

STAGES OF TEAM DEVELOPMENT

	ORIENT	ORGANIZE	ACTION	RESULTS
Personal	Acceptance →	Respect →	I →	We
Inter-personal	Politeness →	Bid for Power →	Cooperate →	Enthusiasm
Group	Discussion →	Consensus →	Collaborate →	Creative Problem Solving

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How to create high performance teams right the first time!

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This model is used in our team training and teambuilding to provide an in-depth understanding of the team development process.

TEAM DIMENSIONS

Teams are extremely complex. Our research has identified ten key success factors that are predictors of team performance. Any one team can have all, none, or some of these variables. This creates over 1200 different combinations of variables that any one team may start with. And these variables are not binary – they are not necessarily just “present” or “absent.” This means that within these 1200 combinations, each team can have a different range of performance on each variable. In short – teams are extremely complex.

Every team also faces a different set of external variables that will affect its performance, even teams within the same organization. One product team may find, for example, that a function is not collaborative because it pays a high price for supporting the team. Another team may find that same function highly collaborative because it benefits from that team. Therefore, what the team is doing, and the costs and benefits it creates for others in the organization, will combine to create a different set of circumstances for every team.

Teams are intense. They start out in a chaotic situation due to lack of consensus on team rules, roles, and structure and they typically operate within highly complex organizational and political dynamics. Motivation and commitment among team members can vary widely, with some not even attending the initial team meetings and others remaining passive until they are able to get an accurate assessment of the situation. In this intense environment things can quickly become emotional and confrontational. Under the influence of their emotions people often say and do things they later regret.

Because of the complexity and intensity of the team setting the answer to every question about team development is the same – *It Depends!* It is this tremendous variation in the team development process that accounts for the inconsistency in team performance within and across organizations

What Teams Do And How They Do It!

Driving team complexity is the fact that teams operate on two dimensions simultaneously – a task dimension and a process dimension. In the world of teams you are always doing two things at the same time – and you must do each exceptionally well.

Task Dimension

In general, the task dimension is what a team does. But the specific tasks each team does *depends* on the type of team (i.e. business teams and product teams do different tasks) and the specific situation the team is in. Even two product development teams within the same business unit will do significantly different tasks. This makes every team unique and one of a kind.

What tasks a team decides to do directly impacts the teams’ productivity and its success. Teams that do the wrong tasks, or do tasks in the wrong sequence, will experience false starts that lengthen cycle time, increase costs, and reduce team member motivation and commitment. Therefore picking the right tasks is of critical importance.

Process Dimension

The process dimension is how a team goes about doing its chosen tasks. Since there are no roles, rules or structure when a team first gets started, it must develop a process for every single task it does. And each task requires a different process to organize it and make it efficient. If the team is making a decision, it must agree on a decision-making process. If the team is building a project plan, it must agree on a project planning process. If the team is having a discussion, it must agree on how to run the discussion.

Under the pressure to perform many teams fail to get agreement on a process before they jump into the task. This invariably leads to unproductive conflict as team members charge off in different directions. For example, a team decides to make a decision, but does not define the decision making process. The reality is there are many different decision-making processes, each with different steps in the process. With this wide range of options, the chances of team members all operating with the same process in mind is nil. Soon team members become frustrated with what they see as the disruptive behavior of those working a different process. Eventually the conflict comes to a head and the team must repair damage and re-start the decision-making process.

The process a team chooses directly affects the teams productivity and results. When developing a mission statement, for example, an autocratic process where the leader decides and then imposes the mission on team members, is likely to develop the wrong mission and will certainly minimize team member ownership and commitment to that mission. In contrast, using a highly participative process will create the critical thinking necessary for a team to develop the right mission. A highly participative process maximizes ownership through participation, which in turn will maximize team member's commitment to achieving the mission. So how a team chooses to do a task is of equal importance to what tasks the team chooses to do.

Task & Process

The significance of teams operating simultaneously on two different dimensions is tremendous. First it means that every team is custom built to maximize its performance in a specific situation. If teams were doctors, they would all be specialists. This is the major strength of high performance teams because it dramatically increases a team's ability to do the right things for a specific situation.

Secondly it means teams require a significant upfront investment of time and energy to achieve high performance. The team must first determine what it will do and how it will do it, before doing it! Doing the wrong tasks causes false starts that reduce performance and results. Doing the wrong process minimizes productivity and results. Therefore teams that fail to make this investment are likely to do the wrong things, and do them poorly.

Lastly it means that individual experience on teams is of limited value. Because each team is different, individual experience and learning will be different and will have limited application in a new situation. What worked to make team "A" successful, may

very well cause team "B" to fail. Therefore teams must make sure they are always designing a new team for the current situation and not copying a previous team from a previous situation.

The tasks and process dimensions are tightly inter-related. What task a team does will determine which processes it should use. And the processes the team uses affect the task it is doing. How these two dimensions interact with each other will create the teams Personal, Interpersonal and Group Dynamics; adding yet another level of complexity to building a high performance team

THE STAGES OF TEAM DEVELOPMENT Task, Process And Team Dynamics

The Stages of Team Development is based on the best practices of high performance teams that were identified over 20 years of applied research in business organizations. Its major contribution is summarizing the key dependencies that affect team development and organizing them into four stages of development. It drills down into each stage of development to identify specific Milestones and Tasks that must be achieved to successfully move through that stage of team development. The result is a clear and actionable roadmap for creating high performance teams.

TEAM TASK AND PROCESS

The Stages of Team Development organizes team development into four sequential and predictable stages of development. Following is a brief summary of each stage.

1. **Stage 1 – ORIENT:** The first step in team development is to create a “common orientation” to the situation by getting everybody on the same page on the importance, urgency, and the probability of success. The key process is group discussion.

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2. **Stage 2 – ORGANIZE:** The second step in team development is to organize the team by establishing its mission, goals, strategies and structure. The key process is consensus seeking.

3. **Stage 3 – ACTION:** The third step in team development is to initiate action on the team goals and strategies. The key

process is collaboration.

4. **Stage 4 – Results:** The final stage of team development is to maximize team results by fully implementing team actions. The key process in this final stage varies with each of the team tasks.

For a more in-depth understanding of team tasks and process go to home page and click on Innovative Ideas and select “Team Stages: Milestones” model.

TEAM DYNAMICS

The interaction between team tasks and team processes create team dynamics, and Team Dynamics influence a team's performance on its tasks and processes. This circular relationship between tasks, process and dynamics creates a dynamic and often volatile environment.

Team Dynamics take place at three levels – Personal, Interpersonal and Group.

Personal Dynamics

Personal Dynamics are how each team member experiences the team. Individual differences in personality, style and experience often result in team members experiencing the same team quite differently. This is why it is not unusual for one team member to experience a team as highly effective while another experiences it as dysfunctional and low performing. These differences in perception are one of the main reasons why it is often difficult to get an accurate read on a team's performance.

Teams start out with no roles, rules or structure. Therefore what roles a person chooses to play on a team are driven by their personality, style and experience. This is why when there is disagreement – given the complexity and intensity of teams there is always disagreement - it quickly becomes personal. The resulting “personality conflicts” can quickly escalate into team members choosing up sides and causing the team to split into sub-teams that vie for control of the teams' actions.

Developing positive team dynamics requires that team members understand and value individual differences in personality, style, and experience as a team strength. When these differences are understood *and* valued, it creates a safe environment where people can be themselves and make many different contributions to the success of the team.

Interpersonal Dynamics

Interpersonal Dynamics are how team members interact with each other. Interpersonal dynamics reflect the level of relationships within the team and how team members communicate with each other.

The strength of work relationships within a team determines the level of trust between team members and the level of risk team members are willing to take. The stronger the work relationships, the more trust and risk taking will occur. But it only takes one bad relationship between team members to destroy trust and reduce risk taking. One team member who violates confidentiality, for example, can cause other team members to withhold information from the team and severely damage interpersonal dynamics.

Open and honest communications between team members is critical to team success. Good relationships can create the trust necessary for people to risk being open and honest. But good communications skills are also critical to establishing positive interpersonal team dynamics. Arguing over opinions, for example, reduces information flow, reduces innovation, and damages work relationships. Interpersonal dynamics turn sour when this becomes the norm and team members struggle to get through each meeting without it turning into a fight.

Group Dynamics

Group Dynamics are how team members work together as a group. Group dynamics reflect the roles and responsibilities that team members play within a team.

The process of creating strong personal and interpersonal dynamics remains the same throughout the life of the team. Strong personal dynamics require that team members understand and value differences at each stage of development. Strong interpersonal relationships require that team members build work relationships and communicate in a way that creates shared understanding at each stage of team development.

In stark contrast to Personal and Interpersonal dynamics, a team's Group Dynamics must change at each stage of team development because the tasks and processes at the group level are different at each stage of development. For example, creating a common orientation through discussion in the ORIENT stage is dramatically different than reaching consensus on the team's mission goals, strategies and structure in the ORGANIZE Stage. A team that has good dynamics on group discussion may have terrible group dynamics when it comes to achieving consensus.

Group dynamics can quickly change as team members play different roles at each stage of development. A person who plays the "gate keeper role" of inviting people into conversation in the ORIENT stage may play a confrontational or "devils advocate" role in the Organizing stage to encourage critical thinking. This change in roles will dramatically change how people interact with each other, leading to a change in Group Dynamics.

STAGE 1 – ORIENTING A TEAM

The major task in ORIENT Stage is to get “everyone on the same page” by creating a common orientation to the business, the organization and the situation. The key process is group discussion.

GROUP DYNAMICS

In the beginning the team is much like a jig saw puzzle; each team member has different pieces of the puzzle, some pieces of the puzzle are missing, and no one has a picture of what the final puzzle should look like. Therefore the first thing the team must do is to get everyone to put their pieces of the puzzle on the table. A team may also have to reach outside the team to gather other pieces of the puzzle.

The jig saw puzzle the team is trying to solve is an accurate assessment of the situation the team is entering into. In the beginning team members have lots of questions – e.g. Why do we need a team? What’s in it for them if they participate on this team? How important is the team? Why are certain people on the team and other not on the team? Is management going to support the team or are they just setting the team up to take the blame? Will the team get the resources we need? What politics will we run into? Who wins or loses if the team succeeds or fails? Team members will have different questions, and different answers to the same questions. Getting everyone to share their questions and their perspectives on each question will create a “common orientation” among all team members.

To answer all of their questions and create an accurate assessment of the situation the team will need to complete the following tasks:

1. **Business Analysis** – The team must analyze its alignment with business plans and strategies to assure it is always doing the right thing for the business and to determine the level of power, influence and support the team can expect within the organization
2. **Organizational Analysis** – The team must analyze the costs and benefits it will create for key stakeholders and the organizational roadblocks it will run into in order to determine the effort that will be required to achieve success.
3. **Situational Analysis** – The team must analyze the importance of the team to the organization, the urgency with which the team must act, and the probability of the team achieving success to determine the level of priority and resource the team will justify from team members.

The team does not need to reach agreement or consensus on this analysis, they only need share their perspectives to create the most accurate and complete picture of what they are getting into. Once the picture is completed it is likely that there will still be different interpretations of it, but at least the team is all looking at the same picture.

The key process in the ORIENT Stage is group discussion. The goal of these discussions is to share what everyone knows in order to create a common knowledge base that can be analyzed to make an accurate assessment of the situation. To achieve high performance these discussions must be organized to create balanced participation and facilitated to avoid arguing over opinions.

PERSONAL DYNAMICS

People role-play a lot at work; tell me your job title and I know the role you play in the organization. In the team setting there is no role-playing because there are no roles until the team establishes them. Therefore individual personality, style and experience tend to drive individual behaviors and the roles people decide to play in the ORIENT Stage. People with action-oriented personalities will try to cut discussions short and do something. People who like to explore alternatives before they take action will try to keep discussion open to find the best thing to do. When disagreements erupt between these two people it becomes personal and can quickly turn into personality conflicts.

The fact that things quickly become personal creates a very high-risk environment. People cannot hide behind their function, their boss, or the system when other team members engage them. Team members who do not participate are quickly labeled as none team players. Members that do participate risk getting caught in personal conflicts. This creates an environment where risk taking cannot be avoided; said another way, teams raise the level of risk taking within an organization. Therefore, at the personal level, what is going through people's minds, consciously or sub-consciously, is will I be accepted if I speak up?

A common example of acceptance that affects many teams is an inexperienced team member that is new to their job. When a discussion comes up the more experienced team members tend to ignore the inexperienced person. At first they ignore them because they fear putting them on the spot and embarrassing them. At first this is O.K. with the new person because they have little to offer anyway. But soon it just becomes the norm to ignore this person. Eventually team members begin to talk about the inexperienced person outside of team meetings; how the inexperienced person is the "weak link" in the chain that is holding the team back and causing delays on critical issues because they have to go back and check on everything because they do not know anything. Inevitably the inexperienced person hears the rumors and, not feeling either acceptance or respect, they withdraw from the team even more.

The key process for creating strong Personal Dynamics is to understand and value individual differences. For example, had the team put the issue of experience on the table for discussion they could have talked about the strengths and weaknesses that different levels of experience bring to the team. Inexperienced people bring a fresh perspective and will ask the "dumb questions" that others miss and often lead to key insights; but they also have to check with their boss before doing anything. Experienced people bring lots of history and learning; but they can also be stuck in the old ways and resistant to change. The team can then value the strengths of different levels of experience and openly deal with the downsides to minimize their affect on team performance.

The team could have created positive dynamics if they would have openly talked about experience levels and how they will handle the affect of these differences on team performance. Putting this issue on the table would start to establish a norm of talking to each other about personal issues, not talking about each other.

INTERPERSONAL DYNAMICS

Team member interaction at the interpersonal level in the ORIENT Stage is often polite and superficial. Not knowing whom they can trust, most team members decide to play it safe and not put everything on the table. For example, a team member may have a boss who has sent them to spy on the team and undermine team actions. But, not knowing whom they can trust, the team member is most likely to say something polite and superficial like – “I don’t think we have management support”. This allows the team member to avoid the risk of this getting back to his or her boss because someone on the team breaks confidentiality and shares the information outside the team.

Polite and superficial discussions shut down communications and make it difficult for the team to get the information it needs to know what it is “getting into” and create an accurate assessment of the situation. This lack of understanding will carry over into the ORGANIZE Stage and create a significant likelihood that the team will experience a false start when establishing its mission, goals and strategies. Therefore establishing positive interpersonal dynamics is critical to team success.

Teams that have uniformly strong work relationships between team members will quickly establish strong interpersonal dynamics and avoid polite and superficial behaviors. Teams that start with damaged work relationships will have to repair relationships in order to create positive interpersonal dynamics. Stranger teams, where nobody knows anybody very well, will have to invest in relationship building to establish positive interpersonal dynamics. Most teams have a mix of relationships – some good, some bad and some unknown.

INTERACTION OF TEAM DYNAMICS

A team’s Personal and Interpersonal Dynamics have a strong and direct impact on its Group Dynamics in the ORIENT stage. If team members do not feel accepted the team is likely to experience personal conflicts that stifle discussion. If team members do not trust each other they will likely withhold key information that the team needs to create an accurate assessment of the situation. If there are poor interpersonal communications they will likely end up arguing over opinions. The more problems a team has with its dynamics, the more difficult it will be to create an inaccurate assessment of the situation and avoid a false start in the next stage when organizing the team.

This interaction of dynamics makes the ORIENT Stage extremely unpredictable, difficult, and time consuming. When everything is aligned just right, a team can move through the stage quickly. But it only takes a few things to go wrong to damage team dynamics. Just like building trust, team dynamics take a long time to build, but they can be destroyed in one critical incident.

STAGE 2 – ORGANIZING A TEAM

The key task of the ORGANIZE stage is to organize the team for success. The key process is consensus seeking.

GROUP DYNAMICS

At the end of the ORIENT stage the team has a good idea of the business, organizational and situational dynamics it will operate within. Now the team must define its mission and organize itself to achieve high performance on that specific mission in the current specific situation. To organize itself the team must establish its:

1. Mission – Defines what the team is trying to accomplish and limits the scope of team action
2. Goals – Establishes what the team has to do to achieve its mission
3. Strategies – Determines how the team will achieve its goals
4. Structure – Creates focus and control within the team

Accomplishing these tasks turns a collection of individuals into a team with clear purpose.

The key process during this phase is consensus seeking. Consensus must be achieved through highly participative processes that balance participation and create open and honest communications. Highly participative processes foster the critical thinking necessary to determine the right mission, goals and strategies. Balanced participation maximizes team membership ownership and commitment to the team's mission, goals and strategies and helps to create strong personal and interpersonal team dynamics.

To achieve high performance the consensus seeking process must be organized to maximize individual participation and create balanced participation among all members of the team. It must be closely facilitated to avoid unproductive conflict and keep the team focused on each task.

PERSONAL DYNAMICS

The key personal dynamic in the ORGANIZE stage is respect. Establishing the right mission, goals and strategies will require a great deal of critical thinking and arguing for and against different alternatives. In the heat of the moment these arguments can quickly become personal and or political. Those being attacked feel their ideas and contributions are not respected; at which point they either chose to withdraw from the team or attack back. Either way the teams Personal Dynamics will start to become very negative.

The key to creating strong personal dynamics in the ORGANIZE Stage is the same as in the ORIENT Stage; team members must feel accepted and respected. The key process is to understand and value different perspective and ideas on how to organize the team for success.

INTERPERSONAL DYNAMICS

Interpersonal dynamics in the ORGANIZE stage are often marked by a “bid for power” among team members. Because the team has yet to agree on rules and establish norms, these bids for power are inevitable. To succeed, the team must be able to limit and minimize their impact before they affect performance and damage team dynamics.

Quite often the bid for power is over leadership of the team. Based on their personality and style, some team members are natural leaders and lousy followers; as a result they will vie for leadership no matter how good or bad the team leader is. A battle for leadership often creates a highly political environment as team members are forced to choose up sides between competing team leaders. This can split the team into different camps and make it extremely difficult to get consensus on the team's mission, goals and strategies.

Most bids for power are small in nature, but quickly become very frustrating. For example, several people talking at the same time is a bid for power over who has the attention of the group. A team member trying to get the team to focus on something other than the current agenda item is a “bid for power” over control of the agenda. Holding side conversations during a meeting is a bid for power over how to run meetings. If these things happen on rare occasions, they are merely frustrating. But when they become the norm they can quickly destroy team dynamics. And since the team has yet to establish its roles, rules and structures, these can quickly become the norm on the ORGANIZE Stage.

INTERACTION OF TEAM DYNAMICS

A team's Personal and Interpersonal Dynamics have a strong and direct impact on the Group Dynamics. If team members do not feel respected when they share their ideas and suggestions they will tend to pull back and limit their participation. If the bid for power gets out of control it can quickly politicize the team process and fragment the team into warring camps. When these negative dynamics occur there is a great likelihood team member ownership and commitment will be minimized and the team will develop the wrong mission, goals and strategies.

The interaction of these dynamics in the ORGANIZE Stage often creates a great deal of nervous energy and frustration, especially if consensus does not come quickly. Under this pressure teams must be careful not to reach premature consensus where people simply give in and go along. While this may get the team through the ORGANIZE Stage it also tends to minimize ownership and commitment. Teams that do this typically crash and burn in the ACTION phase and blame each other for not speaking up in the ORGANIZE Stage.

STAGE 3 – ACTION

It is not until the ACTION stage that a team begins to “work” on the reason for its existence – i.e. a product team begins to work on developing the product and a business team begins to work on developing the business. Therefore each of the previous two stages have been an investment to assure the team takes the right actions and does them right the first time. How well the team does in the ACTION Stage will depend on the investments it has made in the ORIENT and ORGANIZE Stages of team development.

GROUP DYNAMICS

There are many key tasks in the ACTION Stage as the team begins to implement its goals and strategies. The team will develop plans, make decisions, solve problems and resolve conflicts. Most of these tasks are accomplished outside of team meetings and will involve key stakeholders who are not team members. To maximize performance the team must accomplish these tasks using highly collaborative processes that reach outside the team to involve the right people, at the right time, and in the most efficient manner.

Team Meetings

A key task for teams in the ACTION Stage is running efficient and effective team meetings to assure the team stays focused and adjusts to learning and changing circumstances.

During the ACTION Phase the team will be taking parallel action on many different tasks. Involving all team members in every task is inefficient because not all team members will contribute to every task. Therefore the team will need to hold regular team meetings to keep everybody on the same page, to remain focused on its mission, and to keep team members informed of what is going on.

In the ACTION Phase the team will be confronted with many critical issues that the team could resolve, but are not part of their mission. Teams that chase these hot issues quickly become unfocused and fall into the activity trap of confusing action with results. To maintain focus the team will have to run regular meetings to sort out and prioritize critical issues for action. When a team decides to take on a critical issue that does not fall under its mission or goals, it will have to go back to the ORGANIZE Stage and change its mission, goals or strategies.

Regular team meetings allow the team to apply learning and adjust to changing circumstances. During the ACTION Stage the team will learn a lot, and things will change. Applying this learning and adjusting to changing circumstances assures the team is always doing the right things. It makes the team a self-maximizing system that is always focused on maximizing its performance and results.

Team Norms

Another critical task in the ACTION Stage is establishing team norms for collaboration. To avoid becoming bureaucratic, teams cannot operate with rigid rules that limit its

innovation, creativity and responsiveness. Therefore the team must establish and enforce a set of norms that will define the boundaries of acceptable behaviors. The following norms maximize team performance in the ACTION Stage:

1. Truth Telling – Teams operate under the “Garbage In – Garbage Out” rule. To achieve high performance the team must rigorously enforce a norm of open, honest, and complete communications on critical issues.
2. Openness – Teams must establish a norm of openness to different ideas and perspectives to maximize its innovation and creativity when addressing critical issues. Openness provides a team with a wider range of alternatives and increases the chances of it doing the right thing and the best thing for each action it takes.
3. Cost-Benefit Sharing – The costs and benefits of team actions do not flow equally to the key stakeholders in those actions. The team must determine who benefits from their actions so they can turn to these people for support. It must determine who pays the costs of team actions to provide them with visibility and support. Failure to manage costs and benefits creates “winners and losers”. In a team environment those key stakeholders who lose may not be able to win, but they can quite easily make the team lose in order to provide protection for themselves.
4. Maximizing Results – Teams consume a tremendous amount of time and effort, therefore they cannot afford to re-invent the wheel when taking actions. To maximize productivity teams must apply the learning and results of others when ever possible.
5. Recognizing Contributions – To achieve high performance teams must recognize individual and organizational contributions to the teams’ success. This avoids arguments over who gets credit for results and motivates people to work closely with the team.

PERSONAL DYNAMICS

In the ACTION Stage a team will reap the rewards of its efforts to create strong personal dynamics in the ORIENT and ORGANIZE Stage. If the team has established a norm of personal acceptance and respect through understanding and valuing individual differences, than team members will get to the “I” level in the ACTION Stage – “*I will do everything I can to help this team!*” This high level of personal commitment creates positive attitudes and maximizes team member willingness to commit the time and effort needed to maximize performance and achieve success.

You have probably heard the saying that there is no “I” in team. But there is a “me” in **team**, and if *I* do not feel accepted and respected by the time the team reaches the ACTION Stage, than *I* will opt out of an active role on the team. Some will chose to leave the team, but most simply chose to lay low, go through the motions, and than blame someone else when the team fails.

INTERPERSONAL DYNAMICS

In the ACTION Stage the team also reaps the rewards of its efforts to create strong interpersonal dynamics. If a team has established a norm of building strong work relationships it will have established the trust necessary to gain access to a great deal of information. If the team has established a norm of open and honest communications it will find a great deal of cooperation within the team and from key stakeholders in team actions. These norms will create synergy as the team becomes greater than the sum of its parts.

If the team has not established these norms than it will lack the trust and risk taking necessary to achieve high performance in its actions. Meetings will remain polite and superficial until things begin to fall apart, and than the finger point begins.

STAGE 4 – RESULTS

The major task of the RESULTS stage is to maximize the result of team actions. Maximizing results often requires a great deal of creative problem solving.

GROUP DYNAMICS

There are four major tasks that must be accomplished in the Results Stage – Fully implementing actions, documenting commitments and processes, capture and share learning, providing recognition for contributions.

Fully Implement actions

Action and results are two different things. Teams take action when they are making a decision, but they do not obtain results until that decision is implemented. It is at the implementation stage where teams often come in conflict with functional management. During the ACTION Stage, for example, a functional manager may participate in a decision-making process that decides they must re-direct some of their resources – at this point it is all talk. But when it comes to implementing the decision the functional manager may find the costs are too high, so he or she does not follow through on their commitment. Since the team does not have the power to boss a functional manager around, it must find a creative solution to the managers' problem.

Fully implementing actions often requires the team to escalate conflicts up the organization to higher levels of management. In the example of the manager not redirecting resources above, the manager may well be caught between conflicting priorities – what is right for the team, is not what is right for their function. When this occurs the team must engage upper management to determine the right thing to do for the business – not just what is right for the team or a function. To escalate this conflict successfully the team must establish a relationship of teams *and* management not teams vs. management.

Documentation

High performance teams document the process they used to get results and the commitments made during the process.

Documenting commitments encourages people to follow through on their commitments. Sometimes follow through breaks down because people simply get busy and forget, or because they downgrade the priority of their commitments. Documentation provides visibility to a commitment and creates peer pressure from those who are counting on that commitment to be implemented. Knowing it will not simply go away often forces those who made the commitment to follow through.

Documentation allows others to inspect a team process in order to determine the quality of a recommendation; this is especially needed when implementation becomes a problem and issues must be escalated to management. In the example of a functional manager not following through on its commitment to re-direct resources, the team may have to

escalate the issue to higher management, who did not participate in the process, for resolution. Documentation allows upper management to inspect the process; by inspecting the quality of the process management can better determine if the results should be trusted. If in inspecting the process, for example, they find the team locked into a preconceived alternative and selectively gathered facts to support that alternative, then the process will be seen as political and untrustworthy, and the recommendation will probably be rejected.

Capture and Share Learning

Teams create a rich knowledge base over time because they are the center of communications and information. A high performance product team, for example, will know more about that product than anyone else in the world. There may be people who have pieces of information the team has not yet gathered, but on whole, nobody know more. Capturing and sharing this knowledge adds to the organizations intellectual properties, improves organizational decision-making, and turns an organization of learners into a learning organization. Getting these additional benefits for capturing and sharing learning maximizes the return on the organizations investment in developing a high performance team.

Recognize Contributions

High performance teams provide recognition to others instead of looking for recognition for themselves – instead of taking credit the team gives credit. Recognizing individuals and groups for their contributions increases cooperation and encourages follow-through on commitments made to the team.

The majority of the contributions made over the course of a team are not visible to others. Many times these contributions come as the result of courageous efforts to overcome significant obstacles. If these efforts are not recognized people soon begin to wonder if it is worth all of the effort. This is especially true for organizations that provide high levels of formal recognition to individual contributors. When given a choice of between working on a team and not getting recognition or working alone and getting career advancing recognition, most people will chose the latter.

High performance teams provide recognition for contributions throughout each stage of team development. But it is critically important that the team recognize contributions and celebrates its successes upon the completion of the team's mission. This brings closure to the effort and validates the time and energy that everyone invested in making the team successful.

PERSONAL & INTERPERSONAL DYNAMICS

The “I” of the ACTION Stage turns into “We” in the RESULTS Stage. Confidence increases as team members develop a “can do” attitude about fully implementing their actions. Team members are having fun and are surrounded by team members who accept and respect them. In business it does not get much better than this.

There is a great deal of enthusiasm at the Interpersonal level in the RESULTS Stage as team members realize “We can have fun, get excited and get things done”. The team becomes a comfort zone that members are hesitant to leave. One of the characteristics of an extremely high performing team in the RESULTS Stage is a desire to keep the team going after the mission has been accomplished. When the team does finally dissolve it is not unusual to have team members experience a mild depression.

INVESTMENT MODEL

To turn a group of individuals into a high performance team requires a significant investment of time, energy and other resources. The Stages of Team Development identifies the major investments required to build and high performance team and when the investment must be made to maximize team performance. It also assures the team makes the right level of investment, not too much, not too little, but just the right level of investment for that particular team.

To create strong Personal Dynamics the team must make an investment of time and energy to understand and value individual differences. For example, having team members introduce themselves by sharing their past experience with teams and a brief career resume can easily take over an hour on a eight person team. Discussing the differences in levels of experience and how they will affect team performance could easily take another two to three hours. That's a total investment of nearly ½ in understanding and valuing differences.

The return on a team's investment in creating strong personal dynamics is the establishment of a team norm of acceptance and respect. This norm turns individual differences into a source of team strength and minimizes personal conflicts that can derail team performance. To keep this norm strong the team will need to continue investing time and energy into understanding and valuing individual differences.

To create strong Interpersonal Dynamics the team must make an investment of time and energy to build work relationships and to create shared understanding on complex issues. The return on this investment is the establishment of high levels of trust and personal risk taking, and an information rich environment. This dynamic creates high levels of synergy, innovation and creativity in all team actions - assuring the team is always greater than the sum of its parts. To keep this dynamic strong the team will need to continue its investment in relationship building and communications over time.

In the ORIENT stage the team makes an investment of time and energy in long discussions to get everyone on the same page and accurately assess the situation – the importance, urgency and probability of success. The return on this investment is a clear understanding of what it will take to achieve success and how to organize the team for success. The team gets an additional return when they use this learning to determine the level of investment the team will justify in the next stage – ORGANIZING. A team that is important, urgent, and challenging will deserve more time and effort than a team that is not. Adjusting the level of effort maximizes resource utilization by assuring each team makes the right level of investment for its situation – not more, not less, but just right.

In the ORGANIZE stage the team makes an investment of time and energy in consensus seeking as it organizes itself for success. The return on this investment is an action-oriented team that is a highly efficient and focused on doing the right things, right the first time. This investment avoids false starts that increase cost, lengthen cycle time and destroy team dynamics. A team that makes the investment of time and energy to organize

itself for success is going to reach high performance faster, better and cheaper than a team that does not.

In the ACTION stage the team makes an investment of time and energy to maximize collaboration between the team and the key stakeholders in the teams actions. The return on this investment is increased cooperation with key stakeholders and increased commitment to do the right things for the business. Making the investment of time and energy to reach outside the team increases key stakeholder support for implementing team actions in the RESULTS stage of team development.

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

Our research into high performance teams has identified the following 10 key success factors for creating a high performance team.

<p style="text-align: center;">TEAM KEY SUCCESS FACTORS</p>	<p>1. ACCEPTANCE AND RESPECT</p>
<p>1. Acceptance and Respect</p>	<p>High performance teams establish high levels of personal acceptance and professional respect among all team members.</p>
<p>2. Strong Work Relationships</p>	
<p>3. Creating Shared Understanding</p>	<p>High performance teams understand and value individual differences in</p>
<p>4. Common Orientation to the Situation</p>	<p>personality, style and experience in order to establish high levels of personal</p>
<p>5. Ownership & Commitment to Mission & Goals</p>	<p>acceptance.</p>
<p>6. Organized for Success</p>	<p>Teams will typically have a significant</p>
<p>7. Highly Collaborative Processes</p>	<p>range of individual differences in the</p>
<p>8. Efficient and Effective Meetings</p>	<p>values, work ethic, communications,</p>
<p>9. Productive Conflict</p>	<p>attitudes, personality and styles of</p>
<p>10. Shared Leadership</p>	<p>individual team members. Teams that</p>
	<p>understand and value these individual differences are more likely to establish strong work relationships.</p>

When individual differences are not accepted and respected, it often results in personality conflicts that damage work relationships, destroy trust and often hurt those individuals who are involved. If not addressed, these conflicts force individuals to choose sides and splinter the team into uncooperative camps. In this environment, little can be accomplished. You don't have to like everyone on the team, but you do have to accept, respect, and work with all team members.

Functional differences can also lead to unproductive conflicts between organizational units. These conflicts are often described as "turf wars", where one function lobbs grenades over organizational boundaries at another function. When these battles are brought into the team setting, it becomes "hand to hand" combat - things are going to get personal and political, and somebody is going to get hurt!

Personal and functional differences assure the team will see issues from all perspectives and will have the necessary skill sets to achieve the wide range of tasks the team will need to undertake. Therefore high performance teams must understand and value these differences to assure they become a source of team strength and not a source of unproductive conflict.

2. STRONG WORK RELATIONSHIPS

High performance teams establish strong work relationships based on personal risk taking and trust.

Teams that establish strong work relationships typically exhibit very open and honest communications. Team members feel they can **risk** sharing anything because they **trust** that others will use the information appropriately. This dramatically increases the amount and quality of information a team will have when determining the right actions to take.

Teams that have poor work relationships are guarded and superficial in their communications because team members do not trust how others will use what they say. Team members withhold critical information for fear it will get them in trouble. This dramatically decreases the amount and quality of information a team will have when determining the right actions to take.

Teams with members who are new to each other and have not yet established work relationships will find team members are tentative, and will act more like the teams with poor relationships.

Teams seldom have all strong relationships or all negative relationships. When diagnosing team performance on this dimension it is important to look at the overall affect the current level of relationships is having on team performance, not just the number of poor relationships - poor work relationships between only one or two key team members can often have a strong negative affect on a whole team.

3. CREATING SHARED UNDERSTANDING

High performance teams create shared understanding on complex and emotional issues.

Team members always have a slightly different perspective on any critical issue. Understanding and valuing these differences allows a team to look at the issue from many perspectives. This often leads to understanding and insights that are greater than any individual perspective and provide a more accurate, complete, and thorough understanding of the issue. This level of understanding increases the ability of a team to take the right action on the issue.

When differences in perspective result in criticism and personal attack, team dynamics will become negative, information will be withheld, and the team will have great difficulty achieving a common understanding on an issue. As a result, team decision-making becomes driven more by personality and politics than information and analysis. This decreases the ability of a team to do the right thing and creates a great deal of unproductive conflict that will damage team dynamics.

To create shared understanding high performance teams establish a norm of talking to each other when they disagree on issues, not about each other. The goal of this communication is to empower each other with more information and to understand each other's perspectives. It is this process of information sharing and understanding that assures the team will have an information rich environment for planning, decision-making and problem solving.

Listening is always the power position in teamwork. When you speak, you know what you know! When you listen, you learn what everyone else knows, and you become wiser in the process. High performance teams make sure that every team member is heard and understood by actively listening to each other. Tools such as paraphrasing, restatement, questioning and perceptions checking are all used to understand each person's perspective.

4. CREATING A COMMON ORIENTATION

High performance teams share a common understanding of the business and organizational dynamics that define the team's situation.

In the ORIENT Stage team members have many questions they want answered before they fully commit to the team. Two of the most important questions are: "Why are we doing this? And "What's in it for me?" Teams that do not come up with good answers to these questions will lack the ownership and commitment necessary to build a high performance team.

Think of "what a team is getting into" as a big jigsaw puzzle and each member of the team has different pieces to the puzzle. When team members lay all of the pieces on the table, they will share the same picture and have a common orientation to the situation.

Common Orientation to the Business

High performance teams create a common understanding of their alignment with current business strategies, plans and tactics. Teams that have a strong alignment can develop a compelling business reason for their actions that will maximize their power, influence and support within the organization.

Teams that lack alignment may find themselves in conflict with other actions that do directly align with business strategy, plans and tactics. From a practical perspective this means the team will be of lower priority than other efforts that are more directly aligned. And this is good. It assures the organization is always putting maximum effort into those things that are of the highest priority to the business. But it does present a challenge to the team; they must accomplish as much as they can with the resources they can get. They may be lower priority today, but they may also be tomorrow's highest priority.

Common Orientation to the Organization

High performance teams create a shared understanding of the organizational dynamics that will support and inhibit team performance. Every organization has strengths and weaknesses that can create organizational roadblocks that affect team performance. Teams that experience significant organizational roadblocks typically require a great deal of effort to achieve minimal results. It is critical that the team identify these roadblocks so they can accurately assess the level of difficulty they will likely experience in achieving success.

Common Orientation to the Situation

Understanding Business Alignment and Organizational Dynamics allows the team to create an accurate understanding of their unique situation. How important a team is will determine the level of priority and effort that should be given to it. How urgent a team must act will determine how quickly the team must move through the stages of team development. The probability of the team achieving success will determine the level of risk the team will be taking. With this analysis team members know what they are getting into.

5. MAXIMIZE OWNERSHIP AND COMMITMENT TO THE TEAMS MISSION, GOALS, AND STRATEGIES

High performance teams establish ownership and commitment to its mission, goals and strategies through high levels of participation.

High performance teams use a highly participate process when establishing their mission, goals and strategies to maximize ownership and commitment. Participative processes encourage critical thinking as team members argue for and against different options. This increases the likelihood of a team coming up with the right mission, goals and strategies. The more input team members have, the more ownership they have for the resulting product. The more ownership they have, the more committed they are to achieving the teams mission, goals and strategies.

High levels of ownership and commitment encourage team members to use all of their abilities to make as many contributions to the team as possible. Teams with high levels of ownership and commitment are more likely to work longer and harder to overcome organizational roadblocks and to achieve success.

To maximize ownership and commitment the team must come to consensus on the team mission, goals and strategies. The consensus seeking processes forces the team to consider a wide range of alternatives and possibilities. This openness and consideration helps assure the team is focused on doing the right thing and minimizes the chance of the team having a false start with the wrong mission, goals or strategies.

It is not unusual to have management establish the team mission or charter. In these situations the team must still go through the process of developing its mission, goals and strategies to determine if management is right and to transfer ownership of the team from management to the team. If a team finds management is wrong, it must speak up and challenge management or face getting the blame when it ends up doing the wrong things, right the first time.

6. ORGANIZED FOR SUCCESS

High performance teams organize themselves in a way that provides the best chance of achieving their mission, goals and strategies.

With clarity on its mission, goals and strategies, the team is in a position to determine the best way to organize itself in order to achieve success. There are no rules for organizing a high performance team. The downside of this reality is that the team cannot simply copy what other teams have done. The upside is that the team has a great deal of flexibility and freedom to organize itself based on its specific mission, goals, and strategies.

To organize itself the team must make decisions on its people, process and structure.

People

Team membership must be adjusted to provide the team with the necessary resources to achieve success and to maximize resource utilization within the organization. People who are on the team but are not critical to team success should be removed. If critical people are missing from team membership, the team must try to add them to the team or find an alternative way of involving them in team actions.

Process

A team will need to establish processes for team meetings, team communications and team development. Well defined processes will assure these key tasks are done efficiently and effectively. These processes can run from very informal to extremely formal depending on the complexity of the team.

Structure

A team must structure based itself to provide focus and to institute the necessary level of control. These structures can range from quite simple to very complex. A simple team structure may be simply a leader and eight team members. A more complex structure may have various sub teams that provide focus on specific parts of the team mission.

7. ESTABLISH HIGHLY COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES

High performance teams establish highly collaborative team processes for planning, decision-making, problem solving, and conflict resolution.

In the ACTION and RESULT Stages a team must develop plans, make decisions, solve problems and resolve conflicts. High performance teams run highly collaborative processes that reach outside the team to involve the right people, at the right time, and in the most efficient manner.

- Much of the information a team will need to make the best plans, decisions, solutions, and resolutions will reside outside the team. Using collaborative processes to reach outside and gather this information dramatically increases team performance and results.
- Collaborative processes that reach outside the team to involve key stakeholders increases support for team actions. Key stakeholders that have a chance to raise objections and concerns during the process are more likely to support the implementation of the results at the end of the process.
- When a team runs into a conflict it cannot resolve it will have to escalate it to management for resolution. When this occurs the team will be much more credible if management can see that the team has run a highly collaborative processes that involved all of the key stakeholders in the issue. This assures management that a variety of perspectives were considered and all involved in the conflict have been heard.
- The team will have a better understanding of the costs and benefits that will flow to each key stakeholder if they involve them in the process. This allows the team to solicit support from those who receive the benefits and provide support to those who absorb the costs.
- Highly collaborative processes dramatically increase the innovation and creativity of the team by providing it with a wide range of perspectives and thinking. In the processes of overcoming objections and balancing costs and benefits the team will often come up with a more innovative and creative approaches.

8. EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE TEAM MEETINGS

High performance teams create action-oriented meetings that are planned, focused and efficient.

In the ACTION and RESULT Stages team meetings are the central point of contact for team members. Team meeting will be used for communications, to update progress, to adjust plans and tactics, and to address critical issues. Team meeting become a teams command and control structure for running the team.

High performance teams run meetings that are focused directly on their mission, goals and strategies. If a topic or issue does not relate to a goal or strategy, the team does not take action on it. This assures the team does not chase every hot issue and lose focus on the achievement of its mission, goals and strategies.

If an issue comes up that the team feels needs to be addressed, but it does not fall under the teams existing goals and strategies, the team will go back to the ORIENT and ORGANIZE stages to establish a goal and/or objective.

High performance team meetings are action-oriented. They do not hold long discussions that do not result in action. Their discussions are focused on creating shared understanding and on developing action plans involve the right people, at the right time, and in the most efficient manner.

To maintain their focus and action orientation high performance teams establish an agenda for every meeting. Formal teams will establish a standard agenda that will be used at each meeting. The process of establishing a meeting agenda forces the team to come to consensus on what is the best use of the teams' limited time together.

Establishing a team agenda allows for close facilitation of team meetings. When a team member deviates from the agenda, for example, the team leader can remind then of what they have already agreed to do.

High performance teams routinely assess team meetings to identify ways to increase their efficiency and effectiveness. Because of the complexity of the team environment teams seldom get team meetings right the first time. The volatility of the team environment means that teams often have to change their agenda to adjust to changing circumstances.

9. PRODUCTIVE CONFLICT

High performance teams take action to resolve conflicts that are affecting team performance.

Conflict is an inherent part of organizational life. Different functions, different goals, different objectives, different bosses and different careers are only a few of the differences that can create conflict over who, what, and how things get done. High performance teams do not ignore these conflicts but instead engage participants in a productive process of generating alternatives and criteria, and searching for consensus.

- High performance teams run highly participative conflict resolution processes that involve the right people, at the right time, and in the most efficient manner. This maximizes the ownership and commitment of key stakeholders to implementing the results of the process.
- High performance teams diagnose a conflict to understand its component parts before they take action. This assures the team addresses the root cause of the conflict.
- Once a conflict has been diagnosed a high performance teams will develop an appropriate conflict resolution strategy. This strategy will include a high degree of openness and creative thinking to identify as many alternatives as possible. This will assure the team finds the best possible solutions to the conflict.
- High performance teams develop a comprehensive list of criteria for weighing the different alternatives identified. This assures an open process that minimizes personality and politics while maximizing information and analysis.
- When a team cannot get agreement on a particular conflict, and does not have the authority to impose a resolution to the conflict, it escalates the conflict to the appropriate management for a decision. The team provides management with documentation on its process so that management can judge the quality of the conflict resolution process.

10. SHARED LEADERSHIP

High performance teams create shared leadership among team members.

Strong leadership is key to team success. In the ORIENT Stage there is a dependency on the leader because there are no roles, rules or structure. Therefore the team leader has to take the initiative to get things going.

In the ORGANIZE Stage there is counter-dependency as the leader tries to resolve the “bid for power” between team members. This often puts the team leader in a position where they are asked to choose up sides between different factions within the team. High performance team leaders avoid choosing up sides and focus their efforts on getting all sides on the table and getting agreement on a process for resolving the issue.

In the ACTION Stage there is often an independence from the leader as team members become self-directed in achieving the teams’ mission, goals and strategies. In the RESULTS Stage there is often interdependence as everyone takes some leadership responsibility for team performance.

High performance teams create shared leadership. This includes speaking up with things go wrong and leading team processes. There are too many variables in the team setting for one individual to pay attention to. Therefore team members must step up and contribute when things start to go wrong. When a meeting is going badly, for example, team members must raise the issue in the moment and not wait until after the meeting to complain and blame the team leader.

Each time a team takes on a specific decision, problem of conflict it presents an opportunity for team members to take a leadership role in the process. Sharing leadership in this way reduces the demand on the team leader’s time and allows the team to run several processes at the same time.

TEAM ASSESSMENT

Based on your experience rate your team on these key success factors.

1. UNDERSTANDING AND VALUING INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

Poor		Fair		Good		Very Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Comments								

2. BUILDING WORK RELATIONSHIPS

Poor		Fair		Good		Very Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Comments								

3. CREATING SHARED UNDERSTANDING

Poor		Fair		Good		Very Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Comments								

4. CREATING A COMMON ORIENTATION

Poor		Fair		Good		Very Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Comments								

5. MAXIMIZING OWNERSHIP AND COMMITMENT TO MISSION, GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Poor		Fair		Good		Very Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Comments								

6. ORGANIZING FOR SUCCESS

Poor		Fair		Good		Very Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Comments								

7. COLLABORATIVE TEAM PROCESSES

Poor		Fair		Good		Very Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Comments								

8. EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Poor		Fair		Good		Very Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Comments								

9. PRODUCT CONFLICT

Poor		Fair		Good		Very Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Comments								

10 SHARED LEADERSHIP

Poor		Fair		Good		Very Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Comments								

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