

# Managerial Challenges in Leading and Engaging Teams

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*"In many ways, working on teams can be a positive and productive experience. It provides opportunities for collaboration, the synergy of diverse skills, and collegial support. However, teamwork also raises issues of less autonomy, accountability to colleagues, the requirement of frequent communication, and group problem-solving. A consistent challenge is getting individuals to work together effectively on teams when individual members have differences in communication styles, project management priorities, time management, information gathering and decision making".*

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**Abstract:** While some experiences on being a part of a team can be very fulfilling, with members becoming highly skilled at working together, others are frustrating or challenging, with members developing interpersonal conflicts that impacted on the achievement of the team goals. Perhaps the greatest challenge for a team member is the struggle and resulting tension that arises from being an individual; with one's own talents, biases, values, beliefs, interests, and ways of working; versus being a member of a team with a shared team's charter with purpose and values.

What are the characteristics of high-performing teams? How do you develop, lead, and engage a high-performing team and what are the managerial challenges associated with it?

**Keywords:** Effectiveness, High-Performance teams and Organizational behavior, Team, Team charter, Team effectiveness, Teamwork

## INTRODUCTION

Teams have become a principal building block of the strategy of successful organizations. With teams at the core of corporate strategy, the success of an organization will often depend on how well each team member operates and collaborates with others.

Today's highly disruptive, as well as volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) networked business environment, not only provides a challenging environment for leaders to operate but would need to depend on their extended teams, which are critically important to getting work done (Bawany 2016). Yet, not all teams are created equal. Some fail to perform, or they perform below expectations. Some start out well but later lose their focus and energy. Teams are extremely valuable if they are working well. They are very costly if they are not. It is critical for managers and team leaders to find ways to ensure their teams are working effectively and are achieving their results.

In most teams, the energies of individual members work at cross-purposes. Individuals may work extraordinarily hard, but their efforts do not translate into a team effort, and this results in wasted energy. By contrast, when a team becomes more aligned, a commonality of direction emerges, and individual energies harmonize. You have a shared vision and an understanding of how to complement each other's efforts. As jazz musicians say, "You are in the groove."

A team can have everything going for it—the brightest and most qualified people, access to resources, a clear mission—but still fail because it lacks group emotional intelligence.

Just as effective managers need to develop the self-awareness and interpersonal skills associated with a high level of emotional intelligence, so do teams. One way for managers to help their teams build this capability is to understand and ensure that their teams move successfully through the stages of small-group development: membership, control, and cohesion. These stages are experienced

by all teams. If teams are not well led and facilitated through them, their chances of achieving their results are substantially reduced (2014a).

## DEMYSTIFYING TEAMS

To understand how teams deliver extra performance, it is important to distinguish between teams and other forms of working groups. That distinction turns on performance results. A working group's performance is a function of what its members do as individuals. A team's performance includes both individual results and what is called "collective work products." A collective work product is what two or more members must work on together, such as interviews, surveys, or experiments. Whatever it is, a collective work product reflects the joint, real contribution of team members.

Working groups are both prevalent and effective in large organizations where individual's accountability is most important. The best working groups come together to share information, perspectives, and insights; to make decisions that help each person do his or her job better, and to reinforce individual performance standards. But the focus is always on individual goals and accountabilities. Working-group members don't take responsibility for results other than their own. Nor do they try to develop incremental performance contributions requiring the combined work of two or more members (Katzenbach and Smith 1993).

Teams differ fundamentally from working groups because they require both individual and mutual accountability. Teams rely on more than group discussion, debate, and decision, on more than sharing information and best-practice performance standards. Teams produce discrete work products through the joint contributions of their members. This is what makes possible performance levels greater than the sum of all the individual bests of team members. Simply stated, a team is more than the sum of its parts.

Katzenbach and Smith (1993) stated that “. . . a team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable” (p 45). Let's examine further this definition.

- (i) **Small number of people:** The Optimal number of people in a team is generally between five and nine. While more team members bring a greater diversity of perspectives and ideas, the difficulty of consensus decision making increases dramatically. Subgroups can be created, but then the entire team is at risk of losing sight of the big picture.
- (ii) **Complementary skills:** In establishing a team, it is critical to ensure that there is a mix of diverse, yet complementary, skills such as technical, functional, and interpersonal abilities.
- (iii) **Committed to a common purpose:** Without a unified purpose, the team has no yardstick against which to measure performance.
- (iv) **Common performance goals:** Teams share performance goals or objectives; if a goal or objective is not achieved, the entire team is accountable. Commitment to these common performance objectives results in higher productivity and raised motivation levels.
- (v) **Common approach:** Objectives represent the “task” element of performing successfully; a common approach represents the “group process” element of working together. Neither is more important than the other, but without agreeing on how the team will interact, the chances of completing the task are pretty low!
- (vi) **Mutually accountable:** This refers to the shared ownership and responsibility that is fundamental to real teamwork. If something goes wrong, there should not be any finger-pointing but rather a group effort to fix the current situation and prevent future problems. Everyone

should feel free to ask for help, just as they should feel free to offer assistance. In a team, individual and team success are one and the same.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE TEAMS

Organization and its leaders put a great deal of effort into assembling high-performing teams. The power of a team must lie in its capacity to perform at levels and deliver results, greater than the sum of its parts. Considerable resources are often expended to ensure those teams reach their potential. For team members, as well as other people in an organization, recognizing when a team is doing well is important. When improvement is needed, it is important to make positive changes. However, sometimes it is helpful to take a step back in order to recognize when a team is working effectively. The workings of a highly effective team are not always obvious or intuitive to everyone. So, what are the characteristics of highly effective teams?

#### Well-Defined Team Charter and Operating Philosophy

The single most important ingredient in team success is a clear, common, compelling task. The power of a team flows out of the alignment of a purpose to which every team member is aligned. The task of any team is to accomplish an objective and to do it at exceptional levels of performance. Teams are not ends in themselves, but rather means to an end. Therefore, high-performance teams will be mission-directed, ultimately judged by their results. This would include the team mission, purpose, values, and goals. Effective teamwork includes having a synergistic social entity that works toward a common goal or goals, often with high-performance teams exemplifying a total commitment to the work as well as a total commitment to each other.

Katzenbach and Smith (1993) stated, “Common sense suggests that teams cannot succeed without a shared purpose” (p. 2). While this may be an obvious statement,

teams often form (or are developed) without a clear direction or meaning even though many researchers have explained that employees are inclined to do better when they know how to do their jobs and why they are doing them. Teams that seek higher levels of performance should ensure that each member understands and supports the true meaning and value of the team's mission and vision. Clarifying the purpose in this manner, tied to each individual's roles and responsibilities, is a major contributor for tapping into team potential.

### **Clarity of Roles and Performance Standards of Team Members**

High-performance teams are also characterized by crystal clear roles. Every team member is clear about his or her particular role, as well as those of the other team members. Roles are all about how we design, divide, and deploy the work of the team. While the concept is compellingly logical, many teams find it very challenging to implement in practice. There is often a tendency to take role definition to extremes or not take it far enough. But when they get it right, team members discover that making their combination more effective and leveraging their collective efforts is key to synergistic results.

Clear performance standards are essential to high-performing teams. Such standards provide a system of accountability, which also feeds into the performance ethic (Katzenbach and Smith 1993), an ethic that supports results for customers, employees, and shareholders, recognizing that each is of critical importance and must be balanced with great care and consideration.

Driving standards are certain pressures. These pressures include the individual's performance expectations, team pressure to perform, team leader pressure, the consequences of success or failure, and other external pressures (e.g., the larger organization, the crowd) that compel one to excel. According to Larson and LaFasto

(1989), "people with high standards are those people who do ordinary things in an extraordinary way" (p. 100). When helping people reach the extraordinary, it is important to remember that setting standards must be a flexible process. Larson and LaFasto also provided three common features of developing standards of excellence:

- (i) setting standards that include a variety of variables, variables that include individual commitment, motivation, self-esteem, and performance
- (ii) mutual accountability and
- (iii) a dedication to reviewing and reworking standards to keep them fresh and valuable for the team

### **Shared Norms and Culture**

Like rules that govern group behavior, norms can be helpful in assisting team development and performance. For example, Jehn and Mannix (2001) proposed that high-performance teams build "open discussion" norms in order to promote task conflict—a type of conflict associated with high-performance teams. Other norms of high-performance teams include high levels of respect among members and a cohesive and supportive team environment. Any number of norms may exist for a given team, but high-performing teams use norms, in general, to help govern behavior. In addition to having team norms, teams also benefit from organizing their team standards. As asserted by Larson and LaFasto (1989), "openly articulated or haphazardly applied, standards define those relevant and very intricate expectations that eventually determine the level of performance a team deems acceptable" (p. 95). Standards change the nature of performance by setting the bar at a new level—a level that is clearly defined.

Teams should be recognized and integrated within their organizations (Pearce and Ravlin 1987). Organizations need to clearly define their expectations and mechanisms of accountability for all teams



(Sundstrom, De Meuse, and Futrell 1990). Organizational culture needs to transform shared values into behavioral norms (Blechert, Christiansen, and Kari 1987). For example, team success is fostered by a culture that incorporates shared experiences of success. In times of economic rationalism, there may be cultural conflict and inconsistency between norms of maintaining the standards and adhering to the organization's mission. Team members with higher status also have less regard for team norms and may exacerbate internal conflict.

### **Excellent Communication and Collaboration**

Communication is the very means of cooperation or collaboration between team members. One of the primary motives for companies to implement teams is that team-based organizations are more responsive and move faster. A team, or the organization in which it resides, cannot move faster than it communicates. Fast, clear, accurate communication is a hallmark of high levels of team performance. Such teams have mastered the art of straight talk; there is a little-wasted motion from misunderstanding and confusion. Ideas move like quicksilver. The team understands that effective communication is key to thinking collectively and finding synergy in team solutions. As a result, they approach communication with a determined intentionality. They talk about it a lot and put a lot of effort into keeping it good and getting better.

While high-performing teams experience certain types of healthy conflict, and while they are said to be good communicators, research indicated that different types of communication, even different levels of perceptions of the amount of conflict, can have different types of effects. Different communication strategies appear to yield different results (including satisfaction) among those who participated, suggesting that the best forms of communication

are dependent upon the workgroup and their goals and objectives. Open communication in high-performing teams means a focus on coaching instead of directing (Regan 1999). The value of coaching has emerged over the past several years as a process for helping individuals think for themselves. Coaching is seen as a facilitative process where team leaders or members help facilitate the process of self and group discovery. By utilizing coaching more frequently, individuals become less dependent and more able to take greater levels of responsibility.

### **Effective Leadership**

The more complex and dynamic the team's task, the more a leader is needed. Leadership should reflect the team's stage of development. Leaders need to maintain a strategic focus to support the organization's vision, facilitate goal setting, educate, and evaluate achievements (Proctor-Childs, Freeman, and Miller 1998). When leaders delegate responsibility appropriately, team members become more confident and autonomous in their work.

One of a leader's roles is to ensure that team has the right number of members with the appropriate mix and diversity of task and interpersonal and complementary skills. A balance between homogeneity and heterogeneity of members' skills, interests, and backgrounds are preferred (Hackman 1990). Homogenous teams are composed of similar individuals who complete tasks efficiently with minimal conflict. In contrast, heterogeneous teams incorporate membership diversity and therefore facilitate innovation and problem solving (Pearce and Ravlin 1987).

High-performing leaders usually accompany high-performance teams. High-performing teams have leaders who, when times are certain and peaceful, are able to take a proactive stance and help the team stay ahead. In fact, Regan (1999) encouraged team leaders to create a sense of distress and urgency so as not to be confronted by external crises.

Regan purported those essential leadership qualities include the following:

- (i) Having a vision—meaning one should see the crisis before it happens and act upon it
- (ii) Convincing the opinion leaders of the importance of the goals at hand
- (iii) Organizing quantitative goals
- (iv) Being persistent in asking for the goals to be met
- (v) Endurance testing—whereby leaders must remain steadfast amongst team members trying to test the leader's commitment
- (vi) The ability to induce creativity once goals are set
- (vii) Staying out of the team's way

Katzenbach and Smith (1993) cited six elements necessary for good team leadership:

- (i) Team leaders must keep the purpose, goals, and approach relevant and meaningful.
- (ii) Leaders should continue to build commitment and confidence.
- (iii) Team leaders ensure that their members are always enhancing their skills—skills that include technical, problem solving, decision making, interpersonal, and teamwork skills.
- (iv) Effective team leaders are skillful at managing relationships from the outside, with a focus on removing obstacles that get in the way of team performance.
- (v) They provide opportunities for others and are the last to seek credit.
- (vi) Team leaders don't shy away from getting in the trenches and doing the real work.

While the authors contend that most individuals can develop effective skills to be a team leader, they suggest these components as a guideline for success.

### WHY DO TEAMS FAIL?

In *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable*, renowned author Patrick Lencioni turns his keen intellect and storytelling power to the fascinating, complex

world of teams. Using his familiar writing style of incorporating fables, Lencioni tells the story of Kathryn Petersen, Decision-Tech's CEO, who faces the ultimate leadership crisis: How to unite a team that is in such disarray that it threatens to bring down the entire company. Will she succeed? Will she be fired? Lencioni's tale serves as a timeless reminder that leadership requires courage and insight.

As difficult as it is to build a cohesive team, it is not complicated. In fact, keeping it simple is critical, whether you run the executive staff of a multinational company, a small department within a larger organization, or even if you are merely a member of a team that needs improvement. Lencioni reveals the five dysfunctions that are at the very heart of why teams—even the best ones—often struggle. He outlines a powerful model (see Figure 1) and actionable steps that can be used to overcome these common hurdles and build a cohesive, effective team (Lencioni 2002).

According to Lencioni, most teams unknowingly fall victim to five interrelated dysfunctions. Teams that suffer from even one of the five are susceptible to the other four. Solving all five is required to create a high-functioning team. The five dysfunctions are displayed in a pyramid.

#### **Dysfunction One: Absence of Trust.**

When team members do not trust one another, they are unwilling to be vulnerable within the team. It is impossible for a team to build a foundation for trust when team members are not genuinely open about their mistakes and weaknesses.

#### **Dysfunction Two: Fear of Conflict.**

Failure to build trust sets the stage for the second dysfunction. Teams without trust are unable to engage in passionate debate about ideas. Instead, they are guarded in their comments and resort to discussions that mask their true feelings.

**Dysfunction Three: Lack of Commitment.** Teams that do not engage in

**Figure 1: The Lencioni's Framework of Five Dysfunctions of a Team**



healthy conflict will suffer from the third dysfunction. Because they do not openly express their true opinions or engage in open debate, team members will rarely commit to team decisions, though they may feign agreement in order to avoid controversy or conflict.

**Dysfunction Four: Avoidance of Accountability.** A lack of commitment creates an atmosphere where team members do not hold one another accountable. Because there is no commitment to a clear action plan, team members hesitate to hold one another accountable for actions and behaviors that are contrary to the good of the team.

**Dysfunction Five: Inattention to Results.** The lack of accountability makes it possible for people to put their own needs above the team's goals. Team members will focus on their own career goals or recognition for their departments to the detriment of the team.

A weakness in any one area can cause teamwork to deteriorate. The model is easy to understand, and yet can be difficult to practice because it requires high levels of discipline and persistence.

## RESOLVING THE CHALLENGES TOWARD CREATING HIGH-FUNCTIONING OR PERFORMING TEAMS

### Building Trust

Lencioni states that trust lies at the heart of a functioning, cohesive team and that without trust teamwork is all but impossible. As a leader, you must encourage members of the teams to admit their weaknesses, take risks by offering one another feedback and assistance, focus their energy on important issues, and are willing to ask for help.

Teamwork begins by building trust. And the only way to do that is to overcome our need for invulnerability (putting up a front). Trust is the confidence among team members that their peers' intentions are good, and that there is no reason to be protective or careful around the group. In essence, teammates must get comfortable being vulnerable to each other.

### Removing the Fear of Conflict

Teams that avoid conflict often do so in order to avoid hurting team members' feelings and then end up encouraging dangerous tension as a result. When team members do not openly debate and

disagree with important ideas, they often turn to back-channel personal attacks, which are far nastier and more harmful than any heated argument over issues. The leader must call out sensitive issues and force the team members to work through them.

When the leader sees that people engaged in healthy conflict are uncomfortable, he should remind them that what they are doing is necessary—this can keep them encouraged. At the end of discussion, remind the participants that the healthy conflict they just engaged in is good for the team. At the end of the discussion, the leader should restate the agreements and goals arrived at and restate everyone's commitments and actions expected.

### **Achieving Commitment**

According to Lencioni, commitment is a function of clarity and buy-in. Leaders need to ensure that their teams make timely and clear decisions with buy-in from all team members, even those who do not agree with the decision. Teams with commitment have common objectives, move forward without hesitation, change direction when necessary, and learn from their mistakes.

To reach commitment, the five dysfunctions model recommends techniques such as establishing clear deadlines and communicating the team's goals throughout the organization. This happens through effective discussion, which is a reflection of feedback. Feedback involves active listening and understanding other team members' concerns and viewpoints. It also includes adapting communication to match the styles of other team members.

### **Ensuring Accountability**

Accountability requires team members to call their peers on performance or behaviors that might hurt the team. Teams that hold one another accountable identify problems quickly by questioning one another's actions, hold one another to the same

standards, and avoid needless bureaucracy around managing performance. Members of great teams improve their relationships by holding one another accountable, thus demonstrating they respect each other and have high expectations for one another's performance.

One of the best and healthiest motivators for a team is peer pressure. Clarify publicly exactly what the team needs to achieve. The enemy of accountability is ambiguity. Perform simple and regular progress reviews. Shift rewards away from individual performance to team achievement. That will create a culture of accountability because a team is unlikely to stand by quietly and fail because a peer is not pulling his or her weight. Once a leader has crafted a culture of accountability on a team, they must then be willing to become the ultimate arbiter of discipline when the team itself fails. An optimistic outlook is critical since it communicates confidence to other team members and to the rest of the organization that the team is on the right track. An optimistic team is more likely to hold one another accountable for achieving its goals.

### **Driving Results**

The ultimate dysfunction is when members put their own status or personal goals above the best interests of the team. Teams that focus on results minimize this type of self-centered behavior. The key is to make the collective ego greater than the individual ones. When everyone is focused on results and using those to define success, it is difficult for the ego to get out of hand. If the team loses, everyone loses. Eliminate ambiguity by having clearly agreed on and set goals. (A sports team knows at the end of the game how well it did base on the scoreboard.)

Adopt a set of common goals and measurements, then use them to make collective decisions on a daily basis. Publicly declaring the team's results and offering results-based



rewards are techniques for managing this dysfunction. Without personal conscientiousness, perseverance, flexibility, and optimism, it would be difficult if not impossible for teams to achieve results. Innovation is another aspect of Competence that is particularly important for achieving results. Teams that are creative and generate innovative products and solutions will inevitably achieve results that are superior to those of their competitors.

### **THE SCORE FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING HIGH-PERFORMANCE TEAMS**

Despite society's emphasis on individuality, the critical work of business today is undertaken by teams, whether real or virtual. The success of organizations can be closely linked to how well these teams of diverse individuals perform, and it is clear that some teams truly do excel.

Based on the research through extensive consulting engagements by Centre for Executive Education (CEE) over a decade, several key elements have been identified as critical in high-performance organizations. These elements constitute the SCORE framework for high-performing teams.

A high-performing team demonstrates a high level of synergism—the simultaneous actions of separate entities that together have a greater effect than the sum of their individual efforts. It is possible, for example, for a team's efforts to exemplify an equation such as  $2 + 2 = 5$ ! High-performing teams require a complementary set of characteristics known collectively as "SCORE"—cohesive strategy, clear roles and responsibilities, open communication, rapid response, and effective leadership—as outlined in Table 1.

**Figure 2: The SCORE Framework for High-Performing Teams**



**Table 1: “SCORE”: Characteristics of High-Performing Teams**

Characteristics	Descriptions
<u>S</u> : Cohesive Strategy	High-performing teams with a cohesive strategy will demonstrate why they are in existence by articulating a strong, uniting purpose that is common to all team members. They will describe how they work together by <i>defining team values and ground rules</i> (team charter). Finally, they will be clear about what they do by defining key result areas.
<u>C</u> : Establishing Clear Roles and Responsibilities	Successful teams determine overall team competencies and then clearly define individual member roles and responsibilities. High-performing teams realistically examine each individual's responsibilities in terms of <i>personality, interest, and ability</i> , resulting in an accurate understanding of each member's accountability and contribution to the team.
<u>O</u> : Developing Open Communication and Trust	Communication is the key component in facilitating successful team performance; its lack limits team success. Effective communication includes <i>flexing and adapting one's style of communication</i> to suit the other team members. In addition, a cohesive culture is attained when interpersonal interactions flow smoothly and individual differences are also respected and leveraged to enhance overall team functioning.
<u>R</u> : Rapid Response to Decision Making	A high-performing team responds quickly, as necessary, to changes in the environment, using creativity and “outside the box” thinking. When faced with a problem, these teams brainstorm possible solutions and create innovative resolutions leveraging on <i>cognitive readiness and critical thinking skills</i> .
<u>E</u> : Exemplary and Effective Leadership	An effective team leader is able to adjust his or her leadership style ( <i>situational leadership framework</i> ) as necessary depending on the task at hand and the skill level of each team member performing that task. The team leader also plays a critical role in raising morale by <i>providing positive feedback and coaching team members</i> (managerial coaching skills) to improve performance. Finally, the team leader takes an active role in guiding the team through each stage of team development by using team-building activities and celebrating successes.

## ACTION LEARNING

In high-performing teams, leadership shifts during the stages of team development based on team needs. Unlike organizational leadership, which remains somewhat constant, team leadership can shift from very directing, when the team is being formed, to more delegating, when the team is functioning effectively.

When you have assessed your team's current performance level and needs, you will be ready to move on to building your dream team in whatever SCORE category you choose to begin.

## CASE STUDY: TURNAROUND OF A HIGHLY DYSFUNCTIONAL TEAM

A leading Fortune 500 Information Technology company dispatched a team of highly qualified and experienced IT engineers to

deliver a large-scale strategic project for one of their clients in the mobile telecommunications industry. Sustaining market leadership for this client is critical to the success of this firm. However, high employee turnover, especially among the mission-critical talents, had created misalignment in what was once a strong performing team. Moreover, as competitors encroached, relationship management was critical with this strategic account. All this transcended the sound technical expertise of the IT engineers who demonstrated that a primary form of communication was email. There was lack of direction and clarity on the respective project team members' role and responsibilities compounded by the relatively ineffective team communication, which has resulted in frequent conflict leading to poor performance and results.

The SCORE framework was introduced through the facilitation of a series of team effectiveness meetings and workshops; the project team achieved breakthrough results in customer satisfaction, company, employee, and operational value. The team's KPIs were achieved with shortened response times and improved communication project delivery within the allocated budget.

The team's emotional intelligence was enhanced and relationship management became second nature as team members became more expansive leading to the early exploration of new business opportunities. A post-customer satisfaction survey confirmed acknowledgment of the value that our client provided to their customer.

Finally, the organization preserved its strategic account and strengthened the

customer relationship thereby sustaining market leadership. The project team's ultimate proof of transformation was its unanimous decision to distribute among all team members annual performance bonuses previously assigned to a select few. This presents evidence that high-performance teams not only impact the organization and marketplace but above all the gratified individuals that constitute them.

### BEST-PRACTICE TOOLKIT: THE 5-STEP AGREE FRAMEWORK TO ACHIEVE TEAM COLLABORATION

The Centre for Executive Education (CEE) has developed the five-step AGREE process (see Figure 3) for achieving commitment to a collaboration at the workplace as well

Figure 3: The AGREE Framework Team Collaboration

## THE A.G.R.E.E. FRAMEWORK



resolving conflict and negotiation situations as driven by the use of the communication skills.

### **A: Acknowledge**

The critical first step in achieving collaboration or resolving conflict is for all parties to acknowledge that a conflict exists. This is particularly important when any of the involved parties prefers an avoiding conflict management style. Acknowledging that a difference in the way of working or conflict exists and inviting parties to collaborate helps set the tone for a productive interaction.

**Example:** “I sense that we see this issue very differently, and I believe it is an important issue. Would it be helpful, from your perspective, to spend some time focusing on this? Who else should we involve to help us find a workable solution or work towards resolving this challenge?”

### **G: Ground Rules**

Ground rules help establish the tone, climate, and time frame for a discussion toward a collaboration process. By establishing rules up-front, the parties begin negotiations with clearer expectations and a greater degree of comfort.

**Examples:** Listen to understand; Question to clarify; Maximize participation; Silence means assent; Speak for yourself; Be respectful.

### **R: Reality**

Establishing the context and understanding the current reality related to the issues or conflict in question is the most critical step in achieving collaboration. It is used to move from the destructive side of collaboration (blame or winning at the other person's expense) to the constructive side (resolving problems). In this phase, each person or stakeholder clearly articulates their understanding of the other person's position and must consciously put any emotion aside and reconsider the situation from all perspectives.

**Example:** “If I am understanding you correctly, you are saying...”

### **E: Explore**

People rarely see a need for numerous options because each party already knows the right option, which is his or her own position. Brainstorming and exploring multiple options gives parties room to negotiate and support a problem-solving focus. The goal is to create as many options as possible that are responsive to the interests of all parties.

**Example:** “What do you think are the possible alternatives to resolve this challenge or issue?”

### **E: Execute**

Sometimes the best option is readily apparent and satisfactory to all parties and the decision is made. More often the parties select those options with the most potential and continue to explore them. Use of relevant objective criteria provides an independent basis for decision making by avoiding the will or power of either party. Once the best solution has been identified and agreed upon, the final step will be to implement or execute it effectively. Have a follow-up discussion regularly to enhance the collaboration.

**Example:** Possible objective criteria include Cost, Timeline, Customer demand, and so forth.

### **CONCLUSION**

The success of a team should be measured at regular intervals so that team spirit can be encouraged, either through celebrating achievements or through sharing problems. In terms of measuring success, it is perhaps easier to gauge the progress of a sports team than it is to rate the performance of work-based teams, for example, the performance of a sports team can usually be tracked by league tables.

Working as part of a successful team makes work enjoyable. It provides employees with a supportive work environment



and enables them to address in a constructive way any conflict that might arise. In high-performing teams, leadership shifts during the stages of team development based on team needs. Unlike organizational leadership, which remains somewhat constant, team leadership can shift from very directing, when the team is being formed, to more delegating, when the team is functioning effectively. To transform into a high-performance teams, easily implementable frameworks such as SCORE and AGREE would assist in achieving that end goal.

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