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the
BIG book
of
TEAM CULTURE

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PART I

All About Teamwork

What is teamwork actually?

Search for "teamwork definition" and you'll quickly realize that there isn't a commonly agreed definition of what is teamwork actually.

While many authors emphasize the importance of teamwork, they don't provide a clear and straightforward definition of teamwork. Here are a handful of definitions we managed to find:

> *Teamwork is the process of working collaboratively with a group of people in order to achieve a goal. Teamwork means that people will try to cooperate, using their individual skills and providing constructive feedback, despite any personal conflict between individuals. - BussinesDictionary*

> *Teamwork is a cooperative process that allows ordinary people to achieve extraordinary results. - J. Scarnati*

> *Team has a common goal or purpose where team members can develop effective, mutual relationships to achieve team goals. Teamwork relies upon individuals working together in a cooperative environment to achieve common team goals through sharing knowledge and skills. - P. Harris & K. Harris*

Lack of one true definition proves that it is more important to know the purpose of teamwork than trying to define teamwork.

Six key attributes of successful teamwork

According to a case study conducted by P. Tarricone and J. Luca of Edith Cowan University, there are six key attributes of successful teamwork:

Commitment to team success

Team members should share common goals, values, beliefs, as well as commitment and motivation to succeed; for example, each team member has to strive for perfection - which means that if developers have superb performance, designers have to keep up and vice versa.

Interdependence

There is no success for an individual if other members of the team fail; for example, it doesn't matter that the design is sparkling - if website crashes with every click, everyone loses.

Interpersonal skills

Respect, support and realistic mutual expectations amongst team members are a must; for example, team cannot expect inexperienced junior web developer to pull the same weight as a senior one.

Open communication

Giving and accepting feedback as well as cultivating team spirit of constructive criticism is paramount; for example, if a young

designer willingly accepts more experienced colleagues advice, he may improve his overall performance which will benefit the team.

Appropriate team composition

Specific tasks are handled by specific roles, and specific roles require specific talents and skill sets; for example, a team that is made up solely of developers will create a functional app. Design, however, will probably be way below par.

Commitment to team leadership and accountability

Since team members expect certain freedom when it comes to decision-making, they are more likely to accept individual accountability and personal responsibility for their actions; for example, while team leader delegates tasks and keeps track of progress, it is up to designers and developers to use their skills and deliver the final product. They will often make high-risk/high-reward moves, and be more than willing to accept scolding if their "leap of faith" fails.

Advantages of teamwork

Since teamwork provides mutual moral support and a greater sense of accomplishment, it is obvious that it very beneficial.

However, the real question is: what does your company get out of it? Why should you even bother?

Increased efficiency

Sometimes, you will handle projects that have unrealistic and non-negotiable deadlines. At those moments it isn't enough to issue "all hands on deck" order, but to delegate properly. When members use their experience, specialization and skill sets, targets will be achieved and tasks will be accomplished on time, with minimum errors.

Complement each other's strengths

On the one hand, your company has a top notch designer whose work will allow you to attract any client. However, he is irresponsible and always breaking deadlines. On the other hand, you have a mediocre designer - but he always delivers on time. By teaming them up, you will get the perfect combination: the former will contribute with excellent ideas, while the latter will make sure that work is done properly and on time. This is also known as the "buddy system".

Innovation through constructive conflict

Need an immediate solution to the problem that everyone has been stuck with? Introduce a "wildcard" to the team. Clash of characters can cause constructive conflict and produce solutions that "groupthink" others haven't even considered. Be wary however of long-term consequences: constructive conflict can easily transform to destructive, so the introduction of the "wildcard" should be considered only as a short term solution.

Less employee turnover

Proper, well balanced and open-minded team is similar to your favorite bar - friendly and welcoming. The only difference is that guests (or members) don't drink - they contribute to the company's cause. By maintaining successful teamwork and positive atmosphere, you will reduce staff turnover and avoid costs of losing employees.

Workforce flexibility

Instead of leading everlasting recruitment campaign, you can cross-train your employees for roles outside their current responsibilities. For example, if your web designer gains basic web development skills, he will be able to pull some of the web developing colleague's weight and avoid a bottleneck in case of his absence.

Disadvantages of teamwork

While teamwork has a lot of advantages, there are some disadvantages that you should be aware of.

Groupthink

Even though team members are encouraged to bond, things can sometimes go too far. If you notice that your team is neglecting alternative choices or takes irrational actions, it could be a sign they are suffering from Groupthink has defined 8 symptoms of groupthink and determined that similar background, isolation from

outside opinions, and lack of rules for decision making are connected to the appearance of this phenomenon.

Complex process

Teamwork will peak only if each and every member is given a certain role, has a certain set of skills and is compatible with the rest of the team. But finding all pieces of the puzzle and fitting them together is difficult, expensive and time-consuming. When choosing players for your team, the best advice is to take it one step at the time and avoid hiring anyone you have doubts about.

Conflict

If there is a great deal of difference in ideas and working methods among team members, even the "buddy system" will fail. Two designers with different abilities that complement each other will produce results. However, if their desires, preferences, and behavioral styles are too far apart, communication is constantly poor and there is a lot of uncertainty during cooperation, that team is destined to fail.

Evaluating individual's contribution

Since team has shared responsibility, it is very difficult to determine if an individual has performed above or under expectations. Sometimes, this issue can result in employee dissatisfaction: if the individual has overperformed, he will be unhappy because he hasn't been rewarded properly; if he has underperformed, his teammates will be discontent and might

mutiny against his lack of contribution and extra work they have to handle.

There is NO proper method to measure individual's performance in the team, which is why many companies are using 360 review.

"Analysis paralysis"

Analysis paralysis occurs when a situation is over-analyzed to the point where a person cannot make a decision nor take action. A sudden stop in decision making can cost your company time, money and, in certain cases, even reputation. In well balanced and functional teams it doesn't and shouldn't occur often, but when it does - it should be resolved as quickly as possible.

Conclusion

So what is teamwork actually? It's simple: teamwork is a result of healthy collective consciousness within the group, which is essential for the group's transition into the team.

Teamwork is the foundation for productive collaboration and is critical for the success of the company.

Real world examples of successful teamwork

Instead of retelling the same old stories about best teamwork practices from companies such as Google, Chevron or Southwest airlines (which don't really help when you have a small-to-medium team), we decided to find real life examples of successful teamwork.

We asked everyday entrepreneurs, CEOs, and HR managers one simple question:

How did you improve teamwork in your organization?

Here are the best 9 examples we came across.

3-step onboarding

Developing teamwork should start as soon as the new employee walks through the door. According to Lauren McAdams, career advisor and hiring manager at ResumeCompanion.com, the most successful method for creating excellent intra-team relations was instilling a sense of teamwork early on in the onboarding process.

"While we do experiment with different team-building measures, there are three that have become common practice

First, during onboarding, we have new employees shadow an experienced "coach" who is tasked with helping their integration into

the team. After the initial phase, we assign the new employees to shadow other people so they get to have more than one "coach".

Next, when we begin a new project, I personally assign mini-teams to handle those projects. These smaller units are often comprised, in part, of employees who haven't had a chance to work together. This way, new hires get an opportunity to work and develop relationships with everyone they collaborate with.

And finally, leadership rotates on these projects so different people have a chance to test their leadership skills. Also, since project teams always have different people on them, everyone in the company gets to know each other at some point by working together. This level of exposure and collaboration resulted in very strong teamwork at our company."

Role switching

Some organizations encourage their employees to walk a mile in someone else's shoes. Lee Fisher, an HR manager at Blinds Direct, says that successful teamwork should be based on solidarity, respect, communication, and mutual understanding. With that in mind, his company has been organizing a series of team building events over the years.

"Our most unconventional event to date was the 'Role Switch'. It was launched across our web and marketing department. In the event, each team member switches roles with a colleague. Usually, team members work together closely but they don't really understand the complexities

of other person's role.

Spending a day in your colleague's shoes highlights their efforts, which brings more understanding and respect for one another. The 'Role Switch' was a huge success: it brought the team closer together and made people more considerate of other's workloads and requirements."

Cross-training

Sharing experience with your peers is important, but recognizing where they can best help you improve is even more important . According to Steven Benson, founder and CEO of Badger Maps, his company has benefited from one self-initiated cross-training session which resulted in increase in both teamwork and productivity.

"An example of successful teamwork at our company was when the customer relation department put together an initiative of cross-training and specializing team members for different roles. After deciding who will focus on what, the group sat down and taught one another what they would need to become the expert in their respective area.

Because people were cross-trained, they had a broader set of skills they could use to handle customer interaction - which resulted in fewer hand-offs. This not only enhanced teamwork and productivity, but also improved customer satisfaction. Everyone worked as a team and covered for one another, which made everything move smoothly and quickly."

Scheduled breaks and self-reflection

Publicly reflecting on achievements increases everyone's morale. Bryan Koontz, CEO of Guidefitter, considers teamwork to be more than just brainstorming ideas or helping a colleague on a project - it's about fostering a culture of trust and respect.

> *"A few ways we cultivate an environment of trust and respect is through meetings, or rather "breaks", that don't necessarily focus on work. By scheduling "break" times in our calendars, we allow our employees to talk, relax, and discuss the ins-and-outs of their days.*
>
> *We also strengthen our teams through brief weekly meetings with the entire office: each Wednesday morning we huddle up to recap the past week, with each employee sharing one professional and one personal "win". This encourages everyone to pause for self-reflection on their achievements, often serving as motivation to their peers while forging a bond among our team members."*

Team traditions

Members of jelled teams have a strong sense of identity and often share traditions like getting together for a drink after work. According to Katerina Trajchevska co-founder and CEO of Adeva, establishing team traditions is the foundation upon which teamwork is built.

> *"Rather than using one particular method for strengthening our team, we focus on creating an environment that fosters team spirit and*

communication. We organize after hours drinks and hangouts, and develop a culture that encourages everyone to speak up and take part in the big decisions for the company.

Team traditions can do wonders, no matter how trivial they seem: we have a team lunch every Friday, celebrate birthdays and other important dates, and celebrate one of our national holidays together. All of this has contributed to a more cohesive and a close-knit team."

Unconventional business meetings

Some companies use their business meetings to improve teamwork within the organization by making them fun and laid-back. James Lloyd-Townshend, CEO of Frank Recruitment Group, believes that bringing teams together in an informal environment improves teamwork, strengthens bonds, and bolsters morale - which is why he decided to spice up company's monthly meetings.

"One unusual method we've introduced is "First Thursdays": we start off our monthly business meetings with a business review, promotions, and awards - and then move on to an open bar event.

Apart from "First Thursdays," we also have "Lunch Club": another monthly event where employees enjoy an all-expense-paid afternoon to celebrate their success and enjoy fine dining and have fun with their colleagues.

However, the most popular team building method we employ is our

incentivised weekends away. Our top-performing consultants get the chance to travel to major cities such as London, New York, and Miami as the rewards for their hard work."

Peer recommendations

Some companies are building teamwork through peer recognition. Jacob Dayan, a partner, and co-founder of Community Tax, said that encouraging employees to be active participants in recognizing their peers has proven to be quite a powerful motivational tool.

"I ask employees to share or report instances when someone on their or another team has been particularly helpful or has gone above and beyond their call of duty.

After we thank the contributing employee for their input, we make sure the employee being acknowledged knows the source of information.

Having employees "nominate" their peers for recognition has the additional bonus of bringing them closer together and building camaraderie with long-term productivity benefits."

However, Mr. Dayan is well aware that peer reports and nominations can be driven by personal feelings (positive as well as negative), and can give an unrealistic representation of certain employee's contribution.

"Personal relationships, both close and less so, are an important

consideration when pursuing this approach, which is why we do not hand out recognition without validating the worthiness of the employee's contribution.

We ask the appropriate manager to review the submission and keep an eye on it over time, just to make sure there are no dubious activities."

Conflict resolving

Successful teamwork happens when members of a group trust each other, are comfortable expressing themselves, and deal effectively with conflict, according to Laura MacLeod, a licensed social worker specialized in group work, an HR consultant, and a mastermind behind "From the inside out project".

"Many companies think that team building is about company picnics, happy hours, and other fun events. These things are fine, but they don't address the real issues people face when they have to work together. Going out for a drink with someone you can't get along with will be just as uncomfortable and awkward as trying to finish a project with that person - the only difference is having alcohol as a buffer."

According to Laura, certain team building exercises can help individuals overcome both intragroup and personal conflicts.

"Choose simple activities that help build cohesion and trust amongst team members. For example, you can use "Pantomime in a circle" exercise: without using words, pass an imaginary object (a bucket of water or a ball) around the circle; the point of the exercise is for group

members to rely on each other to complete the activity.

When it comes to personal misunderstandings, you might want to choose an activity where you are actually allowed to yell at a person. So, pair off people and have them repeat opposing sentences (such as it's hot/it's cold) back and forth - going from soft to very loud. This will allow people to get out strong emotions in a non-threatening way, and blow off some steam in the process."

"Spotless" team building exercise

Dmitri Kara, a tenancy expert at Fantastic Cleaners, shared with us a team building exercise his team uses to increase cooperation and efficiency.

> *"Everybody in the office has to simultaneously perform a 2-to-5-minute cleaning routine (like wipe their desk, keyboard, monitor, shelves). But there's a catch: the tools are limited. For example, make everybody wipe the dust off their desks at the same time but provide only 2 sprayers and 1 roll of paper towel (if your team has 10 members). Scarcity will encourage people to share and help each other."*

Besides providing obvious benefits (like cleaner working environment), Dmitri says this team building activity boosts organization, improves long-term productivity, and develops the sense of moral, discipline, and shared responsibility. He even shares how the exercise came into being:

> *"At first it was not really a dedicated exercise. The first time we did it all*

together, it was because of a video shoot. But since it felt good, a few days later somebody said, "let's do that again". And that's where the whole thing came to be."

How teams form

Just like with the question "How are babies made?", the answer to the "How teams form?" is the same: it's a process, my dear...

To give you a better insight into how real teams form, we will use a case study.

A team has been assembled to complete a project for a certain company. However, for this project to be successful, it should be handled by a group of individuals with very specific skills. And while the company already has required personnel on board, they are scattered all over the country and haven't worked together before, which is why a project manager has decided that the team should meet in person - even though they will be working remotely. And so the process begins.

Phase one - First meeting

Everyone's friendly, attentive, understanding and aware of each other's skills and strengths. There is slight competition for leading positions, but nothing to be concerned about. Team building exercises are going well and the overall impression is that everyone is engaged with each other and enjoying each other's company. Everything seems to be going well.

Phase two - Beginning of the actual work

Team members go home and start working remotely. Even though

project started off well, arguments arise all the time. There are disagreements about schedule, duties, workload, task handling... And no one knows how much progress has been made. At this point, the project manager gets involved and tries to calm the situation: she reminds everyone about ground rules, goals and objectives, and tries to resolve team conflicts that can't be resolved on their own. However, over time things settle down, and progress is finally being made.

Phase three - Smooth sailing

Three months into the project, the project manager senses that teamwork is present, even though members work remotely. Arguments are few and trivial, and teammates are supportive of each other when it comes to problem-solving, decision-making and information sharing. Also, they help each other develop skills that can help them grow. Ultimately, they became friends that share their lives outside of work.

Phase four - Pinnacle of project progress

At this moment, this team can be called "high performing". Effective brainstorming sessions, a profound sense of dependence between members and skill sets that weren't developed before are now part of this [team's characteristics. The project is being delivered on time and within budget, milestones are being met, and most importantly, there is no need for the project manager to interfere: everything is running at optimum efficiency.

Phase five - The end

After eight months, the project has ended successfully. However, the team that jelled so well has to be disbanded, and all members return to their respected roles in their respected branch offices. At this point there are mixed feelings within the group: on the one hand, there is a sense of sadness that the project is over; on the other, everyone is overjoyed that they had a chance to meet and work with each other. Most likely, they will remain in contact on the personal level.

Forming   Storming   Norming   Performing

Tuckman's team and group development model

Five stages of team forming

Five phases mentioned above are actually five stages that every team in any company goes through.

Turning a group of individuals into a team will cause discontent among your employees who, until recently, were sharing nothing more than the office. At this point, it is quite common to face resistance toward change among group members.

In order for a group to become a team, there are five stages that it

must go through: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. This scheme was devised by Bruce Tuckman in 1965, and it is considered the simplest and the most elegant explanation of team behavior and development.
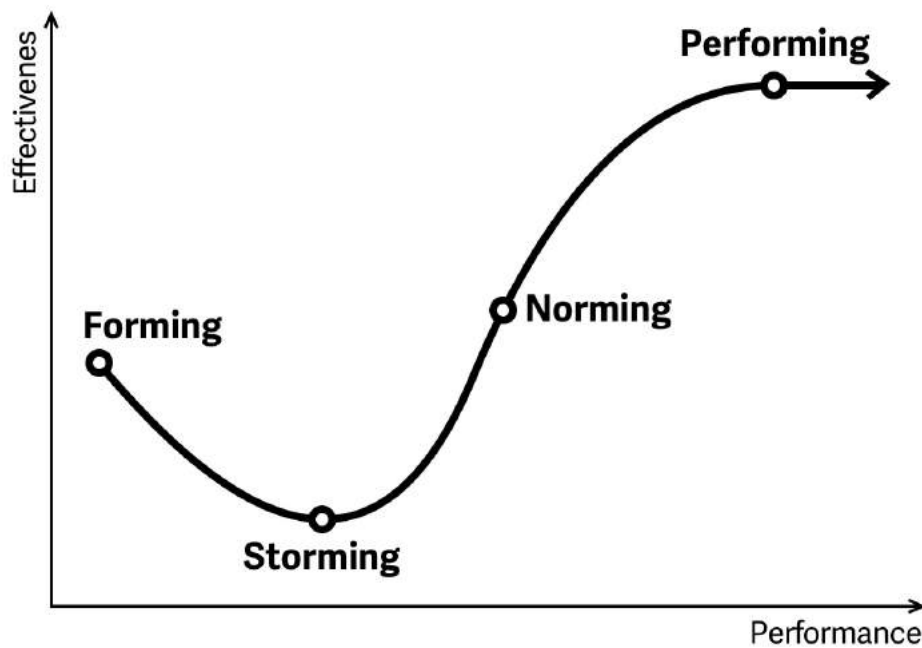
Tuckman's team and group development model

Forming

During the Forming stage, members are usually excited and eager about the work ahead. But at the same time, they feel some anxiety and discontent because they are being forced into a different way of doing things than they are used to.

At this point, new teammates avoid expressing their views and getting into conflicts. While this cautious behavior prevents the group from getting any real work done, that is perfectly fine: the

focus should be on becoming more familiar with each other and on the team's purpose, not on work itself.

During the forming stage, you can expect a lot of questions from the members about group goal as well as cooperation with new teammates. It is up to you to answer them patiently and diligently - turning a cold shoulder at this point can prolong a creation of the team.

Storming

This is the time when conflicts and competition are at the peak; feelings shift from the sense of eagerness and excitement to feelings of frustration or anger; team members voice their concerns about the team's progress, process, goals and the ability of their colleagues. At times, it seems like everything will blow up.

At this point, questions about leadership, rules, responsibilities, structure, evaluation criteria, and reward systems are bound to arise, and they all must be answered so your team can move to the next stage. Keep in mind that the Storming phase makes or breaks the team .

Norming

During the Norming stage, team members begin to accept that their personal expectations are different than the reality. At this point, real ideas and feelings come to light, and opinions of others and constructive criticism is wholeheartedly accepted. Everyone starts to feel as a part of a team and take pleasure from the

positive atmosphere within the group.

They are making a conscious effort to resolve problems and achieve group harmony. "I" is no longer the most important thing - ground rules, practices, and tasks are taking the number one spot. Therefore, this is the perfect time for team evaluation.

Performing

This is what you've been waiting for - you formed a competent and committed team. Members are able to solve and prevent problems; "can do" attitude is ever present, roles become more fluid, and personal differences are appreciated and used to enhance the team's performance.

However, significant changes can result in a team going back to an earlier stage. If these changes and their consequential behaviors are recognized and addressed, teams may successfully remain in the Performing stage indefinitely.

Adjourning

Every project will come to an end. This is called adjourning. Characterized by an emotional rollercoaster, this ending stage can go two separate ways: with the sense of loss hovering in the air, members can either lose focus, or gain the momentum by coping with "grief" and focusing on the task at hand.

Perks of a formed team

The team has been formed and the time of silent individuals in your open space office is coming to an end. Reorganizing group of individuals into a jelled and functional team has increased the productivity of your company.

- By combining efforts of many, instead of relying on individual's contribution, you will achieve higher efficiency.

- A large number of people focused on the same goal will result in a increased process speed.

- You can coordinate team efforts by delegating roles and tasks, which - in return - will allow you to achieve greater effectiveness.

- By relying on diversity within the team, you can utilize information and knowledge that different members bring to the table. This offers an array of potential approaches which can ensure better quality of the final product.

Group vs team

What's the difference between a group and a team? When people share an elevator ride, they are a group; when the elevator gets stuck, they become a team.

Individuals that get on the same elevator most likely share some things, like: they work in the same building and on the same floor or they may work for the same boss and have similar interests. The mere fact that they have something in common makes them a group.

However, if elevator breaks down and they get stuck, a common goal of "getting out of there" makes this group a team.

Difference between a group and a team

A group is a collective of mutually independent individuals with separate goals who are brought together by common interests and experience. Even though everyone shares information and resources with other group members, each member is responsible for their own work.

There are two types of groups:

- formal group, created by the management to perform a particular task
- informal group, formed naturally by employees for different

reasons

A team is an interdependent group of individuals who share responsibility and are focused on a common goal. People in a team have a mutual understanding with other members. By working together, they tend to maximize each other's strengths and minimize weaknesses. Unlike a group, where each member is expected to contribute separately, the most important characteristic of a team is synergy: the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Here's the table with differences between groups and teams:

	Group	Team
Leadership	One leader	Multiple leaders
Members	Independent	Interdependent
Process	Discuss - Decide - Delegate	Discuss - Decide - Do
Product of work	Individual	Collective
Focus	Individual goals	Collective goals

Differences between a group and a team

Why is a team better than a group

90% of articles on the internet represent group as a bad thing , and team as good thing All these articles say: "Transform your group into a team, and you will achieve success!"

But is this true?

Mostly yes. There are a few advantages teams have over groups, like:

- There is a lot more communication between members;

- Collaboration and synergy are better;

- Common goal ensures that everyone are focused on the same cause.

Some experts even claim that 'team based organization' is the only way to go. Biren Bandara, a leadership skills trainer at Leader school, says that he differentiates 'group' vs 'team' very clearly: in a group, everybody works on mutually exclusive tasks, while in a team all members are focused on common goal or mission through completion of interdependent tasks.

> "I've only seen pros for the team based organization. A team allows for better syncing of efforts, streamlining of the organization, and better risk management. A teams accomplishes things and do better under a lot more pressure, stress, and circumstance than a group. If those things are important to you, a team based organization is imperative. "

Even though he considers group and team to be completely different entities, Biren believes that an organization can transform an inefficient group into an efficient team.

> "If a group of individuals is ever to become a team, it needs a strong leader with strong interpersonal skills, vision, and communication. The

key is to convince the group how important the mission and vision is, and then demonstrate how they can all achieve more by working together as a team. Mind you, the degree of how close the team works depends on work as the well as the situation at hand: even when team members don't have much in common, and may never see each other, the binding point for the team should be the overall goal."

Advantages of groups

Contrary to popular opinion, there are certain times when groups are better than teams. Groups are better in temporary working relationships when members have no time to form a proper team but must get things done swiftly and efficiently. Also, individuals of different backgrounds hastily brought together can sometimes produce some rather unconventional and applicable ideas.

Ben Friedman, a co-founder and head operations of Boston-based startup All Set, never puts a team in charge of the creation of a new product or a feature. Instead, he brings together a group of individuals to solve the problem at hand.

"If you are looking to ideate around a problem, "groups" that consist of members from different backgrounds or disciplines are the most effective. Since you have the SME (subject matter expert) in the room ready to tackle the problem, you can get different perspectives on an idea you wouldn't normally get with members of the same team."

Group proved to be very useful when his company was creating a desktop version of their service. Since only a mobile app was

available at the time, the company believed that diversification could greatly increase company's customer base.

> "We were not sure how much of the mobile functionality we needed for the desktop experience, so we wanted to test it in the market before creating a bunch of potentially unnecessary features. To get a multitude of different perspectives on how the desktop experience should flow, we pulled together some people from several departments: Marketing, Customer Support, Operations, Engineering, and Product. Each member of the group was an expert in their area and had previous experience in a product or feature roll-out. Also, we made sure that none of them were from a position of authority.
>
> We relied on Marketing to get initial feedback to guide us on what we should build, and we turned to Engineering and Product to tell us what was possible and how quickly things could get done. Finally, we wanted to get something in the market quickly and that required some heavy lifting from Operations and Support."

Disadvantages of groups

Disadvantages of groups are most noticeable in companies that rely heavily on 'group organization' - such as real estate firms.

John Crossman, president of Crosman & Co says that due to large sales presence, many organizations in his industry do not function in teams simply because most salespeople need to work independently. He emphasized, however, that healthy real estate companies care deeply about encouraging teamwork.

"I compare my role to being similar to coaching a track team rather than a football team. In football, the teammates are entirely dependent on one another. In track, most of the athletes are independent, but a good track coach trains his team to cheer for each other."

The biggest disadvantage of groups (in comparison to teams) is an individual accountability, which makes organization's goal less important than personal. In the past, Crossman came across employees that were so focused on themselves and their results that they would fail to help the company:

"I remember one day I flew to Atlanta to pitch a client. During the meeting, the potential client mentioned that his next door neighbor was our client. Later that day, I was meeting with my boss, when the partner came into the room.

My boss said to him, "John came to town to pitch a client, and it turns out he is your neighbor. Why haven't you pitched him before and mentioned John?" The partner did not miss a beat and said, "I don't see why that would benefit me" and then changed the subject. After that meeting, I've stopped referring that partner's business altogether."

Turning a group into a team

We already know what it takes to create a strong, performing team, but what about turning a group into a team?

When trying to transform a group into a team, you can face challenges that vary from member's inability to cooperate, to

creation of overly-jelled cliques that can be counterproductive for the whole company.

According to Ivan Dimitrov, an online marketing manager at Local Fame, his agency tried to transform their work group into a team by making one of the existing members a leader. Things didn't go smoothly.

> "In a group that's becoming too big and there's one dominant figure that's doing a great work, you'd think that promoting that person is the obvious thing to do. However, transforming a group into a team is tricky. When someone in the group becomes the leader of the team, people start perceiving them differently. At that moment, a team leader needs to establish authority and find a balance in communication - otherwise, people will simply hate the new boss."

Since everyone hated newly appointed team leader, an upper management decided to support him.

> "Since the new boss proved himself through hard work in the past, I started to support his decisions - provided they were fair. When we were in front of the team, and he was obviously wrong, I tried to coach him and guide him in the right direction, but extremely gently. This showed everybody that he has the support of upper management and that people have to respect him and his decisions."

The support of upper management provided newly appointed leader with a boost of self-confidence. Consequently, he made better decisions and achieved better results with the team.

"However, he will always remain "the one who used to be one of us." People needed time to adjust, and even to this day some of them are not comfortable with the situation. Colleagues older than him or with more experience were particularly sensitive because they thought they know and deserve more. Today, on the other hand, the results of his team are great, and I can see that 90% of the people like, trust and are prepared to follow the guy. At the end of the day, that is all that matters."

Conclusion

Even though getting out of the broken elevator usually requires nothing more than the push of a button, in rare cases, there will be a need to climb into the elevator shaft. Getting a boost from people inside will help you make the climb with much less effort than trying to pull yourself up on your own. It may take some time, there might be some resistance, but with the right leadership and the right attitude, a dysfunctional group can become functional - and a functional group can become a team.

Types of teams

Teams can be divided in four main groups: project teams, self-managed teams, virtual teams, and operational teams. What type of team you have depends its purpose, location, and organizational structure. Each type of team comes with its unique set of strengths and weaknesses. In order to fully utilize your team, you first need to understand where each type of teams works the best.
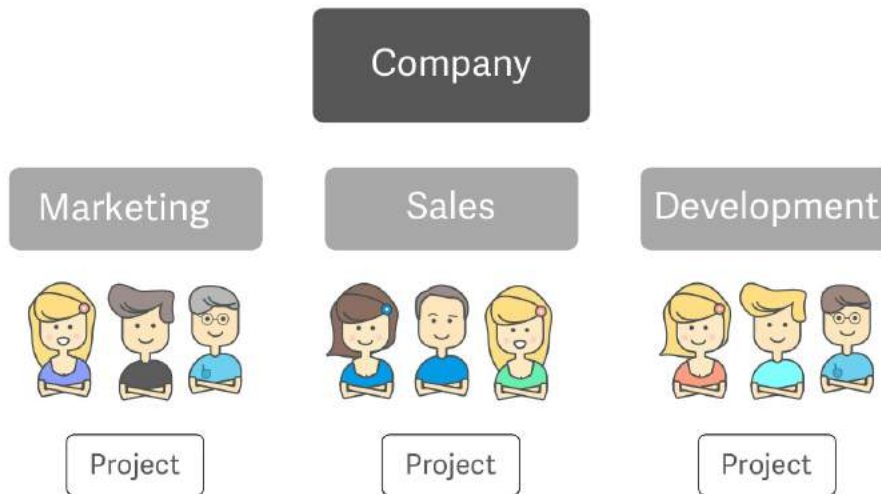
Project teams

Project teams are groups of employees who work collectively toward shared goals. This type of team allows you to structure work in a specific, measurable, and time-constrained way. You can assign clear roles, responsibilities, and deadlines. Also, by selecting both experienced and inexperienced workers, you enable them to do informal coaching and mentoring.

There are four main types of project teams:

Functional teams

These teams are permanent and always include members of the same department with different responsibilities. A manager is responsible for everything, and everyone reports to him. These types of teams are more likely to be found in companies that incorporate traditional project management.

Functional teams

Sometimes, in order to complete a project, several departments need to work together. For example:

- Work on the new product starts with the idea from marketing department;

- The idea is passed down to research and development to determine its feasibility;

- After R&D, the design department is tasked with giving it an appealing look and feel;

- And finally, the product is made by manufacturing department.

This type of approach is known as 'baton passing'. It requires a manager that has an oversight of the entire project and ensures that there are no obstacles when it comes to transferring work from one team to another.

**Cross-functional teams**

Cross-functional teams are made up of members from various departments. These teams tackle specific tasks that require different inputs and expertise. Even though cross-functional teams are becoming increasingly popular worldwide, a recent study has proven that whopping 75% of all cross-functional teams are dysfunctional.
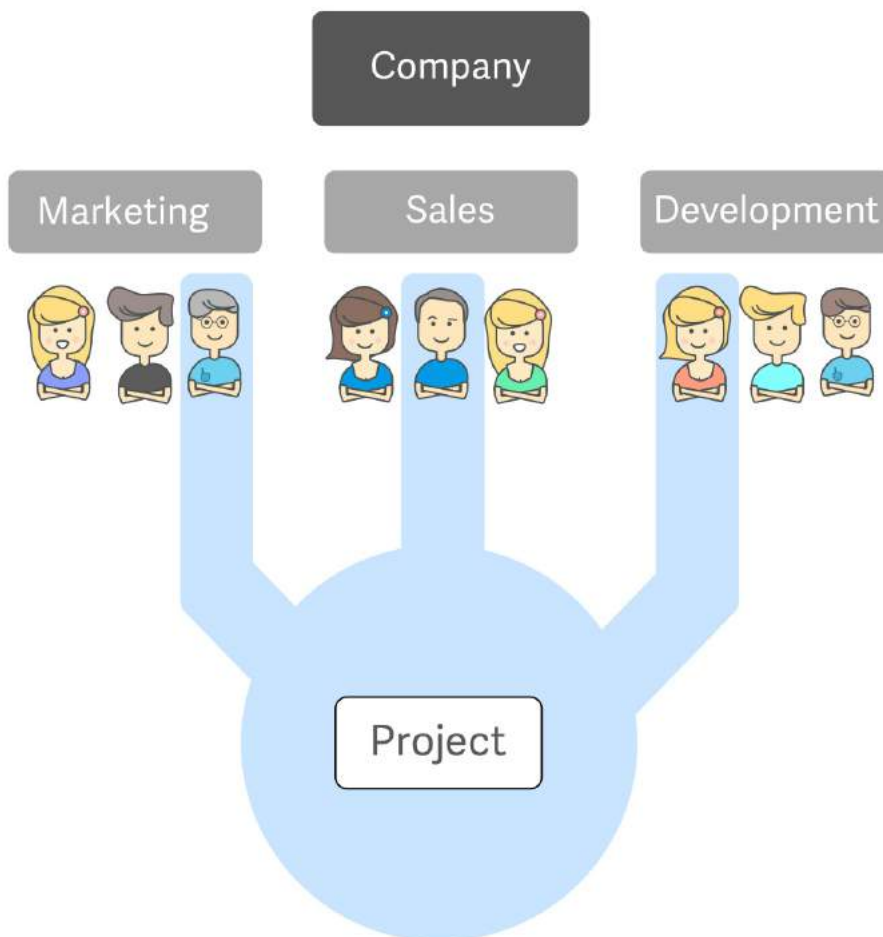
Cross-Functional teams

Matrix teams

These teams are characterized by a "two-boss system", where an individual report to a different manager for various aspects of his work. This type of team is the product of Matrix management approach,
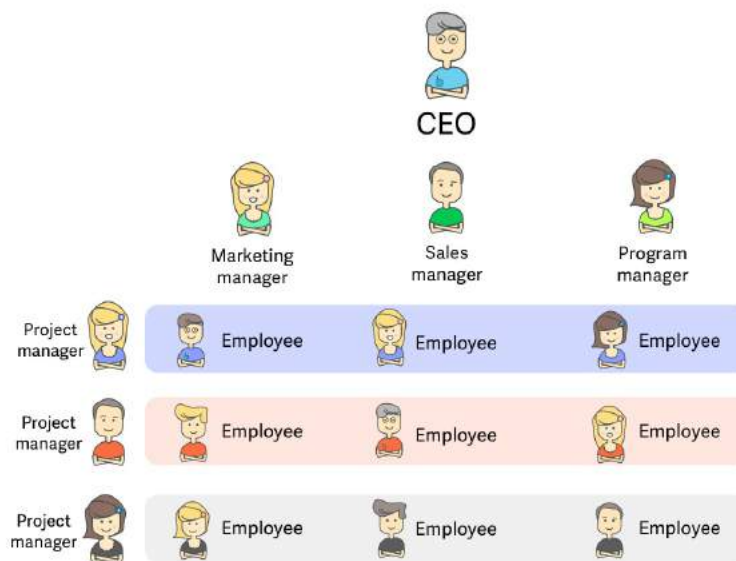
Matrix teams

Let's say Jeff, a designer, was given a task of making a design for a new product that marketing provided an idea for and that R&D deemed feasible. By being included in this project, Jeff all of a sudden has two bosses: the first one is a project manager who only cares about the design being done, while the other one is his functional line manager who's in charge of Jeff's training, career development, and routine tasks.

While this approach helps the top management retain control over

the project without being included in day-to-day decisions, employees are often faced with challenges of dual command: Jeff now has to report to two managers, who might give him conflict instructions, which causes confusion and frustration.

Contract teams

Contract teams are outsourced teams that are tied down by a contract and brought in to complete a part of a project. After the project is completed and the contract has ended, the client can cut all ties to the team, no questions asked.
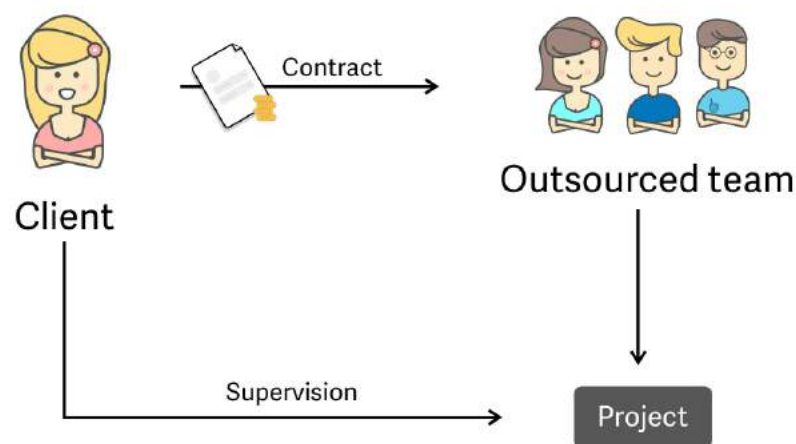
Contract teams

The project manager is the key to success when it comes to contract teams. Project manager has to:

- maintain constant communication between the team and the client,

- compensate for the lack of team's physical presence (given

that most contract teams work remotely),

- bear full responsibility for success or failure of a project

Advantages and disadvantages of project teams

Each type of team comes with its unique set of strengths and weaknesses:

Team Type	Strengths	Weaknesses
Functional team	Handles routine work	Difficult communication across areas
	Line management has control; of projects	Inflexible
	Pools technical and professional expertise	Pushing decision making process upwards
Cross-functional team	Source of unconventional ideas	Diversity can cause conflict
	Can handle wide array of projects	Takes long to develop cohesion
	Greater speed of task completion	Managing can prove to be challenging
Matrix team	Acceptable to traditional managers	Dual reporting
	Top management controls projects, stays out of daily activities	Difficult performance appraisal
	Flexibility for assigned personnel	Team leader is usually unable to choose who will be on the project
Contract team	Easy employment of experts	Difficult assessment of project progress for the client
	No need for client training	Client is the only judge of success
	Team can use existing management structure	Difficult to resolve political and organizational issues

Advantages and disadvantages of different types of teams

Self-managed teams

Typically, members of self-managed teams are employees of the

same organization who work together, and even though they have a wide array of objectives, their aim is to reach a common goal. There is no manager nor authority figure, so it is up to members to determine rules and expectations, to solve a problems when they it arises, and to bare shared responsibility for the results.
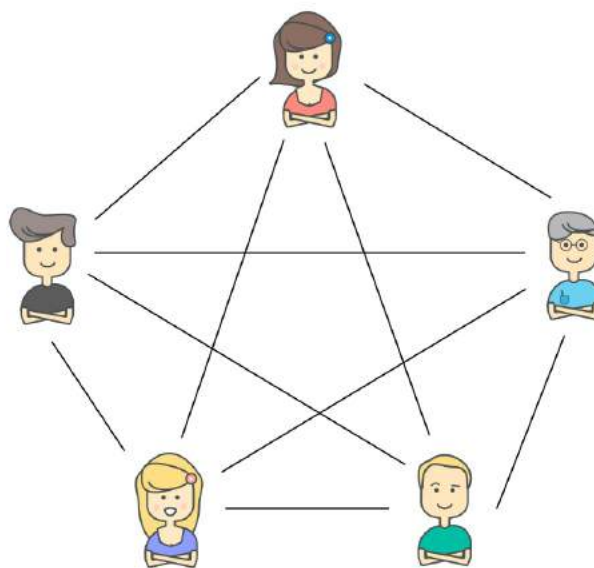
Self-managing teams

One of the first major companies that decided to implement self-managed teams was software company Valve in 2012. Around 300 employees have neither bosses nor a formal division of labor. Instead, they are expected to organize themselves around individual or group projects and are obligated to take care of customer support themselves. The work ethic at Valve relied heavily on individual responsibility.

When setting up a self-managed team, you have to define two parameters:

- Levels of responsibility

- Autonomy that is given to the self-managed team

Research has shown that employees in self-managed teams feel more useful on the job and find their jobs more challenging, although there is no proof that they are actually more productive.

Advantages and disadvantages of self-managed teams

Advantages:

- Autonomy improves employee motivation;

- Team members can manage their own time and handle tasks when it suits them;

- You don't have pay for office;

- Shared responsibility instills pride in team accomplishments.

Disadvantages:

- The lack of hierarchical authority can put personal relationships over good judgment;

- It can lead to conformity that suppresses creativity and critical thinking;

- Added layer of responsibility is time-consuming and requires skills that some people simply don't have;

- Training time and costs are higher due to broader scope of duties.

Virtual teams

Virtual teams are made up of people who work in different physical locations and who rely heavily on collaboration tools to get things done together. Virtual teams provide members with better life-work balance and allow business owners to employ the best experts in the field, regardless of the fact that they live on another continent.
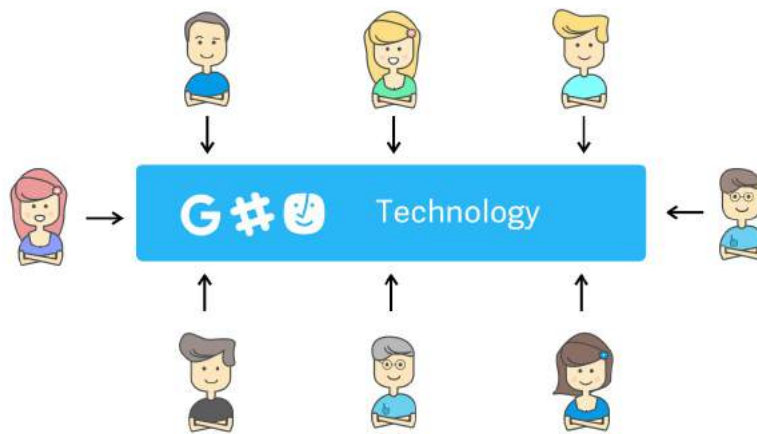
Virtual teams

One of the organizations that had most success with its virtual teams is Automattic, best known by their company, WordPress. Over 100 employees in 43 different countries use Wordpress plugin P2 that enables them to communicate with each other in real-time. Also, when a new employee gets on board he receives $2.000 stipend to improve his home office, gets the latest Macbook, and an open "time off" policy to use take free time whenever they need.

It may seem a little farfetched, but this policy is one of the key

factors behind Automatic's success: Wordpress is now used by 27.5% websites globally.

Types of virtual teams

According to Manager's guide to virtual teams virtual teams are characterized by three dimensions:

- **Time** - WHEN people work. They could work during different hours, on different shifts, or in different time-zones.

- **Space** - WHERE people work. They could be working right next to each other or hundreds of miles away.

- **Culture** - HOW and WHOM people work for. 'Culture' dimension includes factors such as gender, race, language, profession, education, nationality, as well as political, social, religious, and economic factors.

Type of virtual team	Time	Space	Culture
Global team	Different	Different	Different
Multinational organization teams	Different	Different	Same
Project team	Same	Same	Same
Contract team	Same	Same	Different

Characteristics of virtual teams

Operational teams

Operational teams support other types of teams. They are formed to make sure that all back office processes go smoothly.

For example, human resource department doesn't handy any projects but it has to perform candidate screening, interviewing, and recruiting. If one of key players decides to leave, HR has to find a substitute so the respective team can carry on its work.

Operational teams

Also, operational teams can have their own projects and function like a project team because they have well-defined roles and responsibilities. For instance, if accounting department received a task to make an annual financial report by certain date, they will most likely devise a timeline, delegate tasks, and keep track of deadline just like any other project team.

What type of team is right for you?

When choosing a type of team to perform a certain task, ask yourself these questions:

- What's the team's purpose exactly?

- How many people are required, and what will their roles be?

- Are selected members capable of self-management, or they

require a strong leader?

- Is it necessary for them to be located in a single place?

- Is their engagement temporary or permanent?

- If you have a project that requires input from marketing, design as well as customer support department, choose a cross-functional team.

If, on the other hand, you choose to outsource the design, and agency you have chosen uses a designer that works remotely, the only logical way to go is opting for a mixture of virtual and contract team.

In practice, you will rarely find a team that can be defined as solely functional or solely virtual: most teams in modern business represent hybrid of some, even if not all of team types.

Characteristics of a productive team

Did you know that a perfect, productive team has exactly 4.6 members, eats two pizzas for lunch, and consists of people that call themselves "the raiders" or "the oogie boogies"?

How team size impacts team productivity

The larger the team, the less productive they are:

> *"Large-size teams encounter more problems of absenteeism and turnover, members are less satisfied with their work, they experience more negative emotions, and they have lower level of mental health. When it comes to productivity and number of members of the team, less is more." - Group Dynamics: Theory, Research and Practice*

An ideal team has 4.6 members (according to research conducted by Hackman and Vidmar).

In order to determine how team size impacts processes and performance on different kinds of tasks, researchers formed groups that varied from 2 to 7 members. After completing their duties, all group members were asked to answer two questions:

- Was your group too small for the tasks at hand?

- Was your group too large for the tasks at hand?

The chart below is a graphical representation of average answers

to these two questions. The point where two lines cross represents an optimum size of a productive team, which is 4.6 members.

Satisfaction scores

Group too large

Group too small
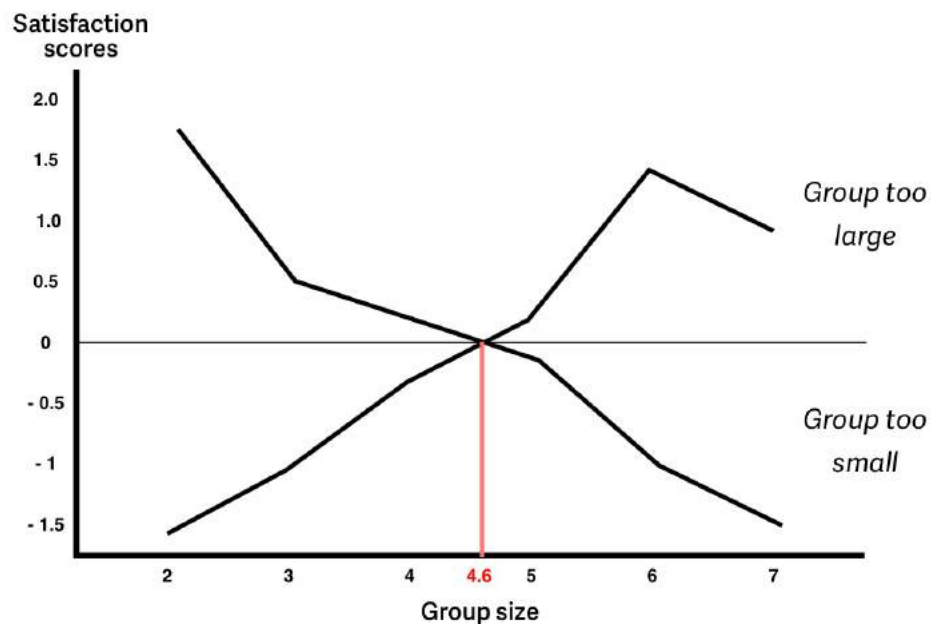
Optimal group size
(research by Hackman and Vidmar)

To determine whether your team is too big, you can use the simple "two-pizza" rule:

"If you can't feed a team with two pizzas, it's too large" - Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon

Jeff Bezos found that teams that consist of 5-7 people (who you can feed with two pizzas) are more autonomous and tend to come up with more innovative solutions.

In both theory and practice shows that smaller teams are more

productive than the large ones, with benefits like: more effective communication, greater trust among team members, and less fear of failure.

Another benefit of small teams is avoidance of groupthink and social loafing.

Groupthink usually occurs when people within the group choose to neglect rational or optimal solutions, for the sake of maintaining harmony within the team, where creativity, independent thinking is neither wanted nor encouraged.

The real problem with groupthink is that projects are more likely to end up in a failure because no one wants to think critically and propose how to fix bad things.

Then we have social loafing, which doesn't result in bad decisions, but can cause discord in a team. Social loafing usually occurs when one or several members try to get by with least amount of work possible, transferring most of the responsibility onto the rest of the team. This free-rider effect can further trigger the sucker effect, where overloaded team members lower their efforts on purpose as a response to free-riders.

Also, there is a danger of creating in group who works hard and out group who's slacking. This creates resentment between them, cause emotional tension, and result in low productivity.

So what is the best size for a productive team? An odd number

close to five. Why an odd number? Simply because there is no danger of getting a tie when it comes voting.

Jelled teams

A team that lacks cohesion and synergy cannot reach its maximum productivity. In fact, it would be miraculous if it achieved any productivity at all.

> "A jelled team is a group of people so strongly knit that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Once a team begins to jell, the probability of success goes up dramatically. They don't need to be managed in the traditional sense, and they certainly don't need to be motivated." - T. DeMarco & T. Lister

Once members reach synergy and understanding, the team doesn't magically get lit up with a big "JELLED" neon sign above them. In fact, there is hardly any indication that jelling has occurred.

The best indicator of jelling is low or non-existent turnover. Also, in jelled team factors like money, status, or possibility for advancement matter less - it is all about achieving common goals and having a blast with your friends while doing it.

Jelled teams usually have strong sense of identity and even colorful names, like: the "Okie Coders" at General Electric; the "Gang of Four" at DuPont; the "Chaos Group" at Cincinnati Gas & Electric.

All members in jelled teams share private jokes, catchphrases, and often get together after work.

You can't just create a Jelled team. According to study, managers cannot simply make a team "jelled". They can however remove some or all of the obstacles that prevent jelling.

Tips for facilitating team jelling

Avoid defensive management

No manager is all-knowing. Create the team that consists of experts in different areas and then just trust their judgment. Since this is not mistake-proof approach, you should be sympathetic toward occasional flops: if the team develops a fear of failure, they are less likely to take risks and innovate.

Eliminate bureaucracy and paperwork

When comprehensive and outdated documentation becomes more important than actual work, members develop a negative attitude toward the task at hand - and negativity always results in damaging the team cohesion.

Team unity

One developer can be only assigned to one team. Multiple engagements will not only decrease the performance of the individual developer but prevent the formation of a gelling as it's harder to bond with multiple teams.

Set realistic deadlines

Unachievable deadlines dramatically decrease the productivity of the team. After constant exposure to high schedule pressure, motivation plummets. In these situations, you can expect missed delivery dates, poor quality, low morale and loss of respect toward management.

Keep the team together

The team should have its territory (an area or an office) that really makes the team members feel like they own it. It should provide sufficient isolation from the rest of the company, and allow the members to interact with each other freely. Face-to-face communication increases both social and task cohesion, which are key for jelling.

Avoid excessive overtime

Constant over time can result in increased turnover and greater number of defects, as well as reduced creativity, productivity and time for self-education. Further, excessive overtime can also affect the inter-team relations as increased stress and fatigue will make people more irritable, impatient, and frustrated. These moods will heavily damage the cohesion of the team and cause conflicts about issues that may not even exist.

Tips for increasing productivity within the team

Choose appropriate management style

Depending on team composition and experience, adapt the right management style for each occasion: when working senior developers, use free-rein style as they'll appreciate more freedom. On the other hand, if you have to manage an inexperienced team, use coaching style so the team can benefit from your guidance.

Try the ROWE method

ROWE stands for "Results Only Work Environment" and is a human resource management strategy co-created by Jody Thompson and Cali Ressler. A contribution of team members is measured through performance, results, or output, rather than physical presence in an office or number of working hours. This approach can prove to be very effective, especially if you're trying to increase the productivity of a remote team.

Increase productivity through accountability

Consider creating a system in which group holds each person individually accountable. For example, make every aspect of the project transparent by allowing everyone to see which task is delegated to whom, what are the deadlines, and what tasks are running late. That way, "slackers" can be easily identified and offered help or confronted. However, keep in mind that this approach is considered to be counterproductive when it comes to building relationships between team members since "slackers" can become outcasts.

Give up on low priority tasks

Ask your team: "This task, is it a top priority, do we have to do it today/this week, or can we postpone it indefinitely?" If certain tasks demand a lot of time and attention but have a low impact on your goals, drop them. Focus on urgent matters and prioritize problems that can be handled quickly.

11 tested hacks for increasing team productivity

Increasing productivity seems straightforward: encourage communication, define team roles, determine adequate processes, delegate tasks accordingly, and motivate your employees through financial incentives and training. Easy, right?

Except, that doesn't really work in real life. It turns out, everyone is already aware WHAT should be done. The question is: HOW?

We asked small business owners, CEOs, and HR managers to share with us actionable tips and tricks they use to increase productivity.

1. "What's going on?" email every week

When we talk about productivity, transparency is unjustly neglected. By allowing the entire team to have an insight into each other's work, there is less chance of social loafing.

Felix Winstone, a founder and director at Talkative, maintains transparency and productivity at his startup with one simple email every week.

"Every Monday morning everyone emails 3 things at our 'All' company email:

1. What they said they were going to do last week

2. What they did last week

3. What they are going to do this week

This ritual takes only 5 minutes but has multiple benefits: we know which projects are being worked on, we can identify slipping deadlines before it's too late, and people get things done because they are accountable for their promises.

With regular accountability, people started working harder to meet their deadlines. Everyone has greater visibility into what everyone else is doing, and since everything is in writing, we have also saved time thanks to reducing excess communication made during progress meetings."

2. Zero meetings monthly

Lengthy and pointless meetings are the biggest time wasters at work. Christian Ranella, CEO and Cofounder at elMejorTrato.com, claims that his company increased productivity dramatically by eradicating all meetings.

"Eliminating meetings was a radical process that couldn't be achieved overnight, so we had to do it gradually, taking it one step at the time.

At the beginning, we've sent a circular email to all employees that explained reasons for the change and how we plan to implement it. Also, we asked for feedback since we felt it was important that everyone was on board.

After that, we shortened duration of meetings and reduced the number of people that were required to be present. During the first three months, we had two daily 30-minute meetings with 7 team members. Later on, we moved to organizing one 15-minute meeting a day, with only 5 people present.

Finally, after 9 months, we completely removed meetings and started with one-on-ones only. Apart from that, we've implemented a project management and collaboration tool and moved all discussions and decision making to our internal group. We tried using email as well but gave it up since it was too restricting."

3. 360 degree white board

Whiteboards have been used for brainstorming and as a productivity tool for ages. However, since they are usually placed in meeting rooms and next to project managers' desks, everyone loses sight of them as soon as the meeting ends.

According to James Goodnow, the productivity expert from the Lamber Goodnow legal team at Fennemore Craig legal firm, his organization decided to use the whiteboard paint on every surface in their workspace.

"This new twist on an old school technique has made a huge difference. We have covered every surface of our 'war room' conference room and much of our offices with paint made to be used with dry erase markers. We use the surfaces to brainstorm, write key tasks, create strategic mind maps, divide work assignments, and more.

If something is important for goal setting and productivity, it goes on the wall to be a constant reminder of how we should focus our efforts. This one simple idea has taken our productivity to new levels."

4. Short walks every hour

Pomodoro technique is widely accepted as a viable productivity hack. However, Tyler Stavola, marketing specialist at OWDT has taken it a step further: his 18 member team increases productivity by taking hourly brakes in the form of short group walks.

"We have gone out to lunches together, we have gone out together socially, but for us as a company, nothing has helped promote productivity more than our exercise program. By getting up and breaking up the day with short walks, we are bonding as a team, getting our circulation systems moving, and focusing more at work.

Through this program, we are adding 30 minutes of exercise to the work day. By adding that reset every hour, people come back to the screen refreshed and focused. We noticed that if people spend longer than 2 hours at the desk, their productivity levels go down quite a bit."

5. Fitness wristbands for all

Being overly engaged, overly productive, and overly efficient will overload your system. James McCarty, CEO of Placement Labs, considers burnout to be the greatest enemy of productivity. So he decided to tackle the problem with hardware.

"To combat the burnout, I purchased a fitness wristbands for each member of my team and encouraged them to get up, take a little walk, chat with coworkers, and just take their minds off of their work for several minutes each hour. Since then, most of my employees appear to be fitter, happier, and more productive.

Since the moment I gave out these wristbands, I have noticed an increased focus on fitness, with team members looking at the data on each other's trackers, and then going right outside for a walk to increase their step count. I do happen to have a fairly competitive group though, so the trackers have yielded healthy competition - both literally and figuratively."

6. Extra paid time off

Whether it's because of personal issues or burnout, a distracted employee is an unproductive employee. According to Shawn Rubel a CEO of Eezy, letting your team members unwind from time to time at company's cost is an excellent way to increase morale and productivity.

"Between kids, travel, and side-hustles, we realized that some members of our team - many of whom are remote workers - needed a couple of days off to get their personal affairs in order. It turned out that they were taking a lot of unpaid time, so as an incentive and a way of showing appreciation, we provided more paid time off to all members of our team. Everyone enjoyed this option and the flexibility has boosted company morale.

As far as working conditions are concerned, we tried to create a system in which employees depend on one another. This approach removed micromanagement, while still ensuring that work gets done quickly and efficiently. With a strongly connected team and good flexibility, we feel our team is far more productive than they would be in a strict, cold environment."

7. The "love tokens"

If members strive to help each other, the overall productivity of the team will inevitably increase. Knowing this, Alison Donaghey, the owner of Sonshine Girls Painting painting company, introduced a very intuitive peer review in her organization.

"I do "love tokens". Every other week (between paydays), I ask my staff to submit votes or "love tokens" to their fellow workers. All of the tokens have to be used, they can't all go to one person, and employees can't vote for themselves. They give them to their coworkers based on how well they show up, how easy they are to work with, and how inclined they are to help. The winner with the most tokens gets a $50 bonus. This concept was widely accepted and embraced by my employees: it created acknowledgment between peers and has proven to be very effective.

However, the best part of this peer review is the fact that I can pinpoint bad fits simply by analyzing "love token" distribution over the course of several months. If someone is getting no love, it's a good warning sign that something is off."

8. Hiring aggressive but talented individuals

Some entrepreneurs believe that productivity is in direct correlation to attitude. For example Joshua Meah, founder, and CEO of Therapist Marketing, chooses only the incredibly talented, assertive, and aggressive individuals. He believes these types of employees bring a lot of positive characteristics.

> "An aggressive person is not just aggressive. They can also have integrity, be reflective, and act kindly to their peers. Furthermore, that aggression may be targeted primarily toward a collective goal.
>
> The one drawback to this approach is that it can be disruptive at first when you have a bad hire, and conflict ensues. However, this is usually quickly resolved when other members of the team protect the culture and company values as aggressively as their own. Internal fights do happen, but if the culture is clear, then the fights resolve well.
>
> The upsides outweigh the drawback, in my view: you are always building toward the most elite, passionate, outwardly competitive, and capable unit possible."

9. The supervisor cup

When your company has many employees, it's important not to lose focus of your supervisors and managers, says Brandy Shope, the Corporate Director of Human Resources at HB McClure Co To keep them motivated, her company created something called The Supervisor Cup.

"Each week, the executive team assigns a task. If a supervisor completes it, his or her name is entered into a monthly drawing for the chance to win a gift card. We are aware that people typically do not leave successful companies unless they feel there is poor management in place, so the Supervisor Cup is a unique practice to keep our supervisors focused on employee engagement.

Not only it's a competitive and fun way to improve engagement and productivity, but it also reminds managers about motivation, rewards, and recognition, and has been very positively received amongst team members."

10. Close coordination and weekly task delegation

For company goals to be achieved, there should be excellent inter as well as intra-team communication. Louie Balasny, managing director of Botkeeper, claims that productivity at his organization is maintained by constant communication and proper task management. The key is in the close coordination of different members from various departments.

"To achieve constant communication, we have 90-minute weekly management calls, 15-minute daily check-ins, and weekly 1-hour one-on-ones. During our weekly management calls, we determine and assign tasks that are most crucial to moving the company forward. That means our business is improving every week, and our team is collaborating on high-level items, while completing smaller tasks individually.

When an individual takes on a task, there is a mutual understanding on

time and effort required for its completion. If they feel the task at hand is something they wouldn't be able to be held accountable for, that task is given a later due date, or some less urgent task will get pushed to a later completion date."

11. Setting attainable goals

One can only be productive if they know what is expected of them. That is why Lisa Chu, owner of Black N Bianco, always sets realistic and attainable goals for her team .

"By setting long term goals and milestones, my team feels a sense of accomplishment and pride when they complete their task. I always explicitly articulate my next business plan because I want them to understand and feel personally connected to the concept. If I set too many unrealistic goals and deadlines, I would be setting them up for failure.

Not only will their productivity suffer but the stress will affect their efficiency. When my team feels they are contributing to our success, they feel accountable for their work. These are the two most important foundations on which every great and productive team rests on."

High performing teams

Every Rolls Royce is a car, but not every car is Rolls Royce. Similarly, not every team is a high-performing team.

To know what are high-performing teams, all we have to do is upgrade our team definition:

team /tiːm/
an interdependent group of individuals who share responsibility and a common goal

high-performing team /hʌɪ pəˈfɔːmɪŋ tiːm/
an interdependent, stable, role-defined group of individuals who share responsibility, mutual trust, and values , while having a strong leadership, and clear focus on a common goal

Creating a high-performing team

Now that we know WHAT a high performing team should look like, the next question is HOW to make your team high-performing.

Creation of a high-performing team doesn't just happen on its own.

According to a certified scrum trainer Mike Levison), there are five things you must do if you want your team to become a high-

performing one.

Form a stable team

When teams form, you should focus your attention on the stable stage. You should take your time and carefully select team members because once you do it, you should stick with them through thick and thin.

It takes at least six months to create a high-performance team, if everything runs smoothly. If members often come and go, and the only real improvements come from strengthening the inter team relationships, form a high performing team becomes very difficult.

Value cohesion

Cohesion is a state when members possess bonds that link them to one another or the whole group. Cohesive teams don't happen overnight - it takes time and diligence to achieve them. Team networks with a high degree of cohesion provide a free stream of information and build trust amongst team members, thus increasing the performance.
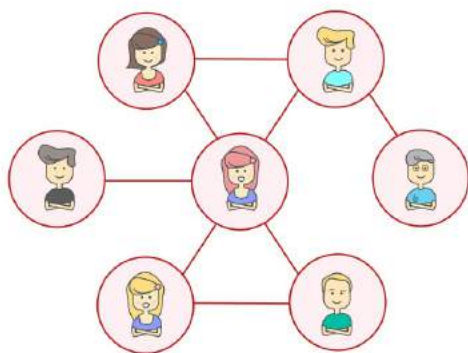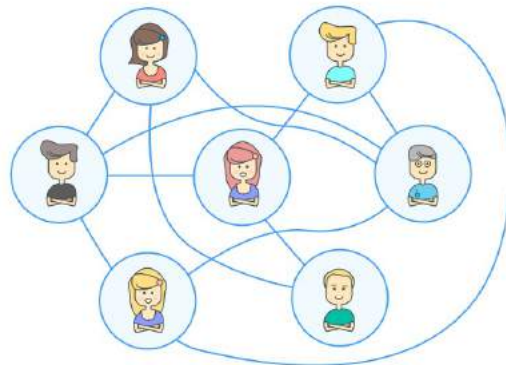
POOR cohesion   GOOD cohesion

However, you have to be very careful as there is a real danger of team becoming over-cohesive and susceptible to groupthink, where, over time, their shared beliefs and assumptions become wrong if unchallenged by someone.

Therefore,while cohesion is crucial for high-performance teamwork, it has to be carefully managed and regularly offset by input of ideas from outside sources.

Coach the team as a team, not as a group of individuals

Usually, human resource departments focus solely on individual skill development rather than the growth of a team. This approach will not get you a high-performing team, but a drastically inferior high-performing group has a few recommendations:

- Have regular one-on-one meetings with your team members. Use them to discuss individual's habits and behaviors, and how they affect the team. You should hold this meetings off-site, where no other members can eavesdrop. If you're dealing with less confident team members, ask for a written feedback.

- Provide thoughtful feedback on small but important things, like the way individual faces other members, how much they interrupt others, and how well they listen.

- You are a leader, so be an example of the behavior you expect everyone to follow. Know your failings and work on them. Your team will react well to the positive example and are more likely to follow your lead.

- Rearrange office seating to encourage member interaction, and create opportunities to encourage social conversation. Set desks so everyone can see each other and choose an office that suits the size of your team: if it's too small, it'll feel cramped and uncomfortable; if it's too big, the distance between members will discourage interaction.

- The most important thing: change team members only if you don't have any other choice.

Get them out of their workspaces

Stimulate interaction between team members in places other than their desks: it can be around a water cooler, in a kitchen next to a coffee maker, or in a lounge area with foosball table. Casual chit-chat and relaxed atmosphere provide incentives for great ideas and increase team cohesion. This is also known as as the watercooler effect).

To take it a step further, get your team out of the office altogether. Organize a simple team lunch, or any other social event (drinks with a game of darts maybe) and just let them bond. Work related topic will come up sooner or later, and relaxed atmosphere will encourage everyone to give their input on the subject - whether is useful or not. Somewhere among those suggestions there may be a solution your team has been looking for.

Set effective performance goals

The difference between effective and ineffective goals are actions with a clear intent. By setting effective goals, you will make the

team more effective as well: they will be more energized, focused, persistent, creative, and tactile.

High-performance teams are called high-performing because they are able to do much more quality work in the shorter amount of time. However, it is up to you as a team leader to provide them with the means to do that by setting HIGHLY specific goals. A goal that states "Increase speed of loading time of page X to under 0.7 seconds" sounds much more specific and challenging than plain "increase the page loading speed" request.

Common characteristics of a high-performing team

What separates a high-performing team from any old team are its specific characteristics (hence the definition upgrad). To explain this better, we'll use a 'house-building' metaphor.

Effective working procedures

The foundation upon which the house (or the team) is built. Similarly to the shaky foundation, ineffective procedures prevent the team from being constructed and can cause problems with gathering, organizing, and evaluating information, while at the same time discouraging creativity, innovation, and risk-taking.

Shared values

Aall members know that the house has to be built, but in a high performing team they also share a vision of what the house should look like. They also share goals, objectives, and values,

while being focused on results and solutions. The final goal is always clear, frequently re-evaluated, and shared by all.

Shared leadership

Depending on the floor (or the task) team is currently working on, different members take turns in being the leader. When workers are installing wiring, the electrician is in charge while everyone else just wield the hammers. As he is an expert in the field, others will follow his orders and his instructions, no questions asked. Mind you, there is always one formal team leader, but their sole purpose is coaching and mentoring.

Complementary abilities

Builders can can get you the walls, but the house won't be functional if there are no plumbers or carpenters. In properly made teams, each member possesses a certain knowledge, set of skills, and personals strengths. Synergy with other members is what makes the team highly-productive.

Trust and mutual respect

If you ask a member of a high-performing team about their colleagues' ability, the will always answer: "If anyone can do that job, they can. And not only that - they will do it right!". Everyone values and supports each other, and feedbacks are wholeheartedly accepted. There is no bad blood - only desire to succeed.

Adaptability to changes

Projects change all the time: the yellow wall suddenly has to become a green wall, and the existing tiles in the bathroom should be replaced as well. When it comes to handling drastic changes, high-performance teams don't revel in self-pity and give up. They analyze, adapt and perform.

Constant learning and improving

Mistakes are a learning tool, and there are no repercussions if members examine what went wrong and don't make the same mistake again. They may knock down wrong walls, but the important part is they won't do it again.

Regular result evaluation

To ensure construction is heading in the right direction, an engineer has to take a step back and take a look at the house from time to time. A high-performing team does that after every major milestone. Why? Because it gives them a realistic completion time as well as an opportunity to foresee obstacles that may arise.

Open Communication

If effective procedures are the foundation of the team, communication is the roof. In high-performing teams, dialogue and attentive listening is ever present, and there is a constant flow of information. Constructive conflicts between team members do happen, but are mostly personal and organizational in nature. It is important to remember that misunderstandings can be a good

thing because they fight groupthink.

High-performing team model

The Performance Factor), a book by Pat MacMillan, CEO and Founding Partner of Triaxia Partners), gives the the best graphical representation of high-performing team model:

The model is represented as a circle because each characteristic is equally important for the team to achieve desired and measurable business result.

Business Results

The center of the circle and the ultimate goal. The point of teaming up is accomplishing results that you as an individual can't achieve alone. However, those results need to be measurable. Without a clear goal, team efforts can come down to focusing on how we "feel" about our team. When members concentrate more on their feelings, rather than meeting goals, team efforts tend to get treated like HR exercises - focus remains on team building. Strong relationships are an important piece, but they're not the only piece, which is why business results are at the center.

The Reason for Cooperation - Common Purpose

Team's common goal has to be clear, relevant, significant, urgent, and achievable. It represents the cornerstone of a high-performance team. Without it, team members won't be able to align their efforts in the same direction. And since teamwork is a means to an end, an effective team must be purpose-directed and judged against its results.

The Strategy for Cooperation - Setting Clear Roles

Member roles have to be defined, compatible, complementary, complete,congruous, and should cover everything that needs to be accomplished. The key to tapping into the potential synergy of the team is proper task delegation, based on various strengths of the members.

The Structure for Cooperation - Accepted Leadership

High-performing team leaders are flexible, service-oriented, and task-driven. An effective team leader quickly adjusts to various situations and personalities, keeps team purpose in mind at all times, and remembers that the leadership role is designed to serve, not to be served.

The Method of Cooperation - Effective Processes

The process needs to be well defined, designed, documented, straightforward, and continually improved. It's not just about how the team gets things done, but how it thinks as a unity as well. These processes need to be mastered,mapped, and changed when required. The unoptimized process is nothing more than a time-waster and a taxation on productivity.

The Climate of Cooperation - Solid Relationships

Solid relationships are based on trust, understanding, sincerity, respect of contribution, acceptance of differences, and mutual accountability. The objective is not to become best friends, but to know how to work together. By being "solid", relationships can withstand misunderstandings, conflicts, and occasional bad days.

The Means of Cooperation - Excellent Communication

Communication within the team should be clear, honest, timely, and accurate. It allows the team to coordinate divided roles, provide feedback, clarify details, and resolve conflicts effectively. Excellent communication is the glue that holds the team together.

Final words

Once you take a ride in a Rolls Royce, other cars simply do not live up to the expectation anymore. Similarly, once you become a part of the high-performing team, going back to work with an ineffective team becomes a punishment.

Forming a high-performing team takes time and effort, but once they jell and start producing results, they become indispensable asset of every company.

Belbin team roles

Why is your team successful? Why is your team failing? Dr. Belbin has an answer.

Dr. Raymond Meredith Belbin is the leading authority on team roles. His research, that spanned more than 40 years, showed that it is more important how members fit together than how smart they individually are.

Successful teams were comprised of members with different and compatible roles, while unsuccessful ones were characterized by constant conflicts between members with similar tendencies and personalities.

What happens when you make a team out of A players

Belbin's research produced several personality tests that enabled experts to determine if an individual will become a business superstar. Those who passed with flying colors were smarter, had better analytical skills, and were better than others in almost every aspect. Logically, the next step in research was to create a super team made up entirely of these outstanding individuals.

Belbin named them the Apollo team. Expectations were high as everyone thought the superstars of the Apollo team would achieve success effortlessly. However, it turned out that team

made out of the strongest individuals is not as effective as it should be - what's more, it usually performed worse than a regular team.

The Apollo team members had spent most of their time debating and trying to persuade other members that their point of view was the correct one. However, no one was willing to change their point of view and each member loved to find holes in each others' arguments. The team couldn't reach a decision together while more pressing jobs were completely neglected.

Belbin team roles

The Apollo team experiment proved that good teams require balance. Over the course of years, Belbin defined nine possible team roles, which he categorized into three groups:

ACTION-ORIENTED ROLES

Action oriented roles focus on improving team's performance, putting ideas into action, and meeting deadlines. The three action-oriented roles are:

- **Shaper** - extrovert that questions assumptions

- **Implementer** - brings self-discipline to the team

- **Completer Finisher** - pays attention to smallest details and makes sure things are done right

Action-oriented roles

PEOPLE-ORIENTED ROLES

People oriented roles bring people and ideas together. The three people oriented roles are:

- **Coordinator** - brings order into the team

- **Team worker** - provides support to the team in a diplomatic way

- **Resource Investigator** - develops outside contacts

People-oriented roles

THOUGHT-ORIENTED ROLES

Thought oriented roles analyze options and provide technical expertise. The three cerebral roles are:

- **Plant** - comes up with innovative, ground-breaking solutions

- **Monitor evaluator** - assesses team decisions analytically and critically

- **Specialist** - experts in particular subject matter

Thought-oriented roles

SPECIALIST

MONITOR EVALUATOR

PLANT

Roles characteristics, contribution, and weaknesses

Each Belbin team role comes with its set of characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses (some of which are allowable and others that are not).

Roles	Characteristics	Strengths	Allowable weaknesses	Not-allowable weaknesses
ACTION-ORIENTED ROLES				
Shaper	Challenging Dynamic Thrives on pressure	Has the drive to overcome the pressure	Provokes others Hurts people's' feelings	Inability to recover situation with good humour or apology
Completer Finisher	Painstaking Conscientious Anxious	Searches out errors and omissions Delivers on time	Inclined to worry unduly Reluctant to delegate A nit-picker	Obsessional behaviour
Implementer	Disciplined Reliable Conservative Efficient	Turns ideas into practical solutions	Somewhat inflexible Slow to respond to new possibilities	Obstructing change
PEOPLE-ORIENTED ROLES				
Teamworker	Co-operative Mild Perceptive Diplomatic	Listens Builds Averts friction Calms the waters	Indecisive in crush situations Can be easily influenced	Avoiding situations that may entail pressure
Resource Investigator	Extrovert Enthusiastic Communicative	Explores opportunities Develops contacts	Over-optimistic Loses interest once initial enthusiasm has passed	Letting clients down by neglecting to follow-up arrangements
Coordinator	Mature Confident A good chairperson	Clarifies goals Promotes decision making Delegates well	Delegates personal work Inclination to laziness once someone takes over	Taking credit for the effort of a team
THOUGHT-ORIENTED ROLES				
Plant	Creative Imaginative Unorthodox	Solves difficult problems	Ignores details Too preoccupied to communicate effectively	Strong ownership of idea when co-operation with others would yield better results
Monitor Evaluator	Sober Strategic Discerning	Sees all options Judges accurately	Sceptic Lacks drive and ability to inspire others Overly critical	Cynicism without logic
Specialist	Single-minded Self-starting Dedicated	Provides knowledge and skills in rare supply	Contributes on only a narrow front Dwells on technicalities Overlooks the big picture	Ignoring factors outside own area of competence

Belbin team roles

Ideal team for a small business

To have a well-functioning team, it would be ideal to have a member for each role. However, to make that happen, you would need a team of at least 9 people. Since small businesses often work with smaller teams, it is only fair to ask: how would Belbin construct a successful small team?

Firstly, it would be ideal if the team had 6 members. Belbin's research has proven that teams with less than 6 members struggle with work and overlapping duties, while teams with more members (7+) tend to get lazy and do the same amount of work as the six-member team.

Secondly, Belbin claims that successful small team should have one Coordinator, one Implementer, and one Plant. Those are a must. Choose other roles as you see fit.

You are probably wondering: "If I have a task that requires creative solution, why don't I just gather three 'Plant' members and let them work their magic?" It turns out, you shouldn't do this.

During his research, Dr. Belbin wanted to know how teams made of people with similar personalities function in everyday business environment, and how they cope when it comes to problem-solving. To achieve this, he divided examinees into four groups based on their personalities:

- **Stable Extroverts** - Excellent communicators. They are best as sales representatives or HR managers.

- **Anxious Extroverts** - Ideal for high-paced working environments. They are most likely to work as sales managers, works managers, and editors.

- **Stable Introverts** - Perfect for long-lasting, close-knit teams. Their usual occupations are administrators, solicitors, government officials, and corporate planners.

- **Anxious Introverts** - They excel at individual jobs that require self-direction and self-sustaining persistence. These are extremely creative people, research scientists, and specialists on long-term assignments.Each group was divided into a number of teams.

These newly formed 'pure' teams brought out extremes in behavior and effects. Results showed that purely extroverted teams had a higher rate of success than purely introverted ones. On the other hand, there were differences in results as each group had strengths and weaknesses:

- **Stable Extrovert teams** - These teams work well together, enjoy group work, have a versatile approach, and use resources well. However, they are inclined to be euphoric and lazy. They had achieved good results overall, but are dependent on one another.

- **Anxious Extrovert teams** - They are dynamic and entrepreneurial, good at seizing opportunities, and prone to the healthy disagreements. On the other hand they are easily distracted and can quickly stray off topic. They had excellent results in rapidly changing situations, but were utterly unreliable at other times.

- **Stable Introvert teams** - Excellent planning and strong organization are their strong suits. However, they tend to be slow-moving and often neglect new factors in a situation. When it comes to results, team members didn't really care whether they were good or bad.

- **Anxious Introvert teams** - These teams are capable of good

ideas, but have a tendency to get preoccupied and often lack team cohesion. Naturally, their results were poor. In some cases, different teams of the same group achieved different results. After closer analysis, Belbin determined that every 'pure' team that achieved a noticeable result had one thing in common: one of the members has taken the role of an Implementer.

Implementers were not simply team members who only did or arranged things (most work involves both). In behavioral terms, they were people who essentially worked for the company, rather than in pursuit of self-interest, and did so in a practical and realistic way. They could identify with the organization and would accept and look for goals in work that fell in line with its ideals and aspirations. There was never any question that jobs would not be done because they did not feel like it or it did not interest them. - R.M. Belbin, Management teams - Why do they succeed and fail

These Implementers were:

• Disciplined individuals who got work done swiftly and systematically;

• Tough-minded, practical, trusting, and tolerant towards others;

• Conscientious and aware of external obligations;

• Respectful of existing conditions and ways of looking at things;

• With a well-developed sense of self-image and a high

degree of internal control.

Belbin figured out that he finally found the secret sauce for the perfect worker. Therefore, the next logical experiment was to create a team made entirely out of Implementers.

Just like with the Apollo team, expectations were high. And just like with the Apollo team, these teams of 'perfect workers' turned out to be a disappointment. According to the findings, they produced average results at best. Implementers were well organised and diligent, but lacked any real ideas. They were strongly committed to anything they set in motion, but were disturbed if plans changed. Simply put - they worked well but failed to get good results.

Final words

Just like in the Group vs Team matter, Dr. Belbin proved that closely knit teams of compatible members will get you much further than the group of highly intelligent but stubborn individuals. So, when making a team, take your time with the recruitment process, and choose your team members carefully - because in the end, they will be the ones who bring you success or failure.

To find out your Belbin role, visit www.belbin.com and apply for an official test. You can also take a free Belbin test alternative at testyourself.psychtests.com/testid/3113

Team building games that really teach teamwork

Not all team building games are good. When you're planning a team building and reading what games you can use, they all look good on paper but once you actually use them, they are bad. People get bored, don't understand the rules, or think the game is dumb.

So, when planning a team building session, you need to know the games will be good. Here are some proven hits (from extensive personal experience) that both teach teamwork and make teams jell.

These games will stick in people's memories for years - they're that good.

Warm-up games

Most of the games you'll find on the net are either short or don't exactly accomplish the goal of team building. Their purpose is to warm up people for the main game, get them excited, set the mood, and break the ice if people don't know each other.

When building a team building session, you'll use one quick warm-up game and one long main game.

Each game needs to have a facilitator that'll explain the rules and guide the group. A warm-up game shouldn't last longer than 10-15

minutes.

Note: you can make a session using several quick games but the session won't be useful.

Game #1: Two Truths and a Lie

Everyone has to introduce themselves to the group and tell two truth facts about themselves and one lie. The group then has to guess which one is a lie. You can even vote. The game is a good ice breaker if people don't know each other well.

Game #2: Seven

People stand in a circle and count. The first person says 1, the second says 2 and so on. When number 7 comes up and its multiples (14-21-28-35...), the person has to clap instead of saying the number. If they say the number, they're out. To make the game more difficult, you can change the number or introduce new moves (eg. jump).

Game #3: Action Intros

Each person says their name, adds an adjective that starts with the first letter of their name, and acts out that adjective. For example, a person named Bill will say "I am Bossy Bill" and act like a boss. The point of the game is to have fun and learn people's name.

Game #4: 60 Second Speeches

Each person has to talk on some topic for 60 seconds non-stop, without a pause. Choose a fun topic and let people have fun.

The main team building games

For the main game, you'll need materials and/or handouts, depending on the game. These games typically last around 30 minutes and longer, but you can always extend the deadline if you see people enjoy.

After each game, make sure you have a wrap-up discussion where you'll talk about their collaboration process, decision making, what they learned, and how would they improve the process.

Game #1: Survival games

There are several survival games and they are all variations on a theme. The team is either lost at sea, in a desert, or on a moon.

The team's job is to survive as long as they can. To help them survive, they get a list of 15 items and they have to rank each item according to how important they think it is.

First, each person gets a paper and ranks the items alone. Then, the whole team gets one paper and they have to rank items together. In the end, the facilitator reveals the correct ranking and people have to compare it with their personal and team's ranking.

Usually, people on the team get more things right than as

individuals. The point of the game is to show how everyone is better thanks to teamwork.

If, on the other hand, an individual gets more things right than the team, it's a sign they need to work more on making their voice heard.

Download "Lost at Sea" handout:

http://insight.typepad.co.uk/lost_at_sea.pdf

Download "Stranded on the Moon" handout:

http://insight.typepad.co.uk/moon_landing.pdf

Game #2: Bank Robbery

Someone robs the bank. Each person gets a few clues (like "Mr. Green was the only person who had a key to the vault."). The team has to figure out who robbed the bank without showing their clues (but they can read them to the team word-for-word). People have to talk with others and piece everything together.

The game teaches the importance of sharing information and that each person has special insight that they need to share in order to solve a greater problem.

Download the clues and the handout here:

http://www.edteck.com/rigor/lessons/detective/clues2.pdf

Game #3: Building games

Two or more teams get materials with which they have to build

something.

In the the simpler version, teams compete who will build the highest tower with materials they have.

In the more complex version, the team has to "buy" resources and build a bridge. Each team gets some money with which they can buy scissors, glue, paper, etc. But the trick is, materials are limited. So for example, if there are 4 teams, there are only 3 pairs of scissors and 10 sheets of paper, so there is always a pressure to buy materials before the other teams.

The team has to carefully juggle resource allocation, planning, and work delegation.

The winner is determined by the jury who tests the bridge based on several criteria:

- stability (will it collapse if you put something on it),

- looks (how pretty/creative it is),

- and budget (how much money the team saved).

More info about the Bridge Building Game:

https://www.trainingcoursematerial.com/free-games-activities/team-building-activities/the-bridge-contract

Game #4: Zoom

This game is based on the book "Zoom" by Istvan Banyai. Each page in the book is a zoomed-in aspect of another page. Each team member gets a laminated page from the book and they have

to arrange the pages in the right order. To do this, they have to talk to each other and discover who has the missing pieces.

Game #5: The Lifeboat Game

This game is about making difficult moral decisions as a team and reaching a consensus. The team gets a list of 14 people who are on a sinking ship in the middle of the ocean. There is one lifeboat which can rescue only 8 people. The team has to decide together who is worth rescuing and they have only 15 minutes.

The people on the list are morally ambiguous and there is no right choice. For example, who is worth more: Billy, a a 16 year old boy who steals, or Tom, a 41 year old war hero who hears voices? Expect a lot of discussion on ethics and strong opinions.

The final list doesn't matter. The point of the game is for people to reach the consensus within 15 minutes or everyone dies.

Download the handout for the lifeboat game here:

http://www.lrhsd.org/cms/lib05/NJ01000316/Centricity/Domain/842/The%20Lifeboat%20Activity.docx

Game #6: Faraway Kingdom

People will hate this game, which is why they can learn so much from it. The game teaches the importance of communicating progress and what happens when you don't give feedback.

There are two teams: those who wait and those who work. While the working group solves a problem, the waiting group waits and gets more and more anxious.

The point of the game is for someone from working group to brief the waiting group on what's going and manage their expectations. Of course, you as a facilitator don't tell them that. They have to learn that on their own.

This is a game where the wrap-up discussion is the most important part.

Other team building options

Team building sessions and team building games are fun if you don't have much time or resources. But if you really want people to bond, take them outside.

It doesn't necessarily mean outdoor; take them outside the world of their workplace they cohabit each day. Make it an experience.

There are 3 options for this:

Organize an activity

This is the cheapest/easiest/most organic way to make people bond. All you have to do is find an activity, organize people, and let them have fun.

You can go on a hike, a conference, do room escape, scavenger hunt, obstacle course, play a sport (bowling, shooting, basketball, rowing, paintball) or a video game (Overwatch, League of Legends). Just make sure there is a clear start and finish, and that people get to interact with one another. This means don't go to

the movies or something similair where people can't mingle.

Hire a consultant

Big companies typically have an HR specialist who creates and runs team building sessions, or hire consultants that teach their team about leadership, teamwork, and collaboration.

If you don't have the time to create a team building session, hire an expert. Consultants typically come to your offices; but you can also go on a retreat where you'll rent a hotel and fill the day with games the consultants will facilitate.

There are plenty companies who organize team building games, like Eagle's Fligh Human Synergistics.

Go on a company retreat

This options is the best if you're a remote company and people know each other only through their screens. You can pick a destination, rent a mansion on Airbnb, and fly everybody in. Then you can mix team building games, fun activities, and work.

Folks at HelpScout and Buffer do this and have written extensively on the topic on their blog so make sure to read about their experience and hear what advice they have.

PART II

Becoming a Great Leader

Five levels of leadership

To become a good team leader all you have to do is constantly communicate with your team, set clear tasks, give proper feedback and delegate. Also, you should listen to their needs and provide coach-like guidance when required. Simple, right? Well, not really...

The above-mentioned tips are just quick fixes that can improve the functioning of your team in the short run, but they have no effect on you becoming a better team leader.

Building yourself into an effective leader is a difficult, slow, and meticulous process, which requires both personal and your team's devotion.

John Maxwell, in his 5 Levels of Leadership, describes the path a newly appointed leader has to take to become a good team leader.

Level 1: Position

You achieve the first (and lowest) level of leadership simply by being placed in the position of power. There is nothing wrong with being in the position of power. However, relying solely on it to have your team follow you is counter productive. When you start handling your team as a newly appointed team leader, they will have no trust in you or your leadership abilities. The only reason

they will follow you is because they have to.

5 **Pinnacle**
Respect
People follow because of who you are
and what you represent.

4 **People Development**
Reproduction
People follow because of what you have done for them.

3 **Production**
Results
People follow because of what you have done for the organization.

2 **Permission**
Relationship
People follow because they want to.

1 **Position**
Rights
People follow because they have to.

John Maxwell's 5 levels of leadership

The first level is the starting level and a base for further improvement. You can start investing in your growth as a potential leader, and use this time to prepare yourself for the next level. You can achieve this through prioritizing and diligence.

TIP: How to know if you are a level one leader? Get an intern (a student or someone who just wants to learn a thing or two about the job), and treat them no different than all the other members. If they start disobeying you or voicing their dissatisfaction with your leadership ability, you should think about adjusting your approach.

Level 2: Permission

The next step toward becoming a good team leader is building strong relationships with your team members. Treating individuals as they have value, will develop positive influence, trust, and respect. At level 2, your team will tacitly give you their 'permission' to lead them. Members will follow not only because you are their supervisor, but because they genuinely like you as a person. When that happens, it is up to you to maintain that relationship with respect and consideration of your team's needs.

Level 2 leaders are relational leaders: they listen closely, observe carefully, and are always learning. They also have a Servant-Leader attitude, which has proven to be essential for the further advancement of leadership skills.

TIP: A level 2 leader talk less and listen more, which is why some recommend the 70-20-10 conversational rule: you should spend 70% of your time listening to your team, 20% of time enquiring with the just right amount of support, and 10% analyzing the information you've gathered. Summarize and sort the information, and then choose the appropriate course of action.

Level 3: Production

You've built mutual trust with team members, and things seem to fall into place. Now, it is time to get things done. You know you've reached level 3 leadership when you start using your influence and credibility to motivate your team to produce results. You have quite a few notches under your belt now, and your team knows it. They will no longer follow you just because they like you - they follow because of your track record and credibility.

At this point, the snowball effect occurs: your previous accomplishments build upon themselves and become the base for further success. Morale will improve, projects will be completed properly and on time, and you will provide your team with a momentum to tackle every problem.

Level 3 leaders shouldn't stop acting like level 2 leaders: you should remain the relational leader your team 'fell in love with,' but also start using new level 3 strategies.

TIP: Use a combination of push and pull influence styles to make sure your team achieves results:

- **Push style** forces someone to take action using logical reasoning, threats, or rewards. Even though this approach brings fast results, it guarantees only short term success and should be utilized only as a last resort. •

- **Pull style** motivates someone to take action. This approach is effective if the leader wants to gain commitment and

quality, but is slow at achieving results. Be wary though as people can interpret insincere 'pull' as a blatantly dishonest manipulation, which can bring tarnish your reputation.

Level 4: People Development

At this level, you already have a high performing team that trusts you completely. Your primary goal as a leader now becomes 'reproduction': identifying and developing as many leaders as possible by investing in them and helping them grow. Furthermore, when you invest in new leaders, a bond of trust will be created between you and them. You will have an ally and someone you can always rely on.

> *"Successful people position themselves well. Successful leaders position other people well." - John Maxwell*

According to Maxwell, the key to being a successful level 4 leader is in three simple steps:

- **Recruit well** - the better the person you bring in, the higher the odds they will contribute to team success;

- **Position well** - find out strengths of a potential leader and allow them to grow in that particular niche;

- **Equip well** - provide leader with means to success, through tutoring and training.

TIP: Level 4 is all about developing as many leaders as possible, so train only those that will help others learn the same process.

Usually, there are 4 steps to training and onboarding a new employee:

- Initial onboarding;

- Mentoring and demonstrating how work process should be done;

- Allowing new employee to perform task themselves while monitoring and tutoring them;

- Enabling them to perform tasks themselves without supervision.

However, a true level 4 leader will implement an additional fifth step:

- Require that the trainee transfers knowledge further.

Once you manage to continuously develop leaders who can train other leaders, you can achieve fifth level.

Level 5: Pinnacle

People follow Pinnacle leaders because of who they are and what they represent. Fifth level leaders are rare.

A number of true level 5 leaders in the world is really small. You can only reach 'level 5' if you are willing to invest your life in the lives of others for the greater good of the company. It requires constant learning on a personal level and continuous focus on developing new leaders.

Level 5 leaders develop Level 5 organizations and have access to opportunities other leaders don't. They create legacy, while their leadership earns a positive reputation. Consequently, Pinnacle leaders often transcend their position, their organization, and sometimes their industry. They become the person everyone in the world turn to for guidance.

TIP: If you find yourself at the fifth level of leadership, there is only one tip you need: always improve. There is an always a new book to read and new technology to master, because a true leader knows they can never be all knowing.

Final Words

Just like with the case of team forming, your reputation among team members may vary: some may consider you a 'level 4' leader, while others regard you as 'level 2'.

Naturally, newest members will feel loyalty for no other reason than your supervising position, but even that can change swiftly if they fall under the influence of their colleagues.

So remember: always improve, always teach, always adapt - that is what makes a leader great.

Daily habits of successful leaders

The most successful people in the business have 5 things in common:

- They have laser focus;

- They are excellent short and long term organizers;

- They learn from their mistakes;

- They adapt easily;

- They take calculated risks.

Also, they read a lot. But that is a story for another time.

We have taken a look at daily habits leaders like Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, and Mark Zuckerberg, and analyzed some of their characteristics in order to find out the secrets behind their success.

Maintain focus - like Steve Jobs

"For the past 33 years, I have looked in the mirror every morning and asked myself: If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today? And whenever the answer has been no for too many days in a row, I know I need to change something." - Steve Jobs

Steve Jobs used to spend his mornings in meetings with his product and management teams. Later in the day, he moved to Apple's design lab and collaborated with companies top designer Jony Ive. Evenings, however, were reserved for family and personal matters, as Jobs used to spend them with his wife and kids.

Steve Jobs was a prime example of being optimized. He had a knack for prioritizing. According to Walter Isaacson, it was Job's focused vision that made Apple what it is today.

In 1997, when Jobs returned to Apple, Apple was producing a lot of products (Macintosh computers, parts, and peripherals). After a few hectic weeks of product review sessions, Jobs made a sudden decision to stop the entire process and make a revolutionary U-turn: he grabbed a marker and drew a two-by-two grid. Above the two columns, he wrote "Consumer" and "Pro," while the rows were labeled words "Desktop" and "Portable." The grid might have looked something like this:

	Consumer	Proffesional
Portable	iBook	PowerBook G3
Desktop	iMac	Power Mac G3

Steve Jobs's product matrix

At that moment he told his team members to focus on four great products (one for each quadrant) and cancel the others. Even though many had disapproved of his decision, it turned out that by getting Apple to focus on making just four computers saved the company.

> *"Deciding what not to do is as important as deciding what to do. That's true for companies, and it's true for products." - Steve Jobs*

At the same time, Jobs began taking his team of a 100 carefully selected people on a retreat once a year. On the last day, he gathered them in a large conference room, placed himself in front of the whiteboard, and asked: "What are the ten things we should be doing next?". However, Jobs would write down each and every one, and then cross off ones he perceived dumb. After a long debate, the group would come up with a list of ten suggestions. Then, Jobs would slash the bottom seven and announce, "We can only do three."

His focus has led Jobs to be blatantly rude and brutal at times.

His people would reach out to him with their legal, personal, or professional problems, asking for help or advice. If he didn't want to deal with it because he had other things on his mind, he would block them out completely. He wouldn't answer email or give you a response - only a blank stare. Every day Jobs would choose four or five things to focus on while neglecting everything else in the process.

Learn from mistakes - like Bill Gates

"Success is a lousy teacher. It seduces smart people into thinking they cannot lose. It's fine to celebrate success, but it is more important to heed the lessons of failure." - Bill Gates

The first thing you need to know about Bill Gates is that he likes his sleep - seven hours a night, at least. He cannot give speeches or do any creative work if he doesn't get a good night's sleep. However, he starts each day the same: an hour on a treadmill while watching educational DVDs.

In the early 1970s, Bill Gates and Paul Allen started a company called Traf-O-Data, which read and analyzed data from roadway counters and created reports for traffic engineers. Traf-O-Data was the first mistake Bill Gates made and learned from. According to Paul Allen, the idea that fueled the company was good, but the business model failed as there was no demand. Traf-O-Data ended up with a total net loss of $3,500. Despite everything, it turned out that this experience was a great lesson for both founders as it played a crucial role in the formation and success of Microsoft.

As the company grew over the years, some mistakes were bound to happen. However, Gates' creativity, teamwork, and sufficient monetary stability allowed Microsoft to thrive and try new things which contributed greatly to company's success.

"Our products were successful enough that even when we did make a

mistake — when we hired a wrong person or organized things the wrong way — we were frank enough to ourselves to say, 'This isn't working.'

And yet, my conservative balance sheet approach meant that for all the mistakes we made, we had a chance to learn from them and do different things. " - Bill Gates

Additionally, Gates is a big fan of feedback, or to be more precise - angry customer feedback, as he considers unhappy customers to be the greatest source of learning. He claims that company's greatest source of growth can come from the people that will tell you what you need to hear and not just what you want to hear. In his case, Gates created a feedback loop where he gets world-class experts to tell him what he (or his company) is doing wrong. Every mistake is a lesson in disguise.

Stay organized - like Elon Musk

"I do love email. Wherever possible, I try to communicate asynchronously. I'm really good at email." - Elon Musk

Elon Musk kicks off his day bright and early, rising at about 7 a.m, after six hours of sleep. He usually skips breakfast but he never skips morning shower as he considers it the best 'thinking time'. Only then the actual work can start.

Musk spends Mondays and Fridays at SpaceX in Los Angeles, while the other three days he spends at Tesla. His entire day is

broken down into a series of 5-minute slots. To save time, he insists on having lunch during mid-day meetings. Also, he declines most phone calls and relies heavily on email. However, Musk often changes and uses an obscure email address to prevent inbox spamming.

He has been known to work 85 to 100 hours a week, dividing working hours equally between SpaceX and Tesla. His reasoning is that working twice as hard as the usual 40-hour worker will give you twice the knowledge and twice the progress. However, Musk admits that being a business owner is not for everyone and that it requires a lot of sacrifice when it comes to work/life balance.

Another symptom of Musk's high organizational capability is his tendency to remove inefficiencies. Basically, he strips everything that doesn't help him or his companies move forward. Such was the case with Tesla electric car.

When Elon Musk decided to make world's first "awesome" electric car, he had no experience in the automotive industry. So, as a complete beginner, Musk started crowdsourcing feedback from friends and coworkers about electric cars. It turned out that problem was public perception - these cars were regarded as powerless and unreliable.

So, Tesla had to be everything electric cars weren't: fast, sleek, and charged. By looking at what didn't work in electric cars, Musk removed the inefficiencies he witnessed in traditional automotive companies. The result was Model S, which was a hugely

successful electric car.

To top things off, he decided to invest into the Tesla's research and development rather than marketing, taking upon himself to become the spokesperson for the brand. Musk used his personal story as a launch pad for introducing Tesla while providing his team with additional resources to develop a superior product.

Constantly evolve and adapt - like Jeff Bezos

"What's dangerous is not to evolve." - Jeff Bezos

Jeff Bezos starts his day between 7 and 8 am, and always spends at least 8 hours a night sleeping. Before heading to the office, he exercises on his treadmill, while reading the morning newspapers. While at work, Bezos tries to avoid being in the office all day and tends to do a lot of his business remotely. During his free time, he reads, a lot.

In the past, however, he had to work long and hard to achieve his current success. Bezos left Wall Street and founded Amazon.com because he relied on something he calls regret minimization framework:

"The framework I found, which made the decision incredibly easy, was what I called — which only a nerd would call — a "regret minimization framework." So I wanted to project myself forward to age 80 and say, "Okay, now I'm looking back on my life. I want to have minimized the number of regrets I have."

I knew that when I was 80, I was not going to regret having tried this. I was not going to regret trying to participate in this thing called the Internet that I thought was going to be a really big deal. I knew that if I failed I wouldn't regret that, but I knew the one thing I might regret is not ever having tried. I knew that that would haunt me every day, and so when I thought about it that way it was an incredibly easy decision." - Jeff Bezos

Over the years Amazon became powerful company, with a net sales revenue of 136 billion dollars in 2016. Its culture is based on firm Leadership principles, which you can apply practically.

Jeff Bezos proved his ability to adapt to any given situation once again in 2015, when New York Times published a controversial story about organizational culture in Amazon announcing a new time of 'empathy' at Amazon.

Two years later, out of the everlasting need to adapt and innovate, Bezos introduced his Day 1 philosophy to Amazon shareholders. He compares "Day 1" companies — companies that are just discovering their potential — with "Day 2" companies. He defined "Day 2" as stasis, followed by irrelevance, decline, and death of the company.

"Staying in Day 1 requires you to experiment patiently, accept failures, plant seeds, protect saplings, and double down when you see customer delight. A customer-obsessed culture best creates the conditions where all of that can happen.

In Day 2, you stop looking at outcomes and just make sure you're doing the process right.The outside world can push you into Day 2 if you won't or can't embrace powerful trends quickly. If you fight them, you're probably fighting the future. Embrace them, and you have a tailwind." - Jeff Bezos

Take risks - like Mark Zuckerberg

"The biggest risk is not taking any risk... In the world that's changing really quickly, the only strategy that is guaranteed to fail is not taking risks." - Mark Zuckerberg

The first thing Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Facebook, does in the morning is check email, messages, and social networks. Afterwards, he spends about an hour working out. When he gets ready for work, Mark spends no time on trivial decisions, like what to wear. He always wears the same thing: jeans, a pair of sneakers and a gray t-shirt. This approach helps him focus on more important things, and reduces the number of decisions he has to make throughout the day. Zuckerberg usually works for 50-60 hours a week, and he tries to use that time proactively rather than reactively. The rest of his day is spent in reading.

However, Mark did not become a leader just by playing it safe: he took risks when needed, and it paid off.

The first time he took a big risk was at the time he was raising money for Facebook. Even though investors were lining up to hear Zuckerberg's proposals, he decided to shut them out: he

refused phone calls, ignored messages, and canceled meetings to drive up demand. Eventually, 12 investors were ready to fund his site, no questions asked. The rest is history.

Second risk Zuckerberg took was making the freshly-launched Facebook available exclusively to students at Ivy league schools in 2004. That made students at other colleges from all over the country want to become part of this exclusive club. This way, he made sure that supply is never larger than the demand.

During his trip to Bogota, Columbia in 2015, Zuckerberg was asked about the exact moment he came up with the idea for Facebook. To everybody's astonishment, his answer was:

> *"I don't think that's how the world works. Ideas typically do not just come to you. It's a lot of dots that you connect to make it so that you finally realize that you can potentially do something."- Mark Zuckerberg*

The third risk he took was not selling the company, despite numerous lucrative offers: before Zuckerberg took Facebook public in 2012, he had many opportunities to sell the company. He stuck to his guns and believed in what he was doing - now he is worth over 65 billion dollars.

To conclude, Zuckerberg's risk taking attitude is perfectly summed up in his famous quote: "Done is better than perfect." He has determined that finishing something is more important than perfecting it, stating that one can always go back and improve on an existing project. However, doing your best is what counts.

"Many business are afraid to take a risk because they are so worried about making a mistake. Companies are set up so that people judge each other on failure. I am not going to get fired if we have a bad year. Or bad five years.

I don't have to worry about making things look good if they're not. I can set up the company to create value." - Mark Zuckerberg.

All leadership theories

Leadership theories are categorized by aspect which is believed to define the leader:

GREAT MAN THEORY

The idea: Individual is born with characteristics of a leader.

According to this theory, an individual cannot become nor learn how to be a leader - leaders are simply born that way. This means that you either ARE or AREN'T a leader. Factors such as your upbringing, education, and experience are only shaping your leadership abilities - they aren't responsible for making you a leader.

This early theory of leadership studied the traits of great leaders such as Gandhi, Lincoln, and Napoleon, and even though it had no scientific validity, it was important as the starting point for the understanding which human traits make great leaders.

At the time it was all about having a dominant personality, charm, courage, intelligence, persuasiveness, and aggressiveness - in one word, being "charismatic".

TRAIT THEORY

The idea: All leaders share common characteristics or "Traits".

This theory focused on analyzing combinations of individual's mental, physical and social characteristics, with the goal to determine if leaders share certain combinations.

TRAITS

Adaptable to situations
Alert to social environment
Ambitious and achievement-orientated
Assertive
Cooperative
Decisive
Dependable
Dominant (desire to influence others)
Energetic (high activity level)
Persistent
Self-confident
Tolerant of stress
Willing to assume responsibility

SKILLS

Clever (intelligent)
Conceptually skilled
Creative
Diplomatic and tactful
Fluent in speaking
Knowledgeable about group task
Organized (administrative ability)
Persuasive
Socially skilled

Ralph Stogdilll's list of traits and skills that leaders have and non-leaders don't

Ambition and energy, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, intelligence, desire to lead, and job-relevant knowledge were all quite common among potential leaders. However, it turned out that none of these traits, nor any particular combination of them, can guarantee that a leader will be successful.

The developer of the Trait theory was Ralph Stogdill he determined which traits and skills differentiate leaders from nonleaders.

However, all of this turned out to be nothing more than a theory. Over the years, scientists have been trying to determine which specific characteristics make a leader. Unfortunately, all of them failed to provide us with any viable results.

BEHAVIOURAL THEORIES

The idea: Person's actions, not personal characteristics, determine if someone is a leader.

Unlike Trait theory, which focuses on what leaders are like, Behavioral theories try to focus on what leaders DO. This new perspective made it possible for someone without necessary traits to become a leader simply by acting like one. In other words, the Behavioral theory claims that leaders are made and developed, not born.

Lewin's Framework

The idea: Leader needs to know when to adapt a particular behavior.

According to Kurt Lewin's research, conducted in the 1930s, there are three types of leaders:

- **Autocratic leaders**: they make decisions without consulting their team.

- **Democratic leaders**: they allow the team to provide input

before deciding.

- **Laissez-faire leaders**: they don't interfere with team dynamics, and they allow members to make many decisions.

Even though many leaders usually belong to a certain type, Lewin claims that the very best leaders have an ability to adapt: they can use many different behavioral styles and choose the right style depending on the situation.

Michigan Leadership Studies

The idea: Employee-oriented leadership approach is better than production-oriented approach.

This study identified two broad leadership styles: Employee-oriented style (which focuses on interpersonal relations and needs of employees, and accepts individual differences), and production-oriented style (which focuses on technical aspects of the job and accomplishing group goals, and regards workers as a means to an end).

Also, this study determined the three critical characteristics of an effective leader:

- **Relationship-oriented behavior** - effective leaders focused on the relationships with their subordinates and preferred a hands-off supervision rather than close control.

- **Task-oriented behavior** - effective leaders carefully planned

out the work, and delegated tasks with challenging and achievable goals.

- **Participative leadership** - effective leaders strive to build a cohesive well-knit team, rather than work with a set of individuals.

Finally, studies concluded that an employee-oriented leadership rather than the production-oriented, coupled with general instead of close supervision, led to better results.

Ohio University Leadership Studies (Leadership Grid)

The idea: Leader must pay equal attention to both people and results

The model identified five leadership styles by their relative positions on the Leadership grid. Previously known as the Managerial Grid, it relies on two behavioral dimensions - concern for production and concern for people.

- **Impoverished style (1,1)**: The leader is unconcerned for employee satisfaction and work deadlines. As a result productivity and satisfaction within the organization drops.

- **Produce or perish style (9,1)**: The leader believes that efficiency is achieved through proper process organization and elimination of human factor wherever possible. This style increases the output in short run but has a higher labor turnover as a consequence.

- **Middle-of-the-road style (5,5)**: The leader tries to maintain a balance between company goals and needs of people. In this case, neither employee nor production needs are fully met.

- **Country Club style (1,9)**: The leader provides employees with a friendly and comfortable environment, hoping it will motivate them to work harder. However, low focus on tasks usually hampers production.

- **Team style (9,9)**: The leader believes that commitment, trust, empowerment, and respect are the key elements in creating a team atmosphere, which will automatically result in high production and employee satisfaction.
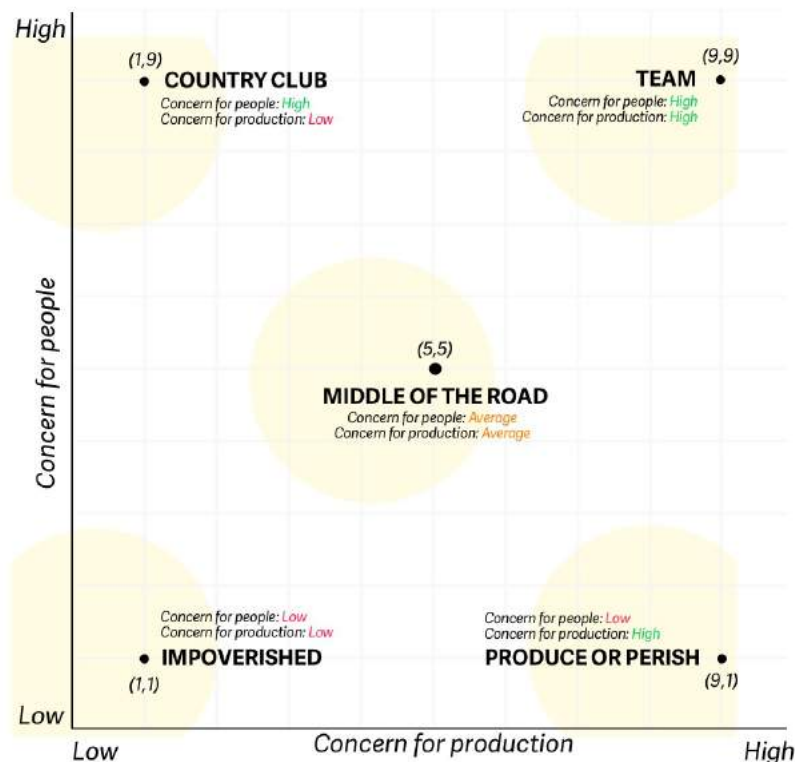
Leadership grid

The Leadership Grid shows us that productivity suffers if manager focus on one area while neglecting the other.

TRANSACTIONAL THEORIES

The idea: Leader enforces strict rules and requires obedience.

According to these theories, there must be a structured hierarchy, where each team member surrenders all independence and sovereignty to the leader. "Punishment and reward" approach is the only way to motivate employees, who are only expected to obey their leader; their competence to accomplish tasks is irrelevant.

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory

The idea: Team members must prove their worth to the leader.

The LMX theory focuses on the relationship that develops between leaders and members of their teams. All relationships go through three stages:

- **Role-taking** - When new team members join the group, the leader uses this time to assess their skills and abilities.

- **Role-making** - In this stage, the leader expects new members to work hard, and be loyal and trustworthy as they get used to their new role. If members fulfill leader's expectation, they become "insiders"; otherwise, they become "outsiders"

- **Routinization** - During this last phase, the leader establishes team routines. Team members who proved themselves in the past work even harder to maintain the favorable opinion of their leader. That will allow them to reap the benefits such as opportunities for growth and advancement.

TRANSFORMATIONAL THEORIES

The idea: Leaders transform followers through their inspirational nature and charismatic personalities.

In its ideal form, transformational leadership creates positive change in the followers with the end goal of developing followers into leaders. It is all about enhancing motivation, morale, and employee performance by giving the team autonomy over specific jobs and the authority to make decisions. The emphasis is on cooperation, collective action, and long-range organizational goals, so the whole system is adjusted to place the community above an individual.

Burns Transformational Leadership Theory

The idea: Leaders transform their followers through their inspirational nature and charismatic personalities.

James MacGregor Burns took a more philosophical approach to the theory of leadership and provided a foundation for transformational leadership theory.

He claimed that transforming leadership occurs when leaders engage with their team in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Therefore, the crucial task of transformational leaders is raising followers' awareness and consciousness to higher levels of conduct and morality.

Bass Transformational Leadership Theory

The idea: Transformational leader is considered, stimulative, influential, and inspirational.

Bernard M. Bass transform their followers into leaders in three ways:

- By increasing their awareness of task importance and value.

- By getting them to focus on team or organizational goals, rather than their own.

- By activating their higher-order needs.

Bass also suggested that the transformational leader has four main characteristics:

- **Individualized consideration** - Emphasis is on an employee needs. The leader acts as a role model (or a teacher) to attract and motivate followers.

- **Intellectual stimulation** - The leader seeks ideas and suggestions from the team. Also, they challenge the prevailing order with innovations.

- **Inspirational motivation** - The leader provides their team with a reason and purpose behind each task and their purpose in the organization.

- **Idealized influence** - The leader becomes a full-fledged role model: honest, trustworthy, proud, and enthusiastic.Groups led by a transformational leader tend to be successful and loyal. Also, they care deeply about the group's ability to accomplish goals.

Leadership Participation Inventory (LPI)

The idea: Leadership is based on five specific behaviors.

This theory focuses on a question: Which characteristics should a leader possess so that other leaders follow them? According to its authors Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner, anyone can become a leader if they adopt the five practices (or behaviors):

- **Model the Way** - The leader establishes company culture. They create standards of excellence and then set an example for others to follow.

- **Inspire a Shared Vision** - The leader has a clear and ideal vision of what the organization can become. Through charisma, they gain followers and focus towards fulfilling the vision.

- **Challenge the Process** - The leader changes the status quo whenever they can. They constantly innovate, take risks, and learn from their mistakes.

- **Enable Others to Act** - The leader fosters collaboration and builds spirited teams, creating an atmosphere of human dignity in the process.

- **Encourage the Heart** - The leader always recognizes individual contributions and rewards their team accordingly. Unlike some other theories, this one had scientific proof to back it up: it was measured and validated by one of the most widely used leadership assessment instruments in the world - the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI).

CONTINGENCY THEORIES

The idea: Leadership style should be based on and adapted to specific situation.

While the Trait and Behavior theories help us understand leadership, there is one component missing: the environment and the external factors in which leaders exist. According to the Contingency theory, there is no single, proper style of leadership - the style should adapt to the ever-shifting conditions of the business world. As external factors and environment change, so should leader's approach.

Fiedler's Contingency Theory

The idea: Choose the best leader for a given situation, and change them when required.

According to this theory, every leader has its own, unchangeable leadership style. Their effectiveness varies from situation to situation, and is determined by two factors – 'leadership style' and 'situational favorableness'.

A company should use Least-Preferred Coworker (LPC) Scale to identify and measure 'leadership style'. By profiling a person they wouldn't like to work with, one can determine if they are a task-oriented leader (with lower LPC score), or a relationship-oriented leader (higher LPC score). Different leaders will shine in different situations.

Next, it is time to determine the 'situational favorableness', which depends on three factors:

- **Leader-member relations** – This is the level of trust and confidence the team has in its leader.

- **Task structure** – This should determine if the task at hand is clear and structured, or vague and unstructured.

- **Leader's position power** – This is the amount of power a leader has to direct the group and provide reward and punishment. By cross-referencing "leadership style" and "situational favorableness", company can always choose the right leader for any given situation, according to theory. In practice, it is not as simple as it seems. Some even claim that Fiedler's contingency model is academic acrobatics and has no practical application in the real world of management.

Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory

The idea: adapt leadership style according to "maturity" of your followers.

Follower maturity is determined by the ability and confidence of the group they are attempting to lead. According to this model, there are four leadership styles:
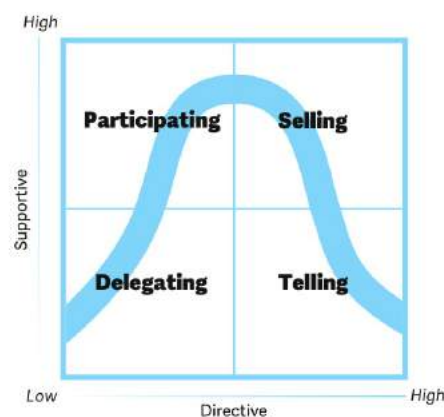
Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory

- **Delegating Style**: (low task, low relationship style) - the leader allows the group to take responsibility for task decisions.

- **Participating Style**: (low task, high relationship style) - everyone shares ideas and decisions.

- **Selling Style**: (high task, high relationship style) - the leader tries to "sell" his ideas by explaining tasks persuasively.

- **Telling Style**: (high task, low relationship style) - the leader gives explicit directions and supervises work closely.

So if follower maturity is high, the model suggests a 'delegating style' of leadership where the leader has to provide minimal guidance. However, if there is low maturity within the group, the leader should opt for 'telling style.'

Path-Goal Theory

The idea: Get things done no matter the obstacle.

To achieve desired goals, the leader should clarify the path, remove all roadblocks, and increase rewards along the route. They can use any means necessary to motivate their team: command, reward and punish, take suggestions from the group, or sugar-coat the task - all that matters is reaching the desired goal.

Depending on the situation, the original path-goal theory identifies four types of leader behavior:

- **Directive path-goal clarifying behavior** - the leader gives clear directions on how tasks should be done.

- **Achievement-oriented behavior** - the leader sets challenging goals for employees and expects top-notch performance, but has confidence in their ability.

- **Participative behavior** - the leader consults employees and asks for their suggestions before making a decision.

- **Supportive behavior** - the leader is concerned for their team's psychological well-being. According to the path—goal

theory, leaders should be flexible and change their style by recognizing and adapting to characteristics of their team as well as external conditions.

Decision-Making Model of Leadership

The idea: When in doubt, follow the map.

According to this theory, the leader first needs to estimate a situation and assess how it will affect the group. Afterwards, he should determine how much the team will support the effort, and then finally choose a style of leading. There is a mechanical process with seven questions and decision points that makes a choice a lot easier.

Afterward, the leader chooses one of the five leadership styles, depending on a situation:

- **Autocratic (A1)** - The leader makes a decision on their own, using the information already available.

- **Autocratic (A2)** - The leader will consult group members to gain more information, and then make a decision (they may choose to share the final decision with the team).

- **Consultative (C1)** - The leader consults selected individuals before making a decision themselves.

- **Consultative (C2)** - The leader consults the entire group before making a decision themselves.

- **Collaborative (G2)** - The group makes the decision while

the leader facilitates the process. Even though this model seems straightforward, certain studies question its credibility.

Decision-making Model of Leadership

The diagram shows a decision tree with the following questions:

- Is the quality of the decision important?
- Is team commitment to the decision important?
- Do you have enough information to make the decision on your own?
- Is the problem well structured?
- If you made the decision yourself, would the team support it?
- Does the team share organizational goals?
- Is conflict amongst the team over the decision likely?
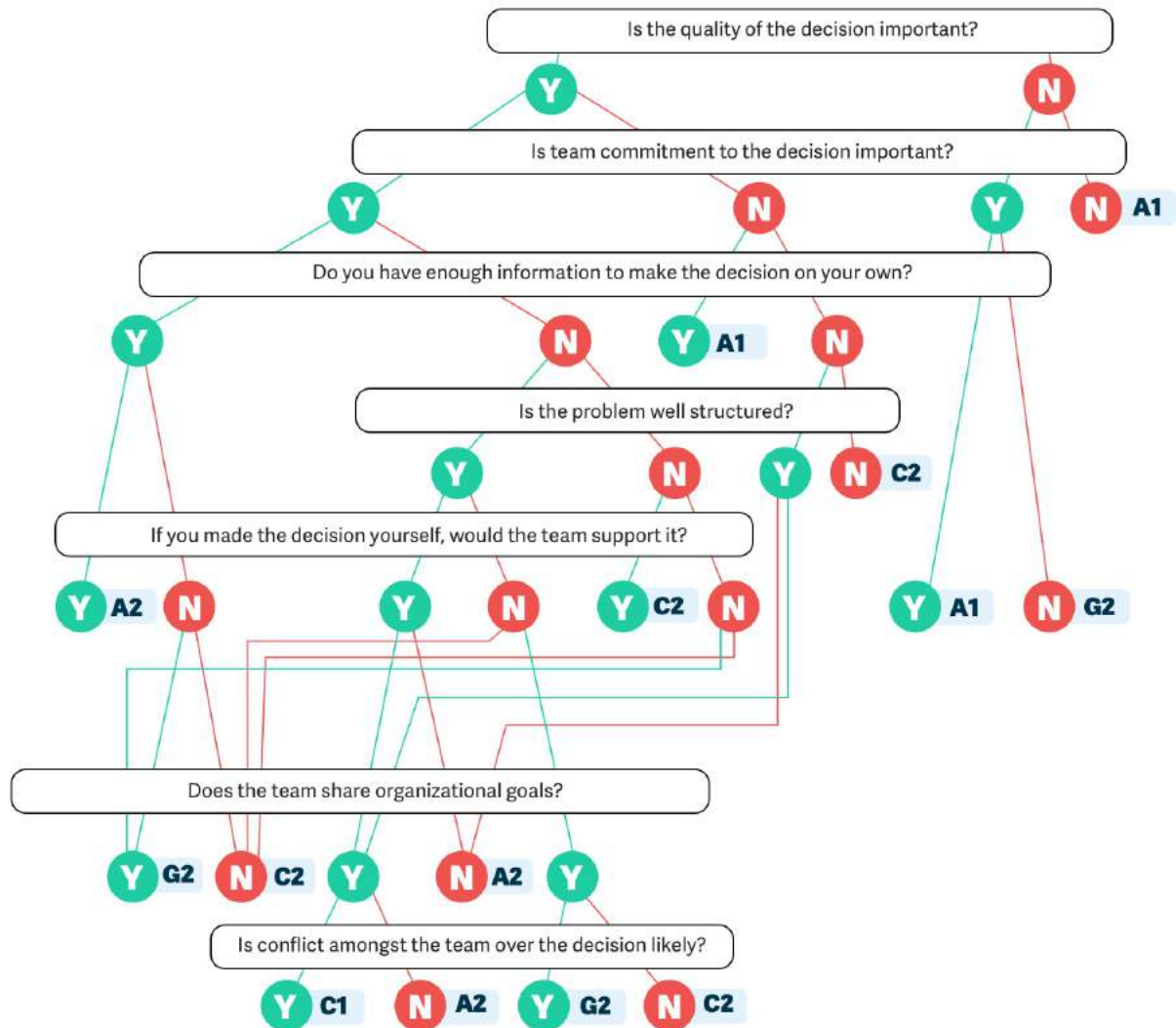
Strategic Contingencies Theory

The idea: Through sheer competence and selfishness, the leader becomes irreplaceable.

According to this theory, there is a very straightforward path to

becoming a leader. First, individual has to become a part of some critical process within the company and must become an expert on a certain aspect of that process. Afterwards, they should acquire and defend the knowledge and skills that nobody else has, while simultaneously preventing anyone else from becoming indispensable.

Strategic contingencies theory claims that a leader's intra-organizational power depends on three factors:

- **Problem skills** - If a leader has the skillset and expertise to resolve important issues repeatedly, then they are going to be in demand. That gives them the upper hand in all potential negotiations.

- **Actor centrality** - If a leader has a central role in the workflow of the organization, everything would stop if they leave.

- **Uniqueness of skill** - If a leader is the only one who can perform certain tasks, they become very difficult or even impossible to replace. Simply by being irreplaceable, an individual becomes the leader within the organization.

Final words

If our calculations are correct, 14 minutes and 47 seconds have passed since you started reading the post. We hope it was a good starting point for all your "leadership" related research.

The difference between leadership and management

If you cannot tell the difference between "Someone is leading me" and "Someone is managing me", the situation may be more serious than you initially thought.

Even though leadership and management (as well as leaders and managers) are often used as interchangeable terms, the way these two approaches affect team culture, workflow process and overall results can prove to be contradictory.

There are 6 key differences between leadership and management:

	Leadership	Management
Is about...	Leading people by encouraging them	Just a process of managing acti
Based on...	Trust of followers	Subordinate control
Focused on...	Long-term goals	Short-term goals
Relies on...	Principles and guidelines	Policies and procedures
Results in...	Change	Stability
Strategy style...	Proactive	Reactive

Differences between leadership and management

But what does that mean in practice? How is a leader different from a manager? Not all leaders will turn out to be good managers. Similarly, not all managers will prove to be good leaders. The fact is that there are many different traits which set

these two groups apart.

Leader vs manager

Let's take a look at two software developer teams as an example. One is led by Mark the Manager, while the other is handled by Liam the Leader. Both teams consist of five members - experienced developers and experts in their areas. They work for the same company, in the same conditions and on very similar projects. The only difference is the man in charge. After a couple of months, the project was finished. The upper management decided to conduct an interview with both teams:

Mark, the Manager

When his team was asked about Mark, they described him as rational, cool headed problem- solver. Team members said that he tended to be very goal-oriented, with a need to keep everything under control. Also, they considered him to be persistent, intelligent, analytical, and strong willed.

However, when it came to internal team collaboration, more than often, issues arose: he was issuing orders, rather than explaining what the benefit of a certain move was. Additionally, he stuck to procedures religiously, not allowing any room for maneuvering or application of alternative solutions.

When good ideas occurred to him, Mark would brief the team about the basics and leave them to it, expecting results without

further involvement. If the idea worked out, he would present himself as a driving force behind innovation, taking all the credit in the eyes of the upper management.

If the idea turned out to be a failure, Mark the Manager would try to diminish "the damage" so he wouldn't be blamed for it.

The worst thing, however, was his relationship with the team. Members often felt like he regarded them as nothing more than a resource - a replaceable set of tools. It was all about results and nothing about accomplishments. When asked if they would work for Mark again, most team members responded: "Only if I'm required to."

Liam, the Leader

Liam's team was a bit different. They described their team leader as inspirational, eloquent and ingenious. Even though he has a vast knowledge of the industry, he was rather unintrusive: he relied on a constructive discussion to motivate his teammates to come up with a variety of different solutions, and then made sure that they accepted those ideas enthusiastically. Afterward, he would step out, magically reappearing to provide guidance when issues arise.

During communication with the members, he was mostly quiet. He spent a lot of time just listening, and occasionally asking questions which often contained pronoun "WE" rather than "I" or "YOU". When the room became silent, he would encourage further

discussion with a constructive proposal, allowing the team to steal the show once again.

Sometimes, the ideas the team brought to the table were out of this world: too expensive, too risky, too unconventional. However, they were well thought out. On these occasions, Liam would say: "It makes a lot of sense in the long run. Go for it, and don't bother yourselves with what might go wrong. I'll explain everything to the upper management and try to get their approval."

Finally, when the project was completed, Liam received an invitation to come to the head office for personal praise. He politely refused and requested that representative of the upper management comes to the team quarters - for it was a team effort after all.

Liam respected everybody, and everybody respected Liam. When asked if they would work for Liam again, most team members responded: "I wouldn't want it any other way."

> *Managers do things right. Leaders do the right things. - Warren G. Bennis*

I am a leader, not a manager!

Are you sure? Can you ever be sure? Well, Vineet Nayar came up with a method that allows an individual to determine if they made the transition from management to leadership. It consists of three simple tests (or questions) which should tell you where you stand

on the matter.

Do I create, or just count value?

Managers will only count value. Sometimes, they will even disable those who add value, by asking for frequent and unnecessary status reports. Leaders, on the other hand, will add to the value team already creates by empowering them and leading them by example. If you want to find out where you belong, answer truthfully to the question below.

Your team has achieved their quarterly goals, and the pressure is suddenly off. You consider this to be:

- Mission accomplished

- The base which the team can build upon

If the answer is A, you focus on the bottom line - just as a manager would do. If you've selected B, you have your eyes on the horizon and a tendency to change the status quo - just like the true leader would do.

Do I influence, or just have power over people?

Contrary to the leader's circles of influence which consists of followers, managers fill their circles of power with subordinates. To determine if you govern the circle of influence (like a leader), or circle of power (like a manager), simply count how many employees outside of your reporting hierarchy come to you for advice or help. The bigger the number the greater the influence.

Am I leading people or just managing work?

Influencing a team to accomplish a certain set of goals is not the same as keeping them under control. Sit your team-mates down for a chat, and pay close attention to the way they talk about work. If they are heavily oriented on current tasks - you are managing them; if on the other hand, they speak of vision, purpose and long term goals - you are well on your way to become a leader.

Behaviors of non-effective leadership

Is being a manager the same as being a non-effective leader? Well not really. Non-effective leaders constantly try to improve themselves, but despite their best efforts, they still tend to show some detrimental behavior. Behaviors like:

Complaining and gossiping

Constantly criticizing a fellow (team) leader says a lot about a person's character. This habit can make you seem petty (at best), or even marking you as potentially destructive for the company's team culture (the worst case scenario).

This type of behavior has two drawbacks: not only does it undermine leadership efforts of the leader you are criticizing, but you will most certainly earn a reputation of a gossip-monger as well. In the company of followers, it's safe to say that none of these traits will help you achieve leadership status you crave for.

Volatility of emotions

True leader knows how to control and express their emotions positively and productively. They have social and self-awareness to know when any given situation requires restraint, silence or confrontation.

On the contrary, if the individual is unable to understand different personalities, there will always be friction between them and their team. Even if you read all the leadership manuals out there and invest incredible energy and resources into becoming a true leader, all your efforts will fall flat if you lack empathy.

Trying to be friends with everyone

Being torn between being liked and being effective is a tale as old as time, so it's no wonder that many inexperienced leaders make this mistake. Having your team consider you as friend rather than their superior will make your life difficult in the long run.

As a team leader, you will have to make some difficult decisions, but many of your "friends" can dismiss them and interpret them as a "personal issues". Therefore, keep your distance: be accessible but not overly engaged, and insist on work-related topics. Personal talk can wait until working hours are over.

Micromanaging

Poking and probing into everyone's daily routine, tasks and duties can be beneficial in early stages of team forming, but at later stages this behavior becomes unacceptable. Also, micromanaging is exhausting: not only will you overexert yourself, but your team

will feel like you don't trust them (which can be a real problem since leadership is based on trust, after all).

Final words

Even though managers and leaders essentially have the same job, their different mindsets make their approaches radically different: while the manager will make sure that their team achieves desired results, the leader will make sure that they feel happy and inspired while doing it.

Managers will work hard to establish strict rules to conduct an efficient process, while leaders will break those rules if by doing so, they can improve the process. Finally, managers will satisfy with short term success while leaders will focus only on improvement and long term goals.

How to manage and lead creative teams

Some managers believe that handling and leading a team of creatives can be very similar to taking care of preschool children: they sleep (procrastinate) when they want, they play (work) when they see fit and often whine if things are not to their liking. But does this group delivers results? Oh boy, it certainly does!

It is made of creatives after all: you provide them with a task and a deadline, and they take it on themselves to complete it as they see fit. All that matters is that jobs get done - other details are not yours to be concerned about.

So, what do you need to know to manage a creative team successfully? For starters, you need an answer to the question: What are they actually like?

Characteristics of creative professionals

To understand what makes creative people tick, you have to get a deep insight into their personalities. Numerous psychological studies determined common characteristics of these individuals, enabling managers to understand how their creative employees engage the world.

Those studies have determined that creative individuals:

- are curious by nature;

- tend to take risks;

- have heightened emotional sensitivity;

- are easy to adapt to the chaotic environment;

- are highly self-aspired;

- nurture divergent thinking;

- are versatile, adaptable, and open to new ideas

All of these traits are clear advantages in the workplace:

- Curiosity sparks new ideas;

- Risk taking enables them to tackle difficult problems quickly;

- Empathy they feel for fellow creative will enable them to work well in groups (but only if other members "share their pain");

- Ability to embrace "the chaos" will allow them to perform in any surroundings;

- Self-aspiration will drive them forward;

- Thinking "out-of-the-box" will result in unique solutions;

- Finally, creative personality of these individuals provides the company with indispensable employees capable of making meaningful contributions.

Leading creative teams

Leading creatives is not the same as managing them. To properly lead your creative team you have to be influential, but not intrusive. Leadership has to be apparent - management has to be done incognito.

It is all in the eyes of the beholder - All creative work is subjected to opinions that differ depending on an individual. From time to time you will receive a design, a text or sketch you are not fond of. Don't let your personal preference be the reason for its dismissal. Run it through the test to if performs well, and make results public.

In his article published in Forbes magazine, Victor Lipman recalled that nationwide focus group testing which proved that the insurance commercial he deemed "ridiculous," was actually enjoyed by the public. It ran for years to come and became the most successful commercial ever, as well as foundation for further marketing activities.

Meaningful praise over extra money - Monetary reward can easily motivate employees that are performing mundane tasks they have no personal connection to. If they fold more boxes per hour than its anticipated, they should be rewarded accordingly - with bonuses. If morale ever drops, it can be uplifted once again with a small intensive.

Creative employees, on the other hand, invest themselves in their work and create it through the reflection of their preferences. Even though they seem like though and independent individuals, the truth is that they are sensitive about their creations. Therefore,

increasing bonus is not as nearly as effective as publicly (or privately - depends on preferences) praising them for a job well done.

Creatives (usually) aren't leaders - They require guidance and thrive by having a "leadership pillar" to lean on to. However, by putting them in the position of power, one of two things can happen:

- They never establish authority and become stretched between newly found responsibility and maintaining a positive relationship with former team mates and friends;

- They go to the other extreme and become dictatorial oligarchs responsible for tension and stress within the team.

Profile of a good leader and a profile of a creative person are very different. According to research, the best creatives exhibit many characteristics that prevent them from being effective leaders: they are rebellious, antisocial, self-centered, and the only time they will stick their neck out is if the comrade is in distress.

Disclaimer: There are rare cases when your top creative can become a leader and take on a managerial position. However, in those cases, you must ask yourself: "Do I want my top creative man to waste his time on organizational issues, or should I allow him to focus on what he does best?"

Managing creative teams

Nobody likes "being managed," especially not creatives. Therefore, if you need to control their work, do it delicately and discreetly.

No micromanagement

This is a no-go from the start. The best way to keep your creatives under some (if any) sort of control is to provide a general roadmap and let them figure out how they want to travel it. However, to keep their imagination from running wild, develop a style parameter - a set of technical specifications, deadline policies and style guides.

No matter how "artsy" your designers are, they have to remember one rule: they are not creating art for the sake of art itself, but as for the sake of your business. A creative project can go off the track easily, and when it does, it needs to be reeled in before it gets derailed completely.

Finally, allow your creatives to work remotely or off hours - refrain yourself from asking them where they were, what were they doing or how they did what they did.

Not all failure is THE failure

Innovation comes from risk, uncertainty, and experimentation. If something is known to work, it isn't creative: simple as that. If your creatives try something new and fail, do not scold them. Sit them down and praise their gutsy attempt - they had your business in mind after all. Experiment with every piece of their work. If 1 in 10

proves to deliver results, you can consider yourself extremely lucky. And yes, trials and tests do cost money - but they are less expensive than not innovating at all.

Creative individuals work best with not-so-creative teammates

Like having two star players, having a couple of excellent creatives in the same team can bring more harm than good: they will either constantly compete, either debate and brainstorm for hours, or (as the worst case scenario) ignore each other completely. Therefore, it would be ideal to surround your star creative with team members that complement their abilities

> *"The solution, then, is to support your creatives with colleagues who are too conventional to challenge their ideas, but unconventional enough to collaborate with them. These colleagues will need to pay attention to details, mundane executional processes, and do the dirty work." - Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic*

Provide them only with meaningful and intuitive work

Do not trap your creatives into mundane, non-creative tasks. They do their best work when they are inspired, and nothing breeds inspiration like doing something which has personal meaning. Contrary to them, some employees only care about the paycheck and clocking out - those are the ones you should delegate "meaningless" routine work too.

Be wary of overjustification effect

Research has shown that tasks which are important for an

individual, tend to diminish engagement once the individual starts receiving the external reward. And, yes - by external reward we mean money.

To clarify: Let's say that your job is a project manager at the IT company, but your hobby is cooking. You like your job (it provides you with the means to survive after all), but you LOVE your hobby even though you earn nothing while doing it.

Well, if you ever leave your position at IT company, and start working as a cook, overjustification effect will occur. You will lose motivation, and the thing you once loved will become nothing more than the job.

This goes double for creatives: they will require money to buy food, but they will drive on your genuine feedback and sense of accomplishment - especially if they feel their work is important.

> *"The most important quality, the one that is most consistently present in all creative individuals, is the ability to enjoy the process of creation for its own sake". - Mihaly Czikszentmihalyi*

Give them creative (and uncreative) workspace

If your creatives are required to come to the office every day, the worst thing you can do is confine them to the "couple-of-square-feet" cubicle equipped with nothing but essential tools like a computer and post-it notes. Not to mention that different colors of workspace can influence your employees in different ways.

Even though many leading companies of the world have already realized that old fashioned cubicles are not the way to go is supposed to be like.

As far as creatives are concerned, you need to remember three things:

They need the inspiration to create

designate one room on your premises and allow your creative team to turn it into mood room (basically a mood board with walls and chairs). Let them spend unproductive moments there, as it can help inspiration to kick in.

They cannot create all the time, or during the given time

Additionally to the mood room, create a rec room and allow your team to blow off some steam. It is of utmost importance to separate the two: in the mood room creatives should be productive - in the break room, they most definitely shouldn't.

To create, they have to detach themselves from the surroundings

If a creative asks to work from home, let them. If they decide to put headphones on, or pick up a laptop and move to more confined and private space, they most certainly have a good reason to do so. Creative's tendency to interact heavily with colleagues when searching for inspiration is rivaled only by their need to seclude themselves when the time for idea realization comes.

To wrap things up

They may be difficult, they may require special treatment, and you may be losing your mind over their work ethic, but your creatives are what propels your business forward.

Even though handling them may seem like a pain, remember that the key lies in trust and very, very long leash.

If you provide them with positive company culture and proper working conditions, they will repay you with excellent work and cutting edge solutions - without breaking a sweat.

Team management skills, challenges, and mindset

When you embark on the five-step journey to becoming a good team leader, having the right attitude is not enough. Even if you are an indispensable team member with lots of knowledge, the new leadership role is challenging.

We asked 10 experienced team leaders:

- What skills do new leaders need?

- What challenges do new leaders face on a daily basis?

- What mindset do new leaders need to inspire and motivate their team?

Here's their advice.

Calamity is the foundation for rational decisions

Patience, the ability to see the big picture, good judgment of character, and keen observational skills are just some of the characteristics that make a good leader.

"In my experience, the best type of team leader is the one who is always calm in the face of panic.

A team leader needs to be able to calmly assess a situation, know his team members' strengths, and properly delegate work to get the job done. Leading a team means having a basic understanding of each job,

but not necessarily being an expert in each, so it is up to the leader to understand and respect the responsibilities of each team member.

Never be too hard on a teammate and respect their work space. The team leader should always ask questions to ensure quality, but shouldn't overrule an expert developer on development decisions, as they will lose self-confidence and respect for their superior."

— Daniel Ali, Vice President and Project Manager at My Quick Startup

Take interest into your team's personal preferences

Take the time to get to know your team, figure out what drives them, what motivates them and how they prefer to communicate.

"As the leader of the solutions team, I think that simple communication is not enough - you have to get familiar with your team's motivations and dreams. Never underestimate the power of a catch up over coffee: it takes 15 mins to sit down with one of your employees and understand what is happening in their world.

This simple hack will not only enable you to keep your team motivated but you will notice issues before they arise as well. Get to know your team inside out on both a professional and personal level - you won't regret it!"

— Hannah Munro, Senior Business Technologist at Itas

Make right, not popular decisions

Popular decisions are not necessarily the best ones. True leaders will make the tough call, even when their decisions are heavily frowned upon.

> "Employees respect owners who are willing to make unpopular decisions, especially when they can explain why they are making them. The leader shouldn't strive for the safest, but for the best thinking in the organization.

> It is fine to avoid unnecessary risks in business, but if the owner always takes the safest route, they are likely to lose good employees and hold on to only those who are risk averse.

> Involving the staff in critical decisions, seeking a variety of inputs and making the best decision – even if it's not the safest one – will grow the respect of the team."

> — David Scarola, Chief Experience Officer at The Alternative Board

Don't doubt yourself

A solid leader needs a set of good problem-solving skills, the ability to define tasks and set clear goals for their team. Also, they provide clear vision and work their pants off for the team. However, confidence is the key prerequisite for a successful leader.

> "Even though it sounds basic - always do what you think is right! I've seen many leaders lie and play politics for personal gain, especially in

projects where there so much room for error and interpretation. I've seen leaders blatantly make a wrong decision that cost companies money.

I have personally been asked to make decisions that would be detrimental to a project. Once, I even gave in and ended up on the receiving end of that mistake. In the end, do what you think is right because you probably are.

I made the mistake of publicly scolding team members when they made repetitive mistakes, or when it resulted in unexpected issues. Now my experience has taught me that one-on-one meetings always end in mutual respect and understanding."

— Gavin Woods, Director of Consulting at PITSS

Share the mistakes you've made

Lecturing someone publicly is never a good move. Being a good leader means treating your team the way you'd like to be treated.

"Your job as a manager is to give your team everything they need to be successful, which means boosting their confidence too. Instead of just telling someone how to set up an email server, explain to them why they should do it a certain way.

Talk about the time when you set it up wrong. Sharing your mistakes not only builds rapport, it also helps you build invaluable experience and triumph in the IT world."

— Roslyn McKenna, Brand Manager at SH Data Centers

Learn from previous mistakes

Every mistake is a valuable lesson in disguise. Team leaders become successful only once they become fully aware of what ineffective team leading is. That way they can learn both from their own mistakes, as well as mistakes of their previous bosses, becoming better leaders in the process.

> *"One of the mistakes I made was assuming that my team members were adequately adapting to our company culture and atmosphere after too short time. I felt as though I may have overwhelmed them with multiple tasks and challenges without checking to see how comfortable they were.*
>
> *From that experience I learned that it's better to ask and check with your team members about how familiar and comfortable they are with what they are doing, instead of only making assumptions."*
>
> *— Jake Tully, Head of Creative Department for TruckDrivingJobs.com*

Communicate carefully

It doesn't matter if your team is dispersed across the globe - a true leader makes members feel like they are working right next to one another. Members need to respect the leader, but only if the leader maintains a delicate balance of humility and authority.

"Listening to your employees is essential (especially when you aren't seeing them face-to-face), which is why I've told my team not to hesitate to reach out to me anytime, night or day. Also, we have a weekly check-in to discuss current projects as well as any concerns they might have.

However, communicating solely via text can be a challenge if you don't express yourself properly. On one specific occasion, I responded in a hurry and without thinking through what I wrote, and the message came across as a demand rather than a request. Consequently, I've learned that it's always better to pause and re-read before hitting "send" and maybe include a well-placed emoji, gif, or funny meme. It won't hurt if you want to lighten the tone."

— Cassie Bottorff, Managing Content Editor at Fit Small Business

Being an expert doesn't make you a leader

The most important skill a tech industry leader needs to have is to be an excellent engineer with an ability to delegate.

"Seniority of tech leaders derives directly from technical excellence. However, this can cause many problems. For example, if an exciting project or problem is brought to leader's attention, their inner-engineer can take over: they will immerse themselves into the task at hand, forgetting that each hour spent on the problem, is an hour they don't spend taking care of the team.

This kind of behavior can send the message that the members' contribution don't matter and that they are here to handle the tasks

which team leaders won't do themselves. It is necessary to include your team in every endeavor. Otherwise, you are destined to fail as a leader."

— Julien Veneziano, Lead Android Engineer at Fueled

Adjust your approach to suit each member

Each leader who takes on a new team should take some time to get to know each member as an individual.

"When I was a new team leader, I was more directive when delegating and assigning tasks. However, I quickly learned that this approach is not effective in the long run. My philosophy now is to hire great people and create an environment which allows them to thrive.

As a leader, you should be there to remove barriers, provide support and encouragement, and then just get out of your team's way.

All employees desire to be appreciated for the personal value they bring. Since everyone is different, ask them how they like to be recognized: some would prefer under-the-radar, sincere emails, while others prefer loud-and-clear public displays. By respecting their wishes, you will provide them with the recognition they crave and build mutual trust."

— Shawna Clark, Founder of Clark Executive Coaching

True team leaders are all-rounders

Being a good team leader is like solving a puzzle - to get a proper effect, a lot of smaller pieces need to fit in.

"If you want people to follow you, they need to be fully aware that you are competent for the job at hand. Once you've established yourself as an expert, do not let it go to your head: build healthy, two-way relationships with your teammates, and encourage open communication as well as a constant exchange of ideas.

Take your time, get to know all members of your team, and get an insight into their strengths and weaknesses. Afterwards, delegate work accordingly. Delegating adequate tasks says two things: first - I know your strengths, and I want you to use them to the fullest, and second - I know your weaknesses, and I will not let you come out of your comfort zone.

Finally, a true leader emerges in the state of urgency and uncertainty. When the times are tough,your team will come to you for your guidance - do not let them down".

— Dejan Kikaš, PHP Developer and Team Leader at S7 Design

PART III

The Quiet Power of Organizational Culture

How to create organizational culture

Your company has an excellent organizational culture? That means you have access to a fancy break room where you can play some foosball... Right?

No... Not by a long shot.

Even though it is all around us, and it determines how employees experience day-to-day life at their companies, it is very difficult to define "organizational culture". However, having one is essential: it prevents organizational chaos, it provides people with a sense of security and creates a base for further company growth.

But, how do you create organizational culture? Which aspects should you strive toward, and what should you avoid? We reached out to business owners, managers, and CEOs with these questions and selected answers which inspired simple, straightforward advice.

Create successful business before the cozy culture

The fact of the matter is: you cannot deliver good service from unhappy employees. That is why having a great organizational culture can be a huge competitive advantage. But there is no point in worrying about which espresso machine your employees would like the most if your business cannot afford one.

"In the beginning, we as entrepreneurs must focus and prioritize the creation of a scalable business over trying to build a cozy culture. Ping Pong tables, free lunch, and massages help make some companies a great place to work, but these things did not make a company great in the first place. These are just the perks that help keep employees happy and a great company on top.

Culture often gets mislabeled as "perks" offered throughout an organization. However, I believe that culture should refer to the aligning individual values with the values of the organization. It doesn't matter what the values of the team are, as long as every member shares those values. At that point, trust emerges - and with trust comes loyalty.

These values have to be installed in the early stages of a company, as it's impossible to come back later and sprinkle in some culture into an established team. The best precaution we can make as entrepreneurs is to hire good fits. If you don't enjoy hanging out with an individual socially, then they won't be a value add for culture."

— Bryan Clayton - CEO of GreenPal

Hire with your organizational culture at mind

There is an ongoing discussion: should you hire individuals who fit into your company culture, should you adapt company culture as team dynamics changes, or do you hire just about anyone and wait until they fit in - if they ever fit in. The company culture at Qminder is rather straightforward: they are client/customer centered, and their internal communication is transparent and

honest. However, what helped them achieve this "zen state" is their recruitment process and careful filtering of potential misfits.

"Even though our hiring process appears to be normal, it's rather "tight" under the surface. Firstly, job ads are demanding and specific regarding what we're looking for in a candidate. Since we push for "personal customer service", we want the applications to be personal. We ask for individual video clips to test their speaking skills and see how composed they are.

Secondly, interviews usually involve people who are not directly related to the position asking unrelated, often though and tricky questions. That can throw people off during the interview process and allow us to see the real person behind the CV.

Finally, the decision process involves everyone in the company - from the junior developers to all the founders. There is a possibility of Veto: if anyone within the company feels the new hire will be a bad fit, the candidate will be turned down. We are a very tight-knit company so we cannot allow big frictions between individuals. The "veto" happens before making the offer to the candidate.

This approach made us turn down a candidate with great experience that was "perfect on paper" as well. Once they came to our office for a visit, they didn't treat our junior employees with the same level of respect as they did with our senior staff. It was abundantly clear that they were not a good culture fit."

— Hyun Lee - Growth Manager at Qminder

You can set organizational culture at the beginning, and stick to it

After you've laid the foundation of successful business and hired the right people, it is time to chose: either you set ground rules and stick with them for the years to come, or you adapt as employees, time and trends change. One of the successful companies that opted for "everything-written-down" approach to organizational culture is MonetizeMore. As the company which is based around remote teams, they rely heavily on their cultural values to make sure everything runs as smoothly as possible.

> *"Our culture has been deliberately built since the first full-time hire I made 4.5 years ago. Whenever we hire, promote or review a team member, we always refer to our company culture - it is the backbone of our business, after all.*
>
> *No matter what, organizational culture is always born within a team whether the founders like it or not. That is why it is paramount that the founders deliberately shape the culture to get the most out of the team. Otherwise, the culture could shape into negative factor rather than one that improves output."*

— Kean Graham - Founder and CEO of MonetizeMore

MonetizeMore is an excellent example of a company that successfully relies on pre-made a set of rules, and expects all employees (new and old) to abide by them. Also, all cultural values of the company are written down in a single document so

all staff members can refer to them at any time.

You can adapt organizational culture as you go along

Some companies have determined their organizational culture at the very beginning - others, on the other hand, have shaped and have been developing their culture over extended periods of time. At Butterscotch Shenanigans, a seven people independent game studio, entire company culture is based around "Always Know Why" concept.

"We've found that this concept allowed us to keep our employees happy and retained while providing them with the possibility to focus on their work. Furthermore, it lets us continuously refine our processes. For example:

We asked: "Why is it hard to have a full week without absentees (for whatever the reason)?" It turns out it's because we're working 5 days per week - so we switched to a 4-day work week.

Then, we asked: "Why are some of our longer days (known in our studio as Jam days, which are typically 12 hours long), most invigorating?" It turns out that our team enjoys working on a single thing for a whole day.

So now we work from 8am to 4pm, Monday through Wednesday, and then do a 12 hour Jam Day every Thursday. The result? Every single employee is happier, we've had less absenteeism, and our productivity has increased. All because we asked why.

However, positive change didn't happen overnight. We stumbled on our core value after months of trying to drive cultural change from the top. It took many months of iteration before we employed the "Always Know Why" concept and our growth since then has been huge."

— Sam Coster - Co-founder of Butterscotch Shenanigans.

Organizational culture is about making your employees feel safe

As often stated, there is no prosperity without taking risks. But if your employees are more afraid of potential consequences of a failure than interested in benefits of an experiment, no one will take any risks. That is why an organizational culture of Procurify is based around not being afraid of failure: fail fast and find a better way.

"When looking for people to join our team, it all comes down to the why. When I started seeing our company take form, I believed in building a team with no ego, and creating an amazing culture for them not just to work, but also be able to learn from each other and improve themselves continuously.

What sets our company culture apart is that we encourage and allow our team members to fail. As the CEO and co-founder, I often meet with new team members to get to know them better and to tell them our story firsthand.

I often tell them: "Don't be afraid to fail because there is no such thing

as failure. There are only good outcomes and bad outcomes, and the bad ones will help you create more opportunities". This has done wonders for product innovation and keeping the right kind of people for our company."

— Aman Mann - CEO and founder of Procurfy

No two organizational cultures are exactly the same

New employees, especially those who switched from another company, will be uncertain about the way "things are done," "who's the man" and "what's frowned upon" at the new company. Some of them will abide by rules of their former employers, while others will try to remain as neutral as possible. At Inspirehub couple of newly recruited staff withheld themselves from asking questions. Reason? At the previous company, questioning leadership in any way was considered a serious infraction.

> *"It all started when I noticed that although I offered praise and rewards my team would never ask questions, especially in public meetings. I had one staff member who also admitted they found it "terrifying" to question leadership based on past work environments. I realized I had to find a way to make people comfortable with asking questions then maybe they would do the transition.*
>
> *I had sent out two logos for "questioning" the day before and got back a total of 2 questions. The next all-hands meeting I grabbed a pencil, and I asked the team to ask as many questions as they could on the pencil. They were laughing and having a great time. I then said, "Ok, I have*

one more." This time I put up the before mentioned 2 logos - we had over 20 good questions in less than a few minutes.

It turned out we had to use "the pencil" for a few more sessions before the culture took over and it became something we understood. Now if I say "Question game this" the team just flies into action. New hires observe and catch on quickly."

— Karolyn Hart - Co-founder and COO of Inspirehub

Implementing organizational culture takes time

Like any other complicated process, implementing organizational culture is a slow and tedious task. However, it will reward you tenfold - if done properly. It took almost a year for Gnatta's upper management to introduce their set of unspoken rules employees should follow.

"In Gnatta we don't have a written manifesto or handbook we ask employees to abide by. Instead, we have a set of unspoken rules which we've taken the time to ingrain into our workforce of 30 people:

1. We work smart, we work hard, but we believe in work life balance - We want our team to view work as an integral part of their being, not as the thing they have to do for 8 hours a day to fund the rest of their life.

2. We're a team - We put all new hires into a dedicated slack channel during their onboarding process so they can experience our culture, banter, and terrible jokes before they join. This way they can tell if our

company suits them, and we can tell if their attitude suits our company's culture.

3. We're an enabler - All of our teams are autonomous, creative, and driven people. Our job is to give them the structure and resources they need to achieve their goals.

It took us roughly 12 months of focused work to get this culture into place and a process for making sure new hires can fit in as seamlessly as possible. The result has been reduced employee turnover, a much more efficient development process, and we grew our business to £5m since 2014."

— Rob Mead - Head of marketing at Gnatta

Ideally, good organizational culture will make colleagues feel like a family

With more than 2,400 employees spread out in more than 25 cities across the country, maintaining our culture can't just fall on the leaders or even our dedicated culture team which is more than 50 employees strong. Three core values are: Be Passionate and Have Fun, Deliver Results with Integrity, and Enhance Lives Every Day.

"How a large company like ours keeps culture so inclusive? Well, our values say: "Actively contribute to the Veterans United' family spirit," and "We genuinely care about the wellbeing of others." So, our employees run wild with those statements – everything from collecting items for an

employee whose apartment burned down, to baking a wedding cake for someone who is on a tight budget, or even raising money to buy a car for an employee who shared one vehicle with her family of five.

We encourage building relationships at every turn, and people take advantage of that. So when we say that we are more like a family than coworkers, it's true – there's a closeness that just isn't found in a typical workplace."

— Ian Franz - Director of culture at Veterans United Home Loans

Conclusion

Like we already mentioned, having a developed and well thought out organizational culture is paramount in establishing productive and overall positive working environment. These tips are the starting point for your company's development, but keep in mind that culture is ever changing and ever adopting. So it doesn't matter if it's the set of unspoken rules or an official document, revise it often and carefully - times change, and with them so should you.

Team culture and its impact on team performance

What do you get when a rigidly structured enterprise hires a team of former digital nomads?

In rare cases, the company would get a beacon of creative light and an inspirational idea how to secure its place on the market. More often, however, the team of former digital nomads who are used to freedom when it comes to creativity and decision-making gets overwhelmed by strict hierarchy and excessive bureaucracy.

In that case, the team is left with two options: either they will adapt (which is time consuming), or they will leave the organization with the excuse of not being able to adapt to new surroundings.

Simply put, they suffer because their creativity and their performance is under the influence of drastically different organizational culture than they are used to.

Types of organizational culture

To understand how culture impacts team performance, we must first take a look at different types of company cultures. Depending on "Decision Making" and "Reward Structure" dimension, there are four types of company cultures:

Each company culture has its strengths and weaknesses which the creators of this theory Jeanne Urich and David Hofferberth

describe as "the culture's unbalanced form".

	Individual reward structure	Group reward structure
Objective decision making	**Competitive** *achievement*	**Controlled** *power & security*
Subjective decision making	**Creative** *self-actualizaiton*	**Collaborative** *affiliation*
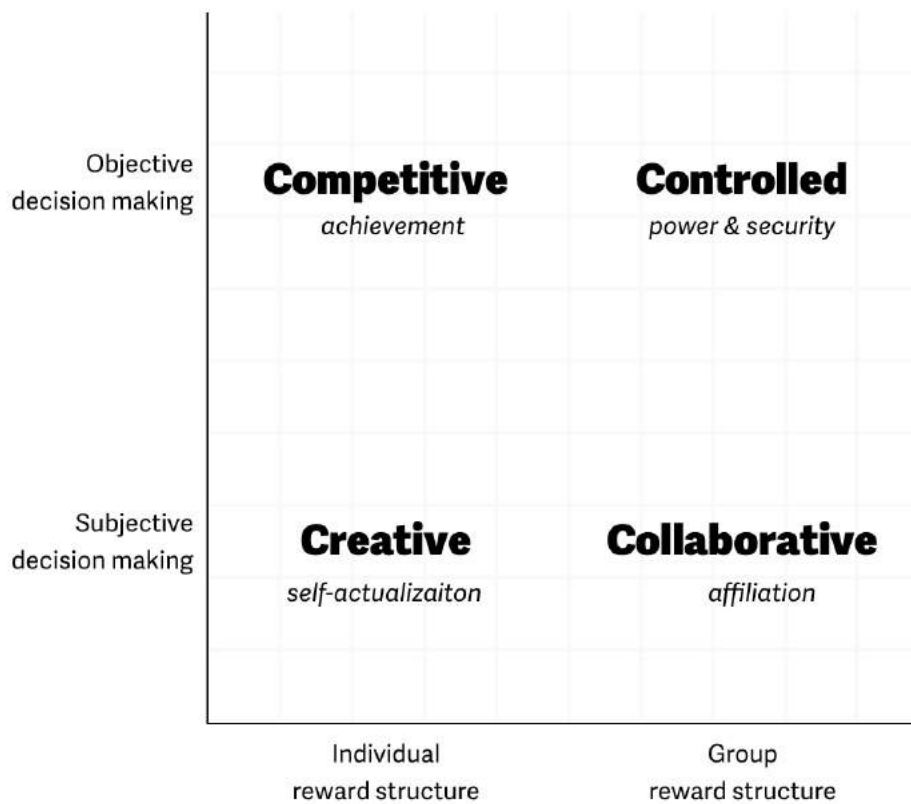
Four types of company culture

1. Creative company culture

This culture is all about self-expression. This means that leaders allow their employees to utilize their creativity, and encourage "out-of-the-box" thinking. This fluid organizational structure is aligned around self-organizing teams and collaborative project groups.

As these companies focus on research and development and professional services, the main goal is to beat the competition by using innovations. Their business owners are not viewed as

"traditional" CEOs, but as entrepreneurs and even visionaries.

The unbalanced form of "Creative culture" is the creation of the cult-like environment, which causes employees to feel loyalty to the "deity", that is, the founder (or the CEO) of the company. Most obvious example is Apple and the personality cult built around Steve Jobs.

2. Collaborative company culture

This type of organizational culture relies heavily on teamwork, consensus and decision-making based on a shared view of desired results.

The main differences between "collaborative" and "creative" companies are that the former value trustworthiness and teamwork above creativity and aggressiveness. Here, the focus is on marketing and customer service as these companies often regard user satisfaction as a success metric.

The unbalanced form of "collaborative culture" can be boiled down to two things: insider clubs and analysis paralysis. Insider clubs create group think, while analysis paralysis, can prolong the decision-making process: not only will it take a lot of time to evaluate alternatives, but there is also a period needed for reaching consensus among some conservative groups.

3. Competitive company culture

For companies that nurture this type of culture, winning is

everything. Based on sales and product development, it is the perfect environment for capable and cunning poachers - individual achievements are valued more than teamwork itself.

It is all about succeeding. So companies that cultivate "competitive culture" will rely on tiger teams which are expected to achieve specific goals efficiently. Their leaders are focused on beating the competition and are driven by personal and team achievements.

The unbalanced form of "competitive culture" can be found in companies that want to win at any cost. These companies will turn a blind eye to an occasional crossing of ethical boundaries and will tolerate blurred lines between competing and cheating - all for the sake of results.

As this environment is an excellent breeding ground for the development of sales superstars, it is quite common to find cliques forming around these successful individuals.

4. Controlled company culture

Controlled culture requires order and alignment based on clear data-driven goals and objectives. Often focused on finance or manufacturing, companies that opted for this kind of culture rely heavily on annual business plans and key performance measurements.

Additionally, they use quarterly improvement metrics and benchmarks to determine if the business is heading in the right

direction. Finally, company leaders create top-down reporting structure based on the hierarchy.

The unbalanced form of "controlled culture" leads to the creation of the cast-system - a system in which individualism is not welcome so as to maintain order and status quo within the company.

When taken to the extreme, controlled culture transforms into a "Mafia mentality". CEOs are regarded as top-level Godfathers, whose direction overrules all, including personal morals and convictions.

Effect on team performance

Organizational cultures have a different effect on different employees. In our last post, we talked about how business owners often allow recruits to decide if their company culture fits them or not. After all, not all of them can succeed in a fast-paced world of startups.

Similarly, controlled company culture is not for energized and creative people. Different cultures suit various types of teams, and each team can succeed or fail depending on the way things are done within the company.

Creative culture

Creative culture is perfect for smaller tech-industry businesses

that rely heavily on agile frameworks. It is all about moving fast and breaking things development.

This "unconventional" culture tends to use self-managed and remote teams, which require certain level of autonomy to function properly. Likewise, highly-structured teams have to struggle, as uncertainty and unpredictability will prevent them from reaching desired productivity.

Collaborative culture

Collaborative culture isn't really for start-ups, but more for scale-ups which strive towards becoming an enterprise. Implementation of this culture implies a larger workforce, as well as the need to keep all employees involved in the process. Companies with collaborative cultures will most likely use matrix management and complex double and triple line reporting structures, so it is no surprise that they will rely on matrix teams.

Matrix teams are considered to be "middle ground" between flexible and rigid teams, as both "extremes" would struggle with the different aspect of collaborative culture. Creative, and flexible teams would be held back by consensus decision making, while rigid teams would lack clear leadership and straightforward set of rules to rely on.

Competitive culture

Competitive culture is for companies that are focused on individual results first, so encouraging "the team" to handle things

may not be the best option. This is one of those cases when using a group instead of a team might be a good idea: There will be a lot of "superstars" competing, so expecting them to collaborate on a common goal would seem unnatural, to say the least.

As team success takes a back seat to individual accomplishments, gelled teams would fail to achieve what leaders of competitive culture companies consider to be a positive result.

Controlled culture

Controlled culture is meant for established enterprises that value highly structured and organized teams, which tend to follow the rules to the letter. Most of the time, they will utilize functional and operational teams as these have proven to provide the most stability to the already rigid culture.

Controlled culture is characterized by excessive bureaucracy and complex management mechanism which prevents creative and independent teams from reaching their full potential. What's more, this approach will demoralize the creatives, as they will feel trapped without freedom to make decisions.

To conclude

If the company chooses a particular culture and implements it throughout all departments, "natural selection" will soon take its course: employees who feel that organizational culture suits them will stay within the organization. Others will will leave on their own

accord.

However, if the company allows different cultures to operate in separate departments, it may impact employee performance severely. For example, HR department has "written communication only" culture. On the other hand, in a marketing department, you can often overhear a loud conversation, discussion, and even laughter.

This "inequality" and "uneven treatment" will most likely cause rivalries among areas, and culminate in outright rebellion if not handled correctly. So, giving each department freedom to choose their own culture is usually NOT a good idea. All employees are equal in the eyes of the company and should be treated as such.

KPI's of effective team management

To determine the KPI's of effective team management, you would have to find a way to measure people's performance. But how do you achieve that? Sure, there are some straightforward ways, like:

- Counting how many tasks a certain team member finishes within a week

- Measuring the average completion time needed for a medium-sized project

But are those real indicators of effective team management? Well, yes and no.

Although they will provide you with hard numbers (number of completed tasks, exchanged emails, and given feedbacks), true KPIs of effective team management are based on something less measurable. According to Bernard Marr, the author of "Key performance indicators (KPI): 75 measures every manager needs to know", to determine these KPIs you should measure:

- Team satisfaction

- Team engagement

- How others perceive each other's efforts

- How employees identify with the company

If those numbers are satisfactory, you are well on your way to

achieve an efficient team management.

> *"There is a strong link between happy employees and happy customers, and another one between happy customers and profit." - Bernard Marr*

Be SMART about your objectives and KPIs

First thing to do is evaluate the relevance of a KPI you want to use to measure a progress toward a certain objective. This objective should be SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound.

Your objectives are SMART if you can answer "yes" to the following questions:

- Is the objective specific enough?

- Can I measure the progress to the objective?

- Am I being realistic while setting goals?

- Is the objective relevant to our organization?

- Is there a well defined time frame for the goal accomplishment?

If your objectives are SMART, it is time to define the KPI by answering a different set of questions.

- **What is your desired outcome?** eg. We want to improve our team efficiency by 20%.

- **Why does this outcome matter?** eg. It will enable us to take on an additional project each year.

- **How are you going to measure progress?** eg. We will measure progress by determining how much time is required for each project.

- **How can you influence the outcome?** eg. We can optimize processes our team uses and provide them with better equipment.

- **Who is responsible for the business outcome?** eg. Team leader will take on the responsibility.

- **How will you know you've achieved your outcome?** eg. Four major projects will be completed between January and October.

- **How often will you review progress towards the outcome?** eg. We will review our progress monthly.

Once you determined the KPIs, evaluate them and constantly keep reevaluating them throughout the process. For example, it may turn out that your team managed to handle not four but five major projects during a ten month period. Reevaluation of the KPI will help you determine whether you've set the bar too low, or some other factor influenced their success.

However, while measuring team efficiency is one thing, measuring "employee engagement" is a whole different ball game. Although KPIs like "employee engagement" or "employee satisfaction" sound very appealing, they can't be easily boiled down to a single

numerical value. So, managers had to invent a way to measure KPIs like those.

Measuring KPIs of team effectiveness

Even though the people are the driving force behind every company, most companies don't know how to meaningfully measure performance. Most of the time, businesses will use oversimplified metrics (like the days of training or absenteeism) to determine if their employees are performing well, while disregarding the most important KPIs in people-run company: people happiness, engagement and productivity.

According to Marr, you have to measure several things to determine a team's performance:

Employee satisfaction index

Employee satisfaction index (ESI) answers the question: "To what extent are employees happy on their job?"

So, if you want to find out how your team feels about their managers, or development opportunities, the best way is to use a survey: it should be anonymous, short and Likert scale based. Even though many companies conduct this survey once a year, it's advisable to interview 10% of the workforce every month.

This means you will have two more months to make corrections and address issues your employees pointed out. Also, make sure

you actually find the solution to the problems at hand - doing nothing will lower the morale and cause even more dissatisfaction.

Employee engagement level

Employee engagement level (EEL) answers the question: "To what extent are employees ready to devote themselves to the mission and the vision of the company?"

Similarly to ESI, EEL is measured with a survey. Even though some companies make their own questionnaires, Gallup's survey is most commonly used. It consists of 12 YES/NO questions and provides you with an insight in the percentage of the employees that are engaged, actively engaged,disengaged or actively disengaged.

If you, on the other hand, choose to make your own survey, keep several things in mind: it should be short and concise, conducted by external provider (if possible), and should result in change in behaviour - keeping the status quo will only result in further disengagement.

360 degree feedback

360 degree feedback answers the question: "How well do your employees perform in the eyes of the colleagues, supervisors and clients?"

Instead of questioning immediate superiors only, question everyone but anonymously. That means including the supervisor,

coworkers, clients and even the employee who's being evaluated. By providing large number of inputs you will get an objective performance review which can form a base for a pay rise or provide an insight into employee further career development needs.

There is no secret formula for creating a perfect 360 degree feedback. A good survey should focus only on observable behavior and question one behavioural pattern at the time.

Bottom line is: The key of 360 degree review is confidentiality as reviewer is more likely to be objective once they realise there will be no personal confrontation because of their feedback.

Employee advocacy score

Employee advocacy score (EAS) answers the question: "Would our employees want to be our public representatives?"

Very similar to Net promoter Score, EAS is a KPI closely linked to staff satisfaction and loyalty.

Measuring it is very simple and comes down to answering one question: "Would you recommend this company as an employer to a friend?" Answers should vary from 0 (not at all) to 10 (most definitely) and will divide all respondents into three categories:

- **Advocates (9-10)**: Loyal, enthusiastic employees who will gladly promote the company;

- **Passives (7-8)**: Satisfied but unenthusiastic - hardly the

promoters for the company, and more likely to leave the business;

- **Detractors (0-6)**: Unhappy employees who can potentially damage your brand by badmouthing it.

Once you get raw results, you can get staff advocacy score by using the formula:

Employee advocacy score = % of advocates - % of detractors

There is really no need for us to point out that negative employee advocacy score is a red flag that indicates the need for a complete system overhaul.

Companies with excellent reputation usually have EAS over 30. According to the latest rankings of Fortune 500 companies, Microsoft is topping the chart with the score of 76, while Apple is in 12th place with EAS score of 58. Interestingly, Disney - which is regarded as the company which nurtures family values - is placed at a near bottom, with EAS score of 7.

To increase efficiency of this method, try conducting a survey at least several times a year. Also, include a few additional questions to determine the pain points of your employees. Once you do that, address them - you would be amazed at how solving just one problem can turn a hardcore detractor into a passionate advocate.

Conclusion

Determining the KPIs of effective team management will not only allow you to figure out how close you are to achieving desired objectives, but it will also help you clearly define the steps you need to take to increase your employees' satisfaction and engagement.

Even though your team may not be producing desired results at the moment, investing in them will give you a strong foundation for future successes.

Just keep in mind that humans are ever-changing and ever-evolving, and you may need to make some adaptations. Be patient and persistent, and your team will repay your trust tenfold.

Common collaboration myths

Lately, we came to revere collaboration as something that makes or breaks an organization. Collaboration become a silver bullet for everything. If you can't solve a problem or can't meet milestones in time - collaborate! We begin to insist on collaboration even in places where it hinders productivity.

Take Linux or Wikipedia for example, all projects that became successful because of the sheer power of collaboration. They make us revere the hive mind, the wisdom of crowds, the miracle of crowdsourcing.

But we're missing the big picture. If we take a closer look, all those projects were created by people working alone. There were no brainstorming sessions or huddle ups. They were all asynchronous, relatively anonymous interactions. This doesn't sound anything like a typical, politically charged, face-to-face open office.

You can engage in deliberate practice - the thing that actually makes you better - only when you're alone. When we practice deliberately, we identify tasks that are out of reach, learn how to do them, monitor progress, and revise the process.

Collaboration isn't always better. Sometimes we need independent, deliberate practice.

This applies especially to developers, designers, and writers. Kafka for example couldn't write when his fiancée was near him:

> "You once said that you would like to sit beside me while I write. Listen, in that case I could not write at all. For writing means revealing oneself to excess; that utmost of self-revelation and surrender, in which a human being, when involved with others, would feel he was losing himself, and from which, therefore, he will always shrink as long as he is in his right mind. That is why one can never be alone enough when one writes, why there can never be enough silence around one when one writes, why even night is not night enough." - Kafka

That's why open-plan offices reduce productivity. Open office plans simply squeeze more employees in less space, while management hopes that'll make people collaborate more. But it doesn't work like that.

People at open offices need to deal with a lot of interruptions and noise. For instance, a guy to your right might have allergies and is constantly clearing his throat; or a girl to your left is a smoker who constantly coughs; or a person in front of you may constantly interrupt everyone with a non-funny joke. To make matters worse, the non-productive employees only get louder and louder as time goes on.

Open offices make people generally more hostile, unmotivated, and insecure. Research found that people in open offices:

- change job more often,

- take more sick days,

- suffer from higher blood pressure and stress levels,

- argue more with colleagues,

- worry someone is eavesdropping or spying their computer screens,

- have fewer personal and confidential conversations,

- are more socially distant and slower to help others,

- have elevated heart rate due to loud and uncontrollable noise.

Collaboration is important but sitting people next to each other doesn't translate automatically to more of it. What people need to be productive is:

- a quiet space to work without distractions (2-4 person per office),

- a place where they can casually mingle and exchange ideas (during lunch or chat),

- a place where people can have a meeting (conference room).

The presence of others can impair our problem-solving skills. Due to peer pressure, we tend to follow what others say. No matter how smart we are, we're all susceptible to the herd mentality.

In one experiment, students were given a test so simple that 95%

of the group answered every question correctly. But when the experimenters planted an actor who intentionally gave wrong answers, the percent of students who gave all correct answers dropped to 25%. And the funny things is, when everyone was asked if they were influenced by the actor, everyone truly believed that they came up with the answer on their own.

Group brainstorming is another popular concept that doesn't work as advertised. Common wisdom says that people in groups generate more ideas than individuals - but that's not true. People produce more ideas of equal or higher quality on their own. And the performance gets worse as the group size increases: groups of four perform better than groups six, which in turn perform better than groups of hundreds

There are three possible explanations to why group brainstorming fails:

- Social loafing: people work less to achieve a goal when they work in a group than when they work alone.

- Production blocking: only one person can talk and generate ideas at a time while others have to sit passively.

- Evaluation apprehension: people are less likely to suggest an idea in fear of looking stupid.

Even though group brainstorming doesn't work, it's getting more popular than ever. That's because people need to believe the group performed much better than it really did; they are attached to the activity and need to justify it, or else admit they wasted

time.

It's ok to have a group brainstorming, as long as you know that the main benefit of the activity is social cohesion and team bonding, and not getting best ideas.

The exception is online brainstorming. It combines the best of both worlds: people get to think alone and produce more, while at the same time get to bounce ideas off each other. Online brainstorming, when properly managed, gives better results than either group or solitary brainstorming. Even the group size positively affects the results: the more people, the better.

So next time you need to brainstorm some ideas, open a discussion, invite people, and let them collaborate alone yet together. You'll get better results than if you'd organize a meeting and force people to sit passively while the speaker gets to finish their monolog. Plus, you'll have a written trace of all the ideas so you won't have to type them out manually.

Is a candidate a good cultural fit for your company

The secret to low employee turnover is the same as the secret to the long-lasting relationship and can be summed up in one word: compatibility. It isn't enough for an employee to be satisfied with their job - the company has to be happy with the employee as well.

Essentially, what company has to do before it hires someone is to determine if a certain individual is a good cultural fit.

What is a "cultural fit"

According to Adrian Furnham a cultural fit is:

> *A fit is where there is congruence between the norms and values of the organization and those of the person. - Adrian Furnham*

The extreme example of bad cultural fit would be ambitious, money-hungry, result-oriented individual landing a job at a non-profit organization. Even though he sees this new position as nothing more than the stepping stone in his career, his approach could prove to be detrimental to day-to-day organization's functioning.

His basic instincts to gain things and obliterate competition will be met with resistance from his new colleagues who are used to do things more "peacefully." On the other hand, he will be frustrated

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with passiveness of the collective, viewing them as unambitious and undedicated.

If an organization doesn't have any benefits from his skills, and he feels he cannot achieve his full potential there, this professional relationship is destined to fail.

However, most of the time, your newly appointed employee will hover in "the gray area" of organizational culture, trying to adapt to the new surroundings. Most will succeed, but there will be those who will fail .

How to know if an employee is a cultural fit

Unfortunately, to be 100% sure that an individual is not a cultural fit, you would have to allow them to spend some time at the company (usually 3 to 6 months). As laying off a newly appointed employee can cost up to three times their yearly salary, it would be best to weed out misfits during the recruitment process, as much as possible.

You can do this in two steps:

- Determine what your company culture is really like, and what characteristics candidate needs to have to fit in;

- Determine if candidate has "what it takes" by using specific set of questions;

First step

If you do not know what you are looking for, you will never find it.

The cultural fit assessment starts by comprehensively determining your organization's current culture. However, if the time is of the essence you can just find answers to the following set of questions:

About Work:

- Do we work collaboratively, independently or do we use a combination of these approaches?

- Are our decisions consensus-driven or made authoritatively?

- Is our communication verbal or written, direct or indirect?

- Are our meetings serious or lighthearted, and how are they structured?

About People:

- Are most successful people in our company individual or team players? Are they proactive or reactive?

- Is our structure hierarchical or flat? Is authority centralized?

- Are there clear reporting structures or do we rely on the matrix?

- How do we reward people who do well, and what do we do with people that do not?

About Commitment:

- How many hours a week do we expect people to work?

- Do we allow flexible working hours, or do we insist on set schedule?

- Are we looking for someone who will stay with us for a longer or shorter period of time??

About Office Ambience

- Are we settled in open-space or closed-door offices?

- Is our dress code more or less formal?

- What do we do to relieve stress and have fun?

Answers to these questions will provide you with a blurry overview of your company's culture, and a pattern your candidate should fit in. Only then you can proceed to interview potential employees to determine if they will be good cultural fit in the workplace.

Second step

Determine your candidate's potential by asking them a series of specific questions. There are countless blog posts online which provide you with a set of questions a recruiter should ask any candidate. However, there are not many which will help you determine if the person sitting across of you is a good culture fit for your company.

According to Lou Adler there are 5 dimensions you should pay attention to when determining if the candidate is a good cultural

fit. Have at least one question for each of these aspects.

Pace

How the candidate handles rapid changes and sudden decision making? Fast growing and developing companies require people who can adapt, collaborate, and work with minimal supervision. On the other hand, companies with a strict set of rules expect their employees to pay close attention to detail and be on board with the complex and hierarchical decision-making process.

Example question:

> *Tell us about the project that was running late and how you handled the delays? Did it breach the deadline? Who was responsible?*

Degree of structure

How the candidate handles organizational chaos? Startups, for instance, are constantly developing and adapting to changing market conditions, while companies with longer life spans (10 years and more) are structured on organizational and process levels. If an individual needs clear decision-making process, they will have a tough time at agile companies that rely on chaos to make quick progress.

Example question:

> *Can you describe the management style that will allow you to maximize your potential?*

Managerial fit

Will candidate get along with their future boss? While some people don't mind who their manager is or what they are like, others have certain standards and won't settle for less. If you misjudge your candidate and they do not "click" with their superiors, you can expect lower performance, potential conflicts, decreased employee satisfaction and higher turnover.

Example question:

> *What must your superior never do?*

Job fit

Will candidate's personality fit the job they have applied? The creative individual will feel trapped at the job that consists only of mundane tasks, while the employee who preferred a structured set of rules will struggle in a chaotic environment. When it comes to this aspect, you can filter out the misfits before the initial round - simply by clarifying job expectations in the job advert. Do not sugarcoat it, as few extra lines of honest text will repel bad picks and save you hours of CV read-throughs and interviews.

Example question:

> *What do you expect from this position? (you should ask this question only if you get the sense that inadequate candidate somehow slipped through initial elimination round)*

Adaptability

Will the candidate be able to perform their duties in given circumstances? This aspect applies to those potential employees who come from distinctly different organizational cultures. Even though their accomplishments at the previous company speak for themselves, they achieved those results under distinctly different circumstances. Essentially, the higher the adaptability, the better the hire.

Example question:

Describe the work environment or culture in which you are most productive and happy. Which aspect of it do you consider essential?

One question to rule them all

If you do not want to spend time checking candidate's fit one aspect at the time, you can just ask them one question and find out everything you need to know. After ten years of research, Lou Adler claims he has determined the ultimate cultural fit assessment test in the form of one question:

What single project or task would you consider the most significant accomplishment in your career so far?

According to Adler, answering this question should take from 15 to 20 minutes and should be propelled forward by additional questions which include:

- Can you give me a detailed overview of the

accomplishment?

- Tell me about the company, your title, your position, your role, and the team involved.

- What were the actual results achieved?

- When did it take place and how long did the project take?

- Why were you chosen?

- What were the 3-4 biggest challenges you faced and how did you deal with them?

- Where did you go the extra mile or take the initiative?

- Walk me through the plan, how you managed to it, and if it was successful.

- Describe the environment and resources.

- Describe your manager's style and whether you liked it or not.

- Describe the technical skills needed to accomplish the objective and how they were used.

- What are some of the biggest mistakes you made?

- Tell me about some aspects of some project you enjoyed.

- Aspects you didn't especially care about and how you handled them.

- How you managed and influenced others, with lots of examples.

- How you were managed, coached, and influenced by others, with lots of examples.

- How you changed and grew as a person.

- What you would do differently if you could do it again.

- What type of formal recognition did you receive?

In just 20 minutes, the interviewer will know everything about candidate's ability to handle the job. The details this answer provides will tell you all you need to know about person's mindset, approach, people skills and expectations from a new job.

This question is the most effective if the candidate has chosen to speak about the project that is relatable to something they are expected to do in the new company.

Conclusion

All this being said, you should keep in mind that recruiting for cultural fit would only be utterly unwise. After all, every new employee is here for their particular set of skills. It is important to know that you will probably never find an absolute cultural fit and that each new employee will have to go through an adjustment period.

PART IV

When Things Go Bad

Why misunderstandings happen?

Misunderstandings happen because there's a big drop off between the sender and the receiver. When you send a message, it goes through a lot of processes and its original meaning gets lost. To make sure there's no misunderstanding, keep in mind how the communication actually works.

Let's say a client wants to tell a designer what kind of website they want. A client first writes the message and right there, during that writing process, the message loses a big chunk of its original meaning. Maybe you can't communicate context, have different interpretation of common terms, or maybe you're not so good with words. Even professional writers struggle with concise and clear communication.
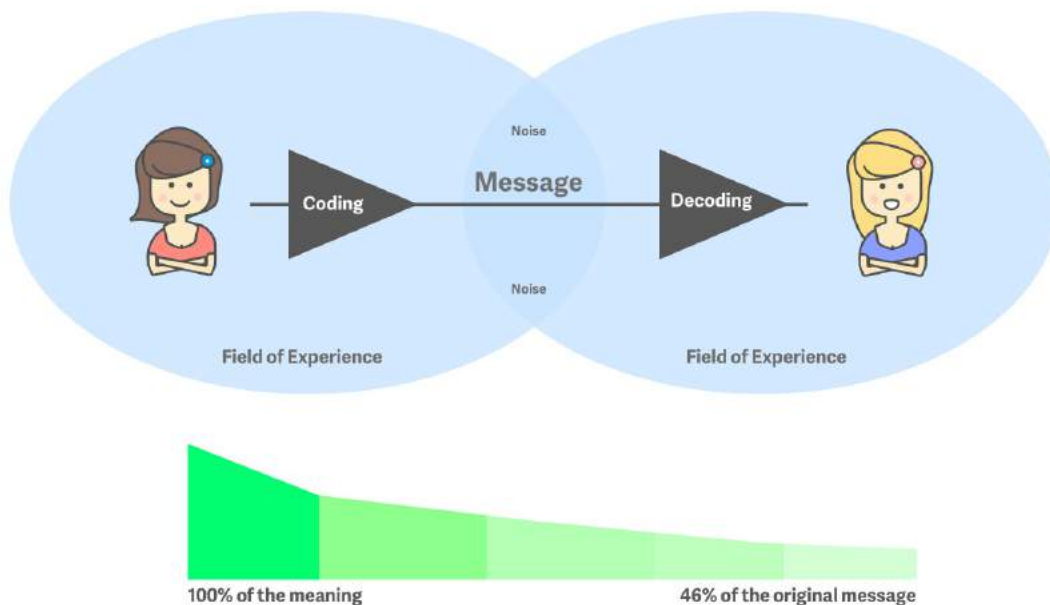
How the message looses its meaning during communication

The medium (eg. email or task comment) also takes away some of the message by limiting what can be said and how. Then, there's the noise around the medium that downgrades the message's quality: reading a long email in a noisy office while there are thousands of other unread emails is different than reading the same message on a piece of paper in your private office.

Then comes the decoding, when a person interprets what you wrote and distorts the original message further. When the designer reads your email, they have to decode the message using their own field of experience. For example, you may ask for a prototype and the designer may understand comp, so he'll spend a lot of time making pixel-perfect PSDs when all you wanted was a fancier wireframe. Good news is, the more you work together, the more your fields of experience overlap and there's less room for misunderstanding.

At the end, the designer gets a different message than the one client had in their head. So, when you communicate, take into the account:
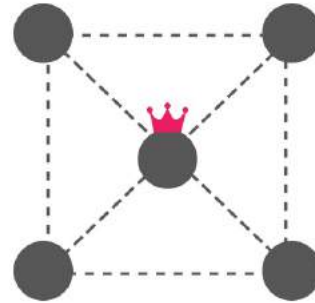
- how you express something,

- the medium and environment,

- and the other person's field of experience.

There are four basic communication patterns: circle, chain, Y, and network. The network pattern is the most efficient and the one you can use only if you keep nexus of activity online. In the
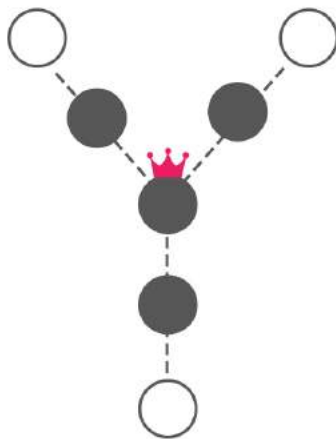
network pattern, everyone can communicate directly with everyone else so there's less room for message distortion.
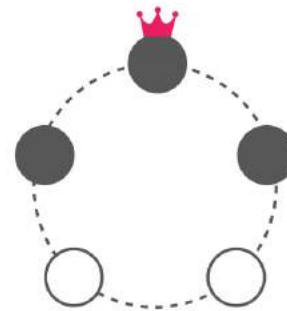

Basic communication patterns

The network pattern saves you from time lags and "monkey on the back" problems.

To have a "monkey on your back" means being responsible for someone else's problem. This happens most often when someone can't proceed without manager's approval so they hang off the problem to the manager, thus giving him the monkey.

For example, a developer might run into you and say:

Hi there! Great to run into you, because you see, we've got a problem with...

You're in a rush so you say you'll let them know later. You might wonder what's wrong with that.

But let's examine what really happened: before the two of you met, the developer had a monkey on his back and you were free; once you parted, the monkey was on your back and the developer was free. Basically, you got stuck with the problem, thus neglecting your own.

To make matters worse, people sometimes have no choice but to give away their monkeys to managers due to bureaucratic reasons. The more managers take on their back, the greater the bottleneck they become; this is until they end up with so many problems that they don't have the time to do their job. While the managers sits on a big pile of tasks, others will complain how they can't make up their mind.

The solution to the monkey problem is to set clear boundaries from the start and never accept the ownership of the monkey. At no time, while helping, will someone's problem become your problem. It means that if someone asks for a consultation, it's their job to leave with the solution.

It's like in school: if someone asks you to help them with their

math homework, you should help them but at no point should you touch the pen or do the homework yourself. By taking the pen, you set yourself up for more work down the road and people know they can take advantage of you.

Never have issues on a project: issues are talked about, problems are solved.

How to resolve conflicts within a team

When we say "a conflict within the team", we do not mean a superficial quarrel about what should be ordered for lunch.

Oh no.

By team conflicts we mean those rooted misunderstandings that are on the way to become "apple of discord" that will break your team into tiny "impossible-to-reattach" pieces, costing your company money and manpower.

Similarly, we are not going to waste a lot of your time on constructive conflicts. Instead, we will focus on prevention and management of destructive conflict which is (whether you like it or not) bound to happen sooner or later within your organization.

But before we start, here is a tip: when conflicted parties start attacking the person, rather than the problem or their actions, you are most certainly witnessing constructive conflict turning into a destructive one.

Conflict management - for managers

If done properly, conflict management can put one of the conflicted parties in the position of power, allowing them to "attack" and "withdraw" at proper times, thus keeping them in the control of the entire process.

However, for managers, the true purpose of conflict management is to find a solution that will prevent conflicts within the team altogether. According to the paper entitled Constructive Conflict by Mary Parker Follet, there are three ways managers can handle conflict:

- **Dominance** - the manager uses force and position of power to resolve the conflict, usually allowing one side to win. Even though this approach is very effective short-term, it can prove to be highly counterproductive in the long run.

- **Compromise** - finding the middle ground, the manager has all conflicted parties give up on something for the sake of conflict resolution. This approach often leaves many participants unsatisfied, as they had to give up something they considered valuable.

- **Integration** - manager tries to incorporate fundamental desires or interests of all sides into the solution. Even though it sounds great, implementing this approach is a challenging and time-consuming task which can be realized to the fullest only on rare occasions.

However, before they choose the way to handle conflict, managers are advised to create a "conflict roadmap."

Conflict mapping

One of the best conflict maps was conceived and realized by Paul Wehr - a tool that will enable them to find their way through a particular conflict.

It may not be the fastest, but it is the most thorough way to handle the conflict within your team.

To make the "conflict roadmap", you will have to determine the following:

- **Conflict Context**: gather information about the history of the conflict and its physical and organizational settings. Note why and where it happened, and what the argument actually is about.

- **Involved Parties**: There are three party levels: primary parties (who oppose one another and have direct stake in the outcome); secondary parties (allies and sympathizers of primary parties, who have indirect stake in the outcome); and third parties (usually mediators, with no stake in the outcome). Designate which members belong to which party. It will allow you to get an overhead view of alliances and clicks.

- **Causes and Consequences**: As a conflict emerges, cause and consequence tend to blend, claims Wehr. Causes of conflict are different and can vary from hostility, interests incompatibility to cultural and language differences. Often, one will derive from another: the pair that was fighting over differences of opinion on particular facts now fights out of pure hostility, which took their conflict to the whole new level. (Depending on the seriousness of the cause, you should adopt the approach: for example, deep hatred is not handled by domination).

- **Goals and Interests**: "Goals" are acknowledged objectives

of conflicted parties, while "interests" are what motivates the parties. By mapping out the conflict, you can help opposing sides distinguish their "goals" from their true "interests". This will enable them to understand each other better and unify all their goals and interests.

- **Dynamics**: Fact of the matter is: conflict is constantly moving and changing - usually for the worse. Different conflict dynamics require different approaches. For example, escalated conflict is not handled in the same way as the conflict in early stages.

- **Functions**: List all positive consequences of the conflict, for all opposing parties. If a manager is aware of all potential positive outcomes and results, they may find alternative ways to produce them. Ultimately, this approach should transform the conflict into cooperative resolution.

- **Regulation Potential**: How to handle conflict at hand? Should you try to resolve it by yourself, or maybe introduce a mediator? When thinking about the regulation potential (or the way conflict should be handled), focus on "limiting factors". There are two types of limiting factors: Internal (such as the simple wish of the parties to maintain their relationship); and external (such as law or higher authority that might be introduced). Analyse them and use them to the team's advantage.

Once you complete a conflict roadmap, you can use it in a number of ways: each party can use it on its own (to clarify the conflict from their perspective), or everyone can get a glimpse (so both sides can present their view of the conflict).

If you choose to relieve your roadmap to a third party (such as a mediator), they could use it to interview the conflict parties, ask them to modify it from their perspectives, and present it as the first step toward resolution.

5 styles of conflict management for participants

When we talk about conflict management, most people first think about "Thomas Kilmann conflict mode instrument" or TKI. The research of before mentioned Kenneth Thomas and his colleague Ralph Kilmann in the 1970's helped them identify five styles in which different individuals handle conflict.
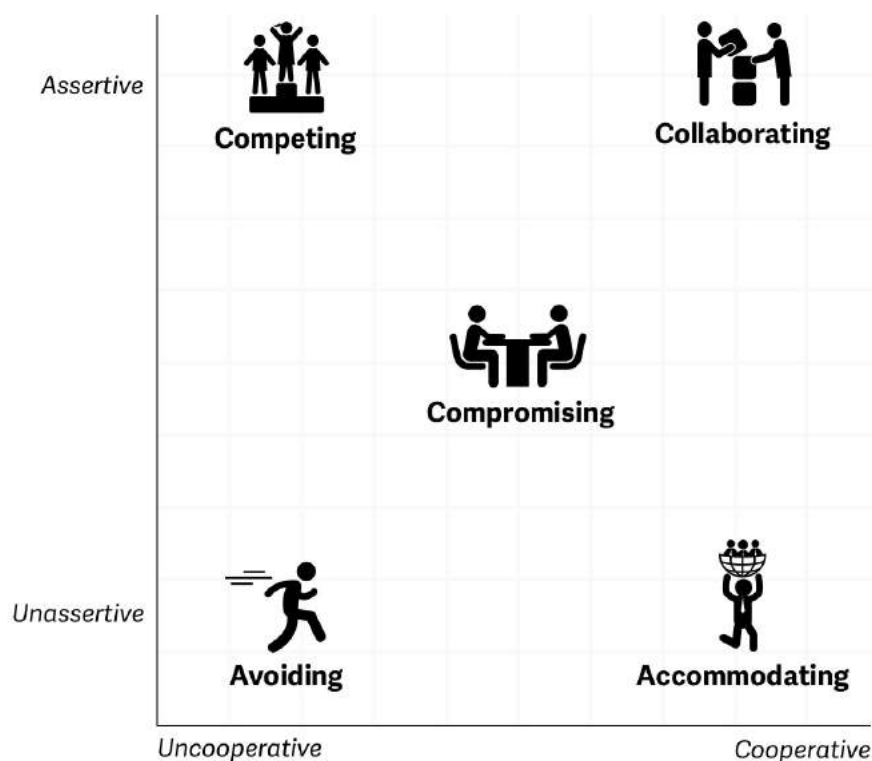
Ways how you can handle conflicts in a team

Essentially, each of us has their approach to conflict resolvement. However, using the same method will not resolve all conflicts successfully. The magic formula is to develop a flexible toolkit of techniques and learn to recognize the situation to implement the right one.

But what are the five different styles Kenneth Thomas has identified? It is best to show it to you by using a simple picture:

And then explain it using words. And we will sort it from least recommendable to most recommendable.

Avoiding (we both lose)

This is probably the worst approach to handling conflict because it all boils down to avoiding it altogether. Individuals that use this approach tend to accept decisions and requests of their supervisors without question, and often delegate difficult decisions and tasks (if they ever find themselves in the position of power).

Essentially, this utterly unassertive and uncooperative approach benefits no one as none of the parties included gets what they want. And even though this passive approach can be useful on rare occasions, try to avoid it.

Good if:

- There are a lot of stirred emotions about an insignificant

issue;

- The solution is on the horizon and conflict will inevitably resolve itself;

Bad if:

- There is a real danger of the conflict escalating;

- The issue in question is of major importance for your team;

Accommodating (you win, I lose)

And while "Avoidance" is a tendency to keep status quo, "Accommodating" relies on satisfying the needs of others, at the expense of your own.

Individuals who lean toward this approach tend to be either very indulgent or have a high empathy. "Accommodating" approach can be beneficial in certain situations but is ultimately regarded as very ineffective.

Good if:

- Staying on good terms with your teammate is more important than winning;

- The issue at hand means more to the other party than to yourself;

Bad if:

- Accommodating the other party will NOT solve the problem;

• If the issue is important to you;

Compromising (nobody wins, nobody loses)

By compromising, you don't win, but you get to resolve conflict quickly, without losing much. This approach requires both sides to give up something so they can gain something - and usually, nobody is happy with what they get. Similarly to "Avoiding" and "Accommodating", this approach is precious in certain situations.

Good if:

  • There is a clash of equal powers (same level managers of two different teams);

  • Time is important but not crucial;

  • Resolving the conflict is more important than winning;

Bad if:

  • If one party has more influence than the other;

  • There are a lot of different needs that need to be satisfied;

  • The situation is extremely urgent, and further quarreling can harm solution's effectiveness;

Competing (I win, you lose)

Unlike "Accommodating", with the "Competing" approach, you take a firm stand on the topic at hand and do your best to force

your way. You can do this by either using strong arguments or relying on a position of power to get what you want.

Individuals who use this approach are usually influential, stubborn, loud and with a lot of credibility within the company. They see each conflict as "a battle for dominance" and can be very aggressive during discussions.

Although this technique is excellent when you want your team to make urgent and unpopular decisions, this approach has more than just few downsides.

Any man who must say "I am the king" is no true king. - Tywin Lannister.

Good if:

- You need to make urgent decisions

- There is a need for making an unpopular decision;

- You feel that someone is trying to hassle you and take advantage of the situation;

Bad if:

- Decision at question is not urgent;

- Another party loses much more than you gain;

- You rely on buying-in other members;

Collaborating (we both win)

"Collaborating" approach is the pinnacle of conflict handling, being both assertive and cooperative. It requires high emotional intelligence of all participants and willingness to come up with unique win-win solutions. However, this type of solution demands not only time but emotional detachment and rational thinking as well, which is hardly achievable during intense conflicts. Therefore "Collaborating" is somewhat difficult to realize.

Good if:

- The situation is not urgent, but requires immediate attention;

- Decision is important and influences all involved parties heavily;

- Decision impacts people other than the ones involved in the conflict;

- All previous conflict resolution attempts failed;

Bad if:

- Making the decision is urgent;

- Involved parties do not care about the matter at hand.

There are official tests that can help you determine your (or your team members) behavior in conflict situations, and it looks something like this. It will give you an insight into the ways you handle conflict, and which areas you need to strengthen to become "conflict master".

Resolving the conflict

The best kind of conflict is a productive one. However, if your team is unable to maintain constructive conflict, preventing confrontation altogether would be the best move to make. By managing conflicts skillfully, you can:

- gain cooperation from team members

- improve performance and productivity,

- reduce stress and preserve the integrity,

- improve relationships and teamwork,

- increase staff morale

Overall, it is complicated but highly rewarding skill, which will boost your team's morale and productivity to a whole another level.

What are toxic workers

When you're running a business, you must be extra careful with who you hire. You need someone productive but also someone who gets along with the rest of the team. You can't afford to spend your time fixing human relationship issues with clients and deadlines breathing down your neck.

The problem is, avoiding toxic workers is easier said than done - especially when you take into the fact that toxic workers are on average more productive than others. This puts every entrepreneur in a tough position: should I turn down the the person who brings results because they are a terrible fit, or should I hire them and hope their productivity will offset their bad attitude?

Well, according to research done by Harvard Business School, you should turn them down as they're gonna cost you more in the long run - $12,500 more, to be exact.

Who are toxic workers

Toxic employees are talented and productive people whose behaviour is ultimately harmful to an organization. They're difficult to talk to, they gossip, make others feel inferior, aren't welcoming to new team members. It's stressful for other employees to work with them, and others generally feel uneasy in their company

because they always have to keep their guard up. They poison the atmosphere and kill collaboration.

If they're so bad to work with, why are they hired? And more importantly, how do they stay employed? The answer is very simple - they hit their numbers. If they didn't, it would be easy to fire them; but when they actually bring in the results, it's a different story. According to research, only 1 in 20 workers is fired for toxic behaviour.

Harvard Business School specifically did a research on toxic workers that encompassed 11 global companies and 58,542 workers. They found that a worker is more likely to be toxic if they're overconfident, self-centered, productive, and rule-following.

The research also found that other people, when exposed to toxic workers, are 46% more likely to be fired for misconduct. In other words, toxicity is contagious.

When exposed to toxic workers, people are 46% more likely to be fired for misconduct.

The trouble with toxic workers

The main reason why toxic employees persist is that they're more productive and more likely to be a superstar (meaning, they're in the top 1% in terms of productivity). This is why toxic workers are recruited and remain in company for a long time. According to

research, unethical workers enjoy longer tenures. An unethical trader might bring in millions of dollars so the firm is tempted to look the other way as long as the trader doesn't overstep legal boundaries.

Toxic workers are more productive, but that comes at an expense. They trade work quality for speed. On the flipside, a worker is 27% less likely to be toxic if they do quality work.

A company might be tempted to hire a toxic worker in hopes their productivity will offset the downside, but that's not the case. It turns out, avoiding a toxic worker is worth more than hiring a superstar: a superstar only adds $5,300 to the bottom line, while avoiding a toxic worker saves you $12,500 in turnover costs.

Jack Welch (a former CEO of General Electric during whose tenure the company's value rose by 4,000%) once classified all workers into four types, based on two attributes: results and values.

He advised to keep those who deliver results and share company values (1), fire those who don't (3), and work with those who share values but miss their numbers (2). But type 4 workers, those who deliver results but create toxic environment, are a problem.

It's unnatural to fire them because they get the job done. Jack Welch decided to make the tough call and remove them because type 4 workers had the power to destroy the positive culture that's critical to business success. By doing this, he showed that soft

values are truly valued and not just empty words written in the company's codex.

	No Results	Results
Values	🟡 2	🟢 1
No Values	⚪ 3	🔴 4
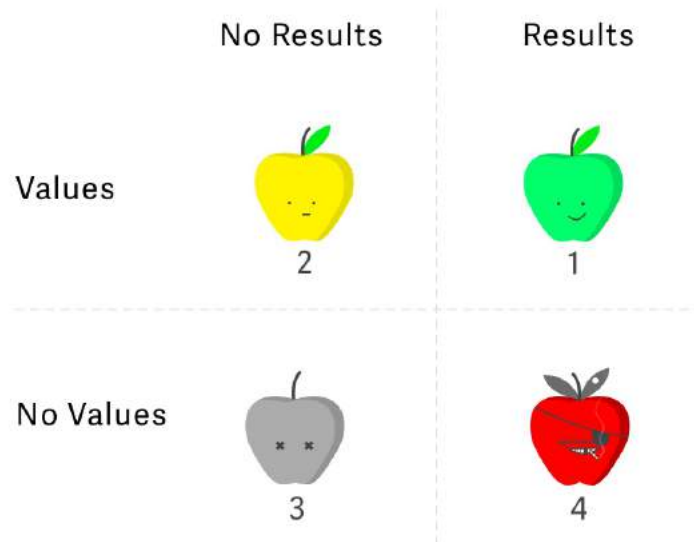
Jack Welche's types of workers

Be careful though. Jack Welch also said that a workforce consists of 20% of people who are high performers, 10% who you should get rid of, and 70% who do ok. This forced ranking can do a lot of harm because managers focus on workers who are high performers and believe the other 70% are underperformers, which is not true.

Companies need to appreciate the competence of the masses and not chase the superpowers of the elite because when it comes to building a stable business than can grow, it's the people who do ok who are the most important. They are the backbone of every big company because they are both reliable and replaceable.

What to do with toxic workers

Bad workers have a stronger effect on the bottom line than good workers. If a workers is a bad fit, they'll be terminated prematurely and the cost of finding and training a new worker will be high. That's why you need to be extra careful when selecting new hires and turn them down even if their work is strong. All their expertise won't matter much if your team can't collaborate efficiently and quit their job.

The first step to avoiding toxic workers is to prevent hiring toxic workers in the first place. When interviewing new candidates, don't ask solely skill-based questions. Ask questions that can help you gauge if they are a team player.

The best way to assess that is by asking questions like:

- "Can you recall the last time someone asked you for help and what did you do?"

- "Can you give us an example of a great team work at your previous company?"

What to do if you already have toxic workers? First you have to identify them. If you're a business owner who doesn't spend too much time in the office, you're most likely oblivious to who makes others miserable because all you see are great results. Current workers won't tell you either because they don't want to badmouth others.

The only way to learn the truth is through exit interviews. When someone leaves saying they need to be in "a more challenging environment with more professionally-minded people who support each other", take that as code word for "the work environment is toxic and I can't take it anymore".

Getting rid of toxic workers is difficult. You can't just fire them - it's bad for morale, legally risky, and you can't afford to lose productivity. The best course of action is to slowly drive them away by introducing changes to the workplace. You can introduce team buildings, pair programming and code reviews, processes, and other activities that require teamwork and support.

Also, bringing in new people can do wonders for the work atmosphere, especially if you bring in a lot of new people. This gives you the chance to mold the right culture. The toxic worker will have to either adjust or decide on their own to leave.

Turning difficult employees into team players

If you came here looking for our advice on creating team players, you are most likely in the midst of one of two given scenarios: either newly added member of your team displays a certain behavior and has trouble fitting in, or you have taken over someone else's team and realized that there is an individual whose behavior is very destructive for team morale.

The best case scenario is to get a new culture-fit employee who will start contributing to the system in no time, while the worst case scenario is having to handle a dreaded toxic coworker. However, most of the time you will be faced with "difficult employees" - employees who just need a little "push" to become valuable members of the team.

9 types of difficult employees and how to handle them

According to Beth Miller and Andre Lavoie, there are 9 types of difficult employees which can be turned into team players if managed correctly.

The Victim

The Victim is the least accountable individual on the team, who denies any responsibility, claiming that whatever happened is not their fault. Excuses may vary from "I was given an unclear task," to

"it's hot outside and AC was on for a couple of hours only."

How to deal with victim

As a manager, it is up to you to define accountability. Provide your team with clear guidelines on what is expected of them as a collective, and from each member individually. This approach is the most effective if you put it in writing and on display for everyone to see. By doing this, you are putting "the Victim" outside of their comfort zone: either they adapt to the obvious rules, or become cast out by the rest of the team.

The Territorial

Often edgy and aggressive, Territorials can shake the team foundation – and not in a good way . With the tendency to defend their territory, they will use "all the weapons at their disposal" to protect their niche from those pesky intruders who dare to come by and ask for an alternative to work they offered.

How to deal with territorial:

When it comes to the Territorial, pay close attention to their attitude. If they care about how their behavior impacts the team performance, then the aggression is probably a defense mechanism of the past which can be removed through careful management and team building. If, on the other hand, they do not care about the team, it is time to remove them from the organization and allow them to focus on individual tasks. It is

probably best for everyone.

The Pessimist

A new project just came in, and it seems it will be a complete package: challenging, meaningful, fun and profitable. Spirits are high, and everyone's ready to go. And then you hear the voice in the back: "This is harder than we think, there is no way we can make it happen..." It is the same person who regularly ignores silver linings and only stares down into the darkness of the abyss. Apart from killing everyone's buzz, these individuals (known as the Pessimists), also tend to strongly resist any change including new hires, policies, and processes.

How to deal with pessimist:

Even though dealing with them can be tiring, the Pessimists can be very critical to the team dynamics. Why? Because they keep the rest of the team from losing their heads in the clouds. You can organize rare "negativity meetings" as a reality check in certain situations, or have a weekly one-on-ones with your pessimist, as their input can have crucial clues to what can potentially go wrong. There is one thing to remember however: these individuals are not suitable for leadership roles.

The (N)ever-present

Usually invisible during the day, and always absent when going gets tough. You can recognize the (N)ever-present when the rest

of the team starts asking: "What do they do here? What is their contribution?" Other clear giveaways are a lot of sick days, frequent coffee breaks outside the office, and detachment from team duties in general.

How to deal with (n)ever-present:

First thing you need to know is that an individual usually becomes "(N)ever-present" when they start feeling dissatisfied with their job, duties, their team, or they might have decided it is time for a career change but haven't yet decided to tell you in case things don't work out. So, the first thing you need to do is to talk to them and understand their reasoning. Only when you know their background story, should you decide if they are a good fit for your existing team or not.

Disclaimer: If a new employee starts acting this way from the get-go, you probably did a poor job during recruitment and hired a slacker.

The Misfit

Misfits are new employees with "the perfect fit" resumes, who simply failed to adapt to company's culture or the team dynamics. They were supposed to be leaders, but have boiled down to the bare minimum, while others pull their weight. In this case, two scenarios can occur (and none of them are beneficial): either the rest of the team get frustrated with the new colleague for having to pick up the slack, or they follow the new leader's example and

start slacking of themselves.

How to deal with misfit:

> This situation is most likely caused by pretenses (or misunderstanding) during the recruitment process. If the resume and the letters of recommendation check out, then your new employee is most likely unsatisfied with the current duties: maybe they feel that assigned tasks are below them, or that they cannot utilize their skills to the full potential. To turn the Misfit into a team player, have an honest discussion and find out what they consider to be pros and cons of the job. As losing a recruit can be costly, redefine Misfit's position so they can fully utilize their strengths.

The Wiseguy

They are smart, they know what they're doing, and they want everyone else to know just how clever they are. While they do their best to achieve the company's goals, they usually tend to be rigid and arrogant towards other team members

How to deal with wiseguy:

Wiseguy are bright - so use that to your advantage. Give them an unusual task to analyze their impact on other team members. Make them note everything down, take positive as well as adverse effects into consideration, and let them draw their own conclusions. Simultaneously, encourage other members to be completely honest, as this will only work if it goes both-ways.

Finally, make them face the truth of their findings, and use it as a wake-up call. If they are brilliant as they claim to be, they will realize how detrimental their attitude is to the team dynamics.

The Bootlicker

For a Bootlicker, keeping the boss happy is more important than work, results, or the rest of the team. Their calculation is simple: boss will not be too hard on boss's pet. This attitude will, however, cause dissatisfaction among other team members as they feel the Bootlicker gets undeserved recognition. Even though this issue sounds trivial, it is your responsibility as a manager to put an end to it. At best, the Bootlicker will be excluded from the collective; at worst, the entire team will stop working and start bringing you coffee.

How to deal with bootlicker:

Introduce peer review system. If the Bootlicker, whose strategy was focusing on the happiness of an individual, suddenly finds themselves being judged by many, they will have no other choice but to concentrate on the work at hand. If they are capable, they will soon start contributing to the team. Also, other members will welcome the attitude change.

The Gossiper

Sometimes beneficial, but mostly destructive, constant "office gossip" can create serious tension within the team. Usually, the

Gossiper is the one that's starting and spreading rumors without thinking about potential consequences. An additional problem arises when the subject of the gossip revolves around employees' personal lives. That is of particular importance in a professional contemporary world, where life-work balance plays a significant role in employee's happiness.

How to deal with gossiper:

Use the natural curiosity and chattiness of the Gossiper to your advantage and redirect their social tendencies. Give them projects that are based around creating interactions (like event planning or company celebration organizations), and watch them become valuable members of the team. Handling these types of projects become win-win situations: it will feed their need to talk about non-business topics, while bringing the team together.

The Narcissist

Narcissists are the exact opposite of the team players and the closest thing you get to toxic coworkers: they do not care about common goals or team results, they do not collaborate - they only care about themselves and their egos. There are clear signs which can help you recognize a narcissist at the workplace. Even though experts took upon themselves to provide us with the tips on how to work with a narcissist, it is highly unlikely that you will be turning one into a full-fledged team player.

How to deal with narcissist:

If an employee you are supposed to convert turns out to be a narcissist, you will most likely be forced to remove them from the team - for the sake of the team. Even though the Narcissist is unlikely to change, there is a possibility of change - but only if they deem it beneficial for themselves. The key is to equalize desired change with Narcissist's success. This is the only way to motivate them to do anything.

Further Reading
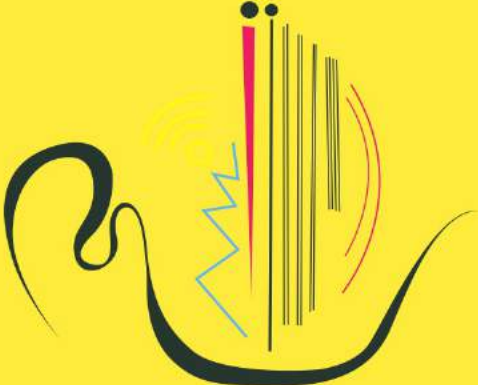
Kanban: A Quick and Easy Guide to Kickstart Your Project

This book introduces Kanban and key principles of agile project management designed to improve your productivity. The book is very short and is geared towards beginners.

The book will help you learn how to organize projects and how to introduce a simple and reliable process so you don't have to worry about things breaking apart when you grow.
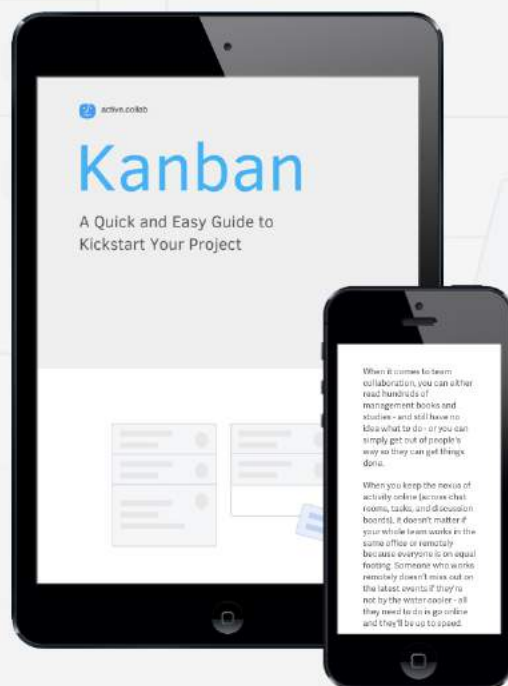
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