

Practices for Building Successful Teams

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Presentation: [Building Successful Teams](#)

Handouts: [Team Brainstorm](#), [Individual Map](#)

Framework

Patrick Lencioni, [The Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team](#) (Trust, Conflict, Commitment, Accountability, Results) - also called the Five Dysfunctions of a Team (Absence of trust, Fear of conflict, Lack of commitment, Avoidance of accountability, Inattention to results)

Practices that Build Trust

- Take time to set group expectations for how you will work together
 - One helpful model for this activity is the Container Building exercise in Brené Brown's [Dare to Lead workbook](#) (p5)
- Sit in a circle where everyone can see everyone else ([circles](#) are a core component of restorative practices, an emerging social science that studies how to strengthen relationships between individuals as well as social connections within communities.)
- Create an opportunity for the group to have a shared experience (social, professional development, etc.)
- Ask for help when needed, offer help when possible
- Try a collaborative activity or game (there are some great collaborative tools from [Liberating Structures](#))
- Provide an opportunity to share strengths and weaknesses
- Create a no-judgement zone in team meetings
- Use transparent processes for decision-making and make sure everyone has the chance to give input (the [Fair Process](#) model in restorative practices is a helpful framework)
- Include everyone in discussions, make sure people who need time to think individually have a moment to do so (one structure is that you can give everyone

a minute to think individually and then have someone start and go in order around the circle and make sure everyone has the chance to share)

- Be punctual and follow through on your commitments
- Build connections by learning about group members beyond the context of your work together (values, hobbies, interests, etc.) The key practice here is asking questions, again the [restorative practices proactive circle](#) model can be helpful – prepare a question for the start of the meeting and give everyone a chance to respond around the circle before you dig into the task at hand)
- Bring someone's favorite treat to a group meeting
- Draft a shared group mission statement
- Practice good listening, listen to understand, rather than preparing to respond
- Remember information that your group members share with you
- Celebrate small victories
- Say thank you, and take moments as a group to appreciate what's going well
- Assume that everyone is doing the best that they can (another powerful tip from Brene Brown)

Practices that Encourage Conflict

- Establish a safe zone in your group where it is ok to disagree and voice your opinion
- Practice using open-ended questions to gather input and feedback on ideas
- Openly invite different opinions, and acknowledge team members who share a different perspective
- Develop guidelines for sharing constructive criticism
- Use Brené Brown's technique of [Turn and Learn](#) (where everyone writes down their ideas/opinions and shares them at the same time)
- Assign a devil's advocate in the group, take turns
- Agree on guidelines for brainstorming (examples: encourage wild, even "bad" ideas, go for quantity, use "yes and" to build on the ideas of others, defer judgement – no blocking)
- Conduct a [SWOT analysis](#) as a group (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) where everyone considers each category together
- Create a pro/con list as a group
- Have the group stress test an idea using the [Red Team](#) technique
- Seek to understand a team member's perspective by asking questions about their reasoning and supporting information
- Assign viewpoints for debates to ensure multiple perspectives are represented

- The word conflict can be uncomfortable for some people, find a word that works for your group
- Notice if a conflict has stepped into the destructive side and step back, apologize, and take a break if needed
- Say thank you when a team member shares their different perspective with you
- Take a moment to appreciate when the group is engaging conflict, even constructive conflict can raise the tension in a group – taking a moment to acknowledge that the group is on the right track by leaning in to this work can help people stay engaged!

Practices that Ensure Commitment

- Keep a spreadsheet of decisions that the group reviews after each meeting.
- [Paint Done](#): Make sure everyone knows the desired end result and how it will contribute to the big picture.
- [Clear is Kind](#): When a decision is made by the group, restate the decision, pause for questions, and check for any remaining concerns/reservations.
- Use the [SMART framework](#) to set clear goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound)
- For larger or more complex tasks, set up milestones that the group can use as moments to check-in and make sure everyone is still clear on their roles and assignments. (short term/long term goals)
- [TASC Approach](#): Make sure each task has an owner, and that they have the authority and ability to succeed.
- Create opportunities for the group to check in on how decision-making and direction-setting are going and discuss how to improve.
- Use a project management system/platform for delivering assignments and tracking progress ([Trello](#), [Asana](#), etc.).
- Discuss the consequences that the group or individuals might experience if the goals aren't met.
- Develop incentives for the group to stay on track and remain committed to the work. (Group shout-outs, treats, appreciation, celebration, etc.)
- Meet on a regular schedule and keep a routine as a group to support operating clarity and expectations.

Practices that Promote Accountability & Achieve Results

- Agree on a system for how your group will check in on assignments

- Create a shared timeline for the project so that everyone can see what is due at what time. (Project management tools like [Trello](#), [Asana](#), etc.)
- Be proactive about asking to adjust deadlines if needed and demonstrate accountability and ownership if you miss a commitment.
- Acknowledge and celebrate contributions and follow-through for individuals and for the group.
- Use a clear checklist of responsibilities and check accomplishments off as a group during meetings.
- Create check-points where the group can reassess goals and have an open conversation about progress.
- Brainstorm fun rewards and penalties as a group to make accountability a little more lighthearted.
 - Sample penalties: Run a lap, bring coffee to the next meeting, take a less desirable task, etc.
 - Sample rewards: Pick your favorite chair, earn a piece of candy, avoid an undesirable task, etc.
- Use an accountability buddy system where each team member has a partner that they check in with on progress.
- Make sure accountability is added to the expectations set at the beginning of the group work.
- Develop motivators that will help the group reach milestones: invite a guest to the meeting to view progress, send a draft to stakeholders for review, schedule an open meeting to discuss your progress, etc.
- Discuss the idea of “team success” as a group, and check in on what it means for each member.
- Find opportunities for team members to “level up” together through their work – build skills, receive recognition, etc.
- Assess the final product from a big picture perspective and ensure it meets the goals of the project.
- Celebrate team success!
 - Lunch, coffee, walk, team gift, thank you cards, etc