Maintain consistency between verbal and non-verbal. • Value ritual greetings and small talk.
Self-Management Skills	Goal Setting and Performance Management	The team member can: Help establish specific, attainable, measurable, and challenging team goals. Help monitor, evaluate, support and give feedback on team and individual performance.
	Planning and Task Coordination	The team member can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help to co-ordinate activities, information, and task interdependence between members. • Help to clarify tasks and roles of team members and ensure balance of workloads.

Assessing the Skills Needed

Our next stage in evaluating the skills of members, or potential members, of our team is to evaluate their teamwork skills using this framework.

As with task-related skills, we start by looking at the skill levels we need, and entering these in the appropriate area of the worksheet. You can see this in figure 2.2.2.2, rows 4 to 7, and columns K to O. (Note that in this figure, we’ve used the MS Excel Window menu... Freeze Frames command to scroll past columns D to J.)

Start by describing the skills and experience your task needs in each area, and enter this in row 5. Next, as with task-related skills, identify whether the skill is needed now or later. Finally, evaluate the importance of the skill to the completion of the team task, using a scale running from 0 (not at all important) to 5 (very important).

Tip:

Use the same scale as you used for reviewing task-related skills. For example, if “conflict resolution” is the most team-working skill, but it’s not quite as important overall as a skill scoring 5 on the task-related skills section, then give it a score of, say, 4.

Figure 2.2.2.2 The Team Selection Worksheet Team Working Skills Evaluation Area

	A	B	C	K	L	M	N	O
1	Team Selection Worksheet							
2								
3				Interpersonal Skills			Self-Management	
4			Skill:	Conflict Resolution	Collaborative Prob. Solving	Communication	Performance Management	Planning & Coordination
5			Experience Needed:					
6	Potential		Now/Later:	L	N	N	N	N
7	Team Member		Importance:	1	3	5	4	4

Assessing Team Members’ Skills Using this Approach

As with the task-related skills area of the worksheet, the next step is to evaluate the skills of each team member or prospective team member in each area. You can see this for our example of evaluating candidates for a publishing team in figures 2.2.2.3 and 2.2.2.4 below.

Figure 2.2.2.3 Teamworking Skills Analysis for the Example Publishing Team

	A	B	C	K	L	M	N	O
1	Team Selection Worksheet							
2				Interpersonal Skills			Self-Management	
4			Skill:	Conflict Resolution	Collaborative Prob. Solving	Communication	Performance Management	Planning & Coordination
5			Experience Needed:					
6		Potential	Now/Later:	L	N	N	N	N
7		Team Member	Importance:	1	3	5	4	4
8	1.	Janis Smith		3	4	5	5	4
9				0	12	25	20	16
10				3	12	25	20	16
11	2.	Ian Bradley		2	4	4	3	5
12				0	12	20	12	20
13				2	12	20	12	20
14	3.	Tariq Ibrahim		3	3	3	5	5
15				0	9	15	20	20
16				3	9	15	20	20
17	4.	Helen Bronson		5	4	4	5	4
18				0	12	20	20	16
19				5	12	20	20	16
20	5.	Manuel Hernandez		3	2	5	4	3
21				0	6	25	16	12
22				3	6	25	16	12
23	6.							
24				0	0	0	0	0
25				0	0	0	0	0
26	7.							
27				0	0	0	0	0
28				0	0	0	0	0
29	8.							
30				0	0	0	0	0
31				0	0	0	0	0
32			Unweighted Now:	0	17	21	22	21
33		© Mind Tools Ltd	Unweighted Later:	16	17	21	22	21

Figure 2.2.2.4 Teamworking Skills by Team Member

	A	B	C	Z	AA
1	Team Selection Worksheet				
3				Team Totals	
4			Skill:		
5			Experience Needed:		
6		Potential	Now/Later:	Weight:	4.00
7		Team Member	Importance:		
8	1.	Janis Smith		Now:	73
9				Later:	76
11	2.	Ian Bradley		Now:	64
12				Later:	66
14	3.	Tariq Ibrahim		Now:	64
15				Later:	67
17	4.	Helen Bronson		Now:	68
18				Later:	73
20	5.	Manuel Hernandez		Now:	59
21				Later:	62
23	6.			Now:	0
24				Later:	0
26	7.			Now:	0
27				Later:	0
29	8.			Now:	0
30				Later:	0

From 2.2.2.4, the manager can tell that team members have reasonable team-working skills.

From figure 2.2.2.3, the manager notes a level of weakness in the team’s conflict resolution and collaborative problem solving skills. The issue with collaborative problem solving is significant, and needs to be addressed quickly with team training.

2.2.3 Adaptive Attitude-Team Member Fit: Can They Take Decisions, Solve Problems, Cope with Change?

The third major group of skills that we need to look at, when we're looking at the skills of existing and potential members, relate to their ability to change and adapt to changing circumstances, otherwise called their "adaptive attitude". (Remember that this is one of the important ways in which real teams do better than groups of individuals working on their own.)

An adaptive attitude embodies a skill set over and above task knowledge and teamwork skills, and it is driven by its members':

- Decision-taking skills.
- Problem-solving ability.
- Capacity to develop versatility.
- Tolerance for ambiguity.

These abilities help teams to identify the problems and opportunities they face on an ongoing basis, develop useful solutions to them, and change the way they're working to reflect this.

Here we've identified eight adaptive attitudes that are useful in different circumstances:

- The ability to handle emergencies and crisis situations in a calm and effective way.
- The ability to solve problems creatively.
- The ability to deal successfully with uncertain and unpredictable work situations.
- An aptitude to quickly understand and adopt new technologies and procedures.
- A willingness to take on open-ended challenges.
- The ability to continually review possible opportunities, and spot potential problems.
- The ability to bring together inputs from many different sources, and thereby make better decisions.
- The ability to understand different cultures and approaches and make decisions that respect these.

However, not all challenges require teams with such high, adaptive abilities. You can be successful with a team with low adaptive ability if the challenge is simple, it doesn't require too many inputs, it is defined, and it is likely to be accomplished in a short period of time.

The adaptive attitude area of the Team Selection Worksheet helps you analyze:

- What level of adaptive attitudes does your team require?
- Which team member displays what adaptive ability?
- Do the adaptive attitudes the team requires, and the adaptive attitudes it demonstrates, match?

Team Selection Worksheet Adaptive Attitude Area

The first step in looking at adaptive attitude is to identify the adaptive attitude skills that your team needs, understand the extent to which you need them, and understand when you'll need them.

You do this in rows 5,6 and 7, columns P to W of the worksheet, as shown in figure 2.2.3.1 below.

Figure 2.2.3.1 Team Selection Worksheet Adaptive Attitude Skills Area

	A	B	C	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W
1	Team Selection Worksheet										
2											
3				Adaptive Attitude							
4		Skill:	Crisis Management	Creative Problem Solvr?	Tolerate Uncertainty?	Adapt to new Technology?	Open-ended challenges?	Review opportunities	Multiple inputs?	Cultural influences?	
5		Experience Needed:									
6	Potential	Now/Later:									
7	Team Member	Importance:									

(This figure shows columns A to C and P to W, with columns D to O hidden using the MS Excel Freeze Frames function.)

As with other parts of the worksheet, think about the experience you need in row 5, when you'll need it ("N" for now, "L" for later), and the importance of the skill on a scale of 0 (not important) to 5 (very important).

And as before, make sure your assessment of importance is on the same scale of importance as the task-related skills area, and the teamworking skills area.

Assessing Team Members Skills Using This Approach

Once you've done this, the next step is to assess team members' skills in these areas, just as you've done before, on a scale of 0 to 5. Figure 2.2.3.2 shows this for our example publishing team.

Figure 2.2.3.2 Adaptive Attitude Skills Assessment for an Example Publishing Team

	A	B	C	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W
1	Team Selection Worksheet										
2											
3				Adaptive Attitude							
4		Skill:	Crisis Management	Creative Problem Solvr?	Tolerate Uncertainty?	Adapt to new Technology?	Open-ended challenges?	Review opportunities	Multiple inputs?	Cultural influences?	
5		Experience Needed:									
6	Potential	Now/Later:	L	N	N	N	L	L	N	N	
7	Team Member	Importance:	1	3	4	4	3	2	4	4	
8	1.	Janis Smith	3	4	4	5	4	3	3	4	
9			0	12	16	20	0	0	12	16	
10			3	12	16	20	12	6	12	16	
11	2.	Ian Bradley	2	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	
12			0	12	16	16	0	0	16	16	
13			2	12	16	16	12	6	16	16	
14	3.	Tariq Ibrahim	3	3	3	5	3	3	4	4	
15			0	9	12	20	0	0	16	16	
16			3	9	12	20	9	6	16	16	
17	4.	Helen Bronson	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	5	
18			0	12	16	16	0	0	16	20	
19			4	12	16	16	12	6	16	20	
20	5.	Manuel Hernandez	3	3	3	3	2	3	5	3	
21			0	9	12	12	0	0	20	12	
22			3	9	12	12	6	6	20	12	
23	6.										
24			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
25			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
26	7.										
27			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
28			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
29	8.										
30			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
31			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
32		Unweighted Now:	0	18	18	21	0	0	20	20	
33	© Mind Tools Ltd	Unweighted Later:	15	18	18	21	17	15	20	20	

The team's manager is happy with her team's spread of adaptive attitude skills.

2.2.4 Pulling This Together – Choosing Your Team

You have now looked at the skills of your team members and potential team members, looking at their task knowledge, team-working skills and adaptive ability. Now's the time to pull all of this together, and pick your team!

To do this, use the following steps:

Step 1. Rank People by Their Skills

Columns X to AC of the Team Selection Worksheet show the skills of an individual person, weighted by the importance of those skills to you. You can see these for our example publishing team in figure 2.2.4.1.

In our example, columns AD and AE pull these together, giving (approximately¹) equal weight to each skills group, and from this giving a consolidated score for that individual.

Figure 2.2.4.1 Team Selection Worksheet – Skill Total Summary

	A	B	C	X	Y	Z	AA	AB	AC	AD	AE
1	Team Selection Worksheet										
2											
3				Task Totals		Team Totals		Attitude Totals		Totals	
4			Skill:								
5			Experience Needed:								
6		Potential	Now/ Later:	Weight:	2.86	Weight:	4.00	Weight:	2.50		9.36
7		Team Member	Importance:								
8	1.	Janis Smith		Now:	36	Now:	73	Now:	76	Now:	63.11
9				Later:	52	Later:	76	Later:	97	Later:	74.28
10											
11	2.	Ian Bradley		Now:	22	Now:	64	Now:	76	Now:	54.38
12				Later:	44	Later:	66	Later:	96	Later:	67.30
13											
14	3.	Tariq Ibrahim		Now:	44	Now:	64	Now:	73	Now:	60.30
15				Later:	72	Later:	67	Later:	91	Later:	74.94
16											
17	4.	Helen Bronson		Now:	56	Now:	68	Now:	80	Now:	67.54
18				Later:	81	Later:	73	Later:	102	Later:	83.19
19											
20	5.	Manuel Hernandez		Now:	51	Now:	59	Now:	65	Now:	58.16
21				Later:	71	Later:	62	Later:	80	Later:	69.56
22											
23	6.			Now:	0	Now:	0	Now:	0	Now:	0.00
24				Later:	0	Later:	0	Later:	0	Later:	0.00
25											
26	7.			Now:	0	Now:	0	Now:	0	Now:	0.00
27				Later:	0	Later:	0	Later:	0	Later:	0.00
28											
29	8.			Now:	0	Now:	0	Now:	0	Now:	0.00
30				Later:	0	Later:	0	Later:	0	Later:	0.00
31											

Note that this assumes that these groups should be given equal weight. In fact, you may want to give different weights, depending on your situation. For example, in a highly skilled and stable profession, you may value task skills very highly, while a new and growing business may value flexibility and teamwork more highly than it does absolute skill levels. Devise the consolidation approach that suits you, or evaluate skills groups independently.

Now rank your people with the most skilled people first, and the least skilled people last.

Clearly, you want the most skilled people you can get on your team – that way you’ve got the greatest chance of success!

¹ OK – in this example, we’ve only evaluated six task-related skills rather than seven, which makes this not quite true. For the sake of simplicity and clarity, we’ll ignore this.

Step 2. Make Sure You Have the Skills You Need

Now take a second, blank copy of the worksheet, and copy over the contents of rows 4, 5, 6 and 7. This sets up the headings appropriately.

Then start building your team up, starting with your most skilled person.

Copy his or her scores into the first team member row of the worksheet (row 8).

This team member will be highly skilled in some areas, and less skilled in others. What you need to do is ensure that you have at least one person with sufficiently skills in each important skills area where skills are needed at the start of the project.

Now look at your remaining potential team members, starting with the next most skilled person, and select the one whose skills best cover the first team member's skills gaps.

Then repeat this until you've covered the most important skills gaps (for skills needed at the start of the project).

Tip 1:

Some skill-sets may be very different from others. In our example publishing team, for example, people with good publishing skills don't have good technical skills, but, while necessary, technical skills are only needed infrequently.

Here, it may be a better decision to outsource technical work to a specialist or occasional contractor, rather than have a full time technologist on the team, particularly if that person does not have good publishing skills.

Tip 2:

People being people, it's unlikely that you'll get a perfect fit. Just get the best fit you can.

Tip 3:

In saying "choose the most skilled person", we're assuming a perfect world and an unlimited budget. A different – and more cost-effective – approach is to recruit people who are less expensive, but have **just** the level of skills you need. It's your choice which approach you use!

Step 3. Ensure That Your Team Is Properly Resourced

Once you have the right starting skills in place, you need to ensure that you're sufficiently well resourced to complete the team's mission.

Firstly, for each of the key skills you've identified, think about how much work will be needed each day or week to complete the tasks that need to be done. What you need to do is identify where you have too little (or too much) resource needed to complete the task successfully.

Next, look at the amount of work that you need each team member to complete. Identify situations where the team member may be overloaded, or where he or she may not have sufficient work.

Where you have capacity gaps, add additional team members in from your list, with the most skilled people selected first.

Where you have people who have excess capacity, consider whether you can use their time elsewhere in the team task, or consider whether you may be better off outsourcing the skills you need them for to a specialist, who you'll call in when needed.

Tip:

Depending on the team's mission and the stability of the environment, you may want to have spare capacity within your team. However, you also want to ensure that you don't have too much resource – this is inefficient, and it can also be demotivating, particularly if hard-working team members see others idling. Now's the time to get your resourcing right!

Add people in to your team, or remove them from your team, as needed.

Step 4. Identify Training Needs

In step 2 above, you built your team based on the skills that were needed at the start of the project. You now need to think about how you'll ensure that you have the skills you'll need later.

Review your worksheet, and identify areas where you have gaps. Then plan the training, recruitment or insourcing of expertise that you'll need to fill those gaps.

Tip:

When you're thinking of training, make sure that you assess people's natural aptitude for the skills areas pragmatically. It's often better that you bring in external expertise than you try to force someone to acquire skills in an area they're uncomfortable with.

Well done: You've now selected your team!

2.2.5 Team Requirement – Personality Trait Fit: Does the Personality Match the Task?

Now that we have dealt with team members' knowledge, skills and aptitudes, let's move on to personality.

The corporate world uses a number of popular models to think about the right personality mix for teams. These models are based on the concept that a team needs a certain mix of personality types to be effective. Unfortunately, research doesn't really support any of these models: if anything, it proves that the necessity of performing effectively overrides issues of personal compatibility in effective teams.

What research does support is that certain types of personality traits – openness, conscientiousness, and agreeableness – have a positive effect on teamwork. You don't have to be an Einstein to figure out that individuals who display these traits are likely to function well within a team!

What is interesting is that different traits are useful for different types of task. For example, while warm, gregarious, extroverted personality traits help an individual make better decisions, openness stands someone in better stead if he or she has to find creative, innovative solutions.

Openness, conscientiousness and agreeableness are three of the personality factors within Paul Costa Jr and Robert McCrae's "Big Five" personality model, which considers five dimensions of personality – OCEAN – to describe team members.

This assesses someone's personality on the basis of –

Openness to experience – the willingness to explore fantasy, actions and ideas.

Conscientiousness – shown as competence, order, and self-discipline.

Extraversion – the display of positive emotions, gregariousness, and warmth.

Agreeableness – showing trust, straightforwardness, and tender-mindedness.

Neuroticism – the tendency towards anxiety, self-consciousness, and vulnerability.

So, how do you figure out whether your team members' personalities suit the task they have to perform? First, consider the personality type of the best-fit candidates you have shortlisted using the Team Selection Worksheet above.

Next, figure out what type of function your team has to perform? (It could be more than one.) If it is...

- **Planning** – Give weight to members who display conscientiousness.
- **Production** – Give weight members who display to conscientiousness.
- **Decision-making** – Give weight to members who display extraversion.
- **Creative Output** – Give weight to members who display openness.
- **Innovation** – Give weight to members who display openness.

Also, as far as possible, give weight to people with low Neuroticism scores – this is rarely a useful trait. (And when it is, normal people can simulate it quite effectively!)

So, based on your knowledge of the key individuals in your team, do you think the work you want them to do suits them?

Remember, while the right personality trait will make team-working easier, finding the team with the “right” potential knowledge, skills and aptitudes mix is more important. The best combination is when you can find the members with the right KSAs who also have the right personality. Your focus should be to find members with the right KSA and then assess their personality to see whether they fit in.

If there are serious differences, and you have plenty of people with the right KSAs, then OCEAN can help you choose team members who will naturally suit their jobs. It can also highlight areas where there is a serious mismatch between people's personalities and the role you want them to perform – here it may be better to select a less skilled person, who is more suited to grow into the role.

2.2.6 The Diversity Balance Beam: Get the Difference Right

Diversity is another area that can affect your KSA-based selection. Too little and too much can both cause serious problems: With too little, creativity is stifled because the team does not have access to a sufficient range of different experiences and different viewpoints. With too much diversity, the team can struggle to meet its goal because too much effort is spent in resolving differences between people.

Note:

Diversity covers areas like different professions, experiences and employment histories, as well as obvious areas like cultural background, gender, age and suchlike.

For very good reasons, different employment laws in different countries make it illegal to discriminate against people in a whole range of different areas. Clearly, you must not use these as characteristics in team selection. However, it makes sense to foresee some of the potential consequences of diversity, so that you can manage these intelligently and make sure you have sufficient time and resources available to deal with them.

By contrast, it can be entirely appropriate to select people based on their different functional knowledge and experience. Using the Axwell Finance example at the beginning of this module, Alan (the manager) may well want people from many different business areas on his team, so that he can develop robust products that the organization can deliver as well as sell.

So, how can you assess the amount of effort you'll need to put in to manage diversity? We give you the NODS strategy. This helps you think about the level of diversity you need in your team, and also the type of diversity.

Consider the following questions:

- **Nature of the team task:**

Does the team task require creativity, innovation, or external communication? Check the most appropriate answer.

Yes

No

If you have checked "yes", then diversity will benefit the team. However, you'll need to allocate plenty of time to help the group agree on objectives, agendas, and approaches.

- **Outcome most significant to you:**

Do you attach greater priority to high performance than to team stability?

Yes

No

If you have checked "yes" then diversity is indicated again.

However, research indicates that, while diversity benefits performance, it can increase team-member turnover. Here, make sure that you prioritize conflict resolution, work hard to build mutual respect within your team, and help people understand that diversity helps the team perform better.

- **Duration of the project:**

Is the project duration long?

Yes

No

If you have checked "yes", then, again, diversity will benefit the team.

Teams with members from different backgrounds often don't initially perform as well as teams with members from similar backgrounds. However, with time, and as team members learn to work with one another, diverse teams tend to be more effective and innovative than more uniform groups.

If you feel your team would benefit from diversity, your next step should be to understand the type of diversity that would be the best benefit. To do so, let us consider the different sorts of diversity.

As mentioned earlier, diversity can be clubbed under two broad heads – **Task Diversity** and **Relations Diversity**.

- **Task Diversity** represents the diversity in members' task knowledge and skills. Team members hailing from different professional backgrounds and possessing different task knowledge bring multiple perspectives to the table. This aids innovation and creativity. It also boosts the team's total pool of task-related knowledge and abilities, thus increasing effectiveness. Therefore, you should try to build in task diversity.

However, task diversity should not become so much that the disagreements and misunderstandings that arise from diversity of perspectives start to threaten the way that they team functions.

- **Relations Diversity** encompasses several types of diversity:
 - **Culture** – Since many teams are required to perform in multicultural environments today, cultural diversity is usually a good thing. However, make sure that you allocate sufficient time to helping culturally diverse teams learn to work together, and promote the level of mutual tolerance needed for effective teamwork.
 - **Age** – Research shows that members are more likely to leave teams where there are great age variations. Also, evidence seems to indicate that there is an inverted-U shaped relationship between age diversity and team innovation. Moderate age diversity is linked to high innovation, whereas low and high age diversity seem to adversely impact innovation.

Where you have high or low age diversity, you'll need to manage situations to increase innovation, perhaps by bringing outside people into brainstorming sessions or being more focused in your use of creativity techniques. You'll also need to pay attention to helping people work together, perhaps by explaining generational trends in outlook, and promoting mutual tolerance.
 - **Gender** – Men and women can often look at situations in different ways. Having a mix of sexes on your team can therefore enhance its perspective and creativity.
 - **Team Tenure** – Teams that have worked longer together tend to perform better. Team members who have all been working together for a long time understand each other's working styles better. However, teams where members have very diverse tenures have been shown to be less effective. Where your team has diverse tenures, you'll therefore have to work harder to promote cohesiveness and mutual respect. (There's an important exception to this – Research & Development teams with long tenures can be prey to "Not Invented Here" syndrome, which can lead them to miss important information from outside their teams. If you're running an R&D team, make very sure that you avoid this!)

In summary, diverse teams can be very strong teams, and can often be more effective than less diverse ones. However, they need more management to resolve conflict, keep people tolerant of differences between one-another, and keep people working together effectively.

Review the team you've selected on your Team Selection Worksheet, and make sure that there's a sufficient level of task diversity for your team to reach its objective effectively.

And make sure that you have sufficient "management capacity" to deal with the additional effort needed to manage diverse teams.

Next, we consider the issue of team size.

2.2.7 The Size Sorter: Is Your Team Too Big?

The ideal size of a team is usually seven or eight members, although teams can be larger if they're made up of emotionally mature people working on a long project. Where teams get larger than this, the team's leader can start to struggle to find the time to keep everyone working effectively, bad working habits can develop within the team, and people can start to spend so much time coordinating activity with one-another that productivity is seriously affected.

Certainly, including more than 12-15 members within a team usually means compromising the team's effectiveness.

So, how do you arrive at the right size for **your** team?

- First, review the Team Selection Worksheet you prepared earlier in this module. This shows the potential team members who collectively possess all of the must-have-right-at-the-beginning KSAs, and who have the potential to develop the remaining KSAs. How many people figure on the list? Is the number more or less than seven to eight?
- Next consider the duration of the project. If the project duration is small, you might be better off sticking to a small group. This is because larger groups tend to take more time to get running, and they usually spend more time on the storming and norming stages of our forming-storming-norming-performing process.
- Simultaneously, take into account the emotional maturity of the potential members of your team. Mature team members can usually work well together even in a short space of time. They are better at coordination as well. Therefore, if you have mature members, you can go for a larger team.
- Another factor you have to consider is the nature of the project. Projects that need team members to share limited resources may restrict the working group size. Challenges requiring creative solutions might call for larger groups, representing more diversity. Larger numbers are also sustainable if there is a high degree of structure to the team, and individual functions are well identified.

Once you have decided on the optimum number, run the team past this quick checklist:

- Are all of the must-have-right-at-the-beginning KSAs represented in the team?
- Does the team have the potential to develop the remaining KSAs?
- Can the team meet easily and frequently?
- Can all members communicate with each other easily and frequently?
- Do all members understand each other's roles?
- Do all members participate in team discussions?

If you check "yes" on all counts, chances are, you have arrived at the right team size.

So what if you need everybody on your team, but your team is too big?

This is where it's worth splitting the team into sub-teams, with a team leader looking after each sub-team.

This may involve some thought about how work should be split up between teams, however this is usually possible with some creative thought, and the benefits in terms of improved effectiveness and reduced waste are often significant.

2.2.8 FAQs: Virtual Teams and Part-Time Members

The FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) list below gives you answers to some of the common dilemmas people face when setting up teams.

Q: Do Virtual Teams, teams with members in different places who communicate using electronic media (such as email and instant messaging), work?

A: Yes. Not only do they work, they are fast becoming a necessity in the boundary-less environment of today. What's more, they offer tremendous benefits, including allowing you to work flexibly with some of the best people in the world, not just those living in a 75-minute commuting distance of you.

Management guru Jon R Katzenbach notes that in teams, “it is the quality and productivity of the interactions that count. Electronic interactions can work, especially if they are supplemented from time-to-time with traditional get-togethers.”

Special care needs to be given to setting norms for the electronic interactions. If people aren’t used to virtual working (many are), the leader may need to ensure that the members spend time physically together, at least initially. Also, processes that develop team ties assume special importance here.

Also, while many people are happiest working from home, some like the “buzz” of a busy office. You may want to mix and match your approach, depending on the nature of the work, and on the skills and personalities you need.

Q: Should you include members who can only work part-time?

A: If a part-time member contributes positively to the right skill mix, you should include him or her. What counts is that the member does the work allocated, and contributes significantly to the team.

In fact, you can have part-time teams, consisting of members who are only working part-time on the projects. As long as the team follows the right processes, it will succeed. However, special attention has to be paid to shaping a working approach that respects the constraints on everyone’s time, and does not leave full-time team members “picking up the pieces” for part-timers.

Q: Who should select the team – the leader, or the members themselves?

A: Usually, the approach that works best is to have the selection process led by the team leader, and to also involve some inputs from the team members. However, if a team consists of very mature members and is envisaged as a self-directed entity, it may be appropriate for members to have more influence on the selection process.

Q: Can you include people of different nationalities in one team?

A: Yes. In fact, you’ll sometimes need to in view of the globalization occurring today.

Q: Can you include incompatible personalities in a team?

A: Compatible personalities, as we have mentioned before, are relatively less important than KSAs. So, if you need to include some incompatible personalities to get to the right skill mix, go ahead and do it. Team building, counseling, and facilitation processes might smooth out the problem later.

Even if they don’t, by maintaining a performance focus, you can ensure that team members work effectively together. Remember, having people “liking” each other is less important than having them “respecting” one-another’s work.

Clearly, though, people have to behave in a respectful and tolerant way, and act in the interests of the team’s mission, the client, the team itself, and one-another. Where they deviate from this, this needs to be dealt with appropriately.

2.3 Apply This to Your Life

It’s all very well knowing how to pick your team in theory, but theory’s meaningless unless it’s put into practice.

Cement your understanding in the following ways:

- If you're the manager of an existing team, evaluate the task knowledge, teamwork skills and adaptive attitude of your existing team members using the Team Selection Worksheet described in sections 2.2.1 through to 2.2.4.

Does this show any gaps, and any training that you need to do to help your team, or individuals within your team, perform more effectively? How will you fill these gaps?

- If you're setting up a new team, use the worksheet to evaluate team members and design your new team.
- Use the OCEAN model to evaluate people's personalities. Think about what actions you may need to take to best manage these people.
- Evaluate the level of diversity within your team. If diversity would be useful for your team task and you don't have a diverse team, think about what simple actions you can take to get the benefits of diversity.
- Think about the size of your team, and whether you should consider breaking it down into sub-teams.

Module 3

Take on the Leadership Challenge: Energize Your Team

Interest: As a current or potential leader, you need to understand what your team needs from you. This module helps you to build this understanding. It explains what leadership means in the team context. It outlines the basic skill set needed for effective team leadership, and it acts as a guide to show you how leadership can be developed. It also helps you to assess where you currently stand as a leader.

Need: By acquiring and practicing the leadership skills set detailed in this module, you'll ensure that you get the full benefits of teamwork, and you avoid many of the reasons that teams fail. These techniques help you tackle issues, such as "social loafing", favoritism, lack of enthusiasm, destructive feedback, and faulty communication. These issues, if not addressed and resolved, can act as a barrier to effective teamwork.

Timing: 2 hours

Range: This module:

- Explains the core of effective team leadership.
- Details the concept of "process losses" and "process gains".
- Equips you with the skills you need to practice effective leadership:
 - Motivational Skills.
 - Communication Skills.
 - Confidence Building Techniques.
 - Team Effectiveness Enhancing Techniques.
- Gives you a questionnaire to help you assess your leadership skills.

Objective: By the end of the Module, you will be able to:

- Describe the essence of effective leadership.
- Identify any "process losses" or gains in your current team.
- List the basic skills you need to minimize these process losses.
- Improve your motivational skills.
- Improve your communication skills.
- Implement confidence boosting measures.
- Enhance your team's collective effectiveness.
- Understand which skill to apply in each situation.
- Evaluate yourself as a leader.

3.1 Introduction

“Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth.”

– James McGregor Burns, *Political Scientist*

Leadership is a strange thing. Not only does it mean different things to different people, it takes on different dimensions in different situations.

Consider this situation:

Pete, a friend with whom you are meeting, says, “Working with the design team of XYZ Inc., has been a great experience for me. I like it there because Drake, my boss, leads the team very well.”

Now, given below is a list of leadership attributes. If you were to describe Drake, the good team leader, which ones would you use? On the table below, check the qualities that you believe Drake must possess in order to be a good team leader. The qualities you check should be the sort of attributes that would seriously handicap the team leader, should he lack them. *Keep in mind that we are talking about leadership in the team-context, and in today’s business environment.*

Exercise – Attributes an Effective Team Leader Must Possess

Attributes of an Effective Team Leader	
Communication skills	Creativity
Charisma	Coaching skills
Extensive knowledge	Ability to create a common purpose, agenda, and approach for the team
Motivational skills	Interpersonal relationship facilitation
In-depth expertise	Planning and coordination skills
Authority	Ability to act as a role model
Strong belief in team ability and purpose	Supportiveness
Courage	Openness
Insightful decision-taking	Sweeping vision
Conflict-resolution skills	Exceptional talent-spotting skills
Power	Confidence-boosting skills

As you can see, all of these qualities are desirable in some context of leadership; however, the ones that an **effective team leader cannot afford to do without include:**

- Communication skills.
- Motivational skills.
- Strong belief in team ability and purpose.

- Conflict resolution skills.
- Coaching skills.
- Interpersonal relationship facilitation.
- Planning and coordination Skills.
- Ability to act as a role model.
- Supportiveness.
- Openness.
- Confidence-boosting skills.

The other attributes, like charisma, extensive knowledge, in-depth expertise, authority, insightful decision taking, power, courage, creativity, etc., are obviously be handy attributes for a team leader to possess. However, they are not *essential* attributes. Some of these qualities might be essential for a corporate leader, and some for a business unit leader, but a team leader can operate effectively in their absence. However, the ones checked above are more or less essential requirements for the team leader. Without these, a team leader will not be able to get the best from his or her team.

Tip:

We're emphasizing here that these are the skills of an effective **team** leader. Some of these attributes are exceptionally important for **business unit** or **corporate** leaders. This type of leadership – which involves creation of a compelling vision of the future, and motivating and managing people to achieve it – needs a different, complementary set of skills, and is covered in our *How to Lead: Discover the Leader Within You* leadership course (for details, go to <https://www.mindtools.com/cgi-bin/sgx2/shop.cgi?page=HowtoLead.htm>).

In today's business world, leadership is required at different levels, in different contexts, and for different purposes. This is how corporate leaders, business unit leaders, and team leaders are differentiated from one other, and the leadership approach, traits, and behaviors that are required from each vary.

Since our focus is to help you to lead a team effectively, this module concentrates on equipping you with the specific qualities, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that you need to lead a team effectively.

In this section,

- We will explain the essence of effective team leadership, keeping in mind that, for a team to be successful, it needs to minimize “process losses” and maximize “process gains”, as has been highlighted in Module 1.
- We will then move on to explain these process losses and process gains in greater detail.

3.1.1 The Essence of Effective Leadership

The main, defining attribute of effective team leaders is that they are not *above* the team. Rather, they are people who work *with* the team. They are not “heroes”. They are simply people who believe that the team is the hero. They don't know it all, but they do possess the ability to tap into the specific and unique knowledge of each team member.

In essence, an effective team leader is an **ARTIST** who ensures that team process losses are minimized and the process gains are maximized.

- **Alignment:** An effective team leader aligns aspirations to create a shared vision, objective, and approach.

- **Renewal:** An effective team leader regularly renews enthusiasm and excitement about the work, and maintains a sense of optimism and confidence.
- **Teamwork and Team Member Development:** An effective team leader helps team members to appreciate each other, and helps them to learn how to constructively confront and resolve differences.
- **Interpersonal Relations Facilitation:** An effective team leader helps team members to coordinate activities, improve continuously, develop new capabilities, encourage flexibility, objectively analyze processes, and collectively learn about better ways in which they can work together.
- **Security:** An effective team leader secures the interests of the group or organization, protects its reputation, helps to establish trust with external stakeholders, and helps to resolve conflicts between internal and external partners.
- **Team Identity Creation:** An effective team leader helps his team in forging an identity for the team as a whole.

3.1.2 “Process Losses” and Gains: Is Team Output Greater Than the Individual Outputs?

A **process loss** is said to occur when the team output is less than the sum of the individual output of all of its members.

A **process gain**, on the other hand, is said to occur when team output is greater than the sum of the individual outputs of all of its members.

It is obvious that process gains are needed in any team, and the responsibility for achieving these lies on the shoulders of the team leader.

Note:

The words “process gain” and “process loss” are cumbersome and awkward. Unfortunately, they’re also very important, and there are no easier replacements. Make sure you fully understand what they stand for – we’ll use them often in this course.

There are three levels of process losses and gains, those relating to **coordination**, **motivation**, and **individual capability**.

- **Coordination Losses:** Coordination losses occur if a group fails to coordinate its members’ individual contributions effectively. Such losses are mainly attributed to a **lack of effective communication** with the team. This can take the shape of:
 - **Groupthink:** Groupthink arises when groups become very close-knit and, without really thinking about it, become more concerned with cohesion and unanimity than with performance. Sometimes, one particular individual dominates the group and everyone goes along with her views. In groups with this mentality, members often prefer an incorrect solution proposed by the majority, as opposed to a correct solution proposed by a minority. In the past, this has led to some catastrophic team decisions.
 - **Production Blocking:** This arises when the team needs to generate ideas in an interacting group session. Sometimes, the ideas of a few members are so strong that all other members are “blocked” and cannot express their own ideas.

Such losses result in flawed team decision-making and problem solving, and also in diminished creativity and innovation.

- **Motivation Losses and Gains:** Working in a group can increase or reduce people’s motivation to contribute to the performance of a task.

Social loafing, free riding, and the sucker effect reduce people's effectiveness:

- **Social loafing:** Occurs when team members think that their individual contribution to the group's output is not identifiable, so they reduce their effort.
- **Free riding:** Occurs when team members reduce their effort because they feel their individual contribution does not affect team performance.
- **The Sucker Effect:** Occurs when people feel that others are not working hard and, in turn, they lower their own effort so that they don't feel exploited.

Motivation gains, on the other hand, include:

- **Social competition:** Where people's individual contributions are identifiable, then group members become more motivated when working as a group, because they want to perform better than other members of the group.
- **Social compensation:** Where stronger members of the team work harder than they would otherwise, as a way of compensating for a weaker member's sub-optimal performance.
- **The Köhler Effect:** This occurs where weaker members of a team work harder than they would work as individuals, in order to avoid being responsible for a weak group performance.
- **Individual Capability Losses and Gains:** People can contribute more strongly in a team than they could individually, because they learn from one-another, and stimulate one-another intellectually. However, people can learn bad things as well as good things from other team members, and while a great social environment is fun to work in, it can also be very distracting.

Our next section will give you the tips on the skills you need as a leader to ensure that your team takes full advantage of process gains, and minimizes process losses as far as possible.

3.2 Introducing the Tools

Recapping on what we discussed in Module 1, the things you have to do to maximize process gains and minimize process losses are:

- Communicate openly – making sure everyone listens, and shares information.
- Encourage participation – building team member involvement and ownership.
- Build consensus – shaping a common purpose, and establishing a common approach.
- Set goals – setting shared and clear goals.
- Hold people accountable – on both a mutual and individual basis.
- Orient people to tasks – clarifying roles, tasks, and assignments.
- Manage disagreement in a civilized way – paying attention to different viewpoints.
- Make the most of diversity – bringing different experiences and styles to bear upon the combined team effort.
- Support innovation – providing an environment that supports innovation.
- Encourage collective learning – helping people to learn along with and from each other.
- Ensure reflexivity – engaging in ongoing reflection and review.

These things do not happen automatically. Someone has to take the trouble to ensure that they happen, and that the desired team output is achieved. That someone is you, the leader of the team!

Clearly, you can't make these things happen at a snap of your fingers. You need to have the right skill set, the right attributes (like the ones discussed above), and the right attitude to do this.

Mastering the right skill set is the first step, and is also the most important step, as the other two are highly dependent upon it. The right skill set includes:

- Motivation-Building Skills.
- Communication Skills.
- Confidence-Boosting Skills.
- Conflict Resolution Skills.
- Team Effectiveness Enhancing Skills.

Motivation-building skills, on one hand, help in minimizing motivational losses, like Social Loafing, Free Riding, and the Sucker Effect, and they help to maximize gains, such as Social Competition, Social Compensation, and the Köhler Effect (see above for all of these). These skills help you build accountability, a sense of ownership, a positive team climate, and so on.

Communication skills help you minimize coordination losses such as group think and production blocking, and they help you set goals, build consensus, encourage participation, and manage civilized disagreement, among others.

Confidence-boosting skills and **conflict resolution skills** help you minimize the individual capability losses coming from social interaction, and help you maximize gains. These affect processes like task orientation, consensus building, team relationship building, and innovation.

Team effectiveness enhancing skills help you ensure that people learn collectively, review the way the team works, and respect and take advantage of diversity within the team. These skills are necessary to be able to take the team ahead as a unit, and also help to ensure that the overall output of the team is greater than the sum of individual contributions.

So, do you possess these skills?

The first tool in this module, the Team Leadership Assessment (3.2.1.) helps you answer this question, so that you can target areas of improvement.

We then look at each of these areas in turn:

- Motivation Builders (3.2.2.)
- Communication Clarifiers (3.2.3.)
- Confidence Boosters (3.2.4.)
- Team Effectiveness Enhancers (3.2.5.)

Besides these, a good team leader also needs to be able to resolve conflict. We have not included this as a tool in this Module, as we cover this in much greater detail in Module 7.

Also, while you need all of these tools, remember that each leader places a different weight upon each of these areas. What ultimately matters is that you help your team to become as effective as it can possibly be. And with the skills in this module, you will be effective!

3.2.1 Team Leadership Assessment

So, do you have the skills you need to get the best from your team? Find out by taking this test.

For each of the 25 questions below, check the column that most closely reflects the way you behave with members of your team.

Exercises are patterned after a questionnaire in Frank LaFasto, Carl Larson (2001), When Teams Work Best, 6000 team members and leaders tell what it takes to succeed, Sage Publications, Inc., United States.

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I define the team's goal very clearly to members of my team.					
2. I try to build team members' commitment by communicating a clear vision of the goal.					
3. I don't allow political issues to compromise on team's objective.					
4. I try to help team members in aligning their individual aspirations with the team's goals.					
5. I work hard to find fresh and exciting ways of reinforcing the team's goal from time to time					
6. If goals need to be changed or adjusted, I make sure that my team understands why.					
7. I create a safe climate, where team members feel free to voice their opinions on any issues related to the success of the team.					
8. I communicate openly with members of my team, and feel comfortable discussing any issue with them.					
9. I work to protect my team from negative issues coming from organization structure and politics.					
10. I try not to let my ego to get in the way, and I manage my personal control needs.					
11. I help my team members to build their self-confidence.					
12. I ensure that my team achieves the goals assigned to it.					
13. I entrust members of my team with important and meaningful responsibilities.					
14. I make sure that members of my team are aware of important facts and critical issues.					
15. I am fair and impartial towards all members of my team.					
16. I recognize and acknowledge the efforts of team members.					

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
17. I am sufficiently equipped to handle the technical aspects of my team's goals.					
18. I am open to technical suggestions from my team members.					
19. I am seen as a credible and knowledgeable person by people outside and inside my team.					
20. I set the priorities for the team, and keep the team focused on them to reach the target.					
21. I make sure that team members understand and can accept the priorities that I have set.					
22. I make clear the performance I expect from all members of my team.					
23. I ensure that the rewards and incentives are aligned with the achievement of the team's goals.					
24. I give useful and constructive feedback to members of my team.					
25. I am confident in my ability to handle inadequate performance.					

Now grade yourself:

- Give 5 points for each “Strongly Agree” answer.
- Give 4 points for each “Agree” answer.
- Give 3 points for each “Neither Agree Nor Disagree” answer.
- Give 2 points for each “Disagree” answer.
- Give 1 point for each “Strongly Disagree” answer.

Then add up your score:

- If your score is **above 100**, take a bow and keep up the good work. Skim the rest of this section quickly, and see if there's anything you need to think about.
- If your score is **between 80 and 99**, you are almost there. Skim this section in a bit more detail, and see what you can learn from the tools in it.
- If your score is **below 80**, read this section in detail, and make sure that you apply it.

3.2.2 Motivation Builders

“Motivation means an inner desire to make an effort.”

– How Managers Motivate, *William F Downing and Leonard R Sayles, 1978*

It's a joy to have motivated people as members of your team.

They are less stressed at work, and they work harder. They take more interest in what they do, and they are constantly looking for opportunities to improve the way in which they work. They not only influence and motivate their teammates, but they are also less likely to leave their jobs. In short, motivated team members improve the performance of your team.

After all, performance can be summed up in a simple equation:

Job performance = ability x motivation

The ability of an individual, to a great extent, depends on his education, his or her experience and training, and it is something that you look for when forming a team. Improvement in ability takes time, whereas motivation can be improved quickly, and is something that you need to work on continually.

Unfortunately, many people automatically associate the word "motivation" with receipt of monetary benefits: compensation and incentives.

Frederick Herzberg, a major contributor in the field of motivation, contradicted this common belief. In a highly influential 1968 article "One More Time: How Do You Motivate Employees?", he explained his "Motivation-Hygiene Theory", which suggests that the factors that determine job satisfaction and serve to motivate are "separate and distinct from the factors that lead to job dissatisfaction".

What this means is that the things that motivate people are different from the things that demotivate people.

Herzberg's research showed that some of the factors which enhance job satisfaction are achievement, recognition for achievement, the task at hand, personal growth, development, and so on. By contrast, the factors that cause dissatisfaction include stringent company policy, poor administration, poor supervision, bad working conditions, low salaries, and insecurity.

Take a minute and reflect on your own feelings. Isn't this true for you? Don't you get your greatest satisfaction from doing a good job, being recognized for it, and from growing in your capabilities? And, aren't you most demotivated by the frustrations of bureaucracy, organizational stupidity, politics, and "being taken advantage of"?

When it comes to motivating your team, you should start by considering the things that would motivate you. Remember, what holds true for you, may well hold true for your team members, as well. Then talk to your team members to find out what they want and what they need, and then, work diligently to provide them with these things.

Know the Condition of Your Team: How motivated are team members?

The first step towards improving motivation in your team is to understand how motivated team members currently are.

The questionnaire helps you do this. Complete this for yourself, and consider asking members of your team to do the same.

Question	Answer (Yes or No)
1. Do you and the members of your team find your job interesting, challenging and important?	
2. Are you able to use your skills in your job, and apply your knowledge to it?	

Question	Answer (Yes or No)
3. Is there adequate room for team members to grow within your team?	
4. Are you and your team members given ample opportunity to enhance your knowledge and skills?	
5. Do members of your team demonstrate commitment and ownership of goals?	
6. Do your organization's policies frustrate members of your team, or leave them feeling insecure or threatened?	
7. Have you noticed social loafing or free riding within your team? Does everyone seem to be working as hard as they can?	
8. Do team members' relationships seem strained, and do they seem to lack trust in one another?	

If the answers to questions one through five are “yes”, and the answers to questions six through eight are “no”, then congratulate yourself and your team members, and keep up the good work!

However, if the answer your answers differ significantly from these, unfortunately, bad news awaits you: The motivation level of your team may be alarmingly low. To improve the situation, think about the types of change that you need to implement, and explore the tips below.

Devise a Strategy: Plan for Action

If you've identified problems that may be undermining team members' motivation, you need to take appropriate corrective action. There are a number of very basic, broad strategies that you can use to improve the situation. These are explained below:

Strategy 1. Satisfy People's Needs

- **Create an Inspiring Vision of the Achievement of the Team's Goals**

To be effective as a team leader, you need to create an attractive and inspiring vision of the achievement of the team's goals, and communicate it to your team members.

You need to paint a vivid verbal picture, so that team members appreciate why the team exists and understand their own, individual, yet significant, role within the team. This helps you keep the team's goals in focus, and inspire commitment towards their achievement.

The team's targets, the mission statement, and the vision may be written all over the place, but do your teammates really understand – at a deep and personal level – what they are doing and why are they doing it?

Don't misunderstand this. We are not saying that targets, mission statements, and vision are of no use. Instead, we are simply saying that although they are of great value to any team, what is required here is that you translate these into a language that your team understands. Help your team “own” the goals, and you'll then see them perform outstandingly.

- **Align People's Goals – What's In It For Them?**

So, the members of your team are aware of what you want from them. But, are you aware of their personal and professional needs?

Always remember that ambition is often the best motivator: it's a powerful force for setting people on the path of achievement.

Talk to each team member, and identify his or her individual needs and desires. Then do what you can to align these with the achievement of the team's objectives by answering the "What's In It For Me?" question.

By doing this, you not only help individuals understand the significance of the role they play in team performance, you help them see how helping the team will help them achieve their own goals and ambitions.

- **Keep the Team's Goals Alive – Breathe Life into Them**

Anything left unattended tends to decay. So, do all of your team members, all of the time, stay focused on the goal that your team is working to achieve?

If they don't, make it a point to constantly reinforce and renew the team goal.

Just as we need to change the oil in our cars, or rekindle an important relationship, or even refresh our bodies with exercise, goals need to be reiterated and refreshed every now and then.

If you regularly reinforce the team's goal, you'll find that team members become dissatisfied if they aren't making good enough progress towards it.

- **Protect Your Team from Disruptive Forces**

Are members of your team demoralized by corporate bureaucracy? Do team members feel insecure? Are they wasting time gossiping about bad pay, poor conditions, rumors of retrenchment or suchlike? Or is the team's client putting pressure on people to deliver the team's product in timescales that are impossible, or at least very unreasonable?

If the answer to any of these questions is "yes", you need to take some serious action. You have to act as a cushion between your team and the sources of these problems.

First of all, make sure that team members know that you will be the first one to make them aware of any threat, where you can.

Then, ensure that your organization acknowledges and respects your team as a unit, and stand up assertively for the interests of that team, where those interests are threatened. An effective team leader represents the interests of the team, protects its reputation, and helps to establish healthy relations with other teams and departments within the organization.

Strategy 2. Raise the Bar – 3 and 3 Can Make 6, or 33. You Choose.

Do people within your team find their work challenging?

According to Herzberg (who we met earlier), if the task at hand is challenging, this tends to contribute to job satisfaction. If the task given to the team is not challenging enough, team members may not be sufficiently motivated to deliver. Not only does this lead to inaction, but, in some cases, it also leads to underperformance, as the team becomes complacent.

As a leader, you need to be able to judge your team's capability and level of aspiration accurately, and set the team's goals so that they're challenging enough to motivate people to give their best, but not so challenging that people become demoralized.

Strategy 3. Recognize Superior Performance – "A Word of Praise Works Better Than a Raise"

People tend to be very sensitive to the importance of rewards and recognition, and rightly so!

Make sure that you give plenty of sincere praise. A good tip here is to complement people whenever you see them doing something that pleases you. Catch them doing things right, rather than doing things wrong!

Also, make sure that you reward successful achievement of goals appropriately.

For example, imagine a situation where the sales force in an organization has been asked to fill in the gaps in customer service wherever this is needed, but where only sales numbers are taken into account during performance reviews. How motivated are salespeople going to be, here, to help with customer service?

As a leader, your job is to link rewards to what you want from team members.

OK, you can't always hand out pay raises, but there are many other ways of rewarding people. As Herzberg argued, you can do a huge amount to motivate people by acknowledging superior performance, and giving credit where it is due. Indeed, this is what members of your team expect from you.

Strategy 4. Practice Positive Reinforcement – Use Feedback as a Building Block

We all know how important feedback is for the effective functioning of any team. What is also important, however, is how feedback is given.

The truth is that if you save feedback for an annual (or even quarterly) performance review, you're probably failing as a manager.

Feedback, both positive and negative, should be immediate and routine. If you like something that someone has done, tell them. This reinforces the behavior. If someone's done something wrong, make sure they know it's wrong right away – that way you can “nip problems in the bud” while they're still small. Otherwise, you risk letting problems snowball so that they become serious issues, and the damage may already be done by the time you come to address them.

What's more, tell them in a way that puts the focus on improvement – the only time you need to be cross with someone is when they're fooling around or not trying hard enough. The rest of the time, your correction can be handled in a positive way.

We'll touch on this again in Module 5.

Tip:

Many people recommend sandwiching negative feedback between pieces of positive feedback – the idea being that people aren't left feeling bad about themselves. There's a lot of truth in this, however, the danger here is that you dilute the negative feedback, and that people leave focusing on the positive and not paying attention to the negative. Use this approach with caution!

A second common recommendation is that “You should praise in public and criticize in private.” There's a lot of truth in this.

Strategy 5. Maintain Effective Discipline

- **Know Your People – Mix and Mingle**

Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.

Remember, team leaders today are not people **above** their teams. Instead, they are people who are much more **with** their teams and **for** their teams. As a leader you have to be

involved in the way that the team works, as well as with the work of the team, and team members need to see as someone they are comfortable discussing issues and problems with.

That said, you need to be a leader first and a member of the team second. You have to maintain enough distance to be authoritative to correct people when they're heading in the wrong direction, but not so much that they're uncomfortable communicating with you.

As ever, the art is to find the right balance.

To understand how your team members see you, think about these questions. (Ideally, quietly ask some of the members of your team these questions – it's so difficult to answer them objectively yourself!)

<p>1. If team members have technical problems while working, what do they do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Approach anybody but you, as you may not even know that the problem exists.b) Ignore the problem, as they think you'll be annoyed if they bring it to your attention.c) Approach you, and get your help sorting through the issue.
<p>2. In social situations, where you're invited, how do they react?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Greet you, but then avoid you for the rest of the party.b) Avoid you totally.c) Greet you, and enjoy talking with you during the function.
<p>3. A team member is in the middle of planning a weekend family trip with the help of her colleagues just at the end of her lunch break, when she sees you walking towards her. What does she do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Shoo away everybody from her desk and pretend that she is concentrating on her work.b) Immediately change the topic to something official, so that it appears that people are having a brainstorming session.c) Acknowledge you, and involve you in the discussion.

Answers to these questions should give you a fair idea of how your team sees you as a leader. If you suspect that people see you as being too remote, you should make an effort to be friendly with team members. Do your best to ensure that your teammates have consistent, positive interactions with you, as well as with other members of your team.

Remember that by having regular one-to-one chats with team members, you can quickly pick up and resolve issues before they become significant.

- **Create a Collaborative Environment – Control Killjoys**

Are any members of your team upsetting other members? Are they unnecessarily negative or cynical? Do they boss around people whom they think are inferior to them in skill and performance? If the answer to any of these is “yes”, then you need to deal with this behavior.

As a team leader, you need to make sure that the energies of the team are directed towards achieving the team's goals, and are not dampened by negativity or directed into competition with one another. A good way of doing this is to deal with the issues driving negativity, and then to reward a positive attitude and collaborative effort.

- **Remove Social Loafing – Identify the “Doers” and the “Non-Doers”**
Social loafing (when people reduce effort because they think others can't spot their contribution) in a team often goes unrecognized by other team members.

It is the leader who has to identify it, and deal with it. Here are some ways of dealing with loafing, starting with the getting the environment right for high performance.

- **Increase Team Members' Personal Involvement with the Task:**
People will not tend to loaf if they know that the team's performance is going to affect them personally. One way of doing this is to attach individual rewards to the team's overall performance.

They'll also tend to work harder if the task is challenging and interesting, or if they understand why the task is important. Make sure that you explain the significance of each activity, and make work as interesting as you can.

People will also usually perform better if they know that others in the team aren't as good at doing a job as they are. This is called the “compensation effect” or “social compensation”, and it can be useful for motivating people, just as long as those people are mature enough not to become arrogant or domineering. (This works best if the weaker team members are seen to be trying their best – otherwise, stronger team members are likely to feel taken advantage of.)

- **Minimize Free Riding**
Similar to this, team members are likely to perform better if they understand that their efforts are indispensable to the team.

The downside of this can again be arrogance, which can spoil the climate of the team. So, again, as a leader, you should use this knowledge with caution.

- **Increase the Team's Self-Belief**
Teams with a strong self-belief tend to outperform teams that doubt their own competence. The leader can increase this confidence – thereby improving performance – in the team by:
 - Making it clear that the team is expected to meet its goal.
 - Expressing confidence that the team will achieve this goal.
 - Convincing team members that the goals they have set out to achieve are valuable and worthwhile.

- **Build a Sense of Common Purpose**
Another benefit of creating an inspiring vision of the future for your team is that you unite them around a common purpose. When they're working together cohesively towards an attractive goal, you'll find that social loafing is minimized.

- **Split the Team, and Hold People Accountable**
If you've done the things above, you've done as much as you sensibly can to help team members behave in a virtuous way.

If people are still loafing, then it's time to step up the level of planning and supervision, so that you hold individuals firmly accountable for the completion of detailed goals.

If you're leading a large team, you'll probably find that you just don't have time to do this. In this case, you'll need to split the team down into smaller units (for example, assignment teams), with team leaders in each unit who can carry out this more detailed management, where it's needed.

It's much harder to hide in a small team than it is in a large one!

Strategy 6. Treat People Fairly – Beat Favoritism

Leaders can easily make the mistake of differentiating between team members on the basis of their talents or skills, whether these are perceived or real.

Subconsciously, the leader creates “in-groups” and “out-groups”, where the in-group members are the ones who are favored, and the out-group includes people who are perceived as not being capable enough.

This behavior can prove to be extremely harmful to the team as well as to people in the out-group: think how much better things would be, in terms of whole team performance, if the leader put extra effort into supporting and building the confidence of those who need to perform better!

Strategy 7. Restructure Jobs When Necessary – Practice Job Enrichment

Job enrichment, as Herzberg called it, is more than a single project – it’s an ongoing job that you need to work away on:

- Where possible, increase responsibilities so that jobs offer a level of challenge equal to the skills of the person who occupies them.
- Work to ensure that those with ability are able to demonstrate their ability, and can win promotion to higher-level jobs.
- Set up jobs so that, as far as possible, people can see a job through from start to finish, making appropriate decisions, and using a wide variety of skills on the way.
- Help people understand the purpose of the job, and give plenty of positive feedback when the job’s done well.

Obviously, not all jobs can be enriched, nor do all jobs need to be enriched. But, as Herzberg concluded, “if only a small percentage of the time and money that is now devoted to hygiene [factors], however, were given to job enrichment efforts, the return in human satisfaction and economic gain, would be one of the largest dividends that industry and society have ever reaped.”

3.2.3 Communication Clarifiers

Process Losses, Gains, Groupthink, Team Leadership, Motivation.

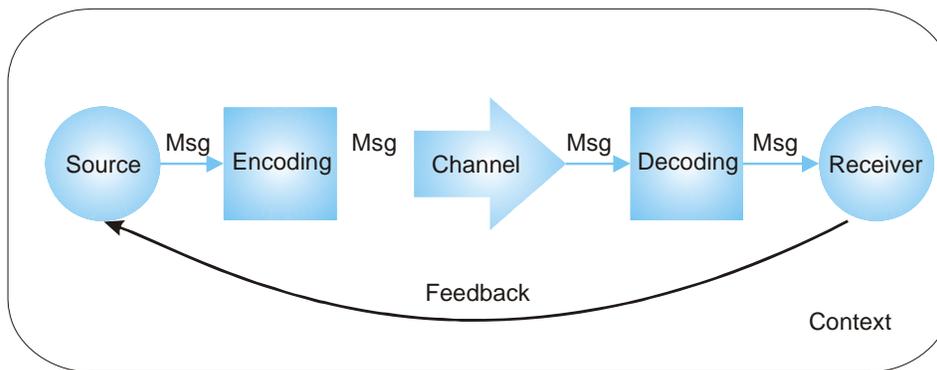
Communication is the process through which a message is transmitted from one person to another.

As such, it is the “glue” that holds a team together. It’s the process by which the leader conveys the team’s goal and builds commitment to it. It’s the way by which he or she motivates team members, and understands and manages the problems they’re experiencing. And it’s the process by which conflict and negativity are dealt with, and are turned into opportunity and positive action.

As such, you must be able to communicate effectively if you are to be effective as a team leader, and this takes effort and practice.

This short section gives tips and pointers that will help you improve communication within your team. (If you have serious deficits here, you’ll need to study intensively to overcome them – this is beyond the scope of this course.)

Figure 3.2.3.1 below shows the communication process.

Figure 3.2.3.1. The Communication Process**Elements of the Communication Process**

- **Source:** The person who sends the message.
- **Receiver:** The person to whom the message is being sent.
- **Encoding:** The process by which the source converts the message into a form that can be transmitted.
- **Channel:** The medium through which the message is sent; this can include speech, phone, mail, e-mail, instant messaging, and so on.
- **Decoding:** The process by which the receiver attempts to understand the message.
- **Context:** The situation in which the communication is taking place.
- **Feedback:** The process which confirms that the message has been received successfully by the receiver.
- **Barriers:** The factors which hinder free flow of communication; these can be noise, emotions, such as anger, mental blocks, environmental disturbances.

Communication can be disrupted at any of these levels, and any disruption will cause coordination losses.

So let's start with a small exercise!

Think about five situations in your team when communication has been poor. Identify where the problems and barriers were, and what could have been done to improve communication.

Situation	Problems/Barriers	Improvements
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Tip:

Leaders can be particularly prone to a major decoding error – not listening properly! Make sure that you at least acknowledge the possibility of this being one of the causes of poor communication in your team!

Depending on what you’ve identified as the problem area(s), the tips below may help.

Basic communication skills:

- **Speak effectively:**
 - Speak clearly.
 - Speak simply, and in a way that your audience will understand.
 - Watch people's body language, so you can tell if they're "drifting away".
 - Maintain eye contact.
 - Be personal when you speak to your team – remember people's names, and use them.
- **Listen effectively:**
 - Pay full attention to what the person is saying, and don't process your answer until the other person has finished talking.
 - Ignore background noise and distraction as far as you can.
 - Help the speaker if he or she is struggling to express an idea.
 - Use paraphrasing – when the speaker has finished talking, say what you think the other person has said.
 - Don't be judgmental while listening – listen with an open mind until the other person has fully explained him or herself.
 - Do not over-talk – don't end the sentences of the speaker with your own words – listen to him/her first, and then go ahead and speak.
 - Display appropriate body language, such as head nods, eye contact, and so on.
- **Choose the correct medium:**
 - Be cautious while choosing the medium – for example, negative feedback should usually be given in private, where others cannot hear.
 - Critical issues and important facts need to be documented, so that people clearly understand what's been said.
- **Identify and remove barriers:**
 - Create an environment that encourages open communication.
 - Make sure that people behave in a respectful way to one another, and are appropriately tolerant of personal differences.
 - Remove barriers to communication wherever you find them.
- **Give and receive feedback effectively:**
 - Positivity is the essence of feedback – learn to give and take even negative feedback in a positive way.
 - Give feedback as one adult to another adult. Don't be patronizing, and don't bring emotion into it. Anger can be effective for shocking someone out of complacency, but it shouldn't be used routinely.
 - Give feedback straight away. Deal with issues while they're small, so that they don't build up into major problems.
 - When receiving feedback, make sure you work on the issues raised.

Tip:

You can learn a lot more about communication in the Mind Tools Communication Skills section at <http://www.mindtools.com/page8.html>.

Having mastered these basics, you also need to do the following things:

- **Be flexible – Make your style fit:**

Besides the basic skills mentioned, there are two more techniques that will help you communicate effectively with members of your team:

- First, think about the person who is going to receive this communication, and consider “mirroring” their behavior. For example, if the recipient is a friendly person, it may be right to slow down while speaking and speak on personal terms. On the other hand, if the person is more professionally driven, consider speeding up your rate of speaking, and discussing only bottom-line, business matters. If the recipient is an outgoing and energetic kind of person, it can help if you put excitement in your voice, and if he or she is a logic-oriented kind of person, use plenty of well-organized evidence for the conclusions you present in your discussion. This will help you build a rapport with that person.
- After you have received a message from the other person, check your understanding. Where appropriate, paraphrase or summarize what the other person has said to confirm your understanding.

- **Make communication safe – Be open to ideas and suggestions:**

Listen to what your team members have to say. Ideas are like burning embers: you can fan them into flames or extinguish them with just a few words of judgment.

In a brainstorming session, do all team members participate, or do you find that some hesitate to give ideas? If the ideas given are odd or unacceptable, do you or team members hush up the individual who suggested those ideas?

If this is the case, then you need to change this. It is important that you, the leader, ensure that members of your team find it safe to express ideas openly. This is to say that all the artificial barriers to communication are removed, and that the impact of real barriers has been minimized.

- **Create awareness – Help your people be smart:**

NETMA – Nobody Ever Tells Me Anthing: A dangerous situation: avoid it.

Do members of your team know what’s going on around them?

As a team leader, you need to ensure that team members are smart about the key issues and facts related to the work they do. Besides goals, the leader needs to communicate any other underlying business issues as well.

An understanding of the context in which they’re operating helps people become more effective and more autonomous, and make better decisions for themselves. This frees you up from mundane decision-making, meaning that you can focus on adding real value to the team’s work.

- **Be specific – Make expectations loud and clear**

The clearer you are about what you want, the more power you will have to achieve it.

As a leader, you have to make your expectations clear to your team.

- **Objectives:** Team members need to be completely clear about what the team’s objective is, and what you expect them to be able to achieve.
- **Collaborative Style:** Team members need to collaborate if the team is to be effective. The leader has to make absolutely sure that team members understand that collaborative behavior is a requirement, not an option. Team members need to know that they are accountable not only for what they achieve, but also for how they go about achieving it.
- **Management Skills:** This measures the ability of people to manage people and other available resources effectively. The leader has to make it clear that no one has the right to ignore talent, and misuse – or under-use – available resources.

3.2.4 Confidence Boosters

People can often experience a sense of insecurity and low self-esteem when they work within teams. This can come as a result of interactions within the team, but can also come from people's experiences in life outside the team, or before they joined it.

As a leader, you may not be able to remove these self-confidence problems completely, but what you can do is help people build their self-confidence so that they are better equipped to face adversity. By doing this, you will make the most of team members' individual capabilities, and harness process gains. On the other hand, if individual members of your team are lacking in self-confidence, they will not work as effectively as they might, and they will suffer individual, capability losses.

To boost team members' self-confidence:

- **Know your stuff – It can make a lot of difference**
You preach a better sermon with your life than with your lips.

As a leader, you need to build a good technical knowledge of the team's mission. You don't have to be a know-it-all, but yes, you do need to have a sufficient knowledge of information directly related to the achievement of your team's task. *For example, if the team's goal is to create a substitute for human blood to be used in emergencies, then you'll need a sound understanding of biochemistry.*

Not having technical know-how does not necessarily mean that you will fail as a leader, however a lack of technical knowledge can mean that team members get frustrated with you, which can lead to performance slippage. Also, remember that leaders have to lead by example. As such, it is important that people within and outside of your team see you as a competent and knowledgeable person.

- **Be results driven – Profit is not a dirty word**
Building the confidence of your team begins with achieving results.

By setting goals, visibly achieving those goals, and celebrating their achievement, you and your team can get into the habit of self-confident achievement. A winning experience, which has resulted from sheer, hard work, is the most authentic confirmation of confidence.

As a leader, you need a passion to win, otherwise you will not be able inspire members of your team, and you won't be able to build the self-confidence needed for great performance.

And you need to emphasize the role of hard work in achieving success – otherwise team members may become complacent, and less effective.

- **Trust your people – They are your most valuable resource**
Start treating your people as grown-ups. Give them responsibility and authority. Trust them.

Another way of booting confidence is to trust members of your team with meaningful and significant responsibility. This is a calculated risk that you, as a leader, need to take.

Help people to be creative, and support and encourage them to try new things and stretch their limits. (We'll talk about this more in the next two modules.)

- **Expert coaching – Be a pillar of support for your team**
Give a man a fish, and he'll eat today. Teach him how to fish, and he'll eat everyday.

Help people within your team to be self-reliant. Give them feedback on where they need to improve their work, and then follow it up with adequate support.

That said, make sure that team members know that “performing the task” is ultimately their own responsibility. If the team member is trying his or her best to deliver, then you need to give as much support as you can, however if he or she is coasting or ignoring feedback, then you need to deal with this.

- **Seek help – You don’t know it all**

Are members of your team seeking just to please you, instead of working to achieve the team’s goals? Are they shying away from giving new ideas and suggestions because they think you won’t appreciate them?

If the answer to either of these questions is “yes”, then these are dangerous situations for you. You may be a very knowledgeable and competent person, but you don’t necessarily “know it all”.

As an effective leader, you need to make full use of the talent of other team members. You need to create an environment where they feel that their ideas and suggestions are welcome, and will not be ruled out, just because they don’t come from you.

3.2.5 Teamwork enhancing techniques

So far, we’ve talked a lot about how to improve individual performance within the team. Here we’re looking at something different: improving overall team effectiveness. You can do this by:

- **Coaching – Teach, don’t preach**

Never stop listening; never stop learning; never stop training.

This may sound absurd, but coaching to improve team processes is actually as much of a listening task as it is a doing task. Coaching is the process of helping the individual and the team be the best they can be. You’re seeking to guide the team in the right direction, and do everything you can to make the conditions right for the team, so that team members can reach their full potential and, therefore, perform accordingly. *Just think of a good sports coach: He or she does this both on and off the field.*

- **Rewarding good teamwork – Showing that working together works**

In a boat race, the fastest crew is usually the one whose members blend individual power and perfect co-ordination.

If you want people to work together effectively as a team, then you need to recognize and reward effective teamwork. Team members need to be aware of why teamwork is needed, and need to understand why poor teamwork harms the mission of the team. One way of doing this is to make collaborative behavior one of the major performance criteria you measure in your regular performance evaluations.

- **Developing team mental models – When teams work, 2+2>5**

The term “team mental model” refers to the awareness and understanding that team members have of the most important factors that affect the effectiveness of the team. These are:

- The goals that the team has set out to achieve.
- The resources available to them to accomplish the task.
- The knowledge, wisdom, skills, habits, and preferences of each member of the team.
- Team effectiveness itself.

The more shared understanding that team members have of these factors, the better they are able to perform. So, the challenge becomes how, as a leader, do you help people understand this. Research tells us that you can do this by:

- **Involving the Team in Planning and Monitoring:** A good way of helping people understand the context they're operating is to involve them in planning (this has the side-effect of building people's commitment as well). Here, you need to involve team members in goal setting, performance monitoring, error diagnosis, and analyzing process feedback.
- **Institutionalizing Self-Correction:** This is the process by which the team evaluates its own performance, and makes changes accordingly. Measures include things like evaluation of effort, error identification, effective feedback, and the quality of planning for the future. As a leader, you can develop this by training team members in the skills needed to do this – such as giving feedback, analyzing the situation, and expressing opinions assertively – and encouraging people to do this on a routine basis.
- **Developing a transactive memory – Working together is success**
“Transactive Memory” is the combined memory of individual team members. If people know about the knowledge and skills of other team members, they know where to get help, and they have access to a larger pool of expertise. In turn, this improves the team's efficiency, because people can access information quickly and don't have to “reinvent the wheel”.

Make sure that as people join your team, and as they learn new skills, that they have the opportunity to share their knowledge and experience with other members of the team. A good way of doing this is to ask individuals to run on short training sessions for other team members on subjects of interest.

- **Enhancing team knowledge**
Learning is an ongoing process. As the team moves forward in its mission, the knowledge and experience of team members expands.

With this also comes the psychological comfort that the members feel in the way that the team works, and goes about achieving its mission. This contributes to a feeling of sharing and openness within the team. The team not only performs better, but can also deal with unexpected situations more effectively.

Encourage people to share the lessons they've learned, and discuss how things can be done better. However, make sure that people also search for ideas or inputs from other teams and other organizations – you don't want the “Not Invented Here” syndrome taking root within your team!

Module 4

Provide Direction: Set Clear, Shared Goals, and Point Out the Path

Interest: *Skyscrapers take only a year to build, but many years to plan.*

Direction setting is about planning – planning the goals that need to be met by the team, and specifying the path that it needs to take to meet these goals. This module teaches you how to plan effectively. It gives you techniques for both:

- Setting SMARTER, shared and more powerful goals for your team.
- Developing a clear, agreed upon, and concrete working approach, so that your team knows what it needs to do to achieve its goals.

Need: A team without direction is a team without purpose: It's unlikely to succeed. With effective direction, on the other hand, you can motivate, orient, and engage members of the team. You can energize your team with valuable, shared, and supported goals, and an agreed upon, clear, working approach.

Timing: 3 hours

Range: This module explains:

- Direction-setting: Its importance.
- The Path Goal Theory: Defining the working approach and the goals.
- The relationship between vision, mission, action plan, working approach, and goals.
- How to set SMARTER, value-added, supported goals.
- How to create mutual accountability.
- How to ensure participation of all team members in the decision-making process, by providing effective leadership through team interaction, through information-sharing, and through the Step Ladder technique.

Objective: After going through this module, you will be able to:

- Assess the leadership behavior you need to show to lead your team effectively.
- Translate the vision of your company into a vision for your team.
- Articulate vision and mission statements for your team.
- Help your team formulate a working approach to meet goals.
- Set SMARTER goals: Goals that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound, Efficacious, and Rewarding.
- Support Goal achievement: By aligning goals with rewards and providing effective feedback and expert coaching.
- Provide structure: Define roles, create accountability and formulate a strategy.
- Ensure full participation of all team members in decision-making.

4.1 Introduction

It's the middle of the week and you know you have a long weekend coming up. You know that you want to do a huge number of things over the weekend. But, somehow, the weekend just comes and goes without you managing to do anything, even relaxing.

Why? Because you didn't set yourself a clear agenda.

You know you wanted to do so much, but you didn't bother to actually sit down and define what, precisely, these things were. Or, maybe you did define them, but you didn't get around to identifying which ones were the most crucial, and you, instead, wasted your time and energy trying to do a bit of everything.

Can you relate to this scenario? Well, a team without direction and goals is pretty much in the same situation. It is nothing more than a package of wasted effort, and squandered resources.

Remember, the very first module of this course specified that you should only create a team when there is a specific performance challenge that must be achieved. Having been given this performance challenge, the team now needs to construct a **shared, clear, and concrete** understanding of the direction it needs to take, in order to achieve the challenge. As the leader, you're the one who has to spearhead this direction-setting process.

If, as a leader, you can do this properly, your team will become:

- **Motivated:** As humans, we are constantly seeking meaning in what we do. With effective direction, you can motivate the members of your team by addressing this need. By linking people's individual aspirations to the team's goals, you can give purpose and meaning to work. *Every time you see a parent coaxing a child to eat his vegetables on the grounds that "it will make you big and strong", you are witnessing a classic example of this technique at work. (And sometimes the vegetables do get eaten!)*
- **Oriented:** *If you don't know where you are going, you're unlikely to end up where you should be.* Direction setting orients team members. It gives them a clear and well-defined set of options, so that they can develop effective work strategies and priorities.
- **Engaged:** It is easy for the leader to identify and tap into individual talent. However, the challenge lies in making best use of the pool of talent available within the team. If you've done a good job of setting direction for your team, team members may be more aware of the pool of talent within the team than you are (because they're closer to the detail of everyday work), and may be better at using this talent in critical situations. *For example, a company's sales team is working to close a critical sale. Alex has initiated the deal. James has been working with him on it. Yet, the team decides to send Alicia, a third team member, recognized for her ability to deliver a killer sales pitch, to close the sale. Since the leader has set direction clearly, the team knows that the deal is crucial for them and, therefore, decides to use the best resource available to it.*

Along with setting direction, team leaders are also responsible for holding people accountable – both as individuals and mutually. Individual accountability refers to the team member's accountability to the team, while mutual accountability refers to team members' collective responsibility to the team's mission.

In this module, we'll give you the tools you need to set clear direction and to create accountability.

4.1.1 Direction-Setting: What does this Process Involve?

So what does direction-setting mean to you?

Several activities are listed below. Which of these seems to you to represent direction setting most accurately?

Direction setting involves:

- a) Translating the performance challenge into specific goals, and communicating these goals to the team.
- b) Creating an inspiring vision of the achievement of the team's goals.
- c) Articulating a motivating mission.
- d) Agreeing the approach the team needs to take to achieve the goals.
- e) Agreeing priorities and strategies.
- f) Aligning team member's individual goals with the goals of the team.
- g) a, b, and c.
- h) a, d, e and f.
- i) a-f.

The correct answer is "i" – giving direction involves all of these activities; in fact, it actually involves even more.

A leader who seeks to provide effective direction has to specify both:

- The ends – that is, the goals – he or she expects the members to meet.
- The means – the path (the strategies, the priorities, the approach) – he or she wants them to follow in order to achieve the goals.

The leader also needs to articulate the vision and the mission, and create alignment to motivate the team members to achieve the goals. (More on this later!)

But surely we're always taught, as leaders, to specify the goals, and let empowered team members devise their own ways to achieve these goals?

The key to this is that the team's work is a joint effort: as a leader, you can't "sit at the top" and hand down the vision, the mission, and the goals. To be truly effective, you need to have the active participation of members of your team at many or all stages of the direction setting process.

So does this mean that you should leave all of the decisions to the members of your team? You can't afford to do this either. You need to understand the capabilities and experience of your team, and then decide on the approach you'll use. At one extreme, you can seek to create a largely self-directed team. At the other, you may choose to make most of the decisions yourself. The tools outlined in this module help you strike the right balance, and help you build a clear, shared understanding of what your team needs to do.

In the sections that follow, we'll discuss:

- Path-Goal Theory, which identifies the behaviors that the leader needs to show, depending on team members' skills and confidence levels.
- The way in which Vision, Mission Statements, Objectives, Action Plans, and Goals fit together, and how you can use these to motivate and co-ordinate activity.

4.1.2 Path-Goal Theory

Path-Goal Theory, one of the most popular leadership theories, gives us a useful framework for understanding the different types of behavior that team leaders need to be able to show if they're going to lead effectively. According to the new version of the theory, developed by Robert J House in 1996, effective leaders need to be able to practice five different types of behavior:

1. **Clarifying Behavior** – This is where the leader clarifies the path to be taken by explaining the performance goals that need to be achieved, by specifying how these will be achieved, by teaching the skills needed to do a job, and by specifying rewards and punishments that will be given. This makes people's roles in achieving the team's goal

clear, helps people understand that hard work in a certain direction will result in good performance, and ensures that people know that if they perform well, they will be rewarded.

2. **Work “Facilitation” Behavior** – Here, the leader clears away roadblocks on the path by anticipating problems, planning effectively, scheduling, coordinating, guiding, coaching, counseling, and giving feedback. This behavior helps team members work effectively by eliminating bottlenecks, providing necessary resources, stimulating self-development, and helping people take responsibility effectively.
3. **Participative Behavior** – With this behavior, the leader draws on the knowledge and experience of members of his or her team to determine the best way forward. He or she does this by consulting with team members, and involving them in decision-making. This behavior increases team members’ self-confidence, and helps them see how their own hard work can influence the achievement of a goal that they themselves have helped to shape.
4. **Supportive Behavior** – Here, the team leader creates a friendly and psychologically supportive environment in which team members feel comfortable and happy. It’s also where he or she looks after – and is seen to look after – team members’ welfare. This helps people to feel part of a great team, and increases their commitment to their goals, to the team, and to the organization.
5. **Achievement-Oriented Behavior** – With this type of behavior, the leader sets high goals, seeks continuous improvement, emphasizes excellence, shows confidence in his or her people, and stresses pride in work. This increases their confidence, and reinforces the importance of working hard to achieve the team’s goals.

The extent to which you, as a leader, should use these behaviors depends, to a large extent, on how well developed the knowledge, skills and abilities of members of your team are; how confident they are; and whether they have an “internal or external locus of control” – i.e. do they see their own success as driven by their own efforts, or by factors outside their control². (The environment also has some impact on this: how the task is structured, how the control systems of the organization operate, and what is expected from the team.)

For example:

- Team members with an internal locus of control, high self-confidence, and high skill levels will respond well to Participative Leadership Behavior.
- Team members with an external locus of control may need more Work Facilitation Behavior. This will help them build their self-confidence and sense of self-efficacy (their belief that they can achieve something).
- Team members who are not very skilled might need more Clarifying Behavior.

When people first think of what a leader does, they often think of Clarifying Behavior – put crudely, telling people what to do, and how to do it. And often, in the initial stages when the team has just been formed, the leader might find the Clarifying Behavior tools useful.

However, as the team matures and progresses, leaders are more likely to find it useful to switch to other types of behavior, particularly Participative Behavior and Achievement-Oriented Behavior. The more competent the team becomes, the more annoyed team members are likely to be by excessive Clarifying Behavior!

While Supportive and Work Facilitation Behaviors are discussed in the next module, here, we provide you with tools to practice Clarifying Behavior, Participative Behavior and Achievement-Oriented Behavior.

² You can find out more about the Locus of Control at http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newCDV_90.htm.

4.2 Introduction to Tools

The tools in this module help you provide effective direction to your team. They help you:

- Craft vision and mission statements that will inspire and motivate your team.
- Working with your team, develop clear, shared, motivating goals, which explain the detail of what your team needs to achieve.
- With your team, lay out a well-defined, agreed-upon path (including strategies, priorities and approaches) that your team will follow to achieve these goals.

These tools fall into three categories:

1. **Vision, Mission and Goal-Setting Techniques:** These techniques help you communicate an inspiring vision and mission; and then help you set SMARTER goals, add value to your goals, and support the achievement of these goals.
2. **Path Definers:** These tools help you to define roles and responsibilities clearly, work with team members to develop working strategies, and hold team members accountable for the achievement of goals.
3. **Participation Techniques:** Securing team participation and support is the cornerstone of all of these strategies. These tools help you do just this, helping you build ownership of team goals and the team's working approach.

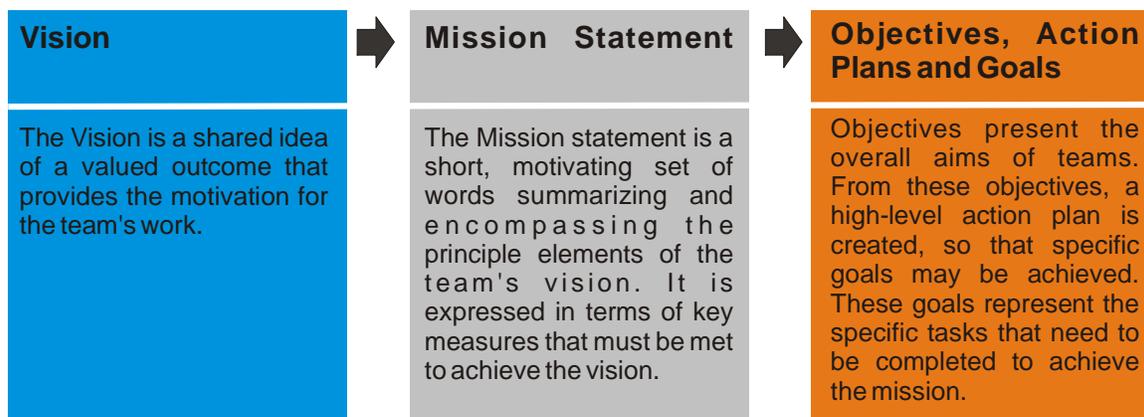
4.2.1 Vision, Mission, Goals, and Approach

In the exercise at the start of this module, we saw that giving direction involved a wide range of activities, such as creating an attractive vision of the future, spelling out the mission, translating the performance challenge at hand into specific goals, and organizing a coherent working approach.

This is something that is needed at all levels in the organization: While top managers set out the vision and mission for the entire company, individual teams – at all levels – also need to identify their own vision and mission, explaining the way in which their team's work contributes to the organization's mission.

These team visions and missions are powerful motivators, which energize the team, and motivate team members to achieve their goals. The team vision and mission need to be derived from the company statement, but need to be specific to the team.

Figure 4.2.1.1 Vision, Mission Statement, and Objectives Action Plans and Goals



Elements of this diagram are drawn from Effective Teamwork: Practical Lessons from Organizational Research, by Michael A West.

The example below shows how the company vision and mission translate into a **specific team’s vision, mission, objectives, action plan, and goals.** (This is a team version of [VMOST Analysis](#), which helps organizations translate vision into everyday actions through a cascade from Vision, Mission, Objectives and Strategy, through to Tactics.)

James Clark, a consumer electronics entrepreneur, wants to manufacture and distribute a domestic electricity generation device that will provide full value in terms of money and service to the customer. With this idea in mind, he set up ABC, Inc, a microgeneration manufacturing and servicing company to develop and distribute it.

Vision of ABC	<i>“We will produce the most recommended microgeneration units in the country. By doing so, we will help to protect the environment and shield consumers from being exploited by energy resource owners.”</i>
Mission Statement of ABC	<i>“Our Mission is to make the most recommended microgeneration units in the country by producing high quality units that cost less than US\$1,000, and are backed by an industry-leading service network, which gives supreme confidence to customers by keeping equipment running reliably (measured as less than 24 hours downtime each year) and at optimal efficiency.”</i>
Service department of ABC	The service department team is responsible for providing post-sales service through service centers.
Vision of the Service Department	<i>“To set the standards of excellence by which others are measured in the industry.”</i>
Mission statement of the Service Department	<i>“Our mission is to achieve and exceed an average score of 4.6 in the Client Engagement Survey, and to ensure that no unit is down for more than 24 hours in any one year.”</i> (The Client Engagement Survey is an internationally approved survey used to measure a company’s customer retention and loyalty quotient. A score of 4.6 on this is considered highly enviable.)
Objectives of the Service Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To set up a network of 250 service centers by the end of 20xx, so that service can be delivered effectively. • To resource service centers so that they can provide an exceptional level of service to clients. • To recruit highly motivated, properly qualified, personable engineers, and train them to a high technical standard. • To train all staff to deliver exceptional levels of customer service. • To monitor service quality closely so that high levels of service are delivered and problems are picked up early.
Action plan for the Service Department	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>To identify the localities where service centers need to be opened on a priority basis.</i> 2. <i>To determine the construction and outfitting of each service center.</i> 3. ...

Goals set by the Service Department	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>To fully equip, staff and train the Greenland Avenue Service Center, so that it's fully operational in six week's time.</i> 2. ...
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So why is **vision** important to your team?

- **It gives meaning:** It explains why the organization and team exists, and how it makes a positive contribution to the world. This helps people understand the positive value of the work they do, which is important for motivation.
- **It gives clarity of purpose:** The vision statement needs to be simple and straightforward, so that people can understand it and remember it. (If the vision is too complex, people are unable to translate what it means into day-to-day action.)
- **It leads to the values needed to achieve the vision:** From ABC's vision it's easy to see that values of quality, customer service, cost-effective manufacture, and environmental responsibility are important to achieve the vision.
- **It unites people within the organization:** The use of the word "we" is powerful, and it has been used with a lot of emphasis in ABC's vision statement. Everyone in the organization, from front line staff to senior managers, needs to feel that their efforts are significant in helping the organization do what it was set up to do, and the vision statement helps them understand this.

Reflect on these things for yourself – aren't you happier, more satisfied and more motivated when you know that your work has a positive effect on the world, and when you know that your contribution is important? And isn't it helpful when you have a clear idea of the direction in which you're heading, and the way in which you need to approach your work? A good, clear, well-expressed vision statement can give all of this.

From this **vision** comes the **Mission Statement**, which:

- **Motivates:** Note that ABC's mission statement has phrases like "our mission" and "supreme confidence". These phrases help to motivate people to achieve excellence. What's more, by including measurable targets in the mission statement, this gives people specific things to work towards, and targets that they need to hit. This provides rigor, and disciplines the "warm glow" of the vision.
- **Reiterates the vision:** Targets like "less than \$1,000", and words and phrases, like "supreme confidence to the customer", emphasize the significance of customer satisfaction, which is the prime element of ABC's vision.
- **Provides a road map:** Besides being a motivator, the mission statement is also a direction provider. It points out the way the company needs to go in order to achieve its vision. In the case of ABC, the phrase "less than US\$1,000", drives the design, production, marketing and pricing strategies that the company needs to adopt, and the statements about service standards necessitate the opening of a sufficient number of service centers.

Having established the vision and mission for your team, you – in consultation, perhaps, with your team – need to articulate a clear, well-defined, comprehensive **working approach** for achieving these goals. This working approach defines the strategy the team plans to pursue to achieve the goals; the roles and responsibilities of each team member; and the behavior norms the team members will follow. In essence, the working approach provides **structure** for the team members.

For example, for a team of mountaineers, climbing Mount Everest is a goal. But, from which base will they start, what time will they begin climbing, when will they stop to rest, who will carry what, who will pair up with whom, who will follow whom? All of these questions are a part of the working approach.

This is where you need to work through a cascade of plans working from high-level objectives, through a medium level action plan, down to that the detailed goals and actions that members of your team need to take to achieve the mission and deliver the vision.

Tip 1:

Don't get too hung up here on the words used for doing this – or on the number of levels. In essence, you're breaking your high level objectives down into smaller and smaller objectives or goals, until you have a list of small, individual actions that team members need to take to achieve the team's mission.

Tip 2:

See the Mind Tools article on [Work Breakdown Structures](#) for a good technique that helps you do this. Also, see our article on the [Logframe Approach](#) for a great technique for checking your plans to make sure that they're coherent, and that you haven't missed any essential steps out.

Tip 3:

We'll look at goal setting in much more detail in the next tool.

Now, do this exercise for your own team. Use the table below and fill in the Vision and Mission Statement of your company. Then do the same for your team, writing down the team's vision and mission (if you haven't yet set one, consider working with the members of your team to develop one). Then, move on to write down the first few action plan points, and the first few goals. (We'll only do this for the first few of each, because your lists may be quite long!)

<p>Vision of your company</p>	
<p>Mission statement of your company</p>	

<p>Goals given to your team</p>	
<p>Vision of your team Based on the vision of the company and the goals given to your team.</p>	
<p>Mission statement of your team</p>	
<p>Objectives of your team What do you need to accomplish to achieve your mission?</p>	
<p>Action plan Write down the first few major actions that you need to take to achieve your objectives. (Write the rest down separately – just get started here.)</p>	

<p>Goals Write down the first few specific, small-scale goals needed to achieve the things on your action plan. (Again, write the rest down separately – just get started here.)</p>	
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4.2.2 Goal Setting Techniques – Setting SMARTER Goals

Goals can be vague, dull and uninspiring, or they can be precise, engaging, and highly motivating. Clearly, you'll get much better results with the latter!

By linking your goals to an inspiring vision of the future, as we did with the previous tool, you've gone part of the way to creating engaging goals for members of your team. You can go the rest of the way by making your goals SMARTER!

Making Goals SMARTER

Start by taking one of the goals that your team is currently working to achieve (don't use any of the ones above for this exercise, unless it's one you're already working towards). Write it in the box below:

Goal:

Now, rate this goal using the table on the next page. Score each measure, based on a scale from 1 to 5, where:

- 1** means you strongly disagree.
- 2** means you somewhat disagree.
- 3** means you neither agree nor disagree.
- 4** means you somewhat agree.
- 5** means you strongly agree.

Measure	Your Score
The goal is crystal clear to me, and to the members of my team.	
The goal is precisely defined, so we will know exactly when we have achieved it.	
My teammates and I see the goal as our own.	
The goal is difficult (but not impossible) to achieve.	
We have a specified deadline by which we have to accomplish this goal.	
Team members know that they have the skills needed to achieve the goal.	
We all know “what’s in it for us” if we achieve the goal.	
Total Score	

If the total score for this goal is less than 25, then you need to make it SMARTER.

SMART is one the most widely used mnemonics for defining goals in the corporate world. Here, we add two more elements to make your goals SMARTER. Ensure that your goal is:

- **Specific: Leave no room for ambiguity**
 Spell out your goal in very specific and clear terms, so that there can be no confusion or argument about whether the goal has been achieved. *For example, in the case of ABC, Inc. (the example in the previous section), the Service Team’s mission was clearly one of excellent service. At the goal level, this was translated in very clear terms of performance (i.e., the opening of the Greenland Avenue Service Center). Note that it mentioned “fully operational”, thus clarifying the extent of expectation*
- **Measurable: Whatever is measurable is manageable**
 Key performance indicators need to be built into the goals. Goals are the basis of the performance evaluation of a team: if the goals are not measurable, the team has no references available by which to judge its own achievement. *For instance, the objective of the Service Team of ABC, Inc., very clearly mentions that they need to be at a 4.6 level of the Client Engagement Survey, and ensuring no more than 24 hours downtime in any one year.* The team has a clear benchmark for performance.
- **Attainable: Challenging yet realistic**
 Goals should be challenging, because a challenge is motivating. However, the challenge has to be realistic. While stretch goals are fine, they need to be attainable, as well. Remember: too many failures will ultimately pull your team down, and leave team members in a situation where they expect failure. Sometimes, though, even though you feel that the goal is attainable, team members may not. Here, you need to encourage your team to take on tougher challenges.

- **Relevant: Show how they support the mission**

Show how the goals you set contribute to the team's mission – this will help team members engage with them, and understand why they're important and significant.

Having demonstrated the relevance of goals, however, don't be inflexible in the way you set them: if they're good, your "front line" people will know more about the detail of what can and cannot be achieved than you do. While externally set targets can work well if they're relevant and clearly understood, it's often best if they're agreed as an output of mutual brainstorming and negotiation.

- **Time-bound: Without time limits, goals lose their meaning**

Deadlines, though dreaded, often serve as the most effective tool for motivating activity. Make sure, therefore, that your goals identify the date by which they need to be achieved. At times, these dates may need to be changed to reflect changing circumstances – if this happens, explain the reasoning behind this so that people don't think that it's "all right" to miss deadlines. *For instance, ABC's goals have inbuilt deadlines: a specific number of service centers have to be opened within a given time, and one service center in particular has to be functional within 4 weeks.*

You can make your goals even more powerful by adding the superlative, "ER" to the word "SMART". Keep your goals:

- **Efficacious: Help your people believe that they can achieve**

If, deep down, people don't believe that they can achieve the goals you've set, they'll be half-hearted in the way they work towards them. However, if they're confident that they have the skills and resources needed to achieve these goals, they'll work quickly and confidently towards them, and they'll work hard to overcome any problems they encounter. Do everything you can to help your people learn the skills they need to achieve their goals, and then help them build their confidence using these skills!

- **Rewarded: Make the outcome appealing**

There are two parts to making a goal seem rewarding: Firstly, you need to help people see an end state that they really want, often in terms of the way it helps the organization or other people. Secondly, you need to help them understand "what's in it for them" to achieve the goal, in terms of things that really matter to the individual. For some this will be money, but for others it may involve things like the intrinsic satisfaction of doing a job well; career advancement; public recognition of their achievement; progress towards their personal goals; or suchlike. Clearly, different people see different things as being important, which is why these need to be tailored individually. However, if the goal is important, make sure it's properly rewarded. More on this below!

4.2.3 Making Goals Meaningful

Making goals SMARTER gets you some of the way towards making them effective. However, for goals to have the maximum possible motivational impact, you need to align them with a worthwhile mission; with values that people can believe in; and with the wants and needs of the individual. You also need to set up a meaningful reward that will be given when the goal is achieved.

Answer the questions below to see how far you're doing these things as part of the way you manage your team.

Questions	Yes/ No
Does your team have its own vision and mission statement?	
Are the goals of your team aligned with these?	
Are your organization's values, and the values of individual team members, aligned with your team's goals?	
Are your team's goals aligned with individual aspirations of the members of your team?	
Do you know what the needs of members of your team are?	

If the answer to most of the questions above is “No”, then you need to make your goals more valuable for your team members. These guidelines will help you do this:

- **Use Vision and Mission Statements**

In section 4.2.1, we looked at developing vision and mission statements for your team. So are your team's goals aligned with this vision, or are they more aligned with other day-to-day demands that you face?

- **Spell Out the Values**

People's values represent the things that they think are important about the way they live and work. In this context, the values that you promote for your team need to be those that lead towards the successful achievement of your vision and mission. As such, they give a framework within which individuals choose to perform their day-to-day tasks, and which helps them to decide what courses of action to take. *In ABC, Inc., the value of respect for customers and for meeting their needs is evident, right from the larger vision of ABC down to the goal of the Service Department.*

- **Align Individual Goals with Team Goals: What's In It For Me?**

Every member of your team has his or her own individual, different, wants, needs, motivations and ambitions. It's your job as the team leader to align these individual aspirations with the team's goals. To do so, you have to:

- **Identify the Needs and Wants of Individual Members of Your Team:**

Yes, we all know that everyone wants a huge salary, and many want big promotions. These are **primary needs**. Unfortunately, given budgets and the realities of what the organization needs, there's only so much you can do to meet these needs.

However, these are not the only needs your people have. They have other needs, too – **secondary needs**, such as the needs for self-esteem, recognition, stimulation, autonomy, and significance. These needs may not be obvious, but they are there, and they're compelling. They also vary from person to person, and also change, as people's circumstances change. This is why you need to understand your people as individuals, so that you can understand their secondary needs are, and motivate them by aligning their work goals with these needs.

What's more, you can often meet at least some of these needs without spending money, simply by changing the way that you manage people. Focus on understanding and identifying these needs.

- **Grasp every opportunity to fulfill the secondary needs:**
Once you have completed the difficult task of identifying the secondary needs, don't stop there: make sure that you capitalize on them! Use every opportunity you have to praise people, and, when they work hard, recognize that hard work. Routinely reinforce the real value and importance of their work to other people. As people prove themselves, do what you can to give them more responsibility for their work.
- **Align the primary, as well as secondary, needs with the team task:**
Company A's post-sales service team was facing a huge backlog, which naturally resulted in poor customer service. Managers decided to tackle the situation by asking the company's sales team to take on some of the post-sales service work. The sales team was not happy about the assignment and did not take it seriously, which meant that the problem of low service standards continued.

Senior managers asked a Senior Sales Manager to explain the situation to the sales team. She helped the sales team members understand that providing post-sales service gave them an opportunity to increase their own learning and experience. She also explained that their promotion prospects would also improve, since they would be viewed as being capable of handling higher responsibilities. The strategy worked, and the company was able to tackle the backlog.

As a team leader, you need to establish and explain the connection between individuals' aspirations, and the goals you want them to achieve.

- **Align Rewards to Goals – For the team, as well as the individuals**
Having aligned individual goals with team goals, you now need to align the rewards you offer with those same team goals. With all of these aligned, you have a powerful combination, which makes it very clear to team members what's in it for them to work hard to achieve these goals.
 - Rewards needs to be aligned with goals, and visibly so, to motivate team members. *For X Inc to make a sale of its sophisticated software, salespeople, business analysts and technical people needed to work together closely. However, only sales people were rewarded for participating in a sale, while business analysts and technical people had to do sales-related work as well as their "day jobs". This led to bitterness and frustration, and poor preparation in sales presentations, which was only fixed when rewards were realigned.*
 - Where teamwork is needed for success, leaders should not only give rewards for superior, individual performance and behavior, they also need to reward the team as a whole for good team performance.
 - The reward system should be such that it allows small victories within the goal itself. *For example, an insurance sales team has been given a target to achieve 1000 new life policies within one quarter, which is a target that's been given to all of the company's sales teams, in all regions. The target also specifies that the team that reaches the 500 mark first will be awarded a celebratory dinner.* Such small wins go a long way in building the commitment level and in boosting the confidence needed to overcome obstacles on the path to goal achievement.

4.2.4 Support Goal Attainment

The final part of supporting effective goal setting is to provide appropriate support for the goals, by giving appropriate feedback and coaching.

Feedback: Make it Effective

Feedback, though not always welcome, is probably the most important tool that a team leader can use to improve team performance. Here are some tips on how to make it effective:

- **Make it routine:** Feedback should immediately follow the behavior that it relates to. Where feedback is correcting negative behavior, feeding back quickly means that you can “nip problems in the bud”, before they get too large. And if you make it a habit to praise good work whenever you see it, you’ll reinforce the behaviors that lead to it, meaning that you’ll see good work more often. By contrast, if you wait until quarter-ends or year-ends to give feedback, problems will have often become so serious that they’re difficult to fix.
- **Make it positive:** As a leader, you need to make an effort to give even negative feedback in a positive way. Rather than being unpleasantly negative and critical, recognize that there is a problem, look for ways to resolve that problem, and set checkpoints to make sure that solutions are being implemented successfully.
- **Make it specific:** If a particular behavior of a team member needs correction, the leader should ensure that, during the feedback session, only this particular behavior is discussed. Be careful to avoid generalizing a problem, so that everything seems wrong, rather than just the specific problem.
- **Make it a solution:** Feedback should be such that it provides a solution to the problem at hand. Pointing out a mistake without providing any input on correcting it leaves the individual feeling lost and demoralized.

We’ll look at feedback in detail in our next module, on team relationships.

Expert Coaching: Make it Timely and Adequate

Coaching is another useful thing that you can do to help members of your team achieve their goals. This isn’t just a matter of training your people (although that is clearly important) – it’s a matter of giving people the support they need to function effectively.

This support can be given in the form of technical know-how or other information, it can be given through provision of help, or it can be given as emotional support, however the important thing here is that it serves to expand the skills and capabilities of the team member. We will look at support in greater detail in the next module.

To find out whether or not you, as a leader, are providing adequate support for the members of your team, ask them to fill out the following questionnaire. For every “True”, give yourself one point.

Statement	True/False
1. The team has a well-defined, well-communicated reward structure.	
2. Rewards are aligned with the accomplishment of goals.	
3. Superior performance in our team never goes unnoticed.	
4. Feedback on performance is prompt and is carried out routinely.	
5. You are usually able to find a solution if there is a problem.	
6. You have a sound, technical knowledge of the team’s task.	
7. You make an effort to be approachable, and support members of your team.	

If you have a score of five or above, congratulate yourself and improve in the areas where you fell short. If you scored less than this, you’ll need to take action to improve your scores.

4.2.5 Path Definers

Once you're setting SMARTER goals, and ones that have real meaning to members of your team, the next step is to define the path – the shared working approach – that you want your team to follow to achieve these goals. This gives structure to the team task. To do this, you need to:

- **Define Roles: Giving people the opportunity to shine**

It's important to define people's roles, so that each member of the team is aware of what he or she needs to do, and also knows what others should be doing.

Roles give people a sense of identity. They show them where they need to focus their learning and acquisition of knowledge, and they help people build up knowledge and experience in their specific area, meaning that they become more efficient, effective and productive in their specialist area.

Not only does this "division of labor" improve the effectiveness and productivity of the team, it improves mutual respect, as team members value the unique contributions that others bring to the team effort.

When assigning roles, bear in mind that people will work much harder if they find the work intrinsically motivating. To organize work in such a way that it supports this, do the following things:

- **Make tasks meaningful:** Try to structure tasks in such a way that they become interesting and meaningful. See if you can make a routine task more:
 - **Challenging, so that the team member needs to use multiple skills:** For example, a person creating a complete customer feedback report would find her job more challenging than someone who is merely entering customers' responses into a computer.
 - **Significant, so that the individual feels useful:** For example, a street sweeper would be likely to do a more thorough job if he understood how an untidy, chaotic environment was linked with high crime.
 - **Complete, so that they confer a unique identity to the team member:** For example, a salesperson who is also responsible for managing the post-sales relationship with the client is likely to find his job more complete than a salesman whose contact with the client ends at the close of the sale.
 - **Encourage autonomy:** People take better care of things they own. Consider the ability of the team member and the nature of the task, and then give as much autonomy as you can. The more you do this, the more the individual will feel responsible. What's more, if people feel a sense of "ownership" for the work they do, they're likely to be more innovative, and experiment with other, better ways of working.
 - **Make results visible:** Where you can, design the task in such a way that people can see for themselves that work has been done correctly. When the task is designed in such a way that performance is visible to everyone, learning becomes natural, and people are able to take satisfaction in a job well done.
- **Create Accountability: Both Individual and Mutual**

"Accepting accountability" means taking ownership of what you are doing. It means that, on one hand, you receive authority to access the resources you need, and on the other, accept responsibility for the successful completion of the task. Authority without responsibility is inefficient, and responsibility without authority sets the person accepting it up for failure.

In a team, mutual accountability becomes particularly important. Individually, people are often ready to be held accountable, but the key lies in creating an environment where the team, as a whole, is willing to assume accountability. Mutual accountability ensures

collective ownership of goals and, therefore, better team performance. To foster mutual accountability:

- **Establish trust:** It can often be difficult for people to trust one another, at least when the team forms. However, trust is vital if people are to be accountable to one another, to the team, and to the team's mission. The leader must therefore create an atmosphere of trust. We look at how you can do this in Module 5.
 - **Create commitment:** People are more committed to the tasks they are doing if they are convinced that they are important. As a leader, therefore, you need to explain the value of each task. (We've already looked at how to do this, earlier in this module.)
 - **Create strong team purpose:** Earlier in this module, we looked at how you can develop a strong, meaningful purpose for the team. Make sure that your team is regularly reminded of this.
 - **Articulate a clear, shared working approach:** Again, ensure that team members are clear about their goals, and how they need to work.
 - **Define individual and mutual accountability:** Also, make sure that they are clear about what they are accountable for as individuals, what they are accountable for as members of the team, and what the team as a whole is accountable for.
- **Strategy Formulation: Create a blueprint for performance**
If goals are the destination, strategy is the approach that your team will use to reach that destination. If you're in a competitive situation, strategy is the approach you'll use to win.

Strategy formulation is a huge subject in its own right, and there are many different approaches to it. However, here we'll give you a simple starting point that you can use with your team.

According to this approach, the key to strategy formulation lies in identifying and understanding the five different elements that constitute a strategy. These are:

- **Domain:** Domain refers to the type of activities that the team has to perform, and the products and services it has to offer. For example, the company's accounting team lists its domains as routine processing and management of financial transactions, payroll, preparation of management accounts, collation of management information, and preparation of statutory accounts.
- **Vehicle:** This is the medium through which these products and services are going to be developed and delivered. In our accounting team example, the vehicle would primarily be accounting professionals, clerks, their assistants, and their systems.
- **Differentiators:** These are the factors that differentiate your team from others. They define the "unique" reasons that people would choose your team, and not choose others. Within an organization, differentiators may not be that important – after all, there's only one accounting team in most companies. However, at a corporate level, differentiation is critical – if people are going to choose your product or service, it has to be better than all others, in a way that really matters to your client.
- **Economic Logic:** This refers to the financial viability of the team. The team needs to be able to sustain itself while also being able to create more benefit (often measured as revenue) than it costs. *All companies need accounting services, so these needed to be provided. However, the scope and scale of these, and the extent to which these would be provided internally or outsourced, depends on the company's needs and the economics of the different approaches to providing these services. The economic logic here points to reliable provision of the services that the company needs at the lowest practical cost.*
- **Sequences and Stages:** Strategy needs to have a plan and a time framework. It needs priorities that are realistic, and do not rely on team members doing too many tasks at the same time. *As the business has grown, existing finance systems have been unable to cope, and new systems are needed. A major project is therefore set up to identify and*

install a new system. This involves stages of systems and vendor evaluation, selection and approval, software and infrastructure installation, training, data migration, parallel running and reconciliation. All of this needs to be resourced, and managed in such a way that the implementation is carried out as efficiently as possible.

By thinking through these elements, you can start to plan your team's strategy for the period ahead.

4.2.6 Participation Tools

Teamwork is about participation. Teams (as opposed to groups of individuals working together) are created because the team's task cannot be accomplished individually. It is therefore essential that each member of the team commits to the team, participates with it, and feels part of it.

There are two aspects to encouraging participation. Firstly, the team's leader needs to create an environment in which team members feel safe communicating what they think, openly and honestly, so that problems within the team can be dealt with, and so that everyone can contribute fully and creatively. To do this, the leader needs to use skills such as active listening and encouraging people to speak their minds, while at the same time insisting that team members behave respectfully towards one-another. Secondly, each person within the team needs to encourage others to participate by communicating honestly and openly with one another, and sharing information willingly.

How Can the Leader Help?

- **Listen: Not only with your ears but your eyes as well**
We gave you tips on active listening skills in the previous module. Use them.
- **Create an environment for open communication: Eliminate fear**
As discussed in Module 3, you need to create an environment where people feel safe voicing their opinions.
- **Encourage everyone to offer opinions**
Some people, especially when they are new to the team, take time to "open up". Since our aim is to create mutual accountability within the team, it is important that all team members are fully involved in the decision-making process.

Where people are shy of speaking up, they need to be gently pushed to ensure that their opinions are known and brought into the team's decisions. And where they are over-bearing, disrespectful of others, or inhibit the ability of others to express their opinion, this needs to be dealt with. As a leader, you need to ensure that members of your team work together to create a collaborative environment.

- **Give people the information they need**
Information is a source of power. By keeping members of your team in the loop, you're entrusting them with this power. Are you a leader who has sole access to all critical information, and who creates a situation where team members are totally dependent on you? Or, do members of your team have direct access to the information they need, so that they can make appropriate decisions quickly and accurately?

What Does the Team Need to Do?

- **Interact: "on-duty" as well as "off-duty"**
How well have members of your team bonded with one another? Do they socialize outside the work environment, as well as working together inside it? Best results are usually achieved when team members do both.

- Within obvious limits, **interaction during task performance** (both “chatting” while people are working and in team meetings) helps information flow freely within the team, and helps build trust so that team members communicate openly with one-another. This enables people to coordinate their efforts better, meaning that they work more efficiently.
- Off-duty interaction, like parties, team lunches or even informal chats, help to strengthen the bond between members of your team. People come to like one-another, and enjoy one-another’s company. Because people are more familiar with one-another, they feel safe with one another.

So how often should people meet? The answer varies from team to team. *The editorial team of a newspaper needs to consult daily, while the editorial team of a weekly publication can manage with only bi-weekly interactions.* From the organizational point of view, team members should meet at least once a month to update each other on developments. It can also help if teams meet at least every six months to review their performance and strategies, and make changes, if required (although some situations can benefit from “After Action Reviews”, where important activities are reviewed immediately after they’ve been completed).

- **Share information: rich vs. poor**

In the team’s context, information refers to data, which has the potential of improving the understanding of a team member or of the entire team.

Information can be rich or poor, depending upon its potential to improve the understanding of the receiver. *For example, in a hospital before a doctor goes off duty, she updates the next on-duty doctor on patients’ health.* This is rich information. *On the other hand, a computer-generated report of calls made by a telemarketer during the day is poor information, as it holds no information on the quality of work done.*

Rich information is often best given face-to-face, because the receiver has the opportunity to view the sender’s body language, and can also ask questions where something’s unclear. Information of medium richness can be delivered over the phone or through video conferencing, while poor information can be communicated through paper and emails.

What, then, of virtual teams, where members are located in different places? Communicating rich information is a challenge, here. Since direct interaction is not possible, members have to rely only on technological means of communication. Such teams have to ensure that they meet much more frequently, and preferably through media such as video-conferencing.

So how do you ensure that you use the right type of communication with members of your team? Use this exercise to evaluate the kind of information sharing that is taking place within your team, and then decide how you’d like to improve upon it.

Information-Sharing Exercise

Adapted from Effective Teamwork: Practical Lessons from Organizational Research, by Prof Michael A West, Wiley-Blackwell, 2004. Reproduced with the permission of the author.

List the most important information that needs to be communicated between yourself and individual members of your team.

Name of the team member	Content of information received	Current medium used to transfer (face-to-face, phone, email, etc.)	Current frequency of transfer (hourly, daily, weekly, etc.)

Now think about how this information should best be communicated. At the same time, think about whether there are communication gaps that need to be bridged, or whether particular types of communication are now redundant, and can now be dropped.

Show this on the table below.

Name of the team member	Content of information desired	Desired medium used to transfer (face-to-face, phone, email, etc.)	Desired frequency of transfer (hourly, daily, weekly, etc.)

Once you've done this, spend a few minutes thinking about how communication within your team should be organized so that information flows sufficiently often, and with the right level of richness. As an example, would a weekly face-to-face team meeting address many of these needs?

- **Make Decisions Together: Involve everyone**

In many situations³ – particularly where you want to engage the full creativity and experience of the team, as well as getting their buy-in to the decision made – team decision-making is the order of the day. In these instances, the important tasks of goal setting and path-definition cannot rest solely upon the leader's shoulders: the entire team has to be involved in the decisions.

There is a catch, though. There are several common problems that can undermine team decision-making. Some of these are listed in the box below. How can you overcome them? Try using the stepladder technique given below.

Common Problems with Team Decision-Making

- **Members do not get equal “air-time” to voice their opinions**

This happens where some members exhibit a dominating behavior in discussions, and take up too much time. This means that others can't air their views.

- **Social conformity**

Sometimes, team members conform with one-another's views too much. They withhold their viewpoint because they feel that their comments will run contrary to the majority view, and they value group solidarity more than they value the making of a good decision. Particularly where team members feel embattled, this can lead to a situation where bad decisions are made.

- **Assumed responsibility**

Here, team members are reluctant to offer suggestions in areas they view as being outside of their area of responsibility. They assume that since they are not responsible, they do not need to be part of the decision.

- **Social loafing**

During team decision-making sessions, social loafing can become a serious issue. People may not pay attention, or may rely on others to make points that they should make.

Stepladder Technique – A Complete Solution

The Stepladder technique is useful where, as a leader, you have a particularly important decision to make, where you need full input from all members of your team, and where you suspect that you're experiencing some of the problems with team decision-making that are identified above.

Developed by Steven Rogelberg and his colleagues in 1992, this technique focuses on involving all team members, and starts with each team member being asked to formulate his or her own views without hearing those of others.

³ The Vroom-Yetton-Jago decision model gives useful guidance on when team decision-making is appropriate, and where it is not (Mind Tools members can find out more about this at http://www.mindtools.com/community/pages/article/newTED_91.php). On one hand, there are many situations where team decision-making is important. On the other, too much of it can cause paralysis, and weak managers can use consensus-seeking as a way of dodging individual responsibility.

The decision is then put to a sub-group of just two people, who explain their own thoughts, and discuss the problem. Then, one-by-one, team members join this group and, before hearing what others think, explain their views. A decision is taken only after input from all of the members has been received. In this method:

- All team members are individually posed with the issue that requires decision-making.
- They are given a certain amount of time to formulate their views and suggestions.
- The leader makes it clear that no decision will be arrived at until all members have given their views.
- Everyone presents his or her own views, without these being influenced by any previous discussion.
- The entire team considers the solutions presented, discussions take place, and a decision is taken.

Besides the Stepladder technique, you can use techniques such as Constructive Controversy, Negative Brainstorming, Brainwriting, and the Minority Influence Strategy, as ways of improving team decision-making. These techniques are explained in detail in Module 6.

Tips for Conducting Meetings

1. The agenda should be clear

- Specify the start time and end time and make it a norm for people to adhere to meeting schedules.
- The venue should be comfortable and have the necessary equipment.
- Work out an approximate schedule for time taken on each issue.
- Stick to the agenda unless deviation is unavoidable.

2. Encourage full participation

- Encourage everybody to contribute.
- Recognize that the more ideas there are on the table, the more productive the session is likely to be.
- Summarize ideas at the end of each section.

3. Make decisions

- Once people's views have been presented and issues have been discussed, move on efficiently to take the decision.
- Don't defer decisions to the next meeting unless this cannot be avoided.

4. Keep control

- Make sure that the mood of the meeting is positive, optimistic, warm, enthusiastic, and courteous.
- Acknowledge and thank people for their contribution.
- If discussions get heated, take a break.

5. Review the meeting

4.3 Apply This to Your Life

Having worked through this Module, you should now be able to give meaningful direction to your team. This includes:

- **Setting SMARTER goals, which are**
 - Specific – clear and concrete.
 - Measurable – so that they are manageable.
 - Attainable – shared and owned by your team members.
 - Relevant, and challenging.
 - Time-bound and duly prioritized.
 - Efficacious – helping team members believe they can achieve them.
 - Rewarded – so that people know “what’s in it for them” to achieve the goal.
- **Adding value to goals**
 - By aligning them with the larger vision of your organization.
 - By linking them to team members’ values.
 - By helping team members to link their personal aspirations to the team’s goals.
- **Supporting the accomplishment of goals**
 - Through an effective rewards system.
 - With regular feedback.
 - Through routine and expert coaching.
- **Providing a meaningful structure for your team by**
 - Defining challenging roles.
 - Creating mutual accountability.
 - Enabling strategy formulation.
- **Encouraging participation of all your team members in the decision-making process**
 - Through effective leadership.
 - By encouraging at work, as well as off-duty, team interaction.
 - Through adequate information sharing.
 - By using tools such as the Step Ladder Technique.

Now, make these techniques part of your routine management practice:

- Review your organization’s vision and mission statements, and from this, develop your team’s vision and mission statements, its action plan, and its goals.
- Establish an organizational system for achieving these goals. (While this is beyond the scope of this course, you can find out more about this using our [Make Time for Success](#) personal productivity course. You can also find out more at http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_83.htm, which explains the basics of Make Time for Success Action Program approach.)
- As part of this, and when you’re setting goals both for yourself and for members of your team, get into the habit of setting SMARTER goals. If it helps, make a flash card with this mnemonic on it, reminding you what each of these letters means.
- For important goals, enrich them by linking them with the primary and secondary wants and needs of individual team members.
- What’s more, think about what behaviors you’re rewarding, and review the rewards that you’re offering to make sure that they support the behaviors that you want to see.
- Get into the habit of feeding back to team members routinely. Where you detect problems, let team members know right away, so that you can “nip problems in the bud”. Where you “catch people doing things right”, praise them immediately, so that you can reinforce good behavior. You’ll be amazed by how this helps!

- Make sure that people clearly understand their roles, that they understand the significance of the things they're doing, and that they've accepted accountability for performing that role properly.
- Ensure that you create a positive atmosphere within all team interactions, so that people feel that they can participate fully. This means managing situations in which individual team members behave in a less than respectful way towards other members of your team.
- Encourage on-duty and off-duty interaction.
- Review the key types of information that your team needs to exchange, and make sure that the mechanisms are in place to exchange this information. This may mean setting up regular meetings, setting up appropriate reports, and suchlike.
- Review the common decisions that your team needs to make, and think about the way in which you make these decisions. Ensure that you're making decisions in the right way, and in such a way that you make best use of the strengths and skills of each member of your team. Where appropriate, put into place the appropriate procedures that you need to make sure that this happens routinely.

Module 5

Focus on Relationships: Create a Positive Team Climate

Interest: This module helps you build a healthy and happy climate in your team, so that team members can work together in a well-coordinated way, without fear, misunderstanding, politics, squabbling, or suspicion.

Need: A team might have highly-qualified members, great leadership, and a clear direction, but, unless team members can develop healthy working relationships with one-another, the team is unlikely succeed. This module helps you build a positive team climate, and it gives you the tools you need to create an atmosphere of trust, safety, and mutual support within your team.

Timing: 1 hour.

Range: This module looks at:

- Team climate, and the factors affecting it.
- The link between team climate and performance.
- The behaviors needed to build and sustain healthy relationships.
- Tools you can use to improve the working relationship between team members.
- Techniques for building trust, giving support, and providing safety in your team.
- Constructive feedback – the significance of it, and how to do it.

Objective: By the end of this module, you should be able to:

- Understand the factors that affect the climate of your team.
- Identify the things that improve and disrupt relationships in your team.
- Build and sustain healthy team relationships by:
 - Using the CONNECT model for strengthening weak relationships.
 - Creating openness within the team.
 - Mastering the art of giving and receiving feedback.
- Create a healthy team climate by:
 - Establishing trust.
 - Encouraging support.
 - Ensuring safety.

5.1 Introduction:

What do you think is the most common reason that teams fail in the workplace?

- a) Inadequate skill set of members.
- b) Poor leadership.
- c) Ambiguous goals.
- d) Ill-defined structure.
- e) Poor team climate.

While all of these factors can cause a team to fail, more often than not, it is the “poor team climate” that is the primary culprit. At least this is what the research indicates.

A recent study, involving 150 senior executives from the 1000 largest companies in the United States, revealed that issues with relationships have more than doubled in a decade. Managers today seem to be spending more and more time resolving issues related to interpersonal relations and team climate than ever before.

A team, by its very definition, is a collective effort. Naturally, if the team members don't work together, the team is likely to fail. Problems with the team climate, such as poor relationships, mistrust, mutual blame, and closed-mindedness, will, sooner or later, show up in the team's output.

On the other hand, you'll benefit immensely if you can build a positive climate within your team. You will be able to use a fundamental human need – the need to belong – to the team's advantage.

We first talked about this need in Module 1. According to Roy Baumeister and Mark Leary, leading experts, “the need to form and maintain strong, stable interpersonal relationships... is a fundamental human motivation”. This need to belong is satisfied when relationships are characterized by:

- Frequent interaction.
- A sense of stability and continuity.
- Mutual support and concern.
- Freedom from chronic conflict.

As the team's leader, you need to make sure that your team has these things. With them, team members should feel that they belong, which encourages them commit to the team and work hard to meet the team's goals.

In Module 4, we looked at the tools you need to help people work together effectively. We'll look at ways of resolving conflict in Module 7. This module helps you create a team environment that offers its members stability, continuity, and mutual support.

This module:

- Explains how to create and maintain a positive team climate, which helps people collaborate effectively and develop healthy, happy relationships.
- Helps you look beyond task performance, so that you can focus on the issues – such as relationships, trust, support and safety – that you need to address to get best performance from your team.

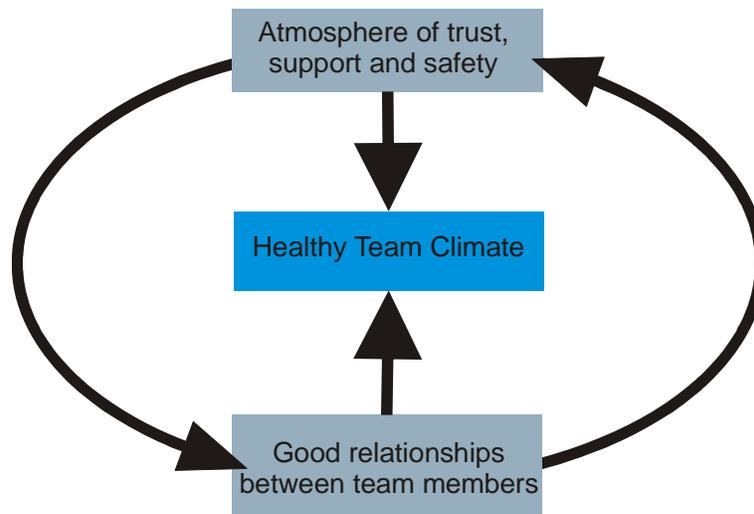
5.1.1 A Positive Team Climate

Two main factors contribute to a great team climate:

- **An atmosphere of trust, support and safety:** As the team’s leader, you need to set the tone here. The tools in this module give you tips and techniques that will help you build trust and provide safety. Use them to create the right atmosphere within your team.
- **Good relationship between team members:** Team members need to behave in such a way that they can build healthy working relationships between themselves. As the leader, it is your job to encourage the behaviors that breed good relationships.

These factors are interdependent, which makes your job more challenging. Good relationships lead to an atmosphere of trust, support, and safety, which, in turn, creates good relationships. This is shown in the figure below.

Figure 5.1.1.1 A Model of a Healthy Team Climate



As a leader, therefore, you need to work on both of these things at the same time. By doing so, you’ll boost:

- **Trust and mutual respect within the team:** When team members understand one another, they work better together. What’s more, process losses – such as free-riding – are minimized.
- **Productivity:** When people get on well together, they drop their defenses and stop wasting time “covering their backs”. This means that people have more time to focus on the real issues at hand.
- **Self-correction:** When people trust one-another, they’re more able to learn from one-another, and are more receptive to others’ suggestions. This means that team members, and the team itself, self-corrects more effectively than would otherwise be the case.

5.1.2 Team Relationships: Good vs. Bad

So, what exactly is a good relationship?

Look around yourself at the various relationships you have, and you’ll find the answer. Use the short exercise below to get started – this will help you to clarify your understanding of relationships in general, and then translate this understanding into the team context.

Look at the reasons you have listed. Chances are, the good ones are connected in some way or another to words, like “commitment”, “trust”, “empathy”, “good communication”, “understanding”, “honesty”, “warmth”, “helpfulness”, “respect”, and “fun”. All of these attributes are **perceived relationship enhancers**.

Now, the bad attributes correspond to words, like “lying”, “manipulative”, “judgmental”, “blaming”, “withholding”, “dominating”, “control freak”, “unfair”, “unreasonable”, “selfish”, “threatening”, and “inflexible”. These are the **perceived relationship spoilers**.

Think of these in the team’s context. More often than not, you will find that the positive attributes, such trust, good communication, a helpful attitude, and commitment, are the ones that you use to describe a good relationship with a fellow teammate.

In fact, research demonstrates that two behaviors, openness and supportiveness, affect team relationships the most.

Openness refers to the ability of the leader and team members to create an environment that supports the free flow of ideas. This is one in which people can say what is on their minds, they are willing to address problem areas, and they accept feedback and suggestions with an open mind.

Supportiveness refers to the inherent desire and willingness of the team leader and team members to help others succeed. This help can take many forms – emotional support, help with specific pieces of work, making available a valuable piece of information, providing constructive feedback and suggestions, or anything else that can help the other person succeed.

The next section shows you how you can encourage these behaviors in your own team.

5.2 Introduction to Tools

We mentioned earlier that a positive team climate has two main ingredients: an atmosphere of trust, support and safety; and good team relationships. Creating an atmosphere of trust, support, and safety lays the foundation for good team relationships. But, what if relationships have already gone sour?

In this section, we first give you a corrective tool to mend bad relationships, and then move on to help you build an atmosphere enriched with trust and mutual support.

5.2.1 The CONNECT Model – A Tested Approach to Building Effective Team Relationships

When we talked about **relationship enhancers** and **spoilers** above, we put the word “**perceived**” in front of them. The reason we did this is that these things reflect your own perceptions of these relationships, and each individual involved may have a different view of what’s going on in the relationship.

While we each have the right to present our own viewpoint, we need to be equally receptive and respectful to the views of others, as well: After all, it’s easy to believe that others are at fault where relationships turn bad, and to ignore the problems that we ourselves may be causing.

The CONNECT Model is an elegant tool for dealing with this problem. Developed by Frank LaFasto and Carl Larson in their book, *When Teams Work Best*, it’s a proven approach for building and sustaining healthy relationships between the members of a team.

This approach is used to improve relationships between two members of a team, and has been tested and used by more than 5000 people in about fifteen different organizations. Before we start explaining the Connect Model, a small word of caution: the conversations that emerge when you

use the tool may sound a little weird initially, and you might feel uncomfortable about using it (in practice, you may want to follow these steps informally). However, rest assured, you'll find that this is a powerful and useful relationship improvement tool!

Imagining that you're the person who wants to improve a relationship, follow these steps:

1. **Commit to the Relationship:** Here, the people experiencing relationship difficulties commit to one-another to talk about how they will improve the relationship between them.

Here, you would invite the other person to talk using this approach. Assuming some level of goodwill, the other person should agree to take part in the conversation – this gives a measure of commitment from both sides to improve the relationship. When you are both ready to talk, explain to one-another why you think it is important to give the relationship a try, what is it worth to each of you, and why you are both willing to put effort into it.

2. **Optimize Safety:** Next, create a feeling of safety for each other. Tell each other, in so many words, that you will do your best to not put each other on the defensive, and that you will make an effort to be more open to understanding and appreciating each other's views. You might feel a little awkward in talking to each other in this manner, but once safety is established, the rest of the process becomes easier to manage.
3. **Narrow Down to One Issue:** Now that the stage is set, you can identify the real issue that brought you to loggerheads with each other. Remember, you should conduct this discussion in the same manner as you would conduct conversations in a meeting. Communicate on an adult level, treat each other with respect, give out all of the necessary information, seek participation from each other, and so on. Also, remember to use a lot of "we" instead of "I" in your conversation: this will reiterate the fact that you are both in this discussion because you are part of a team, and team's interest should not suffer because the two of you are not on the best of terms with one another.
4. **Neutralize Defensiveness:** In your preparation for the conversation, try to come up with a list of words, phrases, or comments, which could put the other person on the defensive. Avoid these when you talk. Also, when you begin the conversation, ask the other person if any of your actions or words in the past have put him or her on the defensive, and avoid these when you talk. In the same way, explain to the other person how his or her behaviors have put you on the defensive in the past. The idea here is that you should both avoid doing and saying things that upset the other person, so that you can discuss the issue as constructively as possible.
5. **Explain and Echo:** Also in your preparation, think carefully about what you think caused the problem. Then, when you reach this stage, explain to the other person your observations, say how you felt about this, and describe any long-term impact that may result, or may have resulted. Once you have explained this, ask the other person to "echo" what you have just said, which means that he or she needs to rephrase what you just stated from his or her understanding. Once the other person has done this, ask for his or her perspective on the issue, and echo this perspective yourself. This will help you both understand one another's viewpoint while, at the same time, promoting mutual understanding.
6. **Change One Behavior Each:** Now that you have both understand one another, it's time for action. Discuss how you want to move forward with things now. What improvements are required? Choose one of these each, put your egos aside, and work to resolve these for the interest of your team.
7. **Track It:** Once you've made commitments, it's time to honor them, and this step is focused on tracking the commitments. Set a future date to meet with one another to discuss how things are going, and see if you can improve things still further.

By going through this exercise, you'll find that this effort has helped:

- **Bring rationality to the situation:** Since this approach asks participants to be well prepared for the CONNECT conversation, it gives people the time and space they need to think calmly about the situation.
- **Bring issues out into the open:** CONNECT helps you bring emotive issues out into clear sight in a controlled way, so that these can be addressed.
- **Promote team spirit and mutual accountability:** As team members resolve issues that previously disrupted their working relationship, this helps you improve the team climate.

The CONNECT model can be thought of as a **relationship builder**. The tools that follow can be called **Environment Builders**, as they help you develop a team climate characterized by trust, support, and safety.

5.2.2 Establishing Trust: Start with Yourself

Trust is like a thin thread: Once broken, it is almost impossible to put it together again properly.

How far do members of your team trust you?

As the team's manager, it's difficult to answer this question, and if you ask people, they're unlikely to give you an honest answer.

So, what do you do? Start with yourself. Trust is essential in a team. To create trust as a leader, you should:

- **Set an example of trust:** The best way a leader can embody trust within the team is by setting a good example. If you, as a leader, entrust people with meaningful responsibilities, they will learn to do the same with others.
- **Be trustworthy:** Be honest and open in your communication. If you say you'll do something, do it. If you don't like something, say so. If you like something, say so. If you make a mistake, admit it. Be worthy of the trust of your team.
- **Encourage team members to risk trusting each other:** *We take the risk of traveling by air, because we trust the capabilities of the pilot and of the aircraft.* Our ability to trust others determines, to an extent, our ability to take risks.
- **Emphasize that team members share the same fate:** When all of the members of your team understand that they are going to be affected equally by the performance of the team, they will be more willing to trust one another. *For example, in a team of mountain climbers, it's possible that two people may not get along. However, they are still ready to trust one another with their lives, because they know that achieving the bigger goal is important to both of them, and to the team as a whole.*

5.2.3 Encourage Support: "All for One, and One for All!"

If you mention the word "support" to many managers, you'll see them roll their eyes skyward. After all, many of us have experienced situations where people have "sucked us dry" for emotional support, and still wanted more. However, if you define "providing support" as "helping people be the best they can be", then this helps you understand how important it is if you're going to build a successful team.

As a leader, you'll need to provide different types of support to different members of your team at different points in time: you'll find some of these listed below, along with tips that will help you support team members effectively.

Informational Support

An insurance salesperson relies on the expertise of tax advisers, so that she can formulate a better sales pitch.

This is informational support. Sometimes, as a team leader, you have access to information that can help another team member to accomplish her task more effectively (sometimes this will be explicit information; other times it may be practical knowledge of what works in a situation and what does not). By sharing this information and experience, the individual who possesses it helps the individual who needs it improve the way in which they work, thereby providing support.

Instrumental Support

The month of March is almost over and the sales team has to complete just two more sales to meet their targets. Sarah has two big clients in the pipeline, but their paperwork is taking a lot of time. Alex chips in and takes over the paperwork, so that Sarah can focus on closing these sales.

This is typical example of providing instrumental support, where the support provider gives practical help to the support receiver, so that the receiver is able to achieve his or her goal.

A word of caution: It can be good to help out, but there's a saying that goes "Do a favor once, and it's kindness. Do it twice, and it becomes your duty". Don't fall into this trap.

Appraisal Support

Doctors often consult other doctors – specializing in related fields – to identify the correct diagnoses and treatments for their patients.

This is appraisal support. Team members help each other by presenting their own opinions about the situation at hand, so that the support receiver can learn from these, and is in a better position to make a good decision.

Growth and Development Support

People who are given challenging tasks are usually happier than those who are given mundane and monotonous jobs. Not surprisingly, these people are also more committed to their jobs.

For a job to be challenging, it needs to offer sufficient learning opportunities. These help individuals grow and develop, and help to make their jobs more satisfying. This is where you can support the members of your team directly – helping them to be the best they can be – with:

- **Skill Development:** Using techniques like SWOT Analysis and structured feedback, help the members of your team understand their own strengths and weaknesses, and, from this, identify the professional and technical skills that they need to develop. The SWOT approach helps them assess:
 - **Strengths:** By focusing on strengths, they can develop and further enhance areas of “natural talent”, becoming even more effective and successful.
 - **Weaknesses:** By understanding weaknesses (and who doesn't have them?) members of your team can develop missing skills where they're absolutely needed. Where those skills aren't absolutely needed, they can learn to manage those weaknesses, perhaps by avoiding these situations, or by developing strategies to minimize their significance.
 - **Opportunities:** These are almost always available – even in adversity. All you have to do is understand them for what they are. By helping your people identify the opportunities open to them, you can motivate them to take advantage of these opportunities.

- **Threats:** These are like ticking time bombs. Defuse them by anticipating them, and taking appropriate action. Again, by helping people understand threats and think about what they can do about them, you can motivate people to develop their skills and improve their situation.
- **Job Enrichment:** Researchers J. Richard Hackman, Greg Oldham and Anne Cummings looked at the way in which people's work roles affected their learning, well-being, creativity, and innovation. They found that there are five main ways in which people's jobs can be enriched, thereby helping people grow and enjoy their jobs more:
 - **Increasing Skill Variety:** This refers to the extent to which the task at hand challenges the skills and talents of the individual. *For example, an accountant can be asked to present his reports to the entire team, thereby getting practice with his presentation skills.*
 - **Enhancing Task Identity:** Here, you're helping people get the satisfaction of doing a complete job rather than just one, small, seemingly pointless job. *We can create more task identity for a person who was attaching power cords to a mixer by making him responsible for assembling the entire mixer.*
 - **Improving Significance:** By increasing significance, you increase the importance that others attach to the team member's job. As an example, some support jobs are vital to the success of your team, but attract little recognition. Here, it helps to highlight the importance of these jobs in meetings, so that the people who are doing these jobs, as well as other team members, understand the significance of these roles.
 - **Increasing Autonomy:** This refers to the freedom people have to perform tasks in their own way. It goes without saying that jobs with more autonomy are more satisfying.
 - **Giving Better Feedback:** When people receive plenty of feedback, they can improve their performance quickly, and do a better job.

Emotional Support

At the start of this section we said that there are many other forms of support that you can give other than emotional support, and we've looked at these.

However, emotional support *is* a necessary part of a team leader's job, particularly where people are going through difficult times. It can mean many things: a shoulder to cry on, an encouraging word, empathy with problems people are working through, or even a joke to lift someone's mood. Here are some tips that will help you provide emotional support:

- Be an active and open listener.
- Do not rush in with your advice and suggestions. Give people plenty of time and space to express their emotions.
- Show warmth, and a caring attitude towards the person in need of support.
- Recognize the importance of people's emotions and feelings, and allow people time to express and sort through their feelings.

It's sometimes difficult to know how much support you need to give. Just remember that the purpose of support is to help people accomplish the task at hand. You need to focus on helping people "stand on their own feet", rather than becoming cozily dependent on your support – thereby sapping your own emotional energy.

So, do people within your team support one-another? Do they help one-another in difficulty, and help one-another become the best they can be? And do you encourage and reward team members who display this behavior? Always remember that the team has to emerge as the "hero". The success of all is more important than that of one. Encourage people within your team to extend support to each other wherever and whenever they can, and in particular where people are going through hard times in their personal life.

However, they should also be cautious of people who seem to absorb all of the support they can get, and still want more. This is where it helps to remember that by supporting someone, you're helping him or her be the best they can be. Dependency is not part of this, and this is where "tough love" is sometimes important!

5.2.4 Interventions: Arrivals, Departures and Between

Take a few minutes to answer the questions below.

1. Does your team have a standard approach for welcoming new members to the team? If "Yes", how do you do this?
2. Do you have in-groups and out-groups in your team? If "No", how do you, as a leader, avoid these?
3. If somebody leaves your team, what does your team do? Does it give a proper farewell? If "Yes", can you describe one such incident?

As a team leader, you need to be careful about the way that you handle situations like the arrival of a new team member and the departure of an existing member of your team. You also need to deal with issues of favoritism and alienation, and minimize these where you can. Here are some things that you can do:

- **Welcome People Warmly:** When we start something new, we'll often bring a lot of positive emotion to it. *When we begin a new exercise routine, we are brimming over with energy and enthusiasm, confident that we are going to lose weight within a given timeframe. How long this enthusiasm lasts, however, is another story.*

People are at their most positive when they first join a team. Similarly, when a new team is formed, people tend to feel positively about the team's challenge. As the team's leader, you need to capitalize on this by celebrating the formation of the team, and making a real point of welcoming new team members.

By celebrating the formation of the team, you help people overcome their initial inhibitions, so that they can get to know one-another quickly. Also, when a new team member joins a team that is in the performing stage (remember forming, storming, norming and performing?), make sure that they are properly welcomed, and that they get a good opportunity to get to know their teammates. Small rituals – such as a lunch, personalized introductions, and welcome emails – all go a long way.

- **Help People Feel Included:** Often, team leaders make the mistake of indulging in favoritism, by giving undue importance to their favorite members. Not only does this create jealousy amongst other team members, it can also lead them to feel excluded and unwanted. In order to avoid such a situation, you need to make sure that all members are treated and supported equally and fairly. *Jane might be the go-getter on your team, but this doesn't mean that you should assign every assignment to her. Maybe Shane, with his meticulous attention to detail, is better suited to take on that crucial research project?* Think fairly. Who is best suited to do what? Is anyone overburdened? Are some people stuck with the “donkey work” more often than others?
- **Say Goodbye Positively:** When relationships end, we all feel a sense of loss, and there may be feelings of frustration, disappointment or bitterness on either side, particularly when people leave at times of stress, or leave for a better job elsewhere. When people leave, make the effort needed to say goodbye in a positive way, and to celebrate the contributions of the departing team members.
- **Set Up “Co-Coaching” Between Team Members:** If you have issues of team cohesiveness, a good way of addressing this is to set up co-coaching sessions between team members. Here, team members “contract” with one-another to give each other a pre-specified amount of time – say, half-an-hour each week – in which both members get the same amount of time to discuss work-related problems. This helps to ensure that people get sufficient time to voice their feelings, address problems, and get regular support.

5.2.5 Ensure Safety: Allow People to “Take Risks” Safely

Members of a team feel safe when they do not see the possibility of an attack or a threat from other members of their team.

In an unsafe team environment, team members are anxious about other people's motives, and do not fully trust one-another. *Team members who are often “made fun of” will inevitably stop contributing ideas and suggestions in team meetings, as a way of avoiding ridicule.* According to leading researcher Daniel Goleman, chronic anxiety and anger not only undermine the safety and effectiveness of the team, but also threaten the health of the individual.

Safety refers to the ability of one member to trust the intentions of another. Therefore, it is essential that each member is held responsible for promoting safety, and that there are no exceptions to the rule. Members who behave in a way that leaves others feeling threatened need to change their behavior.

A point to remember here is that safety is not the same as comfort: on the contrary, it actually encourages people to take social risks – for example, by voicing their opinions, finding new ways of working, deviating from the routine when appropriate, and exploring new opportunities.

As such, leaders can build a safe environment for their team by encouraging the members to accept one another, and by promoting support, warmth and positive humor within their teams.

Humor as a tool

Positive humor helps team leaders and team members build a relaxed and enjoyable team climate. Not only is it a rich source of positive energy, it also helps people to be more committed to their job, as they enjoy their work more. According to a study done by R. Wilburn Clouse and K. L. Spurgeon, jokes stimulate creativity and develop trust amongst team members. This is why it's good to encourage harmless humor in your team.

However, guard against negative or cruel uses of humor. These leave people feeling unhappy, or diminished, or bad about themselves. This damages you team, and it needs to be dealt with immediately.

5.2.6 Openness: Eliminate Fear, Discuss the Real Issues

For each of the statements below, check the appropriate column to show whether you agree or disagree with it.

Statement	Agree	Disagree
We have an open environment in our team.		
People in my team are free to express themselves.		
Everyone can see how well the team is doing.		
I'm not aware of people behaving in a "political" way.		
My teammates are very clear about their roles.		
Performance is evaluated in a fair and transparent way.		

So do you agree with all of these statements? If not, your team is probably not as effective as it could be, and you may need to work on creating a more transparent and open environment in your team.

People work best in an open environment. They know what they're supposed to be doing, and they're comfortable that they know what they have to do to succeed. They can build good working relationships with one another, and take positive risks, confident that they won't be "stabbed in the back". And they feel safe saying what's on their minds, and sharing ideas freely. All of these things help people work together effectively to overcome any problems that they encounter while working to achieve the team's goals.

On the face of it, creating openness seems like a simple task: after all, surely people just need to communicate more effectively and talk things over? Unfortunately, this often doesn't happen, for a variety of reason. This is where, as a team leader, you have to work to create a more open team environment:

- **Open Up Communication:** In the Leadership Module (Module 3) and in the Direction-Setting Module (Module 4), you learned how to create an environment where people are not afraid to voice their opinions. Use these tools: they'll help people trust one-another and communicate with one-another more effectively about the real issues that affect team performance. Key things to remember are:
 - Having sufficient contact with people to communicate effectively.

- Communicating openly, and supportively.
 - Listening actively, and in a non-judgmental way.
 - Keeping your message and your body language consistent.
 - Valuing ritual greetings, and small talk between team members.
- **Make Roles Clear:** Make sure that people's roles are clearly defined, so that they are completely clear about what is expected of them. This helps to remove confusion.
 - **Make Results Transparent:** Team members need to know how well they're doing. In particular, they need to know where to improve, so that corrective action can be taken. As we've said earlier, you need to make your expectations clear and align rewards with these expectations to maximize motivation.
 - **Eliminate "Politics":** Organizational politics can seriously undermine effective teamwork. It leads people to mistrust one another and waste energy "watching their backs", instead of taking positive risks and focusing on the team's mission. This is where you, as the team's leader, need to act as a shield, protecting the team from organizational politics and bureaucracy.
 - **Involve Your Team in Objective-Setting:** Where possible and appropriate, involve members of your team in setting priorities. Not only will this help you take full advantage of team members' expertise and specialist knowledge, it will help your people buy into the team's objectives.

5.2.7 Feedback: Treat it as a Gift

From time to time, relationships within your team will need to change. This happens as objectives change, as people's roles change, and as people themselves change.

This is where feedback is essential, as it's one of the most important approaches that we can use to improve relationships. If someone is not performing to expectations, it can take a lot of courage for someone to point this out to him or her. However, because you're giving that person the opportunity to change for the better, this can almost be considered as a "gift" that you're giving to your fellow teammate.

Just as it's difficult to give feedback, it takes a lot of courage and maturity to receive such a "gift" positively, and without getting defensive about it: this is why the giving and receiving of feedback is so often a tense experience. To make feedback more constructive, do the things below, and ensure that the members of your team do these things too:

- **Remove the Tension – Use the 4 Ps**
 - **Make it Paperless:** If asked to describe the appraisal process in our organizations, most of us would describe it as a form-filling exercise.

Feedback should be much more than this. Yes, forms are needed to document the appraisal process, and to confirm that a review has taken place. However, this is only for administrative purposes, and cannot in any way constitute the sole way of providing feedback.

The most effective and valuable feedback lies in the daily interactions that take place between the leader and the members of his or her team, whereby the leader feeds back on the success or failure of tasks, suggests how they can be done better, and praises when they've been done well. (It also lies in the feedback from team members to the team's leader, helping him or her change approach when needed.)

- **Make it Prompt:** As such, feedback should immediately follow the behavior that needs correction, or follow the behavior that needs to be praised.

It cannot only be an annual exercise as, after this long, there is little you can do to make

amends: At that point, the only purpose it is serving is to make you point fingers at the person who was not able to deliver, which, quite rightly, causes a lot of tension in the team environment as people tend to be on the defensive.

By contrast, immediate feedback allows people to correct their behavior immediately, while problems are still small. It also helps them build their self-confidence, meaning that they work more quickly and effectively. All of this makes feedback much less painful, and help team members become effective much more quickly than would otherwise be the case.

As such, good managers understand the saying that “If team members learn something they don’t already know during a formal appraisal, then you’ve probably failed them as a manager.”

One word of caution here: prompt feedback should not be mistaken with rushed feedback. If an emotionally charged event has taken place in your team, wait a day or two to give your feedback, so that members who were involved in the event have had time to cool down and reason out their behavior. This helps them understand what went wrong, and means that they will be more open to receiving feedback.

- **Don’t link it with Payment:** Giving a raise isn’t the same as giving feedback. Pay and feedback should be de-linked, and ideally should be discussed in separate sessions.

Someone can have performed excellently throughout the year; however there may be no money available to give a raise. By linking the feedback and pay, you undermine good feedback when you’re unable to reward good performance.

- **Use it to build Performance:** The focus and purpose of the entire feedback process should be to improve performance.

There should be no hidden agenda, even if, in the back of your mind, you’re dissatisfied with someone’s performance and think you might have to let them go.

Keep feedback frequent, and keep it constructive rather than destructive.

- **Master the Art of Giving Feedback**

Liz McGill and Ian Beatty (in *Action Learning: A Practitioner’s Guide*, London: Kogan Page) provide useful suggestions about giving effective feedback:

- **Make it clear** – Don’t allow for any confusion.
- **Emphasize the positive** – This helps make even negative feedback a positive thing.
- **Be specific** – Avoid general or vague comments, and get to the point.
- **Focus on behaviors** – Rather than the person.
- **Refer to behavior** – That needs to be changed.
- **Be descriptive** – Rather than evaluative.
- **Own the feedback** – Use “I” statements to explain your comments.
- **Be very careful with advice** – The best help is helping the person to come to a better understanding of their issue, how it developed, and how he or she can identify actions that address the issue more effectively.

Besides these, it can sometimes be good practice to seek feedback on the feedback given. Make sure that your feedback has been understood, that it fairly reflects the facts of the situation, and that the person you’re feeding back to clearly understands what he or she needs to do as a result.

Receive Feedback Gracefully

Giving or receiving feedback is only unpleasant if you allow it to be. If you give it often, and receive it with a reasonable and positive attitude, you will find your team improving its capabilities quickly, and you'll find yourself richer in experience and learning.

Here are some tips that you should keep in mind while receiving feedback:

- **Seek Feedback:** When we are engrossed in our task, we can be so focused on it that we develop “tunnel vision”. The people around us, on the other hand, may see things that we need to know about. In seeking feedback, we have an opportunity to learn about these things. Also, the more actively we seek feedback, the more quickly we'll be able to identify and overcome our own limitations.
- **Avoid negative emotions:** It doesn't help to tell the feedback provider that he or she is wrong. Nor does it help to argue, justify yourself, or be defensive. By doing this, you're failing to learn from the feedback, and you're discouraging further feedback from that person.
- **Do not take feedback personally:** Even if people have given you feedback rudely, be smart enough to think about what's been said, and make changes if you need to.
- **Do not worry too much about feedback:** If you're upset by a particular piece of feedback, give yourself time to become emotionally detached first, and then try to reason it through rationally.
- **Identify and ignore unnecessary feedback:** Feedback, at times, may need to be ignored, because the changes it asks for may not be feasible. It's possible too that the person giving it may be wrong in their understanding of the situation. Here, the best you can do is to thank the person giving the feedback for their time.

Giving Team Feedback

Just as you need to give feedback to individuals, you also need to provide feedback to your team as a whole. This helps you develop and improve team performance. Depending on the situation, teams can be evaluated for their:

- **Outcomes:** This is the success of the team's delivery to its customers.
- **Relationships and Viability:** If team members refuse to work with one another again, this means that the team is not viable for future projects. This may not matter for some situations. For others, it's a serious problem.
- **Team Member Well-Being:** This refers to the learning, growth and job-satisfaction that team members get from their work and from their team relationships.
- **Innovation:** This refers to the experiments that team members engage in to develop new and improved ways of doing things. This is an important tool for measuring the effectiveness of a team, and is something we'll look at in the next Module.

In this module, we've seen how creating an atmosphere of trust, support, and safety helps to strengthen the bond between team members. This cohesion helps to move the team forward as a group, and turns the team into a powerful, unified force, capable of achieving the team's mission.

Unfortunately, in some situations, this cohesion can also undermine team performance. In our next module, on Innovation and Problem Solving, we help you understand and counter problems like “groupthink”, where overly high team cohesion leads to poor decision-making.

5.3 Apply This to Your Life

- Think about the relationships you have with the people around you. Could any of them be improved? If so, explore using the CONNECT model to do this (see 5.2.1).

- Review the way in which you and individual members of your team have interacted in the last month. Have you behaved in a trustworthy, open and honest manner? And are team members behaving in a trustworthy way with one-another? Make sure that this happens from this point forward.
- Think about the support that you provide to members of your team. Do they have all of the information they need to do a good job? Do you and they “pitch in” to help one-another out? Do you and they share experience and opinions as to how to do something? Do people help one another build the skills they need, and develop their jobs to be rewarding and satisfying? And, when people are having a hard time, do they provide appropriate emotional support? Make sure that you provide these types of support to members of your team, and ensure that your team members provide this for one-another (see 5.2.3).
- When people join your team, how do you welcome them? Within your team, how do you make sure that everyone is included? And when someone leaves, how do you celebrate his or her contribution? Make sure that people are welcomed and integrated properly, and departures are managed in a positive way.
- Think about your team climate. Do people seem happy with one another and respectful towards one-another? Or are some individuals critical of others, or do they tease them, or leave them feeling uncomfortable? Deal with these negative behaviors – they’re damaging the effectiveness of your team. What’s more, promote positive, good-natured humor – it makes work so much more enjoyable!
- Continuing the focus on team climate, review your answers to the team openness questionnaire in 5.2.6. So do you have an open team climate? If not, take the steps described to create it.
- Feedback is a fundamentally important tool for improving people’s performance. As such, you need to be comfortable giving it and receiving it on a routine, everyday basis.

Think about the way in which feedback is given and received within your team: are you providing feedback routinely to members of your team? And are they providing feedback to you and to one-another? If not, make it a point to provide feedback – positive as well as negative – from this point onwards. What’s more, make sure you receive it positively yourself!

Module 6

Boost Innovation: Develop the Creativity of Your Team

Interest: This module will help you develop your team to be a more creative, innovative unit: this is exceptionally important if it's going to be fully effective. As such, we outline techniques that you can use to spark a flood of new ideas from team members.

Need: Creativity and innovation are often problem areas for teams, and common barriers can prevent teams from being fully effective in generating and implementing new ideas. This module helps you to understand, confront, and overcome these barriers.

Timing: 2 hours.

Range: This module explains:

- The typical problems that stifle creativity and innovation in teams.
- The strategies you can use to boost innovation in your team.
- Brainstorming techniques – classic, electronic, and “brainwriting”.
- “Minority Influence Strategy”.
- “Constructive Controversy”.
- Innovation initiatives: clarifying expectations; and providing support, safety and rewards.

Objectives By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Understand and analyze the barriers that are blocking creativity and innovation in your team.
- Formulate a strategy to kick-start innovation in your team.
- Apply creativity techniques, such as brainstorming, minority influence strategy and constructive controversy to develop ideas.
- Clarify your expectation for innovation.
- Provide support, safety, and reward for innovation.

6.1 Introduction

Several decades ago, two researchers, Norman Maier and Allen Solem, conducted an experiment in which they formed several groups and presented each with mathematical problems. In some groups, they deliberately included individuals who knew the answers to the problems. Yet, most groups – even those that included these people – could not provide the correct solutions to these problems.

Strange? Not really. Research shows that individuals, when working in a team, can tend either to forget what they know, or just simply do not express their own ideas. As such, teams can often stifle independent thinking and diminish people's creativity.

Time and again, researchers have contrasted the creative, decision-making skills of individuals working alone, compared with those of individuals working within a team setting. These experiments have repeatedly demonstrated the same results: individuals, when left to themselves, tend to produce more ideas than when working as part of a team. If you add up the number of ideas generated by different individuals working alone, you will find that this number is very much larger than the number of ideas generated by all of those individuals, when working together in a team.

You might feel that the quality of the ideas produced by the team effort would be better; however, this is usually not the case, either. Research shows that, typically, individuals working alone produce ideas of a quality that is equal to the quality of the ideas produced by a brainstorming group.

So, how do you, the team leader, translate these research findings into practical action:

- Do you abandon the “team” concept when faced with a challenge requiring “creativity and innovation”, or
- Do you understand the barriers that hamper creativity and innovation in a team, and develop strategies to overcome them?

The answer is often the second choice. After all, how much richer and more developed would ideas be, if they drew on the imagination and diverse experience of everyone in your team?

“Creativity” means the creation and development of new, original ideas. “Innovation” means the successful implementation of these creative ideas. Consider this: aren't both profoundly important for the success of your team and organization, in anything other than the very short term? And can you afford to abandon the “team” concept when faced with challenges that require creative, innovative thinking? Not really.

The only real option open to you is that you understand the hurdles that you face, develop strategies for overcoming these hurdles, and actively encourage a climate that supports innovation in your team. This module will give you the information you need to do this.

6.1.1 Barriers to Creativity

Several different things can undermine creativity in teams. In Module 4, we saw that team trying to make decisions can experience problems. Some team members may be dominating, and they may stifle the contributions of others. And problems like groupthink, social loafing, social conformity and assumed responsibility, may derail the process.

This was why we gave you the Stepladder Technique as a way of avoiding the pitfalls of the team decision-making process.

In the same way, you also need collective thinking from the team when you want to generate creative ideas. Here, the same problems that hinder team decision-making stifle creativity and kill innovation, as well.

Brainstorming is one of the most fundamental tools used to generate creative ideas in teams. The idea with it is that hearing other people's ideas stimulates creative thinking in all team members. Unfortunately, this doesn't always work.

Some team members may get **blocked** by the clamor of too many creative voices, forgetting their ideas while waiting to talk; being unable to get a word in as other, more assertive, team-members dominate conversation; or deciding not to express their thoughts. Also, team members may find that hearing other people's ideas interferes with their own ability to generate their own ideas. This is known as the **blocking effect**.

Some team members, especially those who are nervous or a little shy, may suffer from **evaluation apprehension**. They are worried that their ideas aren't "good enough" or will be received negatively, and so they don't express them. If team members feel that someone in authority is watching them, they can become even more nervous and, therefore, less effective.

Another problem that teams face is **groupthink**. Groupthink emerges in teams that:

- Consist of a tight-knit group of people, who are more focused on maintaining cohesiveness and unanimity than with the quality of ideas they are generating.
- Are isolated from outside information and opinions.
- Are dominated by one individual.

When such teams are under pressure to achieve a decision, they can often tend to go along with the first available option on which they get close to a consensus. This means that they may not bother to generate ideas systemically, and may not search for better options. They may ignore opinions that come from people who are not considered to be core members of the group. Worse still, these groups may discount or block information from outside of the group, especially where this information goes against the group view.

All of this takes a toll on creativity. The group zeroes in on mediocre solutions to a problem, when other, better solutions exist. In non-critical situations this may not be too much of a problem, however in critical situations, or where the team is competing with other teams, this can be a real cause of failure.

Another thing that kills creativity is the **pressure to conform** to a majority opinion. Here, members of the team may disagree with the majority opinion, however they may decide to suppress this disagreement. They may feel under pressure to go along with the majority opinion, and do not, therefore, express their views.

To some extent, this is a basic, human tendency. However, this tendency is often accentuated by the team climate, and creativity suffers because creativity in a team is directly proportional to the different ideas that team members generate.

This is taken to an extreme with another natural human tendency, an excessive **deference to authority**. Here, team members will suppress their own ideas and will simply go along with the suggestion proposed by the figure of authority. This is a particularly serious problem where lower status individuals are in direct contact with clients, and where the figure of authority is remote from them: here, "the boss" may be the person with the weakest grasp of the situation, and he or she may actually have the least effective ideas.

So, with all of these problems to overcome, how do you unlock the full creativity of your team?

This module helps you do this and, in the process, generate a flood of original, creative ideas.

6.1.2 The Innovation Initiative

So, how can you boost innovation in your team? Below, choose the answer that you think is correct.

- a) Set a stimulating performance challenge, an inspiring vision, and clear goals.
- b) Encourage high levels of team member participation, characterized by positive interaction, good information sharing, and mutual respect.
- c) Provide an open, supportive, safe climate; and good relationships.
- d) b and c.
- e) a, b and c.
- f) a, b, c and something more.

The right answer is f.

To promote innovation within your team, you need to set a stimulating performance challenge, create an inspiring vision of the future, set clear goals, encourage high participation levels, and create the right team climate. However, these things are not sufficient by themselves: you need something more. This “something more” involves building a climate of innovation – developing an **Innovation Initiative** within your team.

This means building a climate where team members are:

- **Expected to innovate:** Yes, it’s difficult to set clear performance metrics for innovation. However, it is vital that team members know that innovation is an important part of their job.
- **Empowered with verbal and practical support for innovation:** Many teams are supposed to innovate as a part of their objective, however, no support is provided for implementing new ideas. This is a mistake.

Of course, people need to be supported with the right words and intentions when they suggest new ideas and approaches. Team members need to acknowledge the new ideas positively, express approval for the effort involved, and explore, develop and evaluate ideas respectfully.

However, where these ideas are useful, you then need to provide practical support for them. Team members need to cooperate to build upon the new idea, and resources and time need to be dedicated to apply the idea.

- **Ensured a safe atmosphere for innovation:** Thomas Edison learned 1800 ways **not** to make a light bulb filament before he learned **how to** make one. This shows that innovation involves taking risks, and risks do lead to failure at times. If team members are scared that they’ll be penalized for failure, they will not take risks, and they will not innovate successfully. Make sure that your team develops a stomach for calculated risk-taking, and make absolutely sure that you and your organization do not punish failure, just as long as people have applied their honest, best efforts.
- **Encouraged to Innovate:** Evaluating innovation is a very different thing from evaluating business functions, such as purchasing or finance. Your need to develop ways to recognize, applaud, and compensate attempts at innovation. You need to recognize that true innovation is a two-part thing – creativity, followed by implementation – and you need to foster and support both.

The next section gives you some strategies that you can use to create a climate of innovation within your team.

6.2 Introduction to Tools

This module introduces you to two types of tools:

- **Creativity Tools:** The first group of tools gives you techniques that you can use to stimulate a flow of ideas from members of your team. These techniques help everyone within the team to look at things in an altogether different way; and help them overcome problems that stifle creativity and innovation within it.

We then give you ways of overcoming barriers, such as groupthink, conformity, and excessive obedience, so that your team can make sensible decisions about which of these creative ideas will work the best for it.

- **Innovation Initiative Tools:** The focus of the second group of tools is slightly different. These give you ways in which you can build an environment that supports innovation.

6.2.1 Brainstorming: Set Ground Rules, Get Productive

Brainstorming is a popular way of generating ideas, in which a group of people (the team, in this context) come together and attempt to produce as many ideas as possible. The idea behind this is that hearing other people's ideas stimulates a flow of creative thinking in all team members, and that people's thinking "feeds on" other people's suggestions, provoking a flood of ideas.

Unfortunately, this doesn't always work in the way we'd want it to. The common problems that we've already mentioned – blocking, evaluation apprehension, conformity, obedience, and groupthink – tend to prevent team members from developing and expressing their own ideas as effectively as they might.

However, if you make some ground rules clear from the outset, you can overcome these problems:

- First, let people know what you expect from them – plenty of ideas, the more the better, and expressiveness. Assure team members that they are free to express any idea that comes to their mind, even the really "far-out" ones. Let them know that they are not being judged on quality here: the purpose here is to generate a lot of ideas.
- Then, give team members some time to generate their own, individual ideas – alone, and silently.
- When people express their ideas during the idea generation stage, make sure that others don't judge them or make critical comments – this will instantly shut down creativity.
- Encourage "piggy-backing". Emphasize that all ideas belong to the team and, therefore, members should try to modify and extend the ideas of others whenever possible. The whole purpose of teambuilding is that members derive inspiration from one another.
- Insert some deliberate periods of silence in the process. These breaks will help team members to collect their thoughts.
- Set aside plenty of time for the brainstorming session.
- If team members are straying from the task, talking in pairs, becoming critical, or monopolizing the discussion, refocus their attention on the issue at hand.
- Ask team members to take some time, once the session over, to reflect and record additional ideas.
- Make the brainstorming session fun – at least a little. This makes people less apprehensive, and relaxes team members. Sometimes, the craziest ideas can contain the seeds of a brilliant solution.

6.2.2 Beyond Brainstorming: Add a Twist, Get an Advantage

If you're not getting the ideas you want from brainstorming, or you just feel that you need a change, you could add a twist to the process by using some of the techniques below. Just remember that the classic brainstorming ground rules, such as being non-judgmental and encouraging members to be expressive, must still be followed while using these tools.

You could try **brainwriting**. As the name indicates, this technique asks team members to write down their ideas. Each team member writes down his idea on a piece of paper. Then, he or she passes the paper on to the next team member. This team member adds a bit more to the idea. The process continues until all papers complete a round of the table.

Members, when adding their thoughts to the paper, are urged to piggyback on the ideas that have already been noted on that particular sheet of paper so far. This challenges members to think in different ways.

As an example, let's say that the issue being discussed is "raising productivity". Floyd's first idea, which he noted down on his idea sheet, was "give performance-related bonus". If the usual discussion format was followed, Floyd would give reasons to support his idea and hear the opposing viewpoints. But now, as soon as he has written down his idea and handed over the sheet of paper to his neighbor at the table, he has lost ownership of the idea. It is up to his neighbor to build further upon that idea. Instead, Floyd has been handed his neighbor, Alofa's, idea sheet, with the idea of "improve training". Now, he has to think on a different tangent to develop this idea further.

The other benefit of the brainwriting technique is that it is useful in overcoming the "blocking effect", whereby hearing other people's ideas blocks individuals from developing their own ideas. This approach also comes in handy if the team finds it difficult to come together at the same time. The idea papers can be circulated between all team members over a number of days.

Once all of the idea papers have been collected, you can categorize and combine the ideas to prepare a shortlist of the ideas generated. The next step is to analyze these ideas: you can do this again through brainwriting, or in a traditional, face-to-face meeting. (If you're doing this using brainwriting, each person writes down his/her views about the shortlisted ideas and then individual viewpoints are assessed.)

You might want team members to focus on some key issues at the analysis stage. If so, we suggest that you provide pointers regarding these issues, instead of leaving the analysis as a completely "free-wheeling" exercise. For instance, if one of the ideas generated is to "outsource operations to third party", you might want to ensure that budget constraints and quality issues are considered as part of this.

However, be warned that it isn't always a good idea to provide pointers, because they push team members to think in a pre-determined way: provide pointers only when necessary, and then remember to leave lots of space under the "any other issue" heading. Make sure that members of your team members realize that they don't have to limit their analysis to the pointers alone.

Then, there is the electronic version of brainwriting, which is sometimes called "brain-netting". A file, to which all team members have access, is set up in the network. The file is headlined with the issue being discussed. Members simply make a note of their ideas in the file. This technique is particularly useful if the members of a team work in different geographical locations.

You can also try the "Table of Elements" technique. If an issue is complex and has many different components, break it down into a set of elements. Then, brainstorm each element, individually. This can generate a vast number of ideas, and can generate ideas in the level of detail that you want, rather than generating ideas that are superficial and simplistic.

Remember, you should not block wild ideas when using any of these techniques: these will contribute to creativity later on.

This example illustrates the Table of Elements technique.

A school wants to organize a games meet. The organizing committee entrusted with the task breaks it down into several elements – participants, venue, games, sponsors, and time. Now, the team brainstorms ideas under each of these headings. Both the elements and the ideas are listed in a table. See the table given below.

Participants	Venue	Games	Time	Sponsors
Teams from different schools	Stadium	Soccer	Weekend	Sports companies
Parents	School grounds	Kite-flying	After School	Stores in the neighborhood
Students of the school only	Community park	Races		Companies for which parents work
Teachers	Mall	Gymnastics		Restaurants

Next, the team has to choose appropriate combinations of the ideas generated by the table of elements. Let us say our organizing, by selecting ideas from the table through a totally, random process, has come up with the combination of teachers, mall, gymnastics, weekend, and stores in the neighborhood.

They translate this into a possible action plan – they suggest a gymnastics competition, where teams of students, each led by a teacher, compete to win prizes supplied by local stores, to be donated to local “good causes”. The event is to be conducted in the middle of the mall. The mall and the stores are co-sponsors for the event. The former gets better footfalls and the latter, publicity. Everyone has a good time and teachers and students bond better.

6.2.3 Minority Influence Strategy: Empower Minority, Harness Advantage

Often, minorities – for whatever reason they’re in a minority – hesitate to express their viewpoints in a team, perhaps because they feel that they don’t stand a chance against the majority, or perhaps because they don’t want to draw attention to themselves by expressing ideas that may be seen as offbeat.

This costs the team heavily, in terms of creativity, as research shows that a team benefits immensely if it actively considers minority views.

When someone in “the majority” expresses an idea, other team members may go along with it without really thinking, for the sake of team unity. However, when someone in a minority expresses a viewpoint in an effective, well-deliberated manner, it can cause people to think in a lot more detail about what they’re doing. Even if the minority view isn’t actually correct, it influences the team to test its assumptions and see things differently, and this enhances creativity.

As a leader, you need to harness the advantage of minority influence. You need to manage your team in such a way that all your team members, even if they feel in a minority in the team, have the confidence to speak their minds, loud and clear.

You can do so by providing a safe, supportive atmosphere, and by training all team members to prepare, rehearse, and present their viewpoint to the group. Teach the members of your team to:

- Express their ideas in a clear, defined, and compelling way.
- Back their ideas with a well thought-through implementation plan. This will persuade people in the majority to take these ideas more seriously.
- Anticipate objections, and find solutions to overcome them or arguments to counter them.
- Find allies within the team before presenting the idea to the entire group.
- Share relevant information with all team members.
- Present their idea as clearly as possible, remain consistent, and be prepared to repeat themselves over and over again.
- Listen to other's views and objections with an open mind and factor them in when required.

Gradually, you'll find that the minorities in your team become more expressive, and that your entire team becomes more open-minded and creative.

6.2.4 Negative Brainstorming: Turn Criticisms into Solutions

So, once you've generated plenty of new ideas, how do you choose the best ones?

And how do you ensure that groupthink, conformity, and excessive obedience don't mess up your team's judgment? The next two tools will help you do this.

Negative brainstorming involves getting your team to brainstorm all of the possible problems that could result from an idea. This promotes critical thinking in a team, and ensures that the team considers as many aspects of an idea as it can before implementing it.

Start by picking a new idea that seems to be promising. The team gathers together and brainstorms on all the negative aspects of the idea – what is wrong with it, what bad consequences it could lead to, why it may be difficult to implement, and so on. Just as you would in classical brainstorming, encourage members to express whatever idea comes to mind.

Next, get your team to shortlist the most significant criticisms. This done, the team discusses how the idea can best be adapted to deal with these criticisms. Is it possible to make any changes in the idea so that these problems can be overcome?

At this stage, there can be two outcomes. Either the team will realize that the idea has some fundamental weaknesses that cannot be overcome, or the team will build upon the idea and improve it further.

The advantage of negative brainstorming is that it provides team members with an opportunity to criticize ideas constructively, without blaming anyone.

Tip:

You can take this further by mixing brainstorming with the "Six Thinking Hats" technique, which tests new ideas by providing a useful formal structure for examining data, exploring people's intuition, looking at the issue pessimistically, looking at it positively, and exploring it creatively.

For more on Six Thinking Hats, go to:

http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_07.htm.

6.2.5 Constructive Controversy: Create Conflict, Construct Solutions

What happens when a team is divided on the merits of a new idea – when some people support it and others oppose it? In some teams, the fate of the idea is determined by the status of the individuals involved: if the status of the supporting group is higher, the idea is accepted, and if the status of the supporting group is lower, the idea is rejected.

Other teams use techniques such as voting to resolve the situation. However, this isn't always such a good idea, because issues of obedience and conformity can come into play. And, sometimes, all voting actually does is postpone conflict rather than reduce it.

So, what do you do when people in your team disagree about an idea? Often, the best thing to do is to try to use the disagreement to construct a better solution. In fact, it's often worth actively seeking out controversy, so that it can be used constructively. This tool shows you how.

The **Constructive Controversy** technique involves encouraging team members to come up with any opposition they might have to a new idea in a positive, cooperative climate. Use this tool to assess the merits of a new idea, and build upon the ideas the team has generated.

To use it, you need first to ask the team members who have proposed the new idea to explain their rationale and viewpoint. The explanation has to be as clear and comprehensive as possible. Also, the supporters of the new idea need to indicate how confident they are, or how uncertain they are about their proposals.

Next, encourage people with opposing opinions to state their reservations, and seek out more information about the supporting group's position. Then, ask people opposing the idea to restate the information provided by the supporting group in their own words. This ensures that there are no communication gaps.

Vigorous debate generally follows. The purpose of the debate is for members to be able to explore the idea, and develop an even better idea from it. Ideally, this will be one that reflects the best elements of each argument, with the flaws in each being identified and eliminated.

For this approach to work well, however, you'll need to put some safeguards into place to keep things positive, and make sure that people are not "bruised" by the process. Make sure that constructive controversy:

- Is used in an atmosphere that is cooperative, not competitive.
- Does not become about "winning".
- Does not result in people casting aspersions about each other's competence and abilities.

If you don't do these things, constructive controversy can degenerate into an unpleasant squabble. Remember, you have to coach team members to focus on "team wins", not on "individual wins" – i.e. on developing a final idea that is better than any of the initial idea. This team win will only happen if members are able to put aside their own egos, and combine diverse ideas to build a truly "winning" idea that will benefit the team as a whole.

It isn't easy to get people to put their egos on hold, and you may have to intervene often to ensure that the three safeguards are followed. However, if you are consistent with your approach, team members will learn, and grow, and become more comfortable with the give-and-take involved in the constructive controversy process.

6.2.6 Innovation Initiative Tools: Create the Right Climate

So far in this module, we've looked at a number of techniques that help you develop, test and improve ideas, and these are useful in one-off situations where you need creative solutions to problems. If you persist with the use of team-based creativity techniques, and make it clear that

you expect team members to be fully involved and participative in the creativity process, your team will develop the skills and the confidence needed to make the most of these techniques.

If, however, you want to maximize creativity in your team, you'll need to make it a normal part of the way that your team operates. You need to create a climate in which creativity really thrives.

To do this, you'll need to provide support, create a safe environment for innovation, and reward success.

Providing Support

To underline your commitment to innovation, demonstrate support.

- Provide support for creativity processes. As we mentioned earlier, train team members in the techniques they need to be innovative, and allocate time for the application of creative techniques. With persistence, creativity will become a normal part of the way that your team operates.
- Consider enlisting skilled facilitators to support team creativity sessions (facilitators are people who manage the session process, so that everyone within it can focus on the job in hand and get the most out of it). A facilitator who understands his or her role can really enhance the effectiveness of a creative technique.
- Provide strong support for new ideas. Encourage your entire team to greet new ideas openly, supportively, and positively. This doesn't mean that every new idea has to be applauded. It just means that the effort behind each idea should be acknowledged and its positive aspects recognized.
- Provide practical support for new ideas. Encourage every one in the team to contribute towards the implementation of good ideas, and provide the resources needed to implement it (these resources may include allocation of time, expertise, influence, or material help).

Providing a Safe Environment for Risk-Taking

While taking risks can lead to high rewards, it can lead to failure, too. If you want to encourage a risk-taking attitude in your team, you also have to develop a tolerance for failure. This doesn't mean that you support foolhardy initiatives. However, neither should you penalize a team member for taking a well-thought-through, calculated risk that fails. Invite introspection after a failure so that the team learns from its mistakes.

Rewarding Innovation

Innovation, like any other process that you want to encourage, needs to be recognized and rewarded. This keeps team members motivated. As we have discussed in previous modules, the rewards needn't, necessarily, be monetary. Other compensation and motivation strategies can be used in a very effective way.

6.3 Apply This to Your Life

First, let's recap on this chapter, and then we'll think about how you can make innovation an everyday part of the way that your team works.

6.3.1 Recap

Creativity means the development of new, original ideas. Innovation means the implementation of these creative ideas. Both are frequently exceptionally important.

Teams are often quite bad at being innovative. Creativity is hampered by problems like the blocking effect, groupthink, too much conformity, anxiety over evaluation, and excessive obedience.

Your job as a team leader is to understand the problems that undermine creativity and innovation in a team, and to work out how to overcome them.

To unleash the creative storm in your team, use the techniques we've recommended – brainstorming, brain-netting, brainwriting, the table of elements, negative brainstorming, minority influence strategy, and constructive controversy.

To build innovation in your team, you need to set a stimulating performance challenge, create an inspiring vision, set clear goals, ensure high participation levels, and create the right team climate. Unfortunately, these tools are not enough by themselves. To create the right climate, you need to launch an “innovation initiative” in your team.

To launch this innovation initiative, you have to:

- Expect team members to innovate, and make this expectation clear to them.
- Empower them with verbal and practical support for innovation.
- Ensure a safe atmosphere for innovation; an atmosphere that supports risk-taking and can tolerate failure.
- Encourage innovation through recognition and rewards.

6.3.2 Embedding Innovation within Your Team

- Think about where your team needs to be more creative and innovative in its approach. How would it, and the team's output, benefit from innovation?
- Explain the problems that can occur with team approaches to creativity to members of your team, and help them to understand how they can avoid these problems. Then teach them the creativity skills they need to innovate effectively.
- Make it clear to people that you expect them to innovate, support them when they do, give them the resources they need, and recognize and reward innovation.
- Target the areas where you think your team needs to innovate. Run regular team creativity sessions to address these. Ensure that you do this in a safe and supportive way, and that you reward successful innovation.
- Also run regular sessions where you get your team members to identify problems that need solving, and work on dealing with these.

Module 7

Resolve Conflicts: Use Them to Your Advantage

- Interest:** When you bring together people with different backgrounds and experiences, it's likely that you'll experience some form of conflict. This conflict is often viewed as a negative thing, but it doesn't need to be: if teams learn to manage conflict in the right way, they can actually benefit from it. This module helps you manage conflict so that this happens.
- Need:** Conflict can tear a team apart if it's not managed properly. To guard yourself and your team against this risk, you need to understand conflict, its causes, and the different forms it can take. You also need to understand how to turn conflict into a source of positive energy for your team. This module gives you the insights and tools you need to do this. Use them to harness conflict within your team, and make it a force for good.
- Timing:** 1½ hours.
- Range:** If you want to be able to resolve conflict, you need first to understand why and how it occurs. This module covers the following:
- The nature of conflict.
 - The causes and sources of conflict.
 - The different types of conflict.
 - The different stages of conflict, from inception to escalation.
 - Approaches to conflict resolution.
 - The conflict resolution process, and tools for resolving conflict.
- Objective:** This module helps you recognize, address, and resolve conflict. By the end of this session, you'll be able to:
- Identify conflict.
 - Pinpoint its root cause.
 - Understand the type of conflict that has occurred.
 - Judge whether the conflict is perceived or real, and what stage it's at.
 - Apply the right conflict resolution approach, based on what you've found.

7.1 Introduction:

When Steve Jobs made history by setting up Apple, Inc., in 1976, in partnership with his friend, Stephen Wozniak, little did he know that one day he would be ousted from his own company.

When IBM started developing personal computers and Apple saw its sales figures dropping, the conflict between Stephen Jobs and John Sculley (the CEO of the company, whom Jobs had, himself, “handpicked”) came to the surface. They began arguing over production, pricing, and marketing and, before long, started questioning each other’s competences. In 1985, when Sculley was about to leave for China, he learned that Jobs was planning a coup against him. He cancelled his trip, called a board meeting, and confronted Jobs directly about this. Jobs retaliated. Things blew completely out of proportion and the board gave its decision in Sculley’s favor. This turned out to be one of America’s greatest corporate conflicts, and ultimately resulted in Jobs moving out of Apple to form his own company, called NeXT computers.

What happened at Apple is not unique: conflict is a normal part of life within even the best teams. A team, as we have seen, is made up of different people – people who come from different backgrounds, have different values, belong to different cultures, and have different experiences. These differences sometimes create conflict. If not managed properly, this conflict can take an ugly turn, sometimes even tearing the team apart.

Conflict isn’t necessarily a bad thing, though. In fact, some conflict is essential in a team. After all, differences between individuals can be a tremendous source of creativity.

As the team’s leader, it’s your job to channel conflict into a positive source of energy for the team. This module helps you to do this. We begin by exploring what conflict is, looking at its causes, and understanding the different types of conflict.

7.1.1 What is Conflict?

Conflict is a derivative of the Latin word “conflictus”, which means, “striking together with force”. From the team perspective:

“Conflict arises from the clash of perceptions, goals, or values in an arena where people care about the outcome.”

– from *Communicating at Work*, Tony Alessandra, 1993

Put simply, conflict can be defined as a disagreement that causes the people involved to perceive a threat to their goals, interests or needs.

Mere disagreement is not conflict. *Two doctors may have different views on the health of a patient. This does not, however, amount to a conflict between the two, unless these doctors start doubting one another’s competence, which could quickly escalate into conflict.*

Conflict is a disagreement that has escalated to emotional levels. Simple disagreements, in fact, are useful in team brainstorming sessions because they help teams explore different ideas and approaches in detail. Conflict, on the other hand, is a situation that teams do not welcome.

People involved may not be aware that they are “in conflict”. *Sam has been employed with Arc computers for five years now and has been solely looking after its accounts section. As the business grows, Arc’s executives decide to expand operations and employ John Adams as the Chief Financial Officer. Sam, who had earlier reported directly to the CEO, now has to report to John. Sam feels threatened by John, even though no disagreement has taken place between the two.*

This is a case of perceived conflict, where John is not directly involved – he may not even be aware that he is party to the conflict.

A similar situation can arise due to social pressure. *When a group of workers goes on strike, not all of them are necessarily dissatisfied. They may participate in the strike due to peer pressure, or because they feel a sense of “solidarity” with other workers.*

People involved perceive that their own goals, interests and needs are threatened, whether they do this consciously or subconsciously. If the people involved in a conflict were to be asked to pinpoint its cause, they might think of quite recent or superficial reasons, however small they may be. Things may not be that simple in reality: as a leader, you need to go deeper than this so that you identify the root cause of the conflict.

Exercise

From these definitions, please mark the statements below as “true” or “false”.

Statement	True or False?
1. Any disagreement between two people can be defined as a conflict.	
2. Conflict is a direct outcome of differences between people.	
3. Conflict can be perceived or actual.	
4. Disagreements are not welcome in teams.	
5. Conflict is normal.	
6. People can be involved in conflict without even knowing about it.	
7. Emotions have no role to play in conflict.	

Your answers should look something like this:

Statement	True or False?
1. Any disagreement between two people can be defined as a conflict.	False
2. Conflict is a direct outcome of differences between people.	True
3. Conflict can be perceived or actual.	True
4. Disagreements are not welcome in teams.	False
5. Conflict is normal.	True
6. People can be involved in conflict without even knowing about it.	True
7. Emotions have no role to play in conflict.	False

7.1.2 Why Does Conflict Happen?

Many different factors can contribute to conflict, and it is important to understand the conflict's root cause before trying to resolve the problem.

Broadly, we can group these factors under three major headings:

1. Communication Factors

- **Disagreements that have escalated to emotional levels because they were not resolved at the right time**

Susan and Alex work in cleaning the unit of a restaurant. Both have equal responsibility, but Susan feels that she is doing more than her fair share of work. She makes pointed remarks about this to Alex on several occasions, but this seems to make no difference. Susan continues to do her job until she gets so upset that she confronts Alex by yelling at him in a very unpleasant way.

The situation would not have spun out of control had Susan discussed her perceptions in a rational and open manner with Alex and their team leader, rather than exploding. (Of course, the conflict would not have arisen in the first place if Alex had made more of an effort.)

- **Unclear expectations**

A frequent source of conflict is where someone misunderstands or misinterprets instructions, or where these instructions are not given clearly in the first place. We've looked at clear communication in earlier modules of this course – where you encounter conflict, make sure that people fully understand one-another.

2. Personal Factors

- **Breach of faith and trust between individuals** – As we saw in Module 5, when people trust one another, they feel much more confident and secure than they do when this trust is not present. Where people feel that their trust has been violated, they may feel very upset, and conflict may result.
- **Differences in personalities** – As discussed in Module 6, differences in personality between team members can be a tremendous source of strength for a team, in terms of improving creativity, decision-making and delivery to the team's customer. However, these same differences can also become a significant cause of disagreement and conflict.
 - People can be Sensitive, or Logical and Analytical.
 - They can be Outgoing or Introverted.
 - They can be People-oriented or Task-oriented.
 - They can be Systematic or Flexible.

Jack is always complaining to his boss, Scott, about his colleague, John's, style of working. Upon delving deeper into the problem, Scott finds that Jack actually dislikes John at a very personal level because he feels that he doesn't "buckle down" and do the difficult, careful, detailed work needed to finish the team's work properly.

- **Differences in values and beliefs** – *When Joe and Chris were asked to explain the drop in the sales figures of their teams, Joe took the entire blame upon himself, whereas Chris pointed out that two of his team members were not delivering up to par.*

Who is right is difficult to say, but Joe and Chris each have different approaches: one is ready to shield his team as much as possible, while the other has put team members

directly in the line of fire. If both of them were asked to come up with a solution to the problem at hand, conflict would be likely.

3. Structural Factors

- **Scarcity of resources** – Where insufficient resources are available to the team, such as manpower, funds, space, or equipment, people can end up fighting for these resources, particularly where they're being pushed to deliver to a tight timetable.

Martin wants his sales team to achieve a goal of writing 250 new insurance policies within the month. Luke, who is the head of the sales team, wants to hire two more people to achieve the target. Martin says no to the request for additional manpower (because the firm is cutting costs), but does not budge on the target. Luke confronts Martin about this, they get into a heated discussion. Luke decides to quit.

Was Martin being unreasonable or was it Luke? It's hard to say, but resource scarcity certainly contributed to the situation.

- **Incompatible evaluation systems** – People are not always pleased with their pay increments – they often want more than resources allow. However, conflict is particularly likely to arise if reward and evaluation systems seem arbitrary, unclear, inconsistent or wrong.

Flo has just joined FLX-Munroe Finance as the head of customer service. FLX had major, customer-related problems in the past with Greg, who has been working as FLX's customer service head for more than five years. When Flo joined the company, Greg was moved to another unit.

Flo, because of her experience, was able to improve the efficiency of the customer service department in a very, short span of time. At the time of appraisal, Flo's performance was considered superlative, but when bonuses were being decided upon, Flo's bonus was tiny compared with Greg's. This was due to the fact that FLX's evaluation system placed more emphasis on the tenure of an individual within the organization than it did on the individual's performance. When Flo found out about this disparity, she confronted her superiors, but to no avail. Disgusted, Flo soon leaves the organization.

- **Task interdependence** – *Jim is responsible for finalizing the quarterly incentive payments for the entire national sales team of Parafonia, Inc. To do this, Jim is dependent upon all regions to deliver their sales reports by each quarter end. Unfortunately, it's a low priority for the regional sales heads to send this report because they are under pressure to meet quarterly targets at precisely this time.*

At the national sales conference of Parafonia, Inc., Jim received a lot of flak for not paying the sales incentives on time, which caused frustration within the sales team and was blamed for poor performance overall. Jim responded by saying that he never gets the report on time and, thus, cannot deliver incentives. A major altercation broke out between the regional heads and Jim at this meeting.

Larry, the national head of sales, had to intervene to resolve the issue. Identifying conflicting priorities as the root cause of conflict, Larry decided to change the reporting date of sales figures from quarter ends to one week after the end of each quarter. This way, the regional heads had clear time to deliver the sales reports, and Jim would be able to work out incentives promptly.

Task interdependence is one of the most significant causes of conflict because, while working together, people tend to forget that they themselves are not the only ones who have

been given responsibilities. Quite properly, others may be working to meet other goals, and these goals may not be compatible with these responsibilities.

In our example, Larry was able to resolve the conflict quickly because he could see what caused it.

7.1.3 What Types of Conflict Can Occur?

Just as it can help to understand the sources of conflict, understanding the type of conflict that is occurring helps us manage it. We can understand it in terms of where it takes place, of its intensity, of its cause, and of its outcome:

- **On the basis of where it takes place:**
 - **Internal** – This occurs within an individual’s mind, where he or she experiences conflict between incompatible beliefs, or between conflicting goals and motivations.
 - **Between an individual and another team member** – This is the most common type of conflict, where one member of a team is in conflict with another.
 - **Between an individual and the rest of the team** – Here the individual could be a member of the team or could, in fact, be the team’s leader.
 - **Between two different groups of team members** – This occurs where two different groups of individuals within a team are in conflict. Issues here are likely to be deep-seated, and members of each group reinforce one-another’s views. This makes this type of conflict particularly difficult to resolve.
 - **Between two teams** – The finance and marketing departments of many companies can often seem to be at loggerheads, as can be sales and production. Essentially these departments have different goals (conservation of cash versus extending media reach, and rapid fulfillment of customer needs versus high quality delivery) and these goals create conflict.
- **On the basis of intensity:**

In the monthly meeting of the loans division of Wayfarer Bank, Helen, head of sales, wants to shorten the decision time taken in sanctioning loans, and Greg, head of risk management, is uncomfortable in doing this. After giving due consideration to issues raised by both of them, Jim, their boss, decides to remove the reference checking procedure from the process as it does not significantly impact the credit decision.

 - **Functional Conflict:** In the Wayfarer example, this type of conflict is beneficial and creative, as it can lead to an improvement in the way that the team operates. This is “functional” conflict.
 - **Dysfunctional Conflict:** If, in the same meeting, Helen and Greg had resorted to attacking one another personally, this conflict could well have damaged the team and resulted in an unhelpful win-lose outcome (this is bad, because the team has lost the opportunity of finding an outcome that incorporates the best of each viewpoint). When conflict escalates to a level where it disrupts the team’s performance and gets in the way of goal accomplishment, it is termed as “dysfunctional”.
- **On the basis of cause:**
 - **“Substantive” Conflict:** This conflict is related to how the job should be done, and does not involve personal differences. This type of conflict is very common in teams, and can be used constructively in solving problems, making better decisions, and developing effective strategies.
 - **“Personal” Conflict:** This type of conflict involves people, and their emotions, perceptions, values, and beliefs.

While Substantive Conflict is often constructive in nature and can be used for the team's benefit, Personal Conflict, in more cases than not, hinders the team's performance.

A leading researcher, Christopher Moore, has gone a step further and classified conflict according to its cause, such as:

- **Data Conflict:** This occurs where people are not aware of information, and where it has been withheld, is lacking, or has been misinterpreted.
- **Interest Conflict:** This can be either substantive or personal. It's substantive where conflict arises due to a scarcity of resources or from the way that work is conducted, and it's personal when conflict involves psychological or personality issues.
- **Value Conflict:** This arises when people have different beliefs about workplace values – the things that they think are important in getting the job done well.
- **Relationship Conflict:** This type of conflict is common in environments where communication is poor, and strong emotions prevail.
- **Structural Conflict:** This type of conflict arises out of unbalanced or unfair control, power, or ownership structures, which leave people with the wrong levels of influence over decision-making.

- **On the basis of outcome:**

Constructive: Constructive conflict occurs when:

- People involved have learned something useful, and have grown personally from the conflict.
- The team has developed a clear and effective solution for the problem at hand.
- The people involved with the conflict have fully committed to deliver the solution.
- The team emerges with a stronger bond between its members.

Destructive: Destructive conflict, on the other hand, occurs when:

- No decision has been reached, and the problem at hand – and any ill feeling it causes – remains unresolved.
- The conflict consumes people's time and emotional energy, meaning that this is taken away from activities that add value.
- Team morale is damaged.
- The cohesion of the team is undermined, and people split into competing factions.

Example

Using these different ways of understanding conflict, let's first analyze one of our examples. Once we've done this, we'll use this approach to look at a conflict that you've recently been involved with.

Remember Flo from FLX-Munroe Finance? Despite exceptional performance, she received a tiny bonus compared with the weak manager she replaced. When this wasn't properly resolved, she left the organization in disgust.

Looking at this conflict using these factors, we see:

- **Location:** The key conflict here was between Flo and the senior managers awarding bonuses.
- **Intensity:** The conflict started off as a functional conflict revolving around the rules for awarding bonuses. If this functional conflict had been resolved with improvements to the bonus policy (so that bonuses were correctly aligned) the company itself would have been improved. Instead, because problems weren't resolved, conflict became dysfunctional.

- **Cause:** A whole host of causes contributed to this conflict. *Interest conflict* arose because the bonus pool was limited, meaning that resources were scarce (and they were allocated badly). *Value conflict* contributed, because FLX-Munroe showed that it valued longevity of service rather than initiative and quality of work, which is a value that any able young manager would naturally detest. *Relationship conflict* may have played a part, because bonus policies may not have been communicated clearly. And *structural conflict* may also be present, because the setting of such poor bonus policies may well have been influenced by perverse power structures within the company.
- **Outcome:** The outcome was clearly destructive: the FLX-Munroe lost Flo, and lost all of the benefits, improvements and opportunities that she could have brought.

From this example, you can see how useful it is to look at the conflict by understanding the different factors that contribute to it. Not only have we identified its root causes, but we are now also fully aware of the different types of conflict that occurred within what seemed initially to be quite a simple disagreement.

This compares with a constructive conflict, like the one in Wayfarer Bank between Helen and Greg, which needed Jim's intervention to improve the company's procedures. Jim was able to come up with a solution easily, because he identified the root cause of conflict in a timely way.

7.2. Introduction to Tools

"In great teams, conflict becomes productive. The free flow of conflicting ideas is critical for creative thinking, for discovering new solutions no one individual would have come to on his own."

– Peter Senge

In this module, we start by setting the scene for effective conflict resolution, firstly by helping you to adopt a positive and effective role in resolving it, and secondly by looking at a simple technique for brainstorming possible causes of the conflict.

We then learn about a popular and highly effective conflict resolution process, and explore tips and techniques that can support and improve the conflict resolution process.

We conclude with a technique that can help you overcome anger, if you're one of the people involved in conflict. This frees you to resolve the conflict in a positive way.

7.2.1 Adopting a Positive Conflict Resolution Style

A good starting point for resolving conflict is ensuring that you adopt a positive approach to resolving conflict.

In 1974, researchers Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann identified five main styles of dealing with conflict that people tend to prefer. Each style varies in its degree of cooperativeness and assertiveness, and can be useful – or ineffective – in different situations:

- **Avoiding (Often Lose-Lose):** People tending towards this style seek to evade the conflict entirely. This style is typified by delegating controversial decisions, accepting default decisions, and not wanting to hurt anyone's feelings. It can be appropriate when victory is impossible, when the controversy is trivial, or when someone else is in a better position to solve the problem.

However this is a weak and ineffective approach to take in many situations. What's more, it's one in which the negative consequences of conflict continue, and opportunities for improvement – both of relationships and of the business – are lost. This means that

individuals and the organization often lose out when a manager adopts an avoidant conflict resolution. If this is the way you tend to deal with conflict, ditch this approach fast!

- **Accommodating (Often Lose-Win):** This style indicates a willingness to meet the needs of others at the expense of the person's own needs. The accommodator often knows when to give in to others, but can be persuaded to surrender a position even when this is not warranted. This person is not assertive but is highly cooperative.

Accommodation is appropriate when the issues matter more to the other party, when peace is more valuable than winning, or when you want to be in a position to collect on this "favor" you gave. However people may not return favors, underlying issues are not addressed, and overall this approach is unlikely to give the best outcomes. If you're a team leader who tends to adopt this style, most likely you, your team and your organization will lose, meaning that everyone will be stressed and unhappy. If this describes your conflict resolution approach, learn how to negotiate assertively. (Visit <http://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/NegotiationSkills.htm> to learn negotiation skills, and <http://www.mindtools.com/stress/pp/Assertiveness.htm> to learn assertiveness.)

- **Competitive (Often Win-Lose):** People who tend towards a competitive style take a firm stand, and know what they want. They usually operate from a position of power, drawn from things like position, rank, expertise, or persuasive ability. This style can be useful when there is an emergency and a decision needs to be made quickly; when the decision is unpopular; or when defending against someone who is trying to exploit the situation selfishly.

However it can leave people feeling bruised, unsatisfied and resentful when used in less urgent situations. It can also fail to address underlying problems, meaning that it's often a Win-Lose style.

- **Compromising (Often Neutral):** People who prefer a compromising style try to find a solution that will at least partially satisfy everyone. Everyone is expected to give up something, and the compromiser him- or her-self also expects to relinquish something.

Compromise is useful when the cost of conflict is higher than the cost of losing ground, when equal strength opponents are at a standstill and when there is a deadline looming. However, it can fail to address fundamental problems, meaning that the solution is less good than it could otherwise be.

- **Collaborative (Often Win-Win):** People tending towards a collaborative style try to meet the needs of all people involved. These people can be highly assertive but unlike people adopting a competitive style, they cooperate effectively and acknowledge that everyone is important. This style is useful when you need to bring together a variety of viewpoints to get the best solution; when there have been previous conflicts in the group; or when the situation is too important for a simple trade-off. Collaborative conflict resolution is hard work and requires creativity, but often yields solutions that are good for both parties to the conflict, and for the organization as well.

This is neatly summed up in figure 7.2.1.1 below. This shows where these different styles lie, plotted on dimensions of "Interest in achieving own goals" and "Interest in helping another person with their goals".

Figure 7.2.1.1: Thomas and Kilman's Conflict Styles

Once you understand the different styles, you can use them to think about the most appropriate approach (or mixture of approaches) for the situation you're in.

You can also think about your own instinctive approach (or the approach that tends to be adopted within your organization), and learn how you need to change this if necessary. Ideally, you can adopt an approach that meets the situation, resolves the problem, respects people's legitimate interests, and mends damaged working relationships.

7.2.2 Conflict Analysis

In sections 7.1.2 and 7.1.3, we looked at the root causes of conflict, and the types of conflict that can occur.

Some of these factors relate to how people engaged with the conflict feel about one-another. Dwelling on these feelings risks crystallizing and exacerbating ill-feeling, and risks turning a situation that can be resolved into one in which conflict becomes personal and destructive.

However, other factors relate to the situation rather than relationships. Understanding these can help you nip conflict in the bud, and improve the way that your organization functions at the same time.

Remember Larry at Parafonia, Inc? By spotting that the deadline for sales reporting was at the root of the conflict, he was able to resolve it quickly and easily – simply by changing the reporting date.

A good starting point for resolving conflict is to think about the factors that could be contributing to it – this can help you resolve it quickly and effectively, and before it spins out of control. When faced with or involved in a conflict, work through this checklist of possible causes, and think about whether any of these could be contributing to the situation. This thinking gives you a

starting point for exploring the situation positively with the other party, and helps you expand the range of possible solutions that you could mutually explore.

Do this now, to explore a conflict you're currently engaged in or have been engaged in.

Resource conflict

Are both parties to the conflict struggling to get access to the same, limited resources? Is a balanced way of allocating access available? Are you able to increase the supply of these resources? Or do you need to adjust or alter priorities or goals so that one or other party needs less of the resource?

Goal conflict

Similarly, are people's goals conflicting? Are the goals of each party legitimate and reasonable? Is someone's work to achieve their legitimate goals frustrating someone else's work to achieve their own legitimate goals? Can the working method be adjusted to avoid goal conflict? Or do goals need to be adjusted to avoid conflict?

Data conflict

Are both parties to the conflict operating using the same information, or could one party be missing key information? What information or assumptions are likely to underpin the behavior or "world view" of each party? Are these assumptions correct? Or are you able to provide information that could align people's worldviews?

Expectation conflict

What does each person in the conflict expect of other people involved in the conflict? Are these expectations fair and reasonable? Are others meeting these expectations? Does anything need to be done to manage expectations, ease the achievement of these expectations, or ensure that these expectations are met?

Values conflict

Do the different parties have different values – i.e. different views of how the work should be done to get the best result? What values are appropriate to getting work done optimally? Are both approaches OK, or do people need to rethink their approaches?

Structural conflict

Are incentives and rewards properly aligned with effort and contribution? Are the people with influence and control the people who are best able to lead the team to achieve its mission? Does any group have an unfair level of influence? These things can be difficult to change, however could these things be adjusted to even things up a bit?

Tip:

Be a bit humble in the way you use this analysis – while your analysis may be absolutely correct, it's also possible that you may be wrong because you're not aware of some important piece of information. Make sure that you listen carefully to what people are saying, and that you're flexible in your approach!

7.2.3 Resolving Conflict with the "Interest-Based Relational Approach"

Once you've thought about the possible causes of the conflict, the next stage is to talk to the person with whom you're in conflict. A good way of doing this is to use a technique called the "Interest-Based Relational (IBR) Approach". This approach to conflict resolution focuses on preserving the quality of the relationship, at the same time that it helps people avoid becoming too entrenched in a fixed position.

In resolving conflict using the IBR approach, you follow these rules:

- Make sure that good relationships are the first priority: As far as possible, make sure that you treat the other calmly and that you try to build mutual respect. Do your best to be courteous to one-another and remain constructive under pressure.
- Keep people and problems separate: Recognize that in many cases the other person is not just "being difficult" – real and valid differences can lie behind conflictive positions. By separating the problem from the person, real issues can be debated without damaging working relationships.
- Pay attention to the interests that are being presented: By listening carefully you'll most likely understand why the person is adopting his or her position.
- Listen first; talk second: To solve a problem effectively you have to understand where the other person is coming from before defending your own position.
- Set out the "Facts": Agree and establish the objective, observable elements that will have an impact on the decision.
- Explore options together: Be open to the idea that a third position may exist, and that you can get to this idea jointly.

By following these rules, you can often keep contentious discussions positive and constructive. This helps to prevent the antagonism and dislike which so-often causes conflict to get out of control.

Using the Tool: A Conflict Resolution Process

To use the IBR approach, use the process below to resolve the conflict:

Step One: Set the Scene

If appropriate to the situation, agree the rules of the IBR Approach (or at least consider using the approach yourself.) Make sure that people understand that the conflict may be a mutual problem, which may be best resolved through discussion and negotiation rather than through raw aggression. If you are involved in the conflict, emphasize the fact that you are presenting your perception of the problem. Use active listening skills to ensure you hear and understand other's positions and perceptions: listen carefully to what the other person is saying without interrupting; and paraphrase and summarize what you think the other person is saying to show you're listening and to confirm your understanding of their message.

And make sure that when you talk, you're using an adult, assertive approach rather than a submissive or aggressive style.

Step Two: Gather Information

Here you are trying to get to the underlying interests, needs, and concerns. Ask for the other person's viewpoint and confirm that you respect his or her opinion and need his or her cooperation to solve the problem.

Try to understand his or her motivations and goals, and see how your actions may be affecting these. Also, try to understand the conflict in objective terms: Is it affecting work performance? Is it damaging the delivery to the client? Is it disrupting teamwork? Or is it hampering decision-making? Be sure to focus on work issues and leave personalities out of the discussion.

- Listen with empathy and see the conflict from the other person's point of view.
- Identify issues clearly and concisely.
- Use "I" statements.
- Remain flexible.
- Clarify feelings.

Step Three: Agree the Problem

This sounds like an obvious step but, often, different underlying needs, interests and goals can cause people to perceive problems very differently. You'll need to agree the problems that you are trying to solve before you'll find a mutually acceptable solution.

Sometimes different people will see different but interlocking problems – if you can't reach a common agreement of the problem, then at the very least, you need to understand what the other person sees as the problem.

Step Four: Brainstorm Possible Solutions

If everyone is going to feel satisfied with the resolution, it will help if everyone has had fair input in generating solutions. Brainstorm possible solutions, and be open to all ideas, including ones you never considered before.

Step Five: Negotiate a Solution

By this stage, the conflict may be resolved: Both sides may better understand the position of the other, and a mutually satisfactory solution may be clear to all. However you may also have uncovered real differences between your positions. This is where a technique like win-win negotiation can be useful to find a solution that, at least to some extent, satisfies everyone. There are three guiding principles here:

- Be calm.
- Be patient.
- Have respect.

(For more on win-win negotiation, visit <http://www.mindtools.com/CommSkll/NegotiationSkills.htm>.)

7.2.4 Situational Approaches to Conflict Resolution

The next approaches help you resolve conflict in different situations.

Encourage People to Negotiate: From Win-Lose to Win-Win

“Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate.”

– John F Kennedy, former US President

In their classic book *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*, Roger Fisher and William Ury describe three types of negotiators – soft, hard, and principled. The table below shows the differences between them.

Soft Negotiators	Hard Negotiators	Principled Negotiators
View other participants in the negotiation as friends.	View other participants in the negotiation as adversaries.	View other participants in the negotiation as people who are there to solve a problem.
Are interested in arriving at an agreement.	Are interested in having it their way, and achieving victory.	Are interested in reaching an efficient and positive outcome.
Make concessions, keeping relationships in mind.	Demand concessions to keep the relationship alive.	Separate people from the problem.
Are soft on people and the problem.	Are hard on people and the problem.	Because of their ability to differentiate, they are soft on people and hard on problem.
Change their stance easily.	Remain fixed on their stance.	Remain fixed on the outcome.
Give offers.	Give threats.	Explore interests.
Accept losses for themselves.	Demand gains for themselves.	Invent options for mutual gain.
Succumb to pressure.	Apply pressure.	Yield to principle not pressure.

Chart from Getting to Yes, 2/e by Roger Fisher, William Ury and Bruce Patton. Copyright © 1981, 1991 by Roger Fisher and William Ury. Used by permission of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

While different styles can suit different circumstances, in most cases the principled negotiation approach is likely to be right within a team – hard negotiation is likely to breed resentment and bitterness, and it can be hard to respect someone who takes a soft approach all of the time. Unless there’s a very specific reason why people should adopt a hard or soft approach, make sure that people within your team use the principled negotiation approach when resolving conflict.

Also as a leader, it is important to understand that it needs a lot of courage for people to resolve conflict through negotiation. It needs the courage to sit down and listen to someone who seems to be an adversary. It demands courage for people to review their own roles in conflict. And it needs courage to acknowledge the viewpoint of others with openness and respect.

The Negotiation Process

Fisher advocated a five-step approach to resolving conflict:

- Step 1.** Acknowledge that the conflict exists.
- Step 2.** Establish a common perspective by framing the conflict in the context of the team’s purpose.

- Step 3.** Ask questions to understand the other person's viewpoint, keeping in mind that understanding does not amount to agreement.
- Step 4.** Attack the problem at hand and not each other. Channel anger and hostility into generating solutions to the problem, and into action planning.
- Step 5.** Formulate an action plan detailing the responsibilities of each person.

This approach allows people to acknowledge the type of conflict that exists, and work jointly towards resolving it.

As a leader, your job is to ensure that these people don't put off discussing painful issues – if these are put to the side, chances are that these unresolved issues will re-emerge sooner or later, and things could get unpleasant and out of hand. Also, try to avoid people "passing the buck" for conflict resolution to more senior managers – this disempowers the team and increases their dependence on these managers.

Encourage Third Party Interventions: Jump In to Help Others Swim Out

While you don't want to encourage people to escalate conflict resolution, it can be useful to encourage members of your team to take an active part in resolving conflict, even if they are not involved. When non-participating team members become mediators, they help by:

- Reducing hostility, as they give the people involved a fair chance to voice their feelings.
- Helping to interpret the situation when one person is not able to understand the other's viewpoint.
- Giving opponents a fair opportunity to save face, and accept compromises gracefully.
- Encouraging participants to explore alternative solutions to the problem, which both parties may find acceptable.
- Coordinating the technical aspects of any meeting between the opponents, like venue, agenda, seating, timing, and so on.
- Guiding the people involved through a rational problem-solving process.

One word of caution: While encouraging mediation by team members, make sure that the mediators do no more than support the conflict resolution process, and that they don't try to enforce their own views.

The Don'ts of Conflict Management

- **Don't Avoid Conflict:** Don't try to avoid conflict altogether – this just “bottles up” problems. Instead, identify problems early on, and discuss issues in a professional way.
- **Don't Be Defensive:** Try to understand the other person's point of view, keeping in mind that you need not agree to it. Also, don't assume that the other person is trying to prove you wrong.
- **Don't Over-Generalize:** Don't exaggerate the issue beyond its current realm. Avoid using phrases, like “you always...” or “you never...”
- **Don't “Read Minds”:** Do not assume that you know what the other person is going to say, feel or do.
- **Don't Focus on “Winning” the Argument:** Instead, try to arrive at a mutually, acceptable solution.
- **Don't Play the Blame Game:** Don't get into mudslinging. This just exacerbates the problem and increases ill feeling.
- **Don't Stonewall:** Don't undermine the other person's attempts to resolve the issue by being non-communicative.
- **Don't make character attacks:** Don't blow the issue out of proportion by pointing out personal flaws. Always respect others as people, and keep the discussion professional.

7.3 Apply This to Your Life

This module has looked at a number of useful and important conflict resolution techniques. Now's the time to internalize them, and make them part of your life!

- Review the conflict resolution styles explained in 7.2.1. Reflect on your own style of conflict resolution, and those of the people around you. What changes do you need to make to your own approach, and what coaching do you need to give to members of your team? Add these items to your To-Do List or Action Program.
- All of us end up in conflict from time to time, at home if not at work. If you're married or in a relationship, consider introducing your spouse or partner to the IBR approach explained in 7.2.3 (don't do this in the middle of a row!) Next time things are getting tense, explore using it to resolve conflict.

Module 8

Build an Adaptive and Pro-Active Team

- Interest:** Legend has it that when top ice hockey player, Wayne Gretzky, was asked why he was so successful, he responded by saying that he always tried to skate to where the puck was going to be, not to where it was. This module teaches you this very art. It shows you how to anticipate problems and opportunities, and then address them. It helps you transform your team into a learning, problem-solving unit.
- Need:** All teams get stuck sometime or another. Often, however, teams aren't equipped to deal with this. This module gives you tools and techniques that help you get "unstuck". It shows you how to develop your team into a ready, resourceful, and resilient unit that is actually "energized" by problems.
- Timing:** 2 hours
- Range:** This module covers:
- The "Five Right Behavior's" that a team needs to demonstrate.
 - External environment scanning techniques.
 - Reviews: What, why, when, where, how.
 - A problem identification and analysis tool kit.
 - Solution development aids.
 - Stakeholder analysis.
 - Networking essentials.
- Objective:** By the end of this module, you will be able to:
- Assess whether your team demonstrates the "Five Right Behavior's".
 - Transform your team into a ready, "reflexive", resourceful, resilient unit that is riveted on performance.
 - Scan the external environment for emerging problems and opportunities.
 - Conduct effective reviews.
 - Read symptoms, and identify and analyze problems.
 - Galvanize the team into finding solutions to "insoluble" problems.
 - Conduct stakeholder analysis.
 - Gain an extra edge by networking beyond team boundaries.

8.1 Introduction

It was a dream team of eight women. The goal was to cross the Himalayan mountain range on foot, a distance of more than 4,000km. However, as personality differences between the team members escalated, the dream began to turn into a nightmare. Despite all efforts, differences couldn't be resolved and, in the foothills of the Himalayas, three members of the team decided to drop out.

The team was stuck. It needed at least eight members to complete the journey. Turning back and finding new members for the expedition would waste a lot of time. Then one team member had a thought: Why not invite some of the girls from the village in which they were staying to join them? As Bachendri Pal, the leader of the team, later told media, "Most girls from mountain villages are great climbers and extremely hardy as well. So we decided we would take them on, train them for a few days, and commence the journey". The team went on to achieve its objective.

This brings us to the last, and possibly the most important, lesson a team has to learn: It should never become set in its ways. Just when everything seems that it is in place – a compelling performance challenge, an effective leader, skilled members, a clear direction, great strategy, and an open, supportive climate – a problem will crop up.

It can be anything: a transition – *you need to shift to the new technology*; an ending – *a key team member quits*; triggered by external forces – *the competition launches a breakthrough product*; or it can be caused by internal upheavals – *the deadline gets pushed from tomorrow to yesterday*.

The common theme is that a problem pops up that the team hasn't factored into its strategy, and which the team isn't really equipped to solve. Yet, the team will have to find a way to deal with the problem, with or without external help, and move on.

Most teams get stuck at some time or another. Effective teams learn to work around problems, even unexpected ones, and get themselves unstuck. In fact, being stuck for a while may actually help teams: it forces members to think differently, and tap into the team's latent strengths.

And, when the team manages to get unstuck, it draws energy from its victory. It gains confidence, commitment, and experience; and gains knowledge from the experience. Unfortunately, some teams never manage to get unstuck because they lack problem-solving capacity. These teams flounder for a while and then collapse, or, if they manage to limp along, they are unable to perform effectively.

So, what is it that sets a problem-solving team apart – raw intelligence, the right behavior, or plain, simple luck? Can you teach problem solving to a team? How can a team push itself into a pro-active, learning, reflective mode?

This module will help you answer these questions, and more.

8.1.1 The Five Right Behavior's

Often, we assume that intelligence is the most crucial factor in determining a team's problem-solving ability. This is not always true: while intelligence does play a role in enhancing a team's problem-solving ability, we often attach far more importance to it than is actually warranted.

Much more significant than intelligence is the problem solving approach that the team adopts.

This ideal approach is made up of **Five Right Behavior's** that lead to effective problem solving. These behaviors are closely linked, even overlapping at times. Yet, each is important for

the team to develop its problem-solving capacity, and practicing them regularly helps the team evolve into an effective problem-solving unit.

In this module, we'll look at these behaviors, and the benefits they bring to your team. Then, we will introduce you to the **RIDE** strategy. Consistent, focused application of this strategy will help you to inculcate the five "R"s into your team.

So what are the Five Right Behavior's? To solve problems effectively, the team should be:

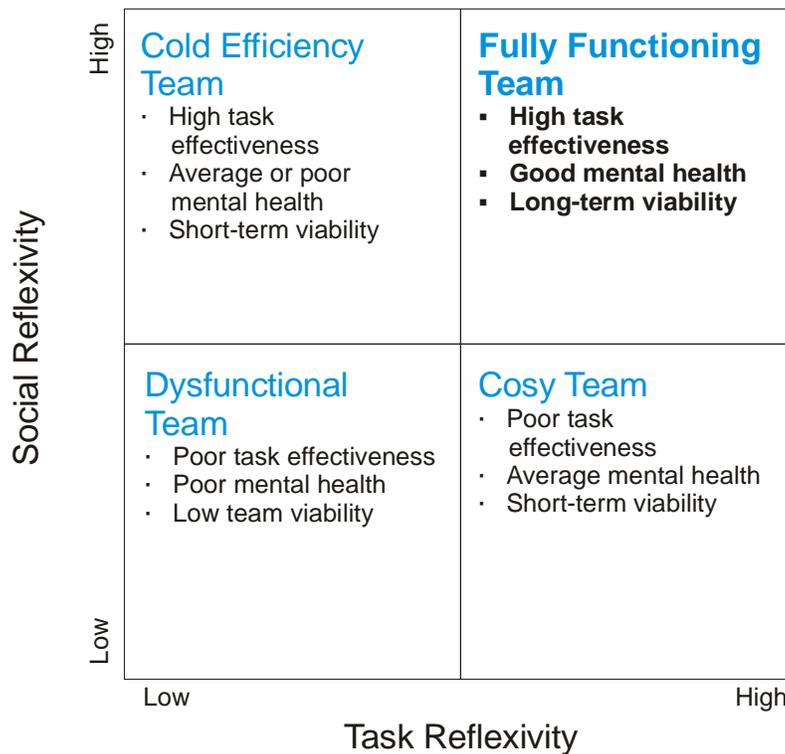
- **Reflexive:**

"What we have to learn, we learn by doing." – Aristotle

A reflexive team is a team that regularly reflects on and reviews both the task it performs and the social climate that prevails in the team. This review is done with a focus on correcting the team's course mid-task, if needed. There are two parts to reflexivity:

1. **Task Reflexivity:** This involves a regular review of the team's objectives, strategies, and working approach. A team high on task reflexivity routinely thinks about its experience of work, analyzes changes in external and internal conditions, and reviews its objectives, strategies, and approaches.
2. **Social Reflexivity:** This involves routine review of the team's climate – the support offered to team members, their openness, the quality of communication between them, and the health of social relationships within the team. The objective is to monitor and improve the team's climate.

Michael A West, in his book, *Effective Teamwork: Practical Lessons from Organizational Research*, uses reflexivity to divide teams into four categories. Figure 8.1.1.1 below, based on West's model, shows these. Use this to think about where your team currently stands: what you ultimately want to achieve is a **fully functioning team**, because only a fully functioning team can be a truly learning and pro-active unit.

Figure 8.1.1.1 Task and Social Reflexivity in Teams

- **Ready:**

The team has to be ready: ready to cope with the challenges it faces today, and ready to cope with the fact that it might face new, unexpected challenges tomorrow.

This means that the team should routinely scan the environment around it. It needs to monitor trends that might affect it, and it has to be aware of its own functioning. This ongoing review helps the team to spot potential and hidden problems, and handle them well when they arise.

Some teams are so inwardly focused that they ignore the outside environment. This is a big mistake: no one can remain isolated from the outside world, and sooner or later, it is going to hit you. Teams need to keep a keen eye on outside affairs that might affect them – that way, they'll be ready for at least some of the surprises that are in store for them.

Other times, teams become defensive. Even when they spot a problem, they “bury their heads”, ostrich-fashion. This costs them dearly, sometimes even fatally. Small problems, that could easily be solved, escalate into full-blown crises. This is why teams need to develop an attitude of readiness – readiness to acknowledge problems.

- **Resourceful:**

Teams very rarely operate in such a perfect world that they always have the full set of skills and resources needed to deal with every situation. Despite this, they still need to achieve their missions.

This is where resourcefulness comes into play. Teams have to find their own ways of dealing with the situations they encounter. They have to use their existing resources differently; solicit external help, such as training, facilitators, or other, organizational support; or induct new team members. The bottom line is that, one way or another, they have to get unstuck, and break through the barriers in their way.

- **Resilient:**

With all of the change and uncertainty in today's business environment, teams have to adapt to the necessity for change – not only on a one-off basis, but routinely, and without pause. What's more, they often do not have the luxury of time when grappling with problems – they have to find problems, solve them, and move on, ready for the next challenge.

So does your team demonstrate these five “R”s? In the box below, note where you feel your team can improve, and then move onto the tools section. This will show you how to develop these behaviors.

- **Riveted on Performance, not Internal Problems:**

OK, this is common sense. However, teams often become so focused on internal problems that they forget about performance.

This is a big mistake. The team exists for a reason, and every problem should be viewed in the context of that reason. Considering a problem in isolation can prove to be counter-productive, as it dilutes the team's focus.

Often, when the interpersonal dynamics in a team break down, a facilitator is brought in to resolve the situation. Some facilitators focus on turning the team members' attention back to the performance challenge they face, and how they can best work together to achieve it. Others focus on addressing the feelings and conflicts of the team members involved. Usually, the first approach is most effective, because it addresses the problem in the right context.

So what of the training programs that teams routinely undergo: team building, assertiveness training, and so on? These will only work if the team is encouraged to translate the knowledge they have acquired into “real action” that boosts performance. Otherwise, these programs will prove to be nothing but a waste of time and energy.

How Well Does Your Team Show the Five Right Behavior‘R’s?

Are team members Riveted on performance, Reflexive, Ready, Resourceful and Resilient? Note down your ideas on their performance in each of these areas.

8.2 Introducing the Tools

The first step in developing the five, right behavior‘R’s involves implementing of all the positive

team-building behaviors that we've discussed in previous modules. Of these, a strong focus on performance, a positive team climate, and good communication are especially important. These provide the foundation of the right problem-solving attitudes and behaviors; and without this foundation, your team will struggle to become an effective problem-solving unit.

However, simply putting this foundation in place isn't enough. You also need to encourage problem solving and learning within your team. And you need to make it a habit of your team to focus on performance, and be reflexive, ready, resourceful, and resilient. All of this will help you tackle problems in an effective, robust way.

You might feel that problem solving has more to do with inspiration and genius rather than habit. However, this is not the case: research shows that the chances of finding a solution are much higher if you have an effective problem-solving strategy in place. This section gives you with the tools and techniques you need to develop this:

- **Reviewing the environment:** This set of tools helps your team transform itself into a ready, reflexive, pro-active unit. It shows you how to scan the environment effectively.
- **Identifying problems:** This set of tools helps you clarify the problem, especially in relation to performance.
- **Developing solutions:** This set of tools nudges your team members into a resourceful mindset. We gave you several tools to boost innovation and creativity in Module 6. Here, we outline measures that go beyond those tools. They show you how to restart your team if the earlier set of tools fails to get the team "un"stuck.
- **Executing solutions:** This set of tools is aimed at helping you bridge the execution gap. It equips your team with the tools needed to build support for solutions it has developed, to execute them, and to become resilient enough to bounce back from difficult experiences.

8.2.1 The Scan-O-Scope: Don't Fight Fires, Prevent Them

Get your team members into the habit of keeping their "Scan-O-Scopes" on. Encourage them to scan the environment, both internal and external, for things that affect the team's task. These could be changes in government policies, moves made by competitors, a shift in internal dynamics – anything and everything that could have a bearing on the team's performance.

Ensure that your team has its antennae up, and is scanning the horizon for information that affects it. This way, your team will be able to spot potential opportunities and anticipate possible problem, so that it can harness the opportunities and alter course to avoid the problems.

Consider the example of the Irish Chocolate Company:

It is an old company, which is Irish, and manufactures chocolates, as is obvious from its name. One of its niche operations is its mail order business. For nearly two decades now, customers have been ordering chocolates through the mail, and the company has been supplying them.

When the Internet boom started, the company actively focused on whether e-commerce had any relevance for them. They quickly realized that the web provided them with a tailor-made opportunity to expand their mail order business. If they peddled their wares online, they could sell a whole lot more chocolate. The company decided to expand its concept of "mail orders" to include "electronic orders", as well.

A website was launched in 2001. The idea was a great success. The site today averages 235,000 hits per month, with a staggering 84% of web traffic coming from the U.S. This has led to a huge increase in export income.

So, what should your team members look out for? As stated earlier, "anything and everything that could have a bearing on the team's performance". Yes, this description is rather broad. What you could do, however, is ask your people to start by focusing on the key areas listed below – these

cover most points. You'll soon find that if the members keep their scan-o-scopes on in these areas, they'll start picking up signals from other fields as well.

Key Areas that team members need to watch are:

- **Customer Needs:**

Your team's customers are clearly vitally important. You therefore need to keep your eyes peeled for any change in consumer habits and needs. Depending on your type of business, this is where you can use focus groups, direct-observation methods, and in-depth interviews to track changes in customer needs.

- **Market Dynamics:**

How fast, and in what direction is the market growing? Who are the emerging competitors? What are your competitors' advantages? Is there any new technology coming to the market? Has the government announced any policy shifts? Consider all of these questions when you scan the market.

Scan Plan

Every time you pick up something on your Scan-O-Scope – it could be a new customer need, a trend, an innovation – analyze it by asking the questions below:

1. What caused this?
2. How does it affect us?
3. Does it cause problems for us, or does it create opportunities?
4. If it causes problems, what is the nature of the problems? How can we solve them?
5. If it creates opportunities, what is the nature of the opportunities? Can we harness them to improve performance?

- **Technology:**

Technology is changing very quickly. You need to scan technological changes from four angles:

- 1) Will they impact consumer habits?
- 2) Can they improve our operations?
- 3) Will they change marketplace dynamics?
- 4) Do they represent a trend?

- **Trends:**

Trends can be classified under three categories – fads, shifts, and leaps. You need to watch out for all of them, as they determine important changes in the marketplace and in customer and employee attitude.

People often tend to be dismissive of fads – after all, they are just temporary crazes. However, you cannot discount them totally: the fashion industry, for instance, thrives on them. The hula-hoop is another classic example. It was a fad, yet 25 million rings were sold in 1958, before the hula-hoop went “out”. The thing with fads is that you cannot base long-term plans on them: you have to be very clear about what they are when they start, and you need to know that they will soon end.

Shifts represent a more clear, defined, and long-term change in direction. The growing interest in “organic” foods is a shift. The accent on “glocal” rather than “global” or “local” is a shift. Shifts happen gradually and are relatively easy to predict, and you need to factor them into your strategy.

Leaps are quantum jumps that cause dramatic changes. Electricity, the Internet, the human genome project – all of these are leaps. Leaps are difficult to predict, yet they can cause revolutions.

- **Internal Dynamics:**

Apart from the externals, the team needs to stay focused on the internals, too. Is the team functioning well? Are relationships healthy? Does anyone need extra support? Are there any imminent departures? Does the team possess all of the required KSAs? Can it acquire them along the way? Yes, we’ve addressed these in previous modules, however the team as a whole needs to keep reflecting upon these.

If this is to be done effectively, team members need time to be made available for this scanning, and for reviewing the concerns that the “scan-a-scopes” might pick up. The what, how, where, when and why of this are discussed in the next tool.

8.2.2 The Review: Stop, Reflect, Go

“Follow effective action with quiet reflection. From the quiet reflection will come even more effective action.”

– Peter Drucker, Educator and Writer

Reviews involve gathering together all members of the team and discussing the team’s performance, with a view to “doing things better”. Reviews are important for two reasons: they give team members a clear forum for sharing their concerns; and, conducted effectively, they encourage reflexivity.

A consultancy team has just finished a major chunk of work, and has gathered for a review. The focus of this is to reflect on how well the team functioned, and to see if the team can devise ways of “doing things better”. While there are no concerns or issues at the moment, the team finds that members have learned some key new skills during the task, which are then shared with other team members. Next time the team tackles a similar job, its conclusions are of a higher quality, and it completes the task more quickly.

After this segment of work is accomplished, the team, again, gathers together to review any further improvements that it may be able to make. Thus, a spiral of continuous reflection and improvement is set in place, and the team gets better and better at its job.

A good way of running reviews is to use an “After Action Review” (AAR) process. This is a structured meeting that does the following:

- Focuses on why things happened.
- Compares intended results with what was actually accomplished.
- Encourages participation.
- Emphasizes trust and the value of feedback.

For the AAR process to be successful, the team needs to discover for itself the lessons provided by the experience. The more open and honest the discussion, the better. Here are some of the key elements of an effective AAR:

- **Discuss the purpose and rules** – The AAR does not seek to criticize negatively, or find fault. The emphasis should be on learning, so make this clear right from the start to achieve maximum involvement, openness, and honesty.
- **Use a facilitator** – A neutral party helps focus the discussion. This person asks questions and can often lead the discussion in such a way that it remains nonjudgmental.
- **Talk about TEAM performance** – The AAR is not about individual performance. Look at how the team performed, and don't assign blame.
- **Conduct the AAR as soon as possible** – For feedback to be effective, it should be timely. By doing an AAR quickly, you'll get a more accurate description of what happened. It also helps ensure that all (or most) of the team can participate.
- **Encourage active participation** – When setting the rules, talk about trust. Emphasize that it's OK to disagree and that blame isn't part of the discussion. Personal attacks must be stopped immediately. Setting the right tone for an AAR is extremely important.
- **Focus the discussion** – If you ask, "How do you think that went?" this can be too broad a topic to discuss. Instead, direct participants to think about specific issues or areas: "How well did you cooperate?" "How could communication have been better?" "What planning activities were most effective?"
 1. Discussion questions typically center around three themes:
 - i. What was supposed to happen? What did happen? Why was there a difference?
 - ii. What worked? What didn't work? Why?
 - iii. What would you do differently next time?

Start by getting participants to agree on what was supposed to happen. Once you have agreement, you can discuss actual versus intended results. You may need to return to the objectives as you move on to what worked and what you would do differently.

2. Remember to ask open questions, so that participants don't think that there's a "right" or "wrong" answer:
 - What would you have preferred to happen?
 - What would you do differently next time?
 - How could the situation have been prevented?
 - In your opinion, what is the ideal procedure?

Sometimes it's helpful to have participants each write down their ideas, and then ask everyone to share. This helps you avoid groupthink, and it allows quieter individuals to contribute.

Write the key discussion questions on a whiteboard or flipchart. This helps participants focus on the main purpose of the meeting.

- **Let the team talk** – This is an exercise in good communication, not just feedback and continuous learning. The better team members communicate with one another and work out differences, the stronger they'll be in the future – as both individuals and team players.

- **Record the recommendations** – Write down the specific recommendations made by the team. Then, consider forwarding this information to other team leaders and stakeholders. This is how AARs contribute to organization-wide learning and improvement.
- **Provide follow-up and training** – If no one follows up on the recommendations, then the process is wasted. Create a system to ensure that the ideas gathered in the AAR are incorporated into operations and training activities.

8.2.3 Problem Identification Kit, Tool 1: Symptom Checklist

The problem with team-related problems is that, many a time, the team can't quite figure out what the issue really is. People know there is a problem, but are not able to put their finger on what exactly it is. Sometimes, we confuse symptoms with the problem and, sometimes, we misread the issue altogether.

Why does this happen? It's often because we don't take the time to explore the issue properly. We are in such a hurry to deal with the symptoms that we don't conduct a thorough analysis. This means that we end up treating symptoms rather than fixing the real problem, and wasting time and effort as we do this.

This tool provides you with a three-part problem identification kit to diagnose problems correctly.

1. First, there is the **Symptom Checklist**. This lists some of the typical team-working symptoms that you can look out for.
2. Next, come **Analysis Aids**. These help you to analyze the various dimensions of the problem.
3. And, finally, we have the **Performance-Focus Description**. This helps you link the problem to its effect on performance, and state this in clear, direct terms.

This tool deals with the symptom checklist. While the symptoms of a problem are often reasonably obvious – poor performance, fully-fledged conflict, and so on – sometimes, a team gets stuck, but doesn't realize it. It finds itself grappling with vague, ill-defined symptoms, while the real problem simmers just below the surface.

As an effective team leader, you need to be able to recognize these symptoms. Here is a quick checklist of some of these symptoms, along with some of the typical questions and statements that can tip you off to them. Go through it. Have you recently heard people in your team say these things?

Symptom Checklist	
Symptom	Question/Statements
Lack of enthusiasm	What's the point? Why bother?
Low team spirit	Why do I have to do it?
Discontent, frustration	What a waste! Why can't they see this?
Blaming, mistrust, backbiting	It's his fault! She did it!
Disenchantment with managers	They don't care! They don't understand!
Confusion about direction, goals, strategies	What's this all about? Huh?
Griping, unconstructive discussions	Things will never improve around here!
Lack of team identity/purpose	What are we doing here? I'll do a job on my own!

Some amount of grumbling and confusion is just human nature, to a lesser or greater extent. However, if you have seen a number of these symptoms, or are checking positive for even one symptom repeatedly, you may have a problem. Try using the problem analysis techniques below to figure out what the problem is.

8.2.4 Problem Identification Kit, Tool 2: Analysis Aids

You know you have a problem with your team, so now you have to understand it fully.

If the symptoms seem vague, then you'll need to conduct a very thorough examination to understand the nature of the problem. However, even if the solution seems to be very clear, we suggest that you still take some time to explore the issue before jumping straight to the solution. Time spent exploring and understanding the problem is often even more important than the time you spend devising solutions.

You see, our minds play tricks when we try to analyze problems. They can block out – or blow out of proportion – information that threatens our personal interests and safety. They can get bored by situations, and focus on other, more interesting, problems. And they can play a whole range of other tricks that muddle our problem solving and cause us to solve the wrong problems.

So, when confronted with a problem, take a step back and mull it over. And take the time needed to pinpoint the exact, real cause of the issue.

While there are many general problem solving techniques (such as the 5 Whys, Cause and Effect Analysis, use of Systems Diagrams, Root Cause Analysis and Appreciative Inquiry) that you can use to analyze problems, our focus here is on giving you three simple approaches that you can use to understand problems within your team.

1. Defuse Defensiveness and Groupthink: Create a collaborative setting

To pinpoint the real cause of a problem, you need to take a dispassionate look at the facts – something teams often shy away from doing. To do this, you need to defuse defensiveness within your team, and you need to create a safe environment in which people can collaborate. At the same time, though, you need to make sure that groupthink doesn't creep into the team.

We dealt with groupthink comprehensively in the previous module, and we provided tools for defusing defensiveness and creating a collaborative setting in earlier modules. Here, we follow these up with some specific techniques.

- **Make a Convincing Case**

People can often live in a state of denial, where they refuse to face up to problems. This is also often true of teams. So, when you first talk to your team about a “potential problem” that you think the team is facing, make sure you have a compelling case to present. List your reasons as to why you think the issue is a problem. Have well rehearsed, convincing, logical arguments ready, and use them to drive the point home to your team.

- **Ban the Blame Game**

The question isn't “Who went wrong?” Rather it is “What went wrong?” All too often, problem-solving exercises can degenerate into a blame game. Encourage the members of your team to put aside any personal agendas, and discuss problems with their focus on learning “what can be done” and “what should we learn from this experience”, rather than “who should take the blame”.

- **Ditch the Efficiency Excuse**

This is a tricky one. Often, teams become so hung up on efficiency – doing things right, that they start neglecting effectiveness – doing the right things. So, when a problem crops up, they tend to ignore it, smug in the knowledge that they are “doing

things right”. Help your team to look beyond efficiency, and concentrate on becoming effective.

- **Agree Rules for Successful Collaborative Discussion**

The most important rule needed for successful collaborative discussion is one we’ve already mentioned – banning the blame game. As well as this, make sure that all points of views are invited and understood in the discussion. Ask team members to back their opinions with facts. And make sure that the discussion is not used as a forum to settle scores.

- **Discuss the Undiscussable**

When an issue threatens the stability of the team, team members can become very defensive, and may not even be willing to discuss it. *If a well-liked member of the team is not pulling her weight, other team members may prefer to turn a blind eye to the issue to protect her. As a leader, it is your job to bring these undiscussable issues to the forefront, even if this causes hostility.*

- **Go on the Offensive:**

If team members continue to be defensive, put the ball in their court. Ask them why they’re denying the problem, and push them to justify their points of view. Either they’ll convert you to their points of view, or you’ll see that their reasoning lacks merit.

2. Look beneath the Surface: Weed out assumptions and biases

All too often, assumptions and biases can creep into the problem solving process without us even realizing it.

Some of these assumptions can be quite subtle. “We know our customers.” “We have the right skill set”. “Our processes are efficient.” “Our goals are relevant.” “Past experience can guide us in developing strategy.” Guard against these. They can distort your vision, and cause you to misread the situation.

An insurance company has outsourced its claims settlement processing operations to an offshore service provider. The company is now facing problems because claims are taking too long to settle. Customer satisfaction is decreasing, and the cost of the outsourced service is rising. The company’s management team jumps to the conclusion that “The service provider seems unable to deliver the customer satisfaction and level of service required, and seems unable to meet cost targets”.

On the face of it, the problem statement seems correct, but it contains inherent biases. It assumes that the company has defined its requirements and procedures correctly to the service provider. Maybe it hasn’t. It assumes that the company’s cost and service targets are realistic. Maybe they aren’t. A better way of stating the problem would be, “The current infrastructure supporting our claims processing cannot provide the expected cost and service levels”.

3. Revisit the Basics

“Revisiting basics” is a guiding mantra prescribed by Jon R Katzenbach and Douglas K Smith in their book, *The Wisdom of Teams: Creating the High-Performance Organization*. The writers recommend that, when faced with a problem, the first thing a team should do is to revisit the basics. This is especially important when symptoms are vague and ill defined, and when unseen assumptions and biases are undermining problem solving.

To revisit the basics, consider the following:

- Does the performance challenge actually require a team effort?

- Does your team have the right knowledge, skill and ability mix required to meet the performance challenge? Do you have the must-haves in place, and are you able to acquire the other KSAs along the way?
- Is the team's goal relevant, inspiring, clear, and shared?
- Is the organizational structure supporting the goal attainment agreed upon, appropriate, and clear?
- Is the path towards the goal agreed upon, appropriate, and clear?
- Is the team climate positive?
- Are conflicts managed effectively?
- Has the team managed to deal with the barriers that hamper creativity and team decision-making?

More often than not, a stuck team will find that it has gone awry on the basics. It might be that the environment or mission has changed, and that what was right before is wrong now. After all, little remains static: the environment, both within and around the team, continues to evolve. The team, therefore, needs to keep revisiting and rethinking the basics.

This can and should be a regular exercise (it can be a part of the reviews discussed earlier). But, where the team spots a problem on its scan-o-scope, or is bogged down in a general malaise, you should check that these fundamentals are still in place.

8.2.5 Problem Identification Kit, Tool 3: Performance-Focused Description

To solve a problem, you firstly have to formulate it correctly – that is, you need to express it in a way that is clear, and that correctly identifies the problem that needs to be solved.

This tool shows you how to do this. It stresses two things:

1. Describing the problem in the context of performance.
2. Using the collective input of people within your team to build a complete problem description.

Have you ever heard the story about the two cats and the monkey?

There were two cats – one white and one black. They stole a loaf of bread. To share it, they decided to break it into two halves. However, one piece of bread was bigger than the other, and they started squabbling.

Along came the monkey, who offered to settle their problem. He took a bite out of the bigger piece, with the idea being that both pieces would be equal now. Unfortunately, the bite was too big and the bigger piece became the smaller piece. The monkey now took a bite of the other piece and so on and so forth, until the monkey ate all of the bread. Sure, the problem was solved, but the cats were left with nothing.

The most important thing that the team does is perform in such a way that it achieves its mission. Performance is fundamentally important and, when you run into a difficult problem, you need to look at it from the perspective of performance. Whenever you spot a problem, first assess its impact on performance and then describe it in this context.

Otherwise you risk being like the cats in the story – you'll focus so much on small points of detail that you lose sight of the big picture.

Now, we come to the second part of this tool – using the collective input of all members of your team.

This is neatly illustrated by the story of the six blind men describing an elephant (in this case, told in the poem “The Blindmen and the Elephant”, by John Godfrey Saxe):

*It was six men of Hindustan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind)
That each by observation
Might satisfy the mind.*

*The first approached the Elephant
And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side
At once began to bawl:
“Bless me, it seems the Elephant
Is very like a wall.”*

*The second, feeling of his tusk,
Cried, “Ho! What have we here
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me 'tis mighty clear
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a spear.”*

*The third approached the animal,
And happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Then boldly up and spake:
“I see,” quoth he, “the Elephant
Is very like a snake.”*

*The Fourth reached out an eager hand,
And felt about the knee.
“What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain,” quoth he;
“’Tis clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a tree!”*

*The Fifth, who chanced to touch the ear,
Said: “E'en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an Elephant
Is very like a fan!”*

*The Sixth no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Than, seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
“I see,” quoth he, “the Elephant
Is very like a rope!”*

*And so these men of Hindustan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right*

And all were in the wrong.

*So oft in theologic wars,
The disputants, I ween,
Rail on in utter ignorance
Of what each other mean,
And prate about an Elephant
Not one of them has seen!*

Different people focus on different aspects of the problem, often drawing quite different conclusions as a result. This is why, when you're blocked, it makes sense to ask all of the members of your team for input when building the problem description.

One way of doing this is to ask everyone to write out a short description of the problem, while keeping the performance focus in context. The description should answer the "when, why, what, where and how" of the problem. Now, collate these inputs. Is everyone's reading the same? What are the discrepancies? Why are they coming up? Use these inputs to create an accurate picture of the problem.

If you have a problem getting started with this, you can use the script below. By filling in the blanks, you'll arrive at a first draft of the description, which you can then develop further. Feel free to tweak the script to suit your specific situation!

Problem Description Script

I feel there is a problem because (describe the symptoms):

The problem is that (describe just what the problem is):

This problem is affecting performance by (describe the impact of the problem):

This problem is happening at (describe where):

The problem started occurring since (describe when):

The problem is occurring because (describe why):

Note: We're not asking "who" here; we're not "pointing fingers" with this exercise.

Now that you have a clear picture of the problem, it is time to shift into the solution mode.

8.2.6 Solution Strategies: Beyond Creativity

Having identified a problem, the next step is to solve it. This tool looks at how you can empower your team to become a truly resourceful, resilient unit that can resolve problems – even ones that you're not really equipped to deal with.

In the creativity and innovation module, we discussed several techniques that you can use to find solutions to the problems you're experiencing. So, what if you find yourself stuck, even after using these techniques? Here are a few tips that can help you move forward.

Make Problem Solving a Systematic, Priority Process

The first and most important thing you need to do is accept that problem solving is going to be a routine part of your team's job. As such, you need to develop a systematic process for dealing with it. Problems are going to come up, and your team can't ignore them. Neither can the team get

hung up on them forever. Instead, you need to develop a problem-solving attitude, and learn how to discuss problems, resolve them, and then move on.

This actually isn't difficult. Research shows that if a team has a strategy to deal with problems, whatever this may be, and consciously focuses on finding solutions, the chances of its success increase dramatically. Researchers have examined several different problem-solving strategies over the years: while the individual merits of each might differ, there is a general consensus that "a strategy" is better than "no strategy". A focused approach usually wins against trial-and-error approaches.

Appoint Monitors

As we discussed in the previous module, our minds often trick us into misreading problems. Sometimes, we get distracted. Sometimes, we rush into solutions. Therefore, when trying to find a solution (or even when discussing a problem), it can make sense to appoint certain team members as monitors.

Such a team members can be trained to remind groups to stay "on course" during problem solving. And, his or her job during discussions is to remind the group not to jump to conclusions prematurely. Where the group is straying away from the problem at hand, the monitor should be required to intervene with a reminder. In doing this, monitors don't have to be aggressive: gentle reminders, framed as questions ("*are we rushing to a conclusion here?*"), can push the team back on course.

Celebrate Small Wins

Wins are energizing, so if your team is stuck badly enough, use the power of wins to energize it. Celebrate every time the team manages to move past even a small hurdle. This will help team members build enthusiasm and, ultimately, perform more effectively.

But what if the team seems permanently stuck and can't achieve any of its goals? Maybe you need to redefine your goals. Remember the "[Attainable](#)" part of SMART goal setting? Make sure that your goal is "doable". People will become less frustrated, and your team may eventually be able to stretch itself enough to achieve a goal that, earlier, seemed unattainable.

Empower Team Members with Relevant Information

It may be that, despite using all the creativity techniques effectively, your team can't come up with a solution. Chances are that a key piece of information is missing.

Trawl around and find fresh facts, new insights, and different perspectives with which you can equip your team members. Provide them with inputs, such as best practices, case studies, customer feedback, process data, and competitive benchmarks. This new information will help the team to devise fresh, better solutions.

Provide Training

At times, a team becomes stuck because it lacks the required knowledge, skills and aptitude mix. In such a situation, the only way it can get unstuck is by sourcing the missing KSAs. While sometimes the members just pick up the KSAs themselves, other times, formal training is required to help them build the skills they need. Identify the missing ingredient in your magic KSA mix, and ensure that the team is able to procure it.

Use Facilitators

Stuck teams can benefit from skilled facilitators. Facilitators are outsiders who possess skills that can help the team to resolve the problem and achieve better performance. A facilitator is effective only if she focuses on the problem in the context of performance.

Change Members – or the Leader

This is the most drastic move, however, at times, it becomes essential. Remember, the performance comes before the team, so if you find any team member, including the leader, hampering performance, let them go. However, we counsel you to do this only as a last resort.

8.2.7 Stakeholder Shaping: Crafting the Right Solution

Once you've found possible solutions to your problem, you have to choose the best one, and then implement it.

So how do you make the choice?

There are several techniques that help you to do this. Here, we outline Stakeholder Shaping, a useful technique that teams use to make good choices. Stakeholder Shaping helps you explore the possible consequences of a proposed solution, and it then helps you shape the solution so that it's as acceptable as possible to your stakeholders. (You can learn about many other decision-making techniques at http://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_TED.htm.)

Given below is a step-by-step guide for conducting Stakeholder Shaping.

1. Start by developing a **Stakeholder Shaping Matrix** like the one in figure 8.2.7.1 below for each of your possible solutions.
2. Write down the proposed change/solution. If there are several solutions, then conduct this exercise individually for each one. (Remember that each solution should be considered individually and separately.)
3. Ask members of your team to identify the main entities – individuals, groups, teams, or organizations – that affect or are affected by the proposed change/solution. These are your stakeholders. They can be internal or external to the team. List them in the “Stakeholder” column. Typically, the stakeholder list can include customers, team members, organizations, managers, vendors, and suppliers. (If you're including groups of people as stakeholders, remember that you have to communicate with them as individuals. Consider listing them individually.)
4. Once you have listed the potential stakeholders, consider how the proposed change affects the stakeholder. List both the advantages and disadvantages the solution might pose for the stakeholder. Record these under the “**Impact on the Stakeholder**” column.
5. Now, review the impact the stakeholder can have on the proposed solution. Is the stakeholder required to play a key role in the execution of the solution? If so, what is the likelihood that they will go along with the solution and play their role?

Chances are that if the stakeholder is adversely affected by the solution, he or she will try to block it. But, maybe your team can persuade the stakeholder to go along with the project. In the “**Stakeholder Impact on Solution Execution**” column, list how important the stakeholder is to the project and whether he or she is likely to block the project, be neutral, or support it.

Figure 8.2.7.1 Stakeholder Shaping Matrix

Proposed Solution/Change:			
Stakeholder	Impact of Solution on Stakeholder	Stakeholder Impact on Solution Execution	Potential Strategies for Minimizing Negative Impact on Stakeholder and Obtaining Support
	Positive: Negative:		
Modified Solution/Change:			

- Having done this, consider how the solution can be restructured so as to minimize the disadvantages to stakeholders, and so that you maximize the advantages. It may not be possible to eliminate all disadvantages, however do what you can to influence stakeholders in your favor – by giving them desired information, by involving them in the planning process, and by giving them the bigger picture. Record your strategy in the last

column in the matrix.

7. Factor these changes into your proposed solution and write down your modified solution in the last row.

Do this for all of the solutions that you have shortlisted. Consider the modified solutions that you have worked through, and identify the solutions that deliver the maximum advantage and minimum disadvantage to the stakeholders you've identified. From the perspective of your stakeholders, this is likely to be the best choice. (You'll probably want to use other approaches, though, to make sure that this is **your** best choice!)

Also, since you have made your best assessment of the various issues and concerns of stakeholders, you will be well prepared for addressing their misgivings and reducing resistance when you present the solution. This will make it much easier to implement the solution than would otherwise be the case.

8.2.8 Networking for Execution: Upwards and Outwards

Teams do not exist in isolation. They are often embedded within organizations, and they are connected to external people and organizations such as their customers, their vendors, and their suppliers. Because of this, the better that teams network with the internal and external entities surrounding them, the better are their chances of procuring resources, finding solutions, and achieving their missions.

This is why networking – building good links with the people and organizations around you – is so important. If your team has good contacts within the marketplace, it's likely to find out about changes in your environment early on. If you are ill equipped to deal with a problem, networking with other teams in your organization may provide you with essential inputs. Lobbying with top managers can give you the resources you need to develop the solution you need.

Networking is an essential skill to master if you want your team to become a resourceful, resilient, problem-solving unit. It may happen that some of your team members are not comfortable with this, and they may not perceive it as a part of the job. A team of software engineers might say, "Our job was to find a solution to the problem. We did it. It isn't our job to go and sell the solution to senior managers."

You have to dispel this impression. A team has to make itself heard. It has to push to get what it wants. It cannot afford to be so inwardly focused that externals get neglected. Silicon Valley history abounds with stories of how a team at one company developed a revolutionary product. The company did not recognize it, and along came another company that exploited the full potential of the technology. *Xerox created the GUI technology that Apple Computer then developed and commercialized. Years later, Microsoft did the same with key technology developed at Apple.* To avoid these situations, your team needs to learn how to reach out to the world around it.

According to researchers Deborah Ancona and David Caldwell, teams need to use three strategies to ensure that they are networking properly. Individuals within the team should act as:

- **Scouts:** These people are on the lookout for new information regarding the market, the competition, customers, technology, and the like. The aim here is that the team keeps itself abreast of the changes taking place around it, so that it can factor these changes into its strategy.
- **Task Coordinators:** The goal of these team members is to communicate and coordinate with other teams and departments so that the team can perform as effectively as possible. These people can negotiate for and share resources with other teams, and seek feedback and share approaches so that everyone can make the most of their performance.

- **Ambassadors:** Ambassadors reach out to influential people to win support. They communicate with senior managers to promote the team as an effective unit, and to promote the team's product as fully as possible. This communication helps the team to secure the resources it needs, helps to ensure that the team's product is used, and makes sure that its work is seen as a success.

It's likely that your team needs all three of these strategies. Together, they will help you access expertise, information and support hidden throughout your organization, and, therefore, solve problems more effectively.

8.3 Module Summary

Let us do a quick recap of the key points covered in this module:

- Teams, even the best ones, sometimes get stuck.
- To get unstuck, teams need to demonstrate the Five Right Behaviour "R"s – they should be Ready, Reflexive, Resourceful, Resilient units, which are Riveted on performance.
- Teams need to keep a sharp eye on the external environment. Key areas your team needs to scan include customer needs; marketplace changes; technology; political, economic and social trends; and team dynamics.
- Teams need to conduct regular reviews. A review involves all team members gathering together and discussing the team performance and the factors affecting it. All of this is done with a focus on "doing things better".
- Problems need to be analyzed thoroughly before you develop a solution. Sometimes, though, symptoms are vague. In such cases, you have to conduct a very thorough examination to identify the nature of the problem. Even if the problem seems to be very clear, however, take out time to explore the issue.
- When the team is analyzing the problem, watch out for defensiveness and groupthink, and make sure that you challenge assumptions and biases. If in doubt, revisit the basics!
- Always describe the problem in the context of performance. Use the collective inputs of the team to build a complete problem description.
- To encourage the team to find solutions, you should celebrate small wins, empower your team with relevant information, provide training, use facilitators, and, if necessary, change the people within the team.
- If you have developed a range of solutions, you can conduct a stakeholder shaping exercise. This will help you to choose the right solution, and help you understand how you can build support for your solution.
- Your team needs to network outwards and upwards. By getting team members to operate as scouts, task coordinators and ambassadors, you can ensure that your team is alert to its changing environment, can tap into additional resources, and can push through its solutions.

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James Manktelow, CEO, Mindtools.com

Team Tools – Reminders...

Copy this page. Keep it by you as a reminder of the key things you've learned.

- A team is a **small group of people with complementary skills and abilities** who are committed to a **common purpose, performance goal and approach** for which **they are mutually accountable**.
– from *The Wisdom of Teams*, by Jon R Katzenbach and Douglas K Smith.
- It takes a lot of work to maintain a good team – only set one up if the benefits of teamwork exceed the benefits of people working individually. (See page 1.2.2 and 1.2.3 for more.)
- Teams typically go through a process of Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing. Know where your people are with this, and know what you can do to help things along (see 1.3.1).
- Start to select people for your team based on the task skills you need (see 2.2.1). Then take into account their team-working skills (interpersonal and self-management – see 2.2.2), their “adaptive attitude” (see 2.2.3) and their personality traits (see 2.2.5).
- The strongest teams have members from a diverse range of professional backgrounds and have some variation in culture, age, gender and tenure (see 2.2.6). They are also small in size, ideally with 7 or 8 members, and with no more than 15 (see 2.2.7).
- To be an effective team leader, you need good communication, motivational, confidence boosting, conflict-resolution, coaching, interpersonal, and planning skills; and a strong belief in the team’s purpose. You need to be a good role model, be open, and provide appropriate support to the members of your team. Module 3 helps you develop these skills and qualities.
- Make sure you understand the concept of “process losses” and “process gains” thoroughly, and know how to minimize the former and maximize the latter (see 3.1.2).
- Providing direction is a key part of your job as a team leader. To do this, you need to:
 - Translate the organization’s vision, mission and objectives to a team level (4.2.1)
 - Set SMARTER (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound, Efficacious, and Rewarded), meaningful goals (see 4.2.2 and 4.2.3).
 - Clarify situations, help people work effectively, provide support and encourage participation and achievement (see 4.1.2, 4.2.4, 4.2.5 and 4.2.6).
- You also need to provide a positive team climate. Partly this involves establishing trust (5.2.2) and providing appropriate support (5.2.3); and partly it involves helping people build great relationships with one another. This is where use of the CONNECT Model (see 5.2.1) can help if relationships are poor.
- Your team needs to be able to solve problems creatively. Unfortunately, issues such as the blocking effect, evaluation apprehension and groupthink can often prevent conventional brainstorming from being effective. Module 6 helps you break through these blocks.
- Conflict can arise from poor communication, differences of personal approach and structural problems (see 7.1.2). You can minimize conflict by adopting a positive conflict resolution style (see 7.2.1), understanding the root cause of the conflict (see 7.2.2) and using the Interest-Based Relational Approach to conflict resolution (see 7.2.3).
- The best teams are ones that are Reflexive, Ready, Resourceful, Resilient, and ‘Riveted on Performance’. Module 8 explains how to scan the environment effectively (8.2.1); learn lessons from each ‘Action’ (8.2.2); identify and manage internal team problems (8.2.3); and build excellent relationships with external supporters (8.2.7).

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