

# Develop High-Performance Teams



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These tools show you how to lead and manage:

- Reducing waste, re-work and errors
- Self-organisation
- Systems and procedures
- Team design
- Team meetings

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## Reducing waste, re-work and errors

**Waste is involved in every human endeavour.** That's a strong claim, but if you reflect on it you will find that it holds true. Whether the waste is time, money or effort. This is simply because not one of us is perfect and there will always be something that could have been done better.

There's a scary figure spread around by spreaders of scary figures that up to 30% of the time spent by a team or workgroup is wasted. That is, that up to 30% of the time is spent in non-productive activities (activities that add no value to your end results) or engaged in re-work related to avoidable errors or sloppy standards.

Now, you will never get to 100% of the time spent only on productive activities because some of the time is spent on thinking, work socialising and relationship building activities. And they are very important.

So, while there is no way your team or workgroup wastes up to 30% of their time, just how well are you reducing waste, re-work and errors?

In relation to your team or workgroup, think about the actions below and decide which actions are not happening or could be improved in relation to reducing waste, re-work and errors.

Select up to 3 actions that need improvement. Specify what needs to happen, what could be done better? Then decide what actions that you need to initiate.

Record on your action plan – what, with whom, by when, status or next action.

Add to your 'to do' list or weekly planner.

Initiate actions.

Update your action plan.

Repeat the process with any other actions needing improvement.

### **Review this checklist to explore how waste, re-work and errors are eliminated or reduced.**

Consider the checklist below and answer the questions: What needs to happen? What could we do better? What do I need to do?

- Things we do which appear to be a waste of time are identified and explored.
- We identify (without blame or consequences) where most errors and re-work occur in the processing of work.
- The consequences of waste and errors for our area and for our customers (internal and/or external) are fully understood.
- The causes of waste, re-work and errors are explored.
- We explore ways to reduce wasteful activities, re-work and errors.
- We provide additional coaching or training to those people who need help to eliminate errors in their work.
- We rectify any faulty equipment or processes which may cause waste, re-work and errors.
- We change systems or procedures which need changing to reduce waste or errors.

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- We ask other areas what they think we do that appears to be a waste of time.
- We discuss with other areas things that we do that causes them to waste time or redo work.
- We discuss with other areas the things they do which waste our time or cause errors.
- We discuss with other areas ways to eliminate or modify actions which waste our time.
- We identify, define and document key systems and standard procedures and check that all team members are capable of and are following them.
- We all suggest new, different and better ways to perform our work to reduce waste, re-work or errors.
- Actions to reduce waste, re-work or errors are implemented and followed through.
- We check that all team members comply with standard procedures.
- Performance standards are agreed for all key things we do.
- We check regularly that all team members are meeting performance standards.
- We acknowledge the efforts of those who act to reduce waste, re-work or errors.
- Management do what needs doing to help reduce waste, re-work or errors.

‘Error is discipline through which we advance.’

William Ellery Channing quotes (American moralist, Unitarian Clergyman and Author, 1780-1842)

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## Self-organisation

Are you and your people well organised? If you and they are then chances are that you will be using your and other's time efficiently. If you or any of your people aren't well organised, not only will you be wasting your time, but the time of others as well.

Digressing slightly, there is a concept referred to as 'Locus of Control' first developed by Julian B. Rotter in his seminal work, *Social Learning and Clinical Psychology* published in 1954. A simple interpretation of this concept refers to two types of people – 'internals' and 'externals'. 'Internals' are people who tend to accept responsibility when things go wrong. 'Externals' are those people who tend to think others are responsible when things go wrong. In reality, there are times when things happen beyond your control and things happen within your control. Personally, I hold the belief that in all moments, we have

choices. And each choice we make has consequences. Even when things happen beyond your control, it is still your choice about how you respond to the consequences that come with your choice. I also accept that many people do not have the ability to make the best choices and to understand the consequences of those choices.

Back to self-organisation, it might pay you well to reflect on some factors that you can control which influence how well you and your people are 'self-organised'.

Who is the best organised person in your team or workgroup? Why? What do they do? How do they do it? What could others learn from them? Who is the worst organised person? Why? What do they do? How do they do it? What could others learn from them? How does this person affect others?

In relation to your team or workgroup, think about the actions below and decide which actions are not happening or could be improved in relation to self-organisation.

Select up to 3 actions that need improvement. Specify what needs to happen, what could be done better? Then decide what actions that you need to initiate.

Record on your action plan – what, with whom, by when, status or next action.

Add to your 'to do' list or weekly planner.

Initiate actions. Update your action plan. Repeat the process with any other actions needing improvement.

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**Review this checklist to explore the extent to which you and your people are organised.**

Consider the checklist below and answer the questions: What needs to happen? What could we do better? What do I need to do?

- Identify and agree the major objectives for each week.
- Agree the priorities for the major objectives for each week.
- Identify the key things to do for the week in relation to each objective.
- Ensure the essential resources required to achieve objectives are available.
- Ensure that adequate time is allocated for each objective and associated actions.
- Eliminate those activities that do not contribute to the achievement of the objectives.
- Check that the information we require to achieve our objectives is timely, accurate and sufficient.
- Identify things we need to do to improve self-organisation.
- Identify things that other people do which disrupt our self-organisation.
- Discuss with others the things we can do to improve self-organisation.
- The direction and purpose of our team is clearly defined.
- Organise work areas to ensure effective access, effective communication, and ease of location of materials, tools and equipment.
- Establish and implement plans each week.
- Monitor and review how effectively our plans are implemented.
- Check that we stay focussed on the agreed activities for the week.
- Check that everybody's perception of what we are trying to achieve and how we are trying to achieve it are the same.
- Use a daily 'to do' list to plan the day.
- Prepare and use checklists of all key activities required to achieve the agreed objectives.
- Discuss the consequences and symptoms of poor self-organisation.
- Check that people know how to improve self-organisation.
- Follow through on key objectives/initiatives until completed.
- Monitor the progress we make to achieve key objectives.
- Acknowledge the efforts of people who act to improve self-organisation.
- Implement agreed ways to improve self-organisation.

'The shortest way to do many things is to do one thing at a time.'

Samuel Smiles, 1812-1904, Scottish physician and biographer, Self-Help.



### Systems and procedures

I have been involved with organisations which are very heavily into systems and procedures. There is a system and procedure for everything. If you feel the need to break wind, there is a procedure to follow – a standard operating procedure. There is probably a system and procedure for systems and procedures. You get my drift.

Having clearly defined systems and procedures is important. No doubt. As long as people are trained in them, believe in them and follow them. And the application of your systems and procedures needs to be measured and reported. They also need to be reviewed and improved as circumstances require that they be changed.

There are two key causes of errors – systems error and human error. The design of the system is faulty or the application of the system by people is faulty.

In relation to your team or workgroup, think about the actions below and decide which actions are not happening or could be improved in relation to systems and procedures.

Select up to 3 actions that need improvement. Specify what needs to happen, what could be done better? Then decide what actions that you need to initiate.

Record on your action plan – what, with whom, by when, status or next action.

Add to your 'to do' list or weekly planner.

Initiate actions.

Update your action plan.

Repeat the process with any other actions needing improvement.

**Review this checklist if you would like to improve the effectiveness of your systems and procedures.**

Consider the checklist below and answer the questions: What needs to happen? What could we do better? What do I need to do?

- Key systems and procedures are defined, documented, discussed and followed.
- We check that everybody is clear on how to follow key systems and procedures.
- All team members have the required competence and confidence to apply key systems and procedures.
- The consequences for self and others if systems and procedures are not followed are known and accepted as demonstrated by our behaviours.
- The benefits of following the established systems and procedures are clarified and accepted.
- We identify where systems and procedures are not being followed.
- When identifying causes of why procedures are not followed, we look at both the system and the human factor.
- We identify the things about systems and procedures that need improving.
- We discuss and agree the purpose of the system or procedure to be improved or developed with those who are affected by it.

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- We all suggest better ways to do things.
- The consequences on other relevant areas of changes to our systems and procedures are explored and factored in to those changes.
- We discuss the best ways to implement improvements to systems and procedures.
- We plan what has to be done to implement the agreed changes.
- We involve those who will be affected by the changes in the planning process.
- We implement and follow through with the agreed changes.
- We acknowledge the efforts of people who act to make improvements or implement new changes.
- We inform others of the reasons why the changes are being made.
- Changes to systems and procedures are incorporated into standard operating procedures.
- Training in changes to systems and procedures is provided and evaluated during implementation.
- Management do what needs doing to support these improvements to systems and procedures.
- The impact of the change is reviewed appropriately.

‘If you have to have a policy manual, publish the Ten Commandments.’

Robert Townsend, Former CEO, Avis, Further Up the Organisation, (Knopf, 1984)

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## Team design

Before you run off with your team abseiling, base jumping, climbing Mt Everest, shooting each other with paint balls, building human pyramids, making paper chains, working out how you would survive if you were lost on the moon, in the desert, in the wild, etc. come back to the reality of your workplace and consider whether you have the best team design.

If you tick the box on all of these, you may not need to send your team to the moon to work out how to be a better team. If you can't tick many boxes, contact Sir Richard Branson as he may be your best option to get you and your team to the moon.

Effective team design means that you have the best team structure in place and functioning effectively. In simple terms this means that you have the right people doing the right jobs. You have the right people reporting to the right person. You have the right people liaising with the right people. You have the right people making the right decisions. Poor team design means that you have too many round pegs in square holes.

In relation to your team or workgroup, think about the actions below and decide which actions are not happening or could be improved in relation to effective team design.

Select up to 3 actions that need improvement. Specify what needs to happen, what could be done better? Then decide what actions that you need to initiate.

Record on your action plan – what, with whom, by when, status or next action.

Add to your 'to do' list or weekly planner.

Initiate actions.

Update your action plan.

Repeat the process with any other actions needing improvement.

**Here is a checklist to explore the extent to which you have an effective team design. If you have a workgroup, but not a team, then check which of these are absent.**

Consider the checklist below and answer the questions: What needs to happen? What could we do better? What do I need to do?

- We have identified the best structure to deliver our team outputs and we have the identified structure in place.
- We clarify and discuss the current team structure, lines of authority, key functions within the team, who is responsible for these functions and any areas of confusion.
- We have the appropriate number of roles identified and implemented to deliver the team productivity requirements.
- The physical environment is optimally designed and structured to enable the team to work effectively.
- We have identified and implemented the technology required to enable the team to effectively conduct its work.
- We are given and effectively utilise the time and resources we need to succeed in achieving our team goals.

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- The quality of our team output has been identified and we currently produce at the appropriate level.
- This productivity level is sustainable.
- We actively share information with our customers (internal and external) to obtain their ideas and input to continuously learn and implement improvements to our services and products.
- Problem solving and decision making approaches are agreed, well established, followed and implemented.
- Decision making is timely and effective.
- We adapt to changing demands proactively implementing solutions to our clients/ customers/ stakeholders needs.
- A variety of ideas and approaches are explored by individual team members and the team, ensuring the most effective action at the time.
- We ensure team decisions fully utilise and reflect the knowledge, skills and abilities of each and every team member.
- We all have a high sense of urgency and actively participate in the identification and solution of any problems we encounter on the job. We implement the identified solution.
- Creativity and innovation are encouraged, supported and rewarded.
- We regularly clarify how, when and by what methods we will measure success. We adhere to these measures and appropriately provide recognition to individuals and the team.
- Our individual and team workload is balanced and reasonable at all times.
- Our work processes are reviewed on a regular basis and changed as required to ensure we have optimal output from the team.

‘The whole object of the organisation is to get cooperation, to get to each individual the benefit of all the knowledge and all the experience of all the individuals.’

Hamilton McFarland Barksdale, Management Executive Committee, Dupont, Committee meeting minutes, October 11, 1909

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## Team meetings

**Have you ever worked out the number of hours** you spend in meetings each week? Meetings are seen by many as a waste of time. Why is that so? Because they chew up valuable time which could be better used in doing the real work – could be the most common response.

But, until somebody comes up with a better way, and technology hasn't done it yet, meetings are essential to managing the human condition in the workplace.

As much as they are maligned, meetings still represent the best available communication and consultative process for maximising effectiveness, exchanging and clarifying information and perceptions, confirming engagement and commitment and improving performance.

There is nothing wrong with meetings provided that they are justified, but there may be in the way that they are conducted. And that responsibility lies not only with the meeting leader, but the participants as well.

In relation to your team or workgroup, think about the actions below and decide which actions are not happening or could be improved in relation to team meetings.

Select up to 3 actions that need improvement. Specify what needs to happen, what could be done better? Then decide what actions that you need to initiate.

Record on your action plan – what, with whom, by when, status or next action.

Add to your 'to do' list or weekly planner.

Initiate actions.

Update your action plan.

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**Review this checklist if you would like to improve the effectiveness of your meetings.**

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Consider the checklist below and answer the questions: What needs to happen? What could we do better? What do I need to do?

- The need for and benefits of improving team meetings are agreed.
- Participants raise issues to include on agendas prior to the meeting.
- Prior to the meeting, we circulate the agenda and its objectives and agree the input required from relevant people.
- We think through the issues prior to the meeting to plan our contribution.
- We set a time limit on the meeting's duration which will allow enough time for the discussion of all agreed objectives.
- We start and end the meeting on time.
- The number of objectives is limited to those that can be achieved within the time available.
- We employ different ways of making the meeting interesting.
- The objectives, format and expectations are clarified at the start of the meeting – as required.
- The key points and decisions made during the meeting are recorded by all relevant people.
- The leadership role is rotated so that other people develop the confidence and competence to conduct effective meetings.
- Different roles are allocated to people (e.g. timekeeper, facilitator, recorder) to ensure we are kept on task.
- We are comfortable with a person in the group playing the 'devil's advocate' role without placing pressure to conform to the group. We use the information they highlight to explore options.
- Participation is encouraged by ensuring that every person's contribution is heard and by asking questions of non-contributors.
- We ensure that all discussion is relevant to the objectives of the meeting.
- Our discussions during our meetings are open and effective. We explore differences in opinion so the best option is determined.
- The composition of our people at meetings changes to fit the skill and work requirements of the meeting agenda.
- We maintain a record of what is agreed, who will do what and by when.
- This record is distributed to all relevant people and used later to monitor progress.
- Ground rules governing the way we conduct ourselves during meetings are agreed and applied.
- Meetings are held at a frequency and duration to maintain an effective focus on team performance.

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- Decisions made during meetings are followed through.
- We have different types of meetings and processes to accomplish our purposes and goals. We implement them accordingly.
- The effectiveness of our meetings is reviewed appropriately.
- The timing, duration and frequency of meetings are effective.
- Ways to improve the effectiveness of our meetings are explored and applied.

A meeting is an event where minutes are taken and hours wasted.

-UNKNOWN