



These tools show you how to lead and manage:

- Team mission
- Using or resolving conflict
- Vision and values
- Work overload
- Workplace relationships



Team mission

What impact does a mission statement for your business/organisation have on the performance of your team? Does it make them get out of bed any quicker on Monday mornings? It could, if it was translated into a team mission statement which is relevant, specific and meaningful to your team.

Finding a purpose in life is arguably the prime determinant of a satisfied life. You can apply this thinking to your team. If you work in a large organization, your team is a cog in a big wheel. But that cog is important. Take it out and the wheel might keep turning but it will weaken other cogs and cause them to break or fail.

The mission or purpose of your team or workgroup connects to the mission or purpose of your business/organisation. That is, the mission of your team supports the achievement of the overall mission. There needs to be a connection. Your team mission statement answers the questions: Why does our team exist? What is our reason for being?

High-performance teams use a team mission statement to focus and galvanise the efforts of all members of the team.

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 mission.

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.

High-performance teams can tick the boxes on these statements below. How many boxes does your team tick?

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

- The key outcomes for our team which contribute to the mission of our business/organisation have been identified.
- We have a common, shared understanding of the purpose and outcomes of the team and what we need to do to achieve our outcomes. We actively work towards achieving them.
- The critical issues that dominate these outcomes have been identified and assigned with appropriate focus, priority and resources.
- We know what the team priorities are and we are actively working on the tasks which match these priorities.
- Relevant performance measures direct a constant focus on the critical issues that ultimately determine our business outcomes.

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- The mission statement provides a succinct reminder (to all team members) of the priority issues that drive the team.
- We know what is outside the scope of our team accountability and we do not produce goods or services beyond our agreed scope.
- The work of the team has been agreed to by the person who allocates resources and funding to us and the work of the team is aligned with the team purpose.
- People outside our team know what we do and who to go to for specific assistance.
- We appropriately and actively promote our team to people external to the team, ensuring when we require additional resources that they appreciate the value we add to the organisation.
- All of our goals are clear, challenging and relevant to the team purpose and all of our strategies and actions for achieving the goals are clear, aligned and implemented.
- The work we do is understood and promoted by every team member.
- Our team mission provides us with enough information to enable us to prioritise our resources and work activities so we can optimise our efforts.
- The mission statement practically impacts on day-to-day decisions and actions whilst also promoting a favourable team culture.
- We have access to, and use, ongoing information about the level of success the organisation and team is achieving in meeting the organisation's goals and objectives.
- We have defined what our specific services and/or products are and what distinguishes our work from other teams. We actively ensure our activities are to the appropriate standard.
- We regularly review the impact our team's products and services have upon our clients.



Using or resolving conflict

High-performance teams encourage conflict. Not conflict associated with violence or aggression. Conflict relates to any differences in opinion, perception, perspective, ideas, strategy or tactics. So, by that definition, conflict exists in all teams. It's a normal part of the human condition in the workplace. The trick is to harness conflict as a positive force.

Everybody in your team has opinions and those opinions will, to a large degree, dictate the things they say and do. And remember that not all people are adept or comfortable in articulating their opinions particularly in a meeting or group discussion. As the team leader, you will need to meet with some of your people individually to encourage them to express their opinions.

Your people will only voice their different opinions, perspectives, ideas, strategies or tactics if, firstly, they are encouraged, and, secondly, if they experience no repercussions for expressing them.

A good adage to adopt for you and your people is - let's not try to win the argument, let's find the best argument. Said another way this means that it is not important who is right, it's more important what is right.

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 using or resolving conflict.

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 how you use and resolve conflict.

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

- The team can integrate diverse viewpoints and use them effectively.
- Team members often disagree about such things as ideas, opinions, priorities and we are able to utilise these differences to allow positive discussion to enable the team to develop/explore the most effective outcome.
- We do not take arguments personally so we are able to hear and use all information presented positively.
- We feel confident about the team's ability to manage and use conflict so that it is productive.
- We proactively seek to identify potential problems and conflicts so that we can resolve and, if required, implement solutions before they become real problems.



- We have an appropriate level of tolerance for conflict and antagonism in the team so that it can be used to make the output of the team more effective.
- We address conflict and it is seen as something positive for us to further explore and reconcile. The outcomes of the conflict enable us to develop more trusting relationships.
- We focus on behaviours not the person when we are exploring ways to improve our relationships.
- To assist in moving through conflict we identify our priority areas on which the team will focus and work on in the immediate future.
- Our differences allows us to generate commitment to action plans and standards of performance. We confront behaviours which are different to the team's agreements.
- We have identified and agreed to our standards in quality and performance. Any differences in performance standards are identified and actions followed through to rectify the differences.
- We have identified where our break-downs in communication and understandings occur and have established ways to move through them positively.
- We seek innovative solutions to problems and explore the solutions freely within the team.
- We proactively escalate issues with possible solutions and a recommendation.
- We show initiative by taking action on and solving problems early so they do not become large problems.
- We have the opportunity to express oneself without fear of repercussions.
- Differing viewpoints are used to their best advantage by handling any conflicts we may have. We face issues openly and by focusing on "what's right" rather than on "who's right."

'Swifter is speech when the heart is hurt.'

Amen Em Opet 1, 1991-1962 B.C., Egyptian Pharaoh, The Wisdom of Amen Em Opet

'If we have to disagree, let's agree to disagree agreeably.'

Lyndon B Johnson, 36th President of the United States



Vision and values

Is there any value in having a clearly articulated statement of vision and values for your team? Yes, if it is used. It should be prominent at team meetings so you and your people can refer to it during discussions and use it as a beacon to guide and ground discussions. It becomes a constant reference point or context for making decisions and deciding actions. A good question to ask of any discussion is, “So how does this fit into our team vision and values?”

What’s the difference between Vision and Mission? Mission comes first. It describes our reason for being, why our team exists. Vision describes where we want to be – what we are striving for. You might never get there, but this is what we are striving to be as a team.

This is the vision for your team, which will connect to, but could be different from the vision for your business/organization.

Your team values should reflect your business/organization values. Your team values could be things like earning trust, speaking respectfully, showing tolerance, accepting constructive feedback, continuous improvement, giving to others, collaborating, helping, developing, coaching, mentoring, learning, not blame...et al.

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 vision and values.

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 how you use vision and values.

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

- The organisation has a clearly communicated view of what the business will be like and its external impact (the world, its niche markets, its industry) for the next 1 to 3 years so that we are able to determine and implement the best team structure to achieve our required outcomes.
- We are very clear about the ultimate, desired outcomes of our team.
- Our vision/values are clearly articulated in simple words to provide a constant compass bearing when deciding the strategic/cultural direction of the team.
- The purpose, meaning and importance of the vision/value statement have been extensively and effectively communicated to all team members.
- The statement is realistic, meaningful, understandable and acceptable to everyone within the team.

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- What our team stands for and the values we believe in are clearly defined. We have well defined values governing how we work together, acceptable behaviour, team performance, etc.
- We use a process which enables us to give individuals and the team feedback on how we are performing against our defined behaviours.
- We know what our internal and external customers need and our team efforts are driven to satisfy their needs.
- People external to the team know what our team outputs are and any changes to these outputs are clearly communicated to the appropriate people within the appropriate timing.
- Everyone has the same idea about what values are important to the team and we have stated our values clearly.
- Teamwork and team contributions are valued and recognized by our team.
- People external to our team would be able to identify our most important values through observation of the team and individual behaviour.
- We have identified any specific ethical and legal guidelines to apply. Everyone on the team understands these guidelines and adheres to them.
- We periodically assess the actual influence of our vision and value statement on business activity and performance.

‘Moral good is a practical stimulus; it is no sooner seen than it inspires an impulse to practice.’

Plutarch, c.46 – c.120, Greek biographer and philosopher, The Parallel Lives : Pericles.



Workload overload

Does everybody pull their weight in your team? Do some people carry a heavier workload than others? Do people complain that their workload is too much? Or do they just suffer in silence through fear of losing their job?

Or do you see the symptoms of workload overload in customer complaints, fatigue, errors, faulty work, poor decisions, injuries, sick leave, death, burn out, staff turnover, poor standards, faulty products, missed deadlines, frustration, grievances, etc.?

For all the wonderful benefits that technology brings to the workplace, it has not reduced workplace stress. It is a fact that workplace stress has not declined as we continuously improve technology in the workplace. While some of the costs of workplace stress are obvious, many of the costs are hidden.

The nature of some of the stressors on people in the workplace has changed over the centuries only to be replaced by new stressors today. Workload overload has always been a cause of stress on people at work and it continues to be today.

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 workload overload.

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 workload overload.

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

- Instances and causes of work overload are explored.
- More efficient ways of performing these activities are explored and implemented.
- Team members who have an overload of work are identified.
- We continually ask the question "Is this the best use of our time?"
- We identify people who have spare capacity.
- Jobs/tasks which could be allocated to another person are agreed.
- We check that the other person is capable of performing the allocated task(s).
- We check whether the way we or others do things is contributing to a work overload.
- Our systems and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis to check that they are not contributing to the overload.

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- We explore what other areas can do to help to reduce work overload.
- We re-assess the priorities of the current workload.
- We use a planner to plot the key regular tasks that have to be performed.
- We eliminate low priority tasks and focus on high priority tasks.
- We check that others are aware of the work overload of a team member.
- Team members who assist others to reduce their workload are acknowledged and recognised.
- We ask team members how we can all help each other to ensure that a team member is not overloaded.
- Management do what needs doing to assist us to reduce work overload.
- We implement and follow through on actions to reduce work overload.
- We monitor the implementation of actions to check that work overload is reduced.
- Time-wasting activities that contribute to work overload are explored and eliminated.
- We negotiate changes with other areas whose actions are contributing to work overload in our area.
- We check that the workload is evenly shared by all team members.

‘I’ve been working for 15 or 16 hours a day trying to shorten working hours.’

Toshio Yamaguchi, Japanese Labor Minister, Management, 1987.



Workplace relationships

For over 35 years, I have asked many people what it is that they most enjoy about their work. How would you answer? Money? Power? Prestige? Satisfaction? Achievement? A noble cause? The product? The service? The most common response is the people that they work with. That is, the relationships that they enjoy with others in their workplace.

And when I've explored why people have left a job, I have often found that poor relationships with others are a significant factor.

The relationships that you have with your people and that they have with each other is a key factor in an effective team. This is important at all levels. I think it becomes even more important for those people who work in jobs which are boring and routine or physically demanding, but not mentally stimulating.

If you think that workplace relationships could be better, then here is a game plan to do something about it before it is too late. However, a word of caution, it does take a degree of maturity and a level of development to be able to resolve workplace relationship issues. But if they go unresolved, they will act like a cancer undermining teamwork and performance.

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 workplace relationships.

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 workplace relationships.



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

- How workplace relationships impact on team performance are clarified and accepted.
- We agree the things we do which detract from effective workplace relationships and team performance.
- We agree relationships that could be better.
- Actions we need to take to improve relationships are agreed and implemented.
- Ways to improve workplace relationships are explored and followed through.
- We share our perceptions of another's behaviour if their behaviour is counter-productive.
- We agree the actions/behaviours that bring about effective workplace relationships.
- We acknowledge where relationships have been damaged and agree a strategy to work together.
- Feedback on our own responses to a conflict situation is sought and acted on.
- We ask others about the things we do that detract from effective workplace relationship.
- We ask others to give us feedback about our own performance.
- We clarify and agree where there are differences of perception about situations and issues.
- We agree to undertake a process to improve the relationship.
- We focus only on the behaviour that may be damaging the relationship and not the person.
- We tell others how we react to their style.
- We identify the things each person does that cause the other party concern or grief.
- We discuss the benefits of better relationships and the 'downside' of a poor working relationship for both parties.
- We avoid saying things that may damage the dignity and self-respect of others when attempting to resolve contentious issues.
- We acknowledge things that happened in the past that have damaged
- relationships so that both parties can move forward.
- We collaborate when opposite points of view are too important to compromise.
- We collaborate when it is important to repair a damaged relationship.
- We compromise when both parties hold strongly opposing viewpoints.
- We concede the point when the relationship is more important than us being right.
- We concede the point when we are proven to be wrong.
- Management do what needs doing to assist in improving workplace relationships.

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‘I present myself in a form suitable to the relationship I wish to achieve with you.’

Luigi Pirandello, *The Pleasure of Honesty* (1917), 1, tr. William Murray