



Topics:

- High-performance teams (1)
- High-performance teams (2)
- Team values
- OOSE A?
- Will? Skill? Nil? Dill?
- Lead or lag?
- Give and take
- Trust me, I'm the boss



High performance teams (1)

‘All for one, one for all’

Alexander Dumas, 1824-1895, French playwright and novelist, *Les Trous Mousquetaiers*

How effective is your team? Here is an assessment tool you can use on your team or work group. Before using it, decide if both you and your team have the maturity to deal with the consequences. Also decide if you are prepared to act on the results. To do this exercise and then do nothing after will seriously damage your credibility. You will need to have a healthy self-esteem and be willing to see criticism as an opportunity for improvement.

Explain what you are doing and why. Ask team members to assist you to make sure that we are working as effectively as we can as a team and that team morale is as good as it can be. Tell them what you plan to do with their evaluations and what you propose to do with the results. Agree with the team whether to keep it confidential or not. If the decision is to keep it confidential, re-think whether or not the team has the maturity to conduct its own evaluation or whether or not there is a fear of repercussions.

Tell them that as the group or team leader, ultimate accountability for team performance, team morale and team effectiveness rests with you, but that without their co-operation you can do little to improve things if improvements are required. Ask them to be honest, fair and balanced in their evaluations.

Firstly, check out the assessment tool and suggested rating scale on the pages following. Then come back and read these guidelines and considerations about improving team performance and team morale using this assessment tool:

- The assessment tool contains 60 items relating to high performance teams. There are others that you could think of and may wish to add, but if most of these items are being well managed within the team you will have a high performance team.
- The optimum score possible using our suggested rating scale is 420 - the **perfect** score for the **ideal** team. Now if your score for your team’s effectiveness is somewhat less than the perfect score - don’t panic. The ideal score of 420 is a target to aim for which realistically no team will ever achieve, but it does give you something to strive for.
- Here are some benchmarks for comparing your team score :

60 - 120	Frankly - a lot of people find renewal in early retirement.
121 - 180	Huh? Teamwork you say. What’s that?
181 - 240	Phew! You’ve got a hell of a lot of work to do.
241 - 300	Well you can see the light at the end of the tunnel.
301 - 360	Not bad, at all. You’ve got a pretty good team there.
361 - 420	Congratulations. You have a high performance team.
- Involve all team members in conducting the evaluation.
- Combine the individual total scores to work out the average total score for the team.
- Combine the individual scores for each item to work out the average score for each item.

Develop High-Performance Teams



- Make a note of items where there is a wide difference in individual scores, e.g. 1,2,6,5,3,1,6,2,5. Firstly, discuss why there is such a variation in scores at the team meeting. Ask people to elaborate on their rating.
- Now, focus on the 5 items which have the lowest average score.
- Discuss with the team what has to happen to improve these things. Agree what things you will do and what things team members will do. Emphasise that for you to make improvements you are going to need their support and co-operation. And vice versa.
- Draw up a list of actions to be implemented by you and/or the team members describing the actions, by whom, with whom and by when.
- Agree to meet in, say, two weeks to review the progress with this list of actions.
- Create an expectation that all team members, where relevant, will be expected to discuss verifiable examples of how they have acted to begin these improvements.
- At this team meeting, always lead off by discussing verifiable examples of what you have done. Then ask others to discuss their examples.
- Keep repeating this process every two weeks or so until the team is satisfied that the first 5 items have been addressed.
- Now focus on the next 5 items with the lowest average score. Note - many of the items are not mutually exclusive, i.e. items may be related to each other. Thus, by improving one item you may also improve another related item. Review if the next 5 lowest items still need improving. If not, choose the next 5 items or whatever that still need improving.
- Continue this process until you conduct your next team evaluation in 6 months.
- Continue the team improvement cycle, but meeting less often as things improve.

Or, if you don't want to do the full assessment, just review the 60 items and reflect on what you need to initiate to develop a high performance team.



Team Effectiveness - Assessment Tool

Below is a suggested rating scale:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Disagree Moderately Neutral Moderately Agree Strongly

Disagree Disagree Agree Agree

1. All people are treated equally and without bias.
2. Creativity and innovation are promoted within the team.
3. Everybody works to the agreed standards.
4. Right efforts are acknowledged as much as right results.
5. Work problems and issues are clarified and resolved.
6. I can express any opinion I like without fear of repercussion.
7. What people say is consistent with what they do.
8. Honesty is displayed within the team.
9. People are prepared to listen to what I have to say.
10. Trust is displayed within the team.
11. We provide each other with recognition and feedback.
12. In conversation, people seldom interrupt others.
13. We frequently clarify what we need and expect from each other.
14. If decisions were made by secret ballot, they would be the same as those we currently make.
15. We communicate effectively between team members.
16. We look for ways to assist other members of the team.
17. Everybody is allowed to have a say - no one dominates.
18. We challenge and improve the established systems and practices within the team.
19. We are open to ways to improve our individual performance.
20. Team meetings are effective, worthwhile and looked forward to by the team.
21. We spend time clarifying the objectives of the team.
22. We are all clear on our roles and responsibilities.
23. Our individual goals directly contribute to the team goals.
24. We get appropriate feedback on team performance.
25. Team efforts and results are acknowledged and recognised.



26. Our team goals are achievable.
27. We have appropriate input into team goals and strategies.
28. Our priorities are clear.
29. We have a clear understanding of what is expected of us on a day to day basis.
30. Members of the team are committed to the team.
31. When things go wrong we look for learnings and solutions, not blame.
32. We participate in relevant decision-making and are committed to the implementation.
33. We are flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances.
34. We always act and follow up on decisions made at team meetings.
35. We have a focus on continuous improvement.
36. We all accept that all of us have a part to play in team effectiveness and team morale.
37. Problems and issues are discussed within the team before decisions are made.
38. We know each other's strengths and limitations and work to complement each other.
39. People tend to be constructive rather than critical.
40. People are prepared to own and discuss errors knowing that this information won't be used against them later.
41. People are prepared to share success and acknowledge their team members.
42. I can do my job properly because other members in the team do their job properly.
43. We are prepared to work with other teams.
44. When the going gets tough, there is a sense of support amongst the team.
45. There are no destructive cliques in our team.
46. Other teams welcome the opportunity to work with us.
47. Team members accept feedback on performance from each other.
48. The team can count on the manager for support.
49. Conflict between team members is resolved fairly and positively.
50. We follow the agreed systems and procedures.
51. People would welcome job rotation within the team.
52. The right people do the right jobs in this team.
53. We evaluate the way we work as a team.
54. People understand the concept of client - supplier relationships within the team and external to the team.
55. The team has the right skills and expertise to get the job done.

Develop High-Performance Teams



6

- 56. People understand the roles that other people in the team perform.
- 57. We have the power to achieve what we are meant to achieve.
- 58. Our manager represents our views to other management.
- 59. The role of the leader and manager is respected in the team.
- 60. People are willing to accept ownership of their actions.



Team values

‘High performance teams thrive on trust and trust thrives in high performance teams’

Daniel Kehoe



Every organisation has its own culture - the way we do things. This culture reflects the values of the people who create and initiate the policies which govern how the organisation functions. Hopefully, it also reflects the values of the employees who actually perform the various functions and tasks required to implement these policies.

This is an important consideration for a manager. If you want your people to continually strive to improve their performance, it is obviously far better if they want to do that of their own volition. It is extremely difficult to get people to do things which are against their own set of values.

You can't really get people to do something against their will. You can if you continually maintain a threat of penalty, but at what cost? In this situation, people will find ways to sabotage your efforts, they will do things to a low standard, make it a low priority, do it half-heartedly or not do it at all.

Within the organisation culture, a manager can create a sub-culture within the work group or team. In terms of the way we do things within our team, what are the things that team members value that keep them motivated and engaged?

Here is a tool a manager can use to check that the team culture is a positive one which encourages optimum team performance.

- Using the 'Team Values' list (or start from scratch and develop your own set of values), ask each team member to select the 10 most important to them.
- Ask them to attach a weight to each value. 10 points to their most important value, 9 points to their next most important value, and so on.
- Collect each team member's top 10 values (including your own) and determine the top 8 values for the team.



- Do this by adding the individual weightings for each value. The value with the highest total weighting is the number one priority value for the team. The value with the second highest total weighting is the number two priority value for the team. And so on.
- Now, working with your team and starting with the number one team value, answer this question :

Q. What do we need to do better to demonstrate that this value is actually reflected in the ways we do things within our team?

- Agree a list of actions and a process to manage and monitor the implementation of these actions.
- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| • OPEN AND HONEST COMMUNICATION | • HUMOUR AND FUN |
| • SUPPORT FOR EACH OTHER | • RESPECT |
| • CREATIVITY | • EQUALITY |
| • VISION AND PURPOSE | • ETHICS |
| • TRUST | • LEARNING |
| • RECOGNITION AND FEEDBACK | • ACCOUNTABILITY |
| • SKILL SHARING AND DEVELOPMENT | • DIVERSITY |
| • RISK-TAKING | • SHARED WORKLOAD |
| • BALANCE | • DIRECTION AND SUPPORT |
| | • CONFLICT RESOLUTION |
| | • CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT |



OOSE A?

‘If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.’

New Testament, Mark, 3:25

Does your team have OOSE A? (Pronounced OOSE A). Now if you have had any exposure to the military or to bureaucracy, you’ll know that acronyms are essential to their survival. Hence my use of the above acronym as the title for this article in the hope that it will help it survive into the future.

Digressing. Stay with me on this. One of the features of our e-tools which we like to tell those few people who are prepared to listen is that our e-tools are light on when it comes to theory. And some years ago I was informed by a critic that our e-tools were not theoretical enough. So in the hope of turning that critic around, I present an article about teams that moves away from our action-based approach into the realm of theory. However, I think it provides some good ‘food for thought’.

I have to also tell you that this article was not penned by me. I found it in my collection of materials but with no source identified. If you are reading this and you recognise yourself as the author, I thank you and hope you won’t mind it being adapted and brought to a wider audience

Output

Objectives

Structure

Energy

Atmosphere

Output

The test of a team is its capacity to deliver the goods and services. A team is capable of achieving results that the individuals who comprise it cannot do in isolation. Their diverse talents combine in the team to create an end product or service beyond their individual capability.

Objectives

A team needs a purpose that is understood, shared, and felt to be worthwhile by its members. This purpose can be described as the team’s “mission”. In addition, there will be specific objectives that the team and each individual member have a commitment to achieve.

Structure

A mature team has dealt with thorny questions concerned with control, leadership, procedures, decision-making, organisation and roles. The team’s structure is finely attuned to tasks being undertaken and individual talents and contributions are utilised without confusion. Team members with a drive for leadership have learned to understand each other and to cope with any feelings of hostility, conflict, competitiveness or aggression. The team has managed to become flexible, responsive, orderly and directed.

Develop High-Performance Teams



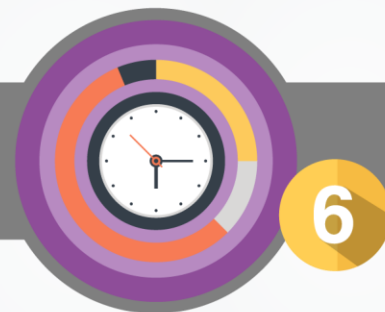
Energy

Team members take strength from one another. Collectively, they feel more potent and find that team activities renew their vitality and enjoyment. The word synergy was coined to describe this special group energy. Synergy has been explained with the mathematically improbable, but psychologically accurate, equation: $2 + 2 = 5$. A team does have a character and capacity beyond the sum of its individual members. It has a capacity for synergy, a group energy that can be deliberately developed and utilised.

Atmosphere

A team develops a distinctive spirit. The team spirit allows for openness between the members and for their support and simple enjoyment of one another. Team members identify themselves with the team and its success or failure affects their feelings. They will extend themselves to serve the interests of the team. Such a team develops an atmosphere within which confidences can be shared, personal difficulties worked through and risks undertaken.

Develop High-Performance Teams



Will? Skill? Nil? Dill?

‘High performance teams don’t just happen. They take continuous development and improvement.’

Daniel Kehoe

Teams are badly affected by under-performing people. As the team leader, you will need to take decisive action.

Here are some guidelines. In practice, always consider your unique circumstances.

Identify a person whose performance could be improved (low commitment and possibly moderate competence) or a person who is capable of being ‘stretched’ (high commitment and high competence).

Identify a KPI or a key part of their role or a major task or major project or a new initiative related to the person where their performance is down or where they are ready to be ‘stretched’.

Using the scale from 1 - 10, rate them against each criterion based on your perception. 1 = definitely NO. 10 = definitely YES.

Circle the item numbers where you have assessed them as 7 or less.

Prepare yourself for a discussion with the person by planning what you would say in relation to each issue related to the identified KPI / Task / Project / Initiative. What are the specific things you would like to discuss with this person?

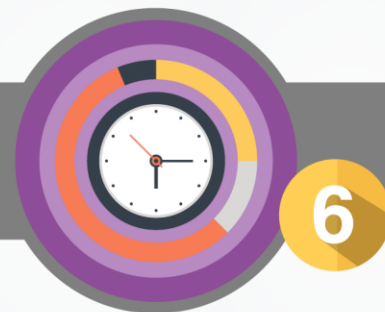
Involve them in this leadership action by getting them to do a self-assessment. Use your assessment and their assessment as a basis for creating learning and understanding.

Agree 2 or 3 things that you will both focus on over the next month or so. Review the application of these and pick 2 or 3 new things and so on.

Direction and context

1. Understands the context	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. Understands the purpose	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. Understands the direction	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. Understands the what and the why	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5. Explores options	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
6. Applies creativity and innovation	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
7. Is motivated to perform	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
8. Understands the key drivers	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Develop High-Performance Teams



6

Space

9. Acts independently where competent	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
10. Shows there is sufficient trust in our relationship	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
11. Tries new ways of doing things	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
12. Explores best practice options	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
13. Uses initiative to solve problems	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
14. Uses initiative to make decisions	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Boundaries

15. Knows and accepts the boundaries	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
17. Constructively challenges the boundaries	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
18. Demonstrates his/her accountabilities	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
19. Acts within acceptable levels of risk-taking	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
20. Acts to our ethics	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
21. Acts to our standards	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
22. Acts to our principles	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Support

23. Feels that contribution is acknowledged and rewarded	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
24. Learns from experience	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
25. Overcomes setbacks	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
26. Is self-motivated	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
27. Receives adequate coaching and mentoring	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
28. Initiates and develops ideas	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Develop High-Performance Teams



6

29. Feels that ideas are heard and considered	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
30. Feels failure is supported by me	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
31. Feels creativity, innovation and risk-taking are supported by me	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
32. Feels a needed part of the team	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
33. Receives adequate emotional and intellectual support from me	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Lead or lag?

‘What gets measured and monitored gets managed.’

Daniel Kehoe

How do high performance teams measure their performance? You need to be able to measure the performance of your team in terms of quantity and quality of output. What are you going to measure?

The things you measure are called ‘performance indicators’ - things which will indicate the performance of your team. The main indicators of performance are called, ‘key performance indicators’ (KPIs). There are two types of performance indicators you can use - ‘lead’ and ‘lag’. Lag performance indicators relate to outputs or results. Lead performance indicators relate to activities which, if they happen, will lead to the desired output or end result - lead up activities.

Most organisations are reasonable at identifying and measuring lag indicators, but not so good at identifying and measuring lead indicators. A lag indicator will tell you whether or not you achieved the end result or output **after** the event. A lead indicator will tell you if you are **likely** to achieve the end result **before** it happens. This enables a manager to take corrective action before it is too late. Lead indicators often (but not always) relate to the badly named, ‘soft’ issues affecting performance. Managers and the team will benefit greatly by focusing on lead indicators as well as lag indicators.

Here are some examples of lead performance indicators that might apply to your team. Use this to build your own list of lead performance indicators and review and discuss them every six months with your team. Remember that none of these indicators alone guarantees optimum team performance, but the more that they are evident the more likely it is that the desired outcomes will be achieved.

Lead Performance Indicators

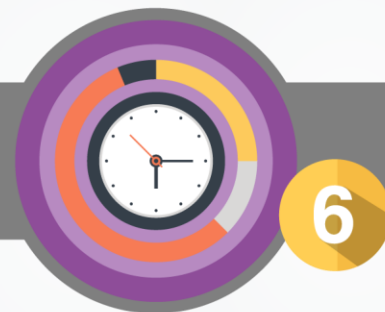
- The number of activities initiated each year to identify the training needs of team members.
- The number of hours per year team members attend off-the-job training.
- The number of times team members are asked to demonstrate the application of off-the-job training.
- The number of times the reasons team members are attending training are explained and post-training expectations of performance are clarified.
- The number of formal, one-on-one coaching sessions conducted on-the-job per employee per year.
- The number of grievances identified and resolved effectively each six months.
- The number of ideas suggested by team members to improve the way we do things implemented every four months.
- The number of non-value adding activities identified and eliminated or modified each year.
- The number of times the team received formal acknowledgment of good performance.
- The number of incidents of non-compliance with agreed procedures detected each month.

Develop High-Performance Teams



- The number of workplace hazards identified each month.
 - The number of workplace hazards eliminated or modified each month.
 - The number of safety meetings held each year.
 - The percentage of team members attending safety meetings each year.
 - The percentage of actions implemented from those agreed during team meetings each month.
 - The number of times that team members communication or information requirements are identified and implemented.
 - The number of times team performance is reviewed each year.
 - The number of activities initiated to remove any fear-based perceptions of team members.
 - The number of activities initiated to identify and remove 'hidden' blockages to improving team or individual performance.
 - The number of times we meet with suppliers of raw materials or information to reinforce our specification requirements.
 - The number of times each year that performance standards are clarified, agreed and reviewed within the team.
 - The number of times that non-performing team members are identified and counselled to improve their performance.
 - The number of times we review the effectiveness of our meetings and take action to improve them.
 - The number of times per year that we clarify and agree individual and team priorities.
- Developing High-Performance Teams 6

Develop High-Performance Teams



Give and take

‘Camaraderie and team spirit make boring and routine work more bearable.’

Daniel Kehoe

Teamwork and negotiation go hand-in-hand. There are many things that individuals need to negotiate with other people within their team to maintain teamwork and co-operation.

If teamwork is suffering in your team, here is an exercise you can use with your team to:

- (1) generate discussion about the part negotiation plays in teamwork
 - (2) raise awareness about ways to conduct ourselves to improve teamwork
 - (3) agree specific things we can all do better.
- Allow 60-90 minutes for this exercise.
 - Explain the objectives of the exercise – refer to points (1) to (3) above.
 - Ask each person to rate the Teamwork Negotiation Actions in terms of their influence on successful negotiation outcomes from a team perspective.
 - Place their rating from 1 to 6 in the ‘own’ column.
 - Go through each item one by one and record the individual group ratings under the ‘team’ column.
 - Ask the team to discuss each item with the view to getting the team to agree a rating.
 - After the rating for all items has been agreed, agree 3-5 specific actions that we will all focus on over the next 3 months to improve teamwork through better negotiation.
 - Set a date to meet to review yours and the team’s experiences in implementing these actions.

Rate each of the following items in terms of their influence on a successful negotiations using the following scale.

1 2 3 4 5 6

low influence

high influence

Team Negotiation Actions	OWN	TEAM
1. Check whether proposals provide a win / win outcome.		
2. Check that both parties are satisfied with the end result.		
3. Identify the objections both parties hold and explore the reality of these things happening.		
4. Consider whose best interests are being served by the current situation or by the proposed situation.		

Develop High-Performance Teams



6

5. Consider the personal needs of both parties.		
6. Clarify your deadlines.		
7. Consider the organisational needs.		
8. Consider what concessions could be traded.		
9. Consider the situation from both party's point of view.		
10. List all the facts known about the situation.		
11. Define your and their objectives from those you/they would like to get through to those you/they must get.		
12. Decide what information you/they require and what information you/they are going to give.		
13. Separate facts from inferences and assumptions.		
14. Declare your own assumptions about the situation and compare your assumptions against the known facts.		
15. Ask the other person to do the same with any assumptions they might hold about the situation.		
16. Show them how what you are proposing benefits all parties involved and ask them to do the same.		
17. Discuss with them the negative aspects of your proposal and the consequences on all parties involved.		
18. Discuss with them the negative aspects of their proposal and the consequences on all parties involved.		



Trust me, I'm the boss

Trust is the basis of every effective relationship, be it with your boss or your team. If the trust between people has died, then so has the relationship. To influence people to trust you and the decisions you make requires a variety of qualities.

Trust is also a key component of being an effective leader. Some would say the most important component. It is near on impossible to get people to follow you if trust is missing. It is not something that just happens or is automatically given.

Trust and high performance teams go hand in hand.

Some of the key elements of being able to demonstrate trust start with the following.

1. **Respect the rights of all people.** Do this by listening to them and acknowledging their point of view. You may even present their perspective to others. You don't have to agree with their point of view, but at least they will feel they have had a good hearing.
2. **Be seen to treat all people equally and fairly.** A hard one because no two situations are the same. Ensure that your processes are transparent and consistently applied to all. Explain the rationale for your thinking, how you came to the conclusions you did, why you followed a particular course of action.
3. **Always do what you say you are going to do.** The moment you don't deliver as promised your credibility starts to come into question. So don't make wild promises. Check what it is that people really need and check that you can deliver. Confirm their expectations of what they think you are going to do. If all things are equal then do it.
4. **Speak confidently about what you believe will and should happen.** This is about instilling confidence in your ability and the decisions you make. Do your research to enable you to provide a sound rationale for why you believe something should happen and the reasons why something will happen. Be prepared to listen to an opposing view point and make a shift in your thinking if what is presented makes sense.
5. **Make informed decisions.** Again, do your research. Making informed decisions is about knowing the 'ins' and 'outs' of a situation, analysis, assessment, weighing up the 'for' and 'against', gathering the data, evidence, facts and information that will support the decision you make. Don't guess. Don't assume that others see the situation as you do or have the same knowledge as you. Consider the whole picture, not just your part in it.
6. **Inform others of the reasons for your decisions.** Establish a credibility, a rationale for your thoughts and just how this decision evolved. It is about being aware of the ramifications of decisions on others.
7. **Minimise the risk of failure.** Seek input from others about potential risks and take steps to check that they are minimised. If the things you do are seen as being successful people will trust your judgement and ability.
8. **Provide counsel to those who seek it.** When asked for advice, give it. This is not saying solve their problems for them. It is about you assuming the role of a mentor and assisting them to make the all important informed decision. Help them see the range of choices and the possible consequences.

9. **Keep confidential conversations between those who are authorised to know.** The quickest way to lose the trust of someone is to breach their confidence. This can be tricky because in some situations you may feel others should know of a problem about which someone has come to you in confidence. Whenever you feel this to be the case, seek permission from the person concerned to discuss this matter with others.
10. **Provide others with the space to manage their own priorities.** In other words, keep your nose out of areas where it doesn't belong. Allow them to be responsible for the outcome and to achieve it in the best way possible. You must ensure that they have the competence to do the job.

The key issue is how trust is demonstrated in the eyes of the other party.

