



How to ... establish an effective team

The challenge

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Aristotle was on to something! Rarely are great business successes the work of just one person. The BIG problems you face in your business are usually too complex to be solved by any one person or discipline – no matter how good they are. When it comes down to it, the ultimate goal of any team is to solve problems and get things done, whether in a project team, a vertical team, or a cross functional team.

Great teams are built on establishing a common vision, creating building blocks for communication and collaboration, identifying and planning for roadblocks, and establishing accountability.

You may be creating a new team or establishing a more effective team from an existing group of people but either way, overall responsibility for the outcome sits on your shoulders! So whether it's a small project or something which spans a significant period of time, follow our steps to ensure you can say your team is 'high performing':

The path to success

- 1) . The primary goal for the team during the forming stage is to create a team with clear structure, goals, direction and roles so that members begin to build trust. During the forming stage, much of the team's energy is focused on defining the team and its responsibilities. Team members tend to be optimistic and interested at this stage – full of excitement about the plans for the future – but many gloss over the time you should really spend clarifying the 'who' the 'what' and the 'why' of this stage to their great detriment later.
- 2) Stabilize. In this stage, the team get to know about each other and the tasks that they have been assigned & are responsible for, settling somewhat into their roles in the team. Patterns of interaction and communication begin to emerge as team members experience the process of working together & it's key for you to be involved at this stage to understand that everyone is on board. Any gaps or overlaps spotted at this stage should be addressed immediately as this stage is critical to successful team outcomes ("what? I thought you were supposed to do that"?). Some teams never experience stabilisation and it just makes it ten times harder for you to manage when this is the case and a key part of this stage is to sow the seeds of trust: doing what you say you will, spending time with each other and adopting an open communication style.
- 3) Integrate. Team members feel an increasing acceptance of others on the team, recognising that the variety of opinions and experiences makes the team stronger and its product richer. Members start to feel part of a team and can take satisfaction from the increased group cohesion



and this can be accelerated by effective communication (sit the teams together if possible but if not – meet virtually on Zoom, Teams etc – our experience face to face will yield tighter integration). This is the stage for the team to focus on its goals, breaking larger goals down into smaller, achievable steps and although the temptation may be to set these goals themselves for all, they will have more inclination to achieve them if they create and own the goals themselves. Many software companies use regular stand-ups for this type of integration – regular meetings where each person explains what they are doing, what their blockers are and what challenges they are finding. The team may need to develop both task-related skills and group process and conflict management skills to smoothly transition to the next stage.

- 4) Actualization: the stage where people are more 'at home'. During this stage of team development, team members experience an increased sense of comfort in expressing their ideas and feelings. They develop an acceptance of others on the team and trust between members is greater. . During the actualisation stage, team members start making a conscious effort to set aside differences and achieve group harmony. Communication is emphasised and becomes more efficient. Team members feel more open to share ideas or ask teammates for help. State the impact of this behaviour to describe the consequences of it and any actions which arise: "Because of this, the impression is that you are not being organised or committed to the team as we can't rely on you for x" . It is what happened as a result of the person's actions.
- 5) Maturation. Not a made up word I promise! In the maturation stage of team development, members feel satisfaction in the team's progress. They share insights and are aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. Members feel comfortable with the team's patterns and processes and feel confident in their individual abilities and those of their teammates. Team members become more accepting of each other and value differences. The commitment and competence of team members is high. Team members continue to deepen their knowledge and skills, including working to continuously improve team development.
- 6) Home straights: During the end stage of any project, some team members may become less focused on the team's tasks and their productivity may drop whilst others will be turbo-charged to complete the project. This is largely dependent on their preferences however you can help overcome the former by continuing to motivate the team members, offering encouragement and (possibly) a reward for completion.
- 7) Ending the team. Some teams, such as project teams or cross-functional teams, come to an end when their work is completed or when the business or client needs change and it's important to recognise that people deal with this type of change in an often emotional way. Celebrate successes along the way but celebrate big at the end of a project in order to reinforce the right kind of behaviour.