



# HANDBOOK



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# LEADER'S GUIDE TO TEAM BUILDING

*Building Adaptive  
High-Performance Teams*



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Lessons and Best Practices

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# **Leader's Guide to Team Building**

## ***Building Adaptive High-Performance Teams***

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## Foreword

The Leader's Guide to Team Building handbook provides lessons and best practices ("a way") to rapidly build and effectively employ cross-boundary teams that are highly competent both in making and executing decisions and in learning and adapting together. It helps the team gain common understanding of the situation and requirements and quickly reach a higher level of performance.

This approach provides a deliberate methodology for forming, launching, operating, and sustaining nested teams and developing member's capacity to work at higher performance levels. It also furnishes a set of practical thinking drills and organizing tools that applies and balances three key elements: information management, knowledge management, and team qualities, which boosts team communication and collaboration skills. Through coached deliberate practice and performance, it systematically builds relationships on a basis of shared purpose, trust, confidence, and competence.

Chapter 3 contains useful tip sheets that leaders and team members can pull out as quick reference tools to enable effective team building and enhance effectiveness for diverse, challenging mission sets across a wide range of operational environments.

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The Secretary of the Army has determined that the publication of this periodical is necessary in the transaction of the public business as required by law of the Department.

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## Introduction

### How to Use This Guide

This guide is for anyone participating as a member of a team. It is designed as a guide, with leading questions and areas of consideration that can be used by any leader, who is a member of the team, during any stage of the team's life cycle.

Chapter 1 provides an overview briefing, lesson, or tutorial that may have been received by a leader about to join a team of other leaders. It also establishes the foundations of the team-building approach and orients the team member to common terms and stages of team development.

Chapter 2 discusses enablers such as the team exercise, information management (IM) tools, and knowledge management (KM) processes. The team exercise is at the heart of the team-building approach; using this information within the context of any team cannot be stressed enough. Particularly valuable is the team assessment: members need to know where the team is to realize where the team wants to go. This chapter provides a methodology for thinking through any problem. When learned and applied with the other two enablers, a team deepens its thinking, understanding, and actions through increased communication and collaboration, developing shared qualities that, in turn, generate high performance as actionable understanding is achieved. The team exercise is best used during a team's normal operating rhythm while it is working to accomplish its goals and objectives.

The IM portion outlines some basic principles and considerations for using technology to connect geographically dispersed teams. The KM processes provide principles, considerations, and questions the team can use to create, manage, and share knowledge internally and externally. IM and KM are supplemented by hands-on orientation and instructions on the specific organization's tools and processes. These pull-outs help the mentor of the team ask the right questions during that instruction.

Chapter 3 contains tips that a team member can pull out and use to generate team discussion and understanding, especially when used to cross the various boundaries and diversities represented within team membership.

- **Development Stages.** Help assess a team's point within its life cycle. Questions are relevant to each stage to help energize conversation and collaboration.
- **Operating Agreements.** Provide examples that can help develop a team's procedures for how to work in a highly collaborative and often virtual environment. These operating agreements outline reasonable expectations and set the foundation for effective cultures of

collaboration across the various boundaries of function, organization, level, or culture.

- **Measures of Effectiveness.** Provide suggestions on how to identify a team's effectiveness and performance. As a survey tool, they can provide leaders with insights on where and how to improve.
- **Individual and Team Preparation.** Designed as an individual and team assessment to help team members prepare to participate on a high-performing team by developing actionable understanding in building relationships that generate high performance.
- **Coaching Tips.** Offer practical coaching tips that can be used by any member of a high-performance team. These tips focus on creating discussion and shared understanding that any leader can apply as an active member of a high-performing team.



## Chapter 1

### Building High-Performance Teams

Leaders of unified action teams face unique challenges as they bring together teams of other leaders that cross multiple boundaries and attempt to operate at high performance levels. In the military culture, team building seems intuitive since there is a shared culture, set of values, lexicon, and doctrine. This common background makes the team-building approach appear naturally occurring.

However, within unified action teams, obtaining high performance is much more difficult due to the added complication of diversified backgrounds, agendas, perspectives, and situational understanding, which can significantly complicate team formation and render some traditional teams dysfunctional. The team-building approach mitigates the challenge of operating within such complex unified action environments, allowing teams not only to function, but to rapidly achieve high performance through developing shared qualities faster than traditional teaming practices focused on task proficiency. High performance will be determined by a number of variables, such as the number and diversity of leaders or changes to mission and capability. Teams may experience peaks and troughs due to any number or combination of factors. Turbulence, as identified in stage four, may cause the team's performance to drop, at which time it should apply the team exercise through the second and third stages again.

#### What Are High-Performance Teams?

High-performing teams consist of members who are from different organizations, cultures, agencies, or backgrounds and bring specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes to the cross-culture unified action team. These team members often represent a parent agency, organization, or country and come with varying backgrounds, skill sets, motivations, and agendas as the members interact to accomplish a common mission or objective. Due to the complexity and a less defined hierarchy where the military organization may not be the lead agency, each member of the team may find himself in a lead role of a project or objective. Rather than a team consisting of clearly defined leaders and subordinates focused on task proficiency, the team is transformed into one of peer leaders where the relationship among members is the cornerstone to achieving high performance.

The team-building approach addresses the interaction and relationships among team members essential to collaboration and critical to high performance. It accelerates collaboration by allowing the team members to further develop qualities of shared vision, trust, competence, and confidence among team members. It is a streamlined approach designed to break through barriers and boundaries that stagnate team development

and, ultimately, performance. Along with the team exercise, teams are able to harness the power of information management (IM) and knowledge management (KM) to achieve rapid high performance. The goal is to leverage this synergistic effect of bringing team qualities to bear, enabled by IM and KM, to achieve high performance within the mission.

The team-building approach establishes a culture of shared trust, intensive collaboration, and networked expertise among horizontal (peer) and vertical (hierarchical) high-performing teams to generate actionable understanding and support decisionmaking.

Many teams face the challenge of having to become effective in a very short amount of time while working across organizations, cultures, or agencies. To operate at high performance levels, organizations are challenged when building teams whose members cross multiple boundaries. Team building seems intuitive when cultures, values, and language are shared; however, in some teams, diverse backgrounds, agendas, perspectives, and situational perspectives complicate things and can even render a team dysfunctional.

The team-building approach generates high-performing teams more quickly than conventional methods. This approach rapidly develops the shared vision/purpose, trust, competence, and confidence required for high performance. It leverages IM technologies, effective KM, and learning strategies to communicate and collaborate across time and space boundaries, while a newly developed team exercise is used to build understanding of the operational situation and team requirements. The developmental models of how the team might execute the mission or tasks result in actionable knowledge needed to perform at high levels.

Every team goes through a set of developmental stages; the synergistic use of the three elements in the teams approach accelerates the team movement through those stages by addressing the team requirements and cultural and organizational obstacles quickly and effectively. This approach broadens the circle of the team and emphasizes building relationships and finding expertise. It develops a larger shared Rolodex and an adaptive nature that immediately looks for, and finds, the work-around when obstacles are encountered.

The team's approach is an adaptive way of teaching leaders how to observe, think, and act in high-stakes, highly complex situations. It is about capacity building for non-routine situations that demand rapid and creative solutions.

## **What Makes Up a Team?**

In most teams today, no one person is solely responsible for the team's leadership. It is often provided by anyone who helps create and maintain performance-enhancing conditions, regardless of whether that person holds

a formal leadership role. Teams can draw from available expertise or can be co-opted, utilizing existing resources to accomplish the mission. Many team members have no direct authority and little professional influence on other members. As missions change, different team members may take the lead in accomplishing a specific mission or objective.

Teams consist of members from different organizations, cultures, agencies, or backgrounds who are joined to accomplish a mission or task. These teams exist across governments, the military, industry, and academia. Each member brings specific skills, knowledge, and attitudes to the team to help accomplish an objective, and each member is part of a greater organization that the team member can reach back to for expertise and support. These teams do not follow a hierarchical organizational model, but rather operate as a network within the hierarchy. At any time, any member of the team may be placed in a lead role for a project or objective.

Team effectiveness depends on three criteria:

- Producing a team outcome (product or service) acceptable to whomever the team is serving.
- A growth in team capacity (which in turn improves capacity of the organization).
- A group experience meaningful and satisfying to members (which results in improved confidence).

High performance can be measured by the amount of the following:

- Shared situational understanding.
- Shared purpose and vision about the mission (ability to see an end-state, a compelling direction).
- Shared trust among team members.
- Perceived competence of other team members.
- Confidence each member has in the team's ability to get the job done and more.
- Latitude it is given by leaders to get the job done (enabling structure that facilitates rather than impedes).
- Level of expertise available or accessible to the team (the bigger the shared Rolodex the better).
- Ability of members to use their social network, to include and co-opt others into supporting the team.
- Time it takes to accomplish a mission/task.
- Quality of work the team produces (satisfaction of the customer).
- Contribution of knowledge and expertise shared beyond the team.

## **How Does the Team’s Approach Accelerate Team Performance?**

Teams accelerate learning, understanding, and action through the synergistic effect of successfully applying advanced team development practices (created through the development of shared vision/purpose, trust, competence, and confidence), with effective use of information technology (IM and information systems), and virtual collaboration tools and processes (KM) to learn and perform more rapidly and at higher levels than before.

The team methodology is not an externally generated exercise or training; it is a way of thinking, understanding, and acting. It is used during the normal course of operations in the context of the situation at hand. This approach will enable team members to observe, listen, stimulate, and support those who will themselves “create shared actionable understanding” from the bottom up, drawing on their practices and expectations so actual ground truth is first supported. These approaches also help a team frame and develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to support the high-priority issues facing unified action teams. These approaches also help teams identify and overcome obstacles that can keep members from accomplishing the mission.

## **Qualities of a High-Performance Team**

High-performance teams possess four well-developed, shared qualities — vision/purpose, trust, competence, and confidence. These teams also possess an adept ability to build relationships and work through problems to achieve the mission.

### **Shared Vision/Purpose**

Shared vision exists when members of the team have a common understanding of the following:

- The overall mission or objective.
- Goals and sub-goals of the mission.
- Strategies for reaching those goals.
- Team members’ strengths and weaknesses.
- Values and preferences of the team as a whole and among the individual members.
- The roles each member will play and want.
- The big picture (such as how this particular mission contributes to a larger purpose).

Benefits of shared vision include the following:

- It's widely known that teams with shared vision have better coordination and less conflict than teams without a shared vision.
- Members of such teams of leaders tend to be better able to predict one another's behaviors and act quickly in the face of changing circumstances.
- Members are more confident sharing responsibility, which, in turn, increases the team's ability to adapt.
- Teams comprise members from many backgrounds, organizations, cultures, and agencies, and each leader brings unique skills, biases, and agendas. It is easy to see, then, how this can result in a lack of a common vision. Through the team exercise process, however, team members can identify where differences exist and come to a more rapidly common understanding.

### **Shared Trust**

Among the meanings associated with trust is the expectation that a person has a high level of integrity and dependability. People are willing to put themselves at risk because of their confidence that the other person will do what they expect. People tend to initially develop trust by superficial factors such as rank, position, resumes, or combat patches, which can lead to assumptions about a person's prior experiences or qualifications. As a barometer of trustworthiness, such assumptions are neither predictive nor reliable. However, direct experience with one another over time allows team members to develop more informed, deeper levels of shared trust.

Team exercises offer a process for developing deeper levels of trust more quickly by discussing experiences in a context common to the team. This development of trust, combined with building on small successes, results in improved confidence across the team, which, in turn, adds to more trust and confidence.

### **Shared Competence**

Competence is evident when people perform their work at or above standard. Individuals and teams, as a whole, have competencies. It's important to ask whether the team has the competencies necessary to accomplish the mission. Shared competence means the team collectively is competent. While in the context of team members from the same organization, members are assumed to be competent, based on similar experiences or a common background; but, it would be prudent not to automatically assume the same to be true in teams with members of diverse backgrounds and experiences. This situation is increasingly common when military teams operate in a cross-cultural world. Team exercises offer

processes for identifying team and individual competencies, or lack thereof, and for faster development of needed competencies.

Rapid development of competence is important because of the following:

- Team members rely on one another to round out team expertise.
- The sum of a team's skills is greater than the separate parts.
- Complexity and change keep accelerating, which means few teams have all the skills and knowledge needed within the core group.
- Confidence builds as the team demonstrates competence.

Competency may be initially assumed, but must be proven to increase trust and confidence. To support developing team competence more broadly, a selected set of standard team exercises and supporting tips are provided in Chapter 3 that can be “pulled out” for use.

### **Shared Confidence**

As trust, purpose, and competence build, the accelerator to attaining and continuing to build high performance is shared confidence by the team members. Small successes develop confidence, which leads teams to undertake new and more difficult challenges. With each accomplishment, team confidence grows, as does their culture and ability to collaborate.

Confidence among team members with a common background, values, and beliefs can be assumed; however, in the much more complex unified action environment, such an assumption of shared confidence comes at the risk of performance. For example, the team may include members whose parent organizations or countries have historically shared little faith in one another, in which case, personal interaction and relationships among one another are more critical to success.

### **Building Relationships**

One of the most important qualities a leader can acquire is the ability to form and maintain solid working relationships. In the relationship, without trust, a team has a difficult time achieving high performance. This is particularly true when operating across the boundaries or levels in a hierarchy (military), service, agency, culture, or nationality. Each leader member of the team should be encouraged to perform the following:

- Identify and include all stakeholder representatives in the team.
- Establish a personal rapport with each leader by finding initial commonalities. Examples could include the following:
  - Common history/experiences.
  - Common contacts/interests.
  - Common competency.

- Determine the team's readiness to collaborate.
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities of each other team member.
- Distinguish between values, interests, and positions.
- Build personal relationships.

## Contact List

The contact list is an annotated team listing of key contacts known throughout an organization. Similar to the white or yellow pages of a phone book, team members should physically share or import their contacts to a shared website to which all have access. The annotated contact list from an e-mail account includes not only physical contact information, such as phone numbers and e-mail addresses, but highlights each contact's functional expertise and how it supports the team mission. By building and sharing contacts, it becomes increasingly important to draw on the various interpersonal associations which created the functionally-oriented Rolodex in the first place. Every member of the team learns who the other's contacts are and understands what relationships exist both outside and within the organization.

When creating and upgrading the shared contact list, it is important to ask some key questions and have conversations about building a network of contacts. Who else should be on this list? Does another agency have a capability the team could utilize? Often, effective collaboration starts by sharing contacts with other team members, each to assist the other in responding to requirements.

## Nested Networks of Teams

Teams also apply to small cross-boundary groups where multiple organizations are represented and members are expected to leverage their home organization's resources on behalf of the team's purpose. Members are expected to lead when their expertise is called upon.

The nesting of teams is one of the most critical aspects of the guide. A breakdown at any level can have serious consequences to the larger group of teams, resulting in a difficult challenge. Greater emphasis on this possibility should be addressed.

Often, for a nested hierarchy there is a parallel hierarchy of interconnected teams. Within each organization, echelon teams are formed for specific missions and purposes. When these teams cross organizational boundaries (internal or external), it is very likely that a leader could serve on multiple teams at various echelons. Examples of formal nested networks of a team are boards, bureaus, centers, cells, and working groups.

A leader from one organization, who is a member of a team from within that organization, may also belong to a leader team consisting of many other organizations. An example of this occurrence is a team that could be focused on a particular crisis, project, or activity. These teams may be hastily assembled or long-standing.

Teams are often created (sometimes in a hasty fashion) from within a hierarchical organization to serve a specific purpose. It is very important for newly-created nested teams to be introduced to the organization, with the purpose or vision explained within the organization. Introducing the nested team will help reduce misunderstandings, specifically as roles and taskings evolve.

### **Adaptability and Work-arounds**

For most, core practices of teams are familiar everyday behaviors. In the midst of change, most situations require two very simple approaches appearing as natural reflexes among high-performing leaders. If the leader's formal systems do not offer quick paths toward solving problems, they know how to find work-arounds. They know how to use personal networks, as well as innovation and adaptation. Solutions come from initiative, expertise, and relationships. Work-arounds and networks of relationships are essential to teams. Success breeds success.

### **Formal vs. Informal Coordination**

Work is done in two settings: formal and informal; high-performance teams must master both.

**Formal.** The approved process within any organization for gaining a decision and officially communicating those decisions to others.

Formal coordination applies when there are clearly defined rules and regulations governing the team's actions. Although a team may exist across the limits of regulations, the agencies and organizations the leaders represent do not. Formal coordination is most common when coordinating between organizations and cultures, when there is a need to maintain records of the process.

**Informal.** The use and transfer of pre-decisional data, information, and knowledge to increase situational awareness and foster coordination of activities and resources to accomplish a mission, often cross boundaries of organization, function, level, or culture.

Informal coordination usually applies within the team when conducting day-to-day business between peers and colleagues. Informal coordination outside the team is used to establish and maintain situational awareness and co-opt other actors and agencies to action, without unnecessary formal avenues. The informal coordination enables the team to act faster.



Organizational leaders must acknowledge and endorse high degrees of informal coordination to enable high performance. Organizational operating agreements must address both formal and informal coordination.



## Chapter 2

### Enabling High-Performance Teams

High-performance teams leverage information management (IM) tools and knowledge management (KM) processes.

#### Team Exercise and Synergistic Effect of Teams

High-performance teams punch through boundaries and barriers quickly, constructively, and without the stop-learn-practice interruption of typical teaming models. This is conducted in the context of ongoing operations, enabling the team to rapidly achieve shared vision, trust, competence, and confidence. The performance enablers of IM and KM, supported by team exercises, result in a synergistic momentum propelling the team to ever-higher levels of performance. This approach facilitates rapid team building by providing specific questions and issues to consider at each stage of a team's life cycle and in the context of the operational mission. These questions help develop mental models of the team's missions/requirements, concerns, and possible actions, with no stepping away from the real world to "conduct an exercise."

Each team exercise discussed in this approach is in context and contributes to mission outcomes. The team discussions, stimulated by the questions and considerations, accelerate shared understanding and set conditions to develop the four key qualities for a high-performance team: shared team vision/purpose, shared trust, shared competency, and shared confidence. Developing these qualities in combination with artfully applying IM tools and effective KM processes help a team virtually communicate across time and distance and collaborate more effectively. The result is a team that can observe, orient, decide, and act faster than the way work is done today. The objective is to build teams that can "connect the dots" ahead of others to influence outcomes across boundaries of organization, function, level, or culture.

The synergy of these three components (shared purpose/vision, trust, competence) help improve communication and collaboration among team members, which, in turn, enables the rapid generation of these components. As the team develops actionable understanding, it performs successfully, enhancing confidence and accelerating high performance. High-performance teams are adept at achieving their goal through building relationships, global collaboration, leveraging technologies, and quickly overcoming the obstacles imposed by traditional hierarchical structures that cause many teams to struggle.

In effect, the high-performance team achieves higher levels of actionable understanding through building relationships faster than traditional team building methods primarily focused on task training. Furthermore, the traditional forming, storming, norming, and performing stages of team development leaders have become familiar with are often dysfunctional when applied across boundaries of organization, level, function, and culture. In Western culture, or where team members have a common background, education, or experiences, such as in the U.S. military, the “storming stage” often places issues on the table and begins addressing the issues early. This builds on common shared qualities, further establishing a relationship among team members.

However, in non-military, non-American cultures, the “storming stage” is likely to have a negative impact and can cause team members to withdraw, hold back vital information, or even work at cross-purposes. At best, the team performs at a sub-optimal level; at worst, it is dysfunctional and ineffective. The high-performance team approach is designed to quickly find common ground across cultures and other barriers if necessary. It reveals differences in purpose, values, and agendas in a less confrontational manner, with minimal “storming,” then builds consensus and trust from a common start point.

The team exercise could initially be introduced as a course or standalone set of exercises, but it is more a way of thinking and acting in diverse team situations, most effectively applied through a coach; preferably one of the team members or team leaders well-versed in the approach. An external coach could and should be used in high-payoff teams to both model the approach and teach others as part of team operations.

The team exercise is the driver that propels and accelerates the team through natural team development stages, helping it achieve high performance, exhibiting actionable understanding more quickly. It should be conducted in an operational setting as a way to think through a situation and build the actionable understanding discussed earlier in this chapter.

The art of building high-performance teams is a combination of sensing what practices and expectations to stimulate and when and with whom to stimulate them. This intensive collaboration fosters development of the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are characteristic of high-performance teams of leaders (shared trust, vision/mission, competence, confidence).

The team exercise process comprises three steps. The team’s skills, knowledge, and attitudes develop primarily through the team discussing short vignettes, analyzing the mission/task of the “what if;” and developing options by considering the “what then.”

The three steps include the following:

**Step 1.** Determine and understand the team's situation and requirements.

**Step 2.** Practice by thinking (talking) through the situation.

**Step 3.** Review shared actions and decisions.

High-performance teams require an approach that goes beyond traditional train-to-task models. Rather, these exercises develop the art of adaptive thinking and learning. This advanced methodology develops clear and shared understanding; critical-thinking and reasoning skills; and adaptive behaviors, not conditioned responses. The team exercise, done in the context of the current mission and situation, results in an accelerated maturation of the four shared qualities: vision, trust, competence, and confidence. The qualities help the team develop understanding with respect to the purpose, situation, conditions, and decisions, as well as how to work around obstacles together. These mental exercises apply available IM and KM enablers and improve the team's ability to effectively communicate and collaborate across organizational boundaries, time zones, and cultures. Using the technique of facilitated discussion, team members gain shared insights by accelerating a process normally transpiring over a long period of time, becoming evident through real world interactions.

To help maintain participant interest and deepen understanding, vary situations and techniques. Initially, keep the situations simple and focus on areas in which the entire team can agree to build shared understanding, trust, and confidence.

The high-performance team exercise concept is a flexible, informal team development tool that provides the following:

- Can be used at any time.
- Lasts only a few minutes or longer, as time permits.
- Uses pre-developed scenarios/vignettes/stories, as well as those generated by the team.
- Can carry out in team discussions, virtually or co-located.
- Can be initiated by any team member, or the team as a whole.
- Improves the way the team looks at and shares work-arounds to solve problems.

- Helps develop and take advantage of the direct and indirect Rolodex (address book) contacts. The broader the experiences, the greater the shared address book.

## How to Create a Team Exercise in an Operational Context

The team exercise can be a discussion or a whiteboard drawing, or conducted over a web-conferencing tool or a teleconference. It can be applied in any situation. Using the framework is simple and quick.

The team exercise can be used at each stage in the team's development. Remember, it is simply a methodology used by the team to improve shared understanding (purpose/vision), shared trust, and shared competence, which in turn leads to improved shared confidence. As the team repeats the process to improve understanding and develop trust, team competencies will improve, which increases confidence and impacts performance and willingness to tackle more difficult situations. Begin the team exercise by asking some basic questions. Get team member input and then check on levels of agreement. Try to find something everyone agrees upon initially, and build consensus from there. When disagreement occurs, attempt to find out why. Coach the team to suspend judgment until the members have heard the disaffected member's position. "Seek first to understand others." Ask questions that relate to the specific issues in the disagreement.

### Step 1: Determine and Understand the Team's Situation and Requirements

This step helps with the sharing of knowledge and experiences, and creates an operational concept. In this step, ask a series of questions to help the team members identify team requirements. Sample questions may include the following:

- What is important about this mission/task and why?
- What team and or mission goals need to be considered and why?

**Note:** If the team is not aligned, always try to start with something (no matter how small) everyone can agree on after hearing each person's view of the mission/task.

- What are the preferences of the senior-level management, if any, and what guidance is offered?
- What strategies should the team consider to reach these goals and why?
- Which team members should be responsible for what and why?
- Whom should the team collaborate with?

- Who needs to be recruited into the team, why, and what does the team have to offer them?
- What would the team expect in the way of resources from higher headquarters and why?
- What can be provided from “the field” bottom up?
- What work-arounds might the team use to deal with this situation?

## **Step 2: Practice by Thinking (Talking) Through the Situation**

Once requirements have been identified and the situation is understood, this next step is to talk through the execution of the task/mission. Here, the team needs to justify the concept developed in Step 1 and build a mental model of what the shared execution of the mission/requirement/task might look like. This discussion develops shared understanding, and it helps the collective team envision the execution.

The team should ask: “What would it look like as we work through this situation?”

One method is to have team members describe the events as they see them occurring. Include decision points and note actions needing to be completed by the team. Other questions to ask include the following:

- What will be the most challenging problem executing this mission/task?
- How will the team work through it? (Explore shared options.)

Once the initial conversation is complete and the scenario has been discussed, compare and contrast what members have said. Then engage a conversation around “what ifs” to extend the discussion in different ways. It is best to manage the conversation so that team-member responses are short and specific, with prompts such as these:

- There seems to be some disagreement when the team gets to X?
- How would the team recognize a change in the situation if it occurs?
- What would be some shared cues or indicators?
- How would this new development affect the overall mission?
- In this new situation, whose roles would change? And to what?
- What could the team do to prevent this new situation from occurring?
- Would the team need to develop work-arounds for this situation?

### **Step 3: Review Shared Actions and Decisions**

After the Step 2 discussions, review what has been learned or decided. This cross leveling of knowledge builds the deep understanding and shared agreements among team members. Record these as needed and adjust operating agreements as required. Some additional questions to consider include the following:

- What did the team decide?
- What shared actions is the team taking?
- How does this affect the team members' operating agreements?
- What is the next step?

If necessary, revisit Step 2 to clarify events and maximize common understanding.

### **Community-of-Practice Characteristics**

The concept of a community-of-practice refers to the social learning that occurs and the shared socio-cultural practices that develop as people with common goals work together to achieve them.

Communities-of-practice are usually formed within a single discipline to focus efforts in sharing knowledge, solving problems, or innovative ventures.

Given the complex nature of the technological and global age in which organizations function, multidisciplinary participation provides an advantage in these efforts because of the expanded focus and even holistic goal that can be achieved.

### **Operating Agreements**

To be effective, the team needs to commit to shared ways of working and interacting. This is particularly important for teams without the familiarity of daily face-to-face contact and for those coming from diverse organizations and cultures. By agreeing to certain common behaviors, the team can codify a set of operating principles addressing many areas where some teams can go astray. Because a team usually exists across boundaries of organization, function, level, or culture, the team may not have traditional rules and regulations that apply to every situation. This is particularly true in the unified action environment, where rules from participating organizations may even conflict. Thus, a team may have to invent new approaches consistent with the common thrust of the participating organizations' procedures.



Each of the following suggests “grounds” for team agreement:

- Collaboration tools.
- The work process.
- Team behaviors and expectations.
- E-mail addresses and groups.
- Location of the shared-contact list.
- Registrations for specific systems/applications/site.



## Chapter 3

### Quick Reference Tips

Use the following tip sheets as quick references to work through each topic:

- A. Shared Qualities of a High-Performance Team
- B. Team Development Stages and Questions
- C. Informal vs. Formal Coordination
- D. Operating Agreements — Rules of Engagement for a Culture of Collaboration
- E. Measures of Team Effectiveness
- F. Individual Preparation for a High-Performance Team Membership
- G. Initial Team Assessment
- H. Coaching Tips and Techniques for High-Performance Teams
- I. Building Relationships
- J. Team Exercise Questions to Develop Vision and Purpose
- K. Team Exercise Questions to Develop Trust
- L. Team Exercise Questions to Develop Competence
- M. Conflict Resolution Tips and Techniques
- N. Nested Teams
- O. Conduct a Virtual Meeting
- P. Example of Organizational Collaboration Guidance

## **Tip A: Shared Qualities of a High-Performance Team**

### **Shared Vision/Purpose**

Whether called mission, vision, or purpose, the shared issue is: What is the team (physical, virtual, or mixed) assembled to do? To what extent does the team members all agree on the mission, vision, or purpose is? The more the four qualities are shared by everyone in the group, the more likely it will be for a higher performing team to implement the vision (purpose). Sharing is not unlimited; it is focused on the explicit vision (purpose) established.

Hopefully the range of overlap will expand to include both explicit and implicit tasks associated with the vision (purpose), including expected and unexpected tasking and task changes. Expansion should occur, particularly as the shared confidence of the team develops and it performs at a high degree of efficiency.

### **Shared Trust**

Shared trust is most important because it establishes the basic ingredient of sharing or collaboration. For Army teams, trust is solidly grounded in the shared values of loyalty, duty, honor, and integrity.

The Soldier's Creed — I will never leave a fallen comrade — epitomizes shared trust. With trust, the other qualities come more easily. So, the challenge to developing high performance is to create intense collaboration among the members of the team, and then among various teams across boundaries of organization, function, level, or culture.

### **Shared Competence**

The skills, knowledge, and attitudes teams build together culminate in what is known as shared competence. Often, competence is assumed. Natural factors in individuals' lives have formed biases resulting in an inference of one level of competence or another. First impressions, rank structures, recognition, social class, and formal credentials are but a few of the ways individuals form early opinions of assumed capability, particularly across cultures. Do not assume competence or incompetence. Instead, build a shared competence by transforming the way teams operate and collaborate to get at the heart of what a team, as a whole, can or cannot accomplish. Using the team exercise, explore and reveal not only gaps in the team's capability, but also hidden expertise. The sum of such expertise over time is a shared competence that drives higher performance toward a particular goal or objective.

## **Shared Confidence**

Confidence is the product of shared trust, working to execute a fully understood, agreed upon vision (purpose) with a wholly competent team. It is a positive approach — routinely looking for better ways to accomplish the tasks assigned. Increasing shared confidence is a very positive accelerator to team high performance.

## Tip B: Team Development Stages and Questions

### Stages of a High-Performance Team

All teams go through certain stages as they form and develop. This guide provides tips and techniques to increase dialogue, improve situational understanding, and develop high performance.

**Stage 1.** Get started by identifying the initial mission, specific team members and conduct an initial meeting. If this is a pre-existing team, this stage may be omitted or reduced. The checklist provides specific questions, considerations, and actions to coach the grouped or virtual team through this stage.

**Stage 2.** Forming the grouped or virtual team. These are activities performed to develop initial shared understanding of the team mission and purpose, the skill sets members bring to the table, and the efforts required to develop shared skill sets. In this stage, team purpose is clarified and consensus is built regarding team purpose, understanding the impact of various boundaries crossed by team members, and building situational understanding of the environment in which the team operates.

**Stage 3.** Do the work. In this stage the team performs the mission(s) it is assigned. Throughout this stage the team can apply the team exercise concept to identify and clarify purpose, adjust team requirements, and build the four shared team qualities in the context of the operational situation.

**Stage 4.** Sustain the team. As the team becomes high performing, many events or activities can reduce effectiveness, such as changing situations, loss of team members, addition of team members, changes in technology, etc. This section of the checklist provides techniques for dealing with turbulence and improving performance.

Teams move naturally through these stages. If a faster result is required, an accelerator can facilitate discussion, understanding, and the development of the shared qualities. Increased confidence is a powerful accelerator.

### Team Development Stages

Use this guide as a reminder of issues to consider during each stage of the team's development. If starting a new team, these stages are often considered a team launch.<sup>1</sup> Continually assess the team's performance and return to any stage or sub-stage as needed.

The questions can be modified for each stage. Additional questions and considerations are listed in each sub-step as a quick reference for stimulating discussion, resulting in an improved shared understanding of purpose/vision, trust, team competence, and confidence.

In some teams, agreement on all points may never be achieved. If a common vision can be established — even at the lowest common denominator — shared trust can be built as divergent views and agendas are known and de-conflicted.

The bottom line is effective team performance through improved communication and collaboration. This allows each team member to achieve his/her organizational objective.

Use the stages and questions below to generate discussion, talk through execution, and review actions. Moving through these stages should be seamless and within the context of the operating environment.

### **Stage 1: Getting Started**

The first thing any team must do is follow the steps below. (If the team has already been working together, this stage may be omitted or truncated.)

- Identify team members and team mission.
  - What must the team do?
  - Who is currently working the action?
  - Who is on the team?
  - Is the team grouped or virtual?
  - Who should be on the team? Where's the expertise?
  - Determine who has access/how to get everyone access.
  - What cultures, organizations, and other diversity exists among the team members?
- Set up and conduct an initial meeting.
  - How will I contact the team?
  - How will I conduct the meeting? Face-to-face, virtual, both? How does this affect team diversity?
  - How do I run a virtual meeting?
- Conduct a team assessment. The more known about a team, the easier it is to highlight the areas where it can improve and where it can excel. Use the team assessment early in the development cycle, then as often as needed. This provides the team a guide to calibrate which tools and approaches are working. The team assessment can be done in a few minutes, and discussing questions is often more productive than taking

it an isolated survey. It can be performed as a group exercise, however, if the team members are having problems building trust with one another, a group discussion may not be the best idea.

A good rule of thumb is to remember that team strengths and weaknesses are equally important. As a group they might consider the following questions:

- How diverse is the team?
- What tools does the team have to communicate and collaborate?
- What are access issues? Security issues?
- What are the information management/knowledge management (IM/KM) requirements? Where is the team's knowledge maintained?
- One technique is for the boards, bureaus, centers, cells, and working groups (B2C2WG) to build a running assessment, like a blog, and have it send an alert to the commanding general's e-mail when it is changed or updated. This helps prevent constantly trying to get into briefs, as well as allowing the knowledge built by the B2C2WG to be shared across the command. By focusing on these running assessments, the team can prevent constantly briefing the leadership on progress and challenges.
- Individual leader assessment. Leaders need to remember each individual brings valuable knowledge, skills, and attitudes to the team. Before members can be an effective high-performing team, they need to know themselves and consider how the team's "style" might impact a larger team composed routinely across boundaries of organization, function, level, or culture. Once the team is formed, it is valuable for each member to spend a few minutes telling the rest of the team about himself using some of the questions provided in Tip F. (Review these questions individually prior to Stage 2.)

## **Stage 2: Forming the Team**

Any team, new or old, must understand how it will operate, share, communicate, and collaborate. Awareness of where the team is located is necessary for those wanting to join the larger team, which helps develop a shared understanding.

Existing teams may revisit this stage when assigned a new task or mission, as a way to recalibrate. The more experience the team has working together establishes more trust, reducing time spent in this stage. Use the three-step team exercise methodology to work through each sub-stage.



- Develop shared understanding. This initial discussion focuses on gaining clear understanding of the mission/task at hand.
- Develop team purpose. Use the team exercise described earlier. Central to this stage is shared understanding of who is in charge, who is in the support role, or what each agency brings to the team.
- Understand the operating environment, which may be called the inter-agency preparation of the area of operation. Ask the following:
  - What does the team know about the geography?
  - What does the team know about the culture?
  - Get specific and consider how the culture affects decisionmaking, relationships, etc.
  - What does the team know about the political environment?
  - Who is in charge, who pulls the strings, is there an informal chain of command or leadership, what is their agenda, etc.?
  - Where does the team get help answering these questions?
- How will the team operate?
  - Ask the following:
    - \* What technologies are available and how will the team use it — who has what issues?
    - \* How will the team create documents together? Posting, versions control, editing?
    - \* What will the team's routine schedule look like? (Work cycle or team rhythm)?
    - \* What are the team expectations for returning phone calls, replying to e-mail, collaboration, etc.?
  - Develop a team operating agreement by writing down informal rules of engagement.

### Stage 3: Doing the Work

- Understand the shared mission (more specific than in Stage 2). What must the team have done by when?
- Build shared actionable understanding.
- Identify cues and indicators requiring changes in direction.

### Stage 4: Sustaining the Team

Once the team has formed and reached a high level of performance, it must have a deliberate process to sustain it. The following are general principles that can help sustain high performance.

- New Team Members.
  - Identify, contact, and incorporate as early as possible.
  - Acquire rapid access to local area network and operating sites.
  - Determine what areas the new member will lead.
  - Introduce team processes and knowledge centers.
  - Explain operating agreements.
  - Introduce new leader to team; include socially.
  - Have a standing mentor-apprentice training plan.
  - Explain how key decisions are made.
- Loss of a Team Member.
  - Identify a backup for every team member.
  - Conduct focused exit interview: KM and team performance. Capture how things were done, not just what was done.
  - Begin capturing knowledge as early as possible, such as file transfers, updated Rolodex, etc.
  - Obtain new contact information and win agreement for continued collaboration.
  - Recognize the outgoing leader and formally say goodbye.
- Mission Change.
  - Return to team exercise and update vision and purpose.
  - ID any new competencies that may be required.

- Re-form team (as needed).
- Identify processes and habits from old mission still relevant or outdated.
- Update operating agreements.
- Rebuild trust and confidence with the team exercise.
- Introduce New Technology into the Team.
  - Identify experienced users to lead until each in the team is proficient.
  - Formulate a training and implementation plan.
  - Team exercise: Impact on mission, capabilities, and other technologies.
  - Update operating agreements.
- Deliberate Practice of High-Performance Team Qualities.
  - Everything is a learning opportunity when done in the context of the purpose.
  - Use team exercises to practice working smarter.
  - Frame discussions in terms of shared purpose and vision as repetitive reinforcement.
  - Cultural awareness: Operating environment, team members, agency nuances, etc.
  - Preface decisions in terms of “In our agency, we tend to...” This will help maintain actionable understanding and shared trust.
  - Periodically review negotiation and conflict management principles to prevent conflicts.
  - Consistently review IM and KM procedures, which will help maintain core high-performance team competencies.
- Conduct a Virtual Meeting.
  - All members attend the meeting in the same way. The most successful ones take place when members are participating in virtual mode. Even if they are in the same location, it works better when all members dial in, as it puts people in close proximity to their information, and comfortable at their own desks. This facilitates participation with the same advantages and challenges.

- Conduct a mandatory screen-sharing conference call to avoid the audience losing focus.
  - Have a timed-out agenda for the meeting to avoid losing the precious resource of real-time communication. A good agenda ensures the meeting is for an important purpose and also guides the team in knowing how long to spend on each item.
  - Rotate new roles. Facilitator, note-taker, and telephone buddies are critical skills each team member should learn. The facilitator leads the call, makes sure the team follows the agenda, and encourages participation by frequent prompting and polling.
  - Begin each meeting by getting “voices in the room” by projecting the face clock, where a picture of each person on the call appears at a different hour on the screen. This virtual conference table makes facilitation easier and encourages people to announce their names each time they speak. For example, “This is Michelle at 3 o’clock.” This behavior should be reinforced until everyone recognizes each other’s voices.
  - Send “read-aheads,” avoid status reporting, and spend most of the team’s time resolving conflict and making decisions. Members should do everything possible outside the meeting, such as researching all pertinent information on the project’s status. Status reports are sometimes necessary, but are not the best use of same-time conference calls. Resolving differences and making complex decisions should be done face-to-face.
  - Check in with everyone periodically during the meeting. One successful team meeting stops the members every 10 to 15 minutes and calls them by name to elicit questions, comments, and concerns. While this technique was rough and choppy the first few times, it eventually became part of the culture.
  - At the close of the meeting, ensure members participate in a brief after action review (AAR), so they can reflect on what they’ve done together and say goodbye. These two actions are simple trust-building practices.
- Adjourning the Team.
    - Mission is completed.
    - Does the team room become the archive/repository of the work done/knowledge base?
    - Ensure all members know of the knowledge base’s location.

- Prepare an AAR capturing the agenda with the context reflected in the organizational processes.
- What has the team learned and why is it important?
- The teachable point of view. How do team members package what was learned? This involves product and process. How does the team close the door on the process?
- Team Peer Assist: How does a team assist other teams to learn from its experience?

## Tip C: Formal vs. Informal Coordination

**Formal.** The approved process within any organization for gaining a decision and officially communicating those decisions to others.

**Informal.** The use and transfer of pre-decisional data, information, and knowledge. This is needed to increase situational awareness and quicken the team's ability to coordinate activities and resources. These are used to accomplish a mission, often across boundaries of organization, function, level, or culture.

The team must agree on coordination within the group to align acceptable informal and formal coordination policies and programs. The various boundaries of organization, level, function, or culture present in the members of the team need to be shared for situational awareness.

Improved shared situational awareness builds shared actionable understanding and brings out both acceptance and challenges. It also allows for said challenges to be better addressed earlier in the process.

The use of informal collaboration and coordination does not circumvent the formal decision authorities and formal decision processes.

Informal coordination and collaboration increases the team's speed at making decisions. It also increases the options and responses available to the team due to larger, more diverse socialization.

### Formal Tools and Processes

Ask the team the following:

- What formal processes does the team need to participate in?
- What documents outline those processes?

Examples may include the following:

- Headquarters/agency approved decision memorandum with routing (this may be performed electronically through a work-flow process).
- E-mail: Some organizations use e-mail as a means to approve minor decisions. Vertical and horizontal use of "to and cc."
- Formal decision briefing and meetings.
- Decision memorandums: These generally used as a follow-up to meetings where verbal decisions were made. Once they enter the system these memorandums are part of a formal process.

- Boards, bureaus, centers, cells, and working groups.
- Video teleconference (VTC) (may also be used informally).

### **Informal Tools and Processes**

Examples may include the following:

- Instant messaging (texting).
- Blog.
- Community-of-practice.
- Phone (may also be formally applied).
- Web conferencing.
- Social networking tools.

## **Tip D: Operating Agreements — Rules of Engagement for a Culture of Collaboration**

Operating agreements should be developed in Stage 2 of the team's development process and revised as often as necessary to ensure continued, informal collaboration endorsed in principle by organization leadership. The following are provided as examples, however, each organization will have its own set of operating agreements, and some may be handed across boundaries.

The rules of thumb below reflect shared common human expectations existing across boundaries.

### **Rules of Thumb that Can Underwrite the Team's Operating Agreement**

- An established collaboration and sharing agreement is based on trust.
- Nobody likes to be surprised.
- Nobody likes to be hung out to dry.
- Trust and sharing is a two-way street — both vertically as well as horizontally.
- People at the top like to know the truth.
- People below the top want to know early on what's coming down.
- All want data, information, and knowledge by whatever means to increase situational awareness. If relevant, "more is better."
- All want the ability to go across boundaries wherever and whenever in order to coordinate actions and acquire the resources to do the job faster, better, and easier.

**NOTE:** Sometimes a fast decision is imperative. In such cases, silence is assumed consent, however, it can often cause confusion through presumed understanding. This is particularly problematic when crossing boundaries of culture, agency, and nationality.

When dealing across boundaries, "you scratch my back, I scratch yours," mentality fosters more trust across the boundaries of level, organization, function, and culture. This results in the team operating more informally.

A "draft" (or "working paper") header on informal correspondence (including e-mails, blogs, etc.) could be highlighted at the top, while the text below follows the action officer's signature block.



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“Views or opinions expressed are not to be interpreted as command positions. They reflect command sensing that informal collaboration among leaders across functions, organizations, cultures, or levels can create better shared understanding of issues and policies. This is informal sharing of content so that all can be more fully informed when necessary formal decision processes are exercised.”

When coordinating informally, announce at the beginning of the teleconference all drafts must be marked or referenced as pre-decisional.

The “ground rules” must be fully explained, and misunderstandings chalked up to the process of informal coordination. Life is friction and errors occur, particularly when crossing boundaries. A responsibility of senior leaders is to explain what is, or is not, appropriate, and then counsel when errors occur. The gain of greatly increased shared actionable understanding far transcends the cost of occasional errors.

### **Handling Violations of Trust**

What happens when someone uses pre-decisional information to one’s own advantage? As the team begins to coordinate/collaborate, members will generally start with a small circle of leaders and expand outward, probably across boundaries, as the team learns of new contacts that could assist in accomplishing the mission. It is important to make sure the contacts understand the rules by which the team shares pre-decisional information and what sensitivities and limits to circulation-across-boundaries exist.

Occasionally someone will abuse the team’s trust. Usually it will not be done intentionally, but is because the contact did not realize the limits or rules of engagement. If someone continues to abuse the trust in informal collaboration, the individual should be routinely cut out of the loop and excluded from the informal coordination. This can result in making a person’s job more difficult. This places a high incentive to be seen as a trusted agent and to safeguard pre-decision information during the informal stage of coordination. This is particularly important across boundaries of organization, level, function, or culture. The word about effective sanctions, if trust is abused, will spread rapidly “through the grapevine.”

## **Tip E: Measures of Team Effectiveness**

Measures of effectiveness (MOE) help the team measure improvement. These questions can be conducted as a survey of team members, or through observation methods. MOEs are not intended to be a scientific measurement, but rather a barometer of activity required to move organizations toward cultures of collaboration across boundaries.

### **Examples of MOE**

How will a team know if it is performing at higher levels? Look for these indicators:

- Team members feel connected and challenged by their work and take pride in it.
- Team members feel empowered to try new approaches to their work.
- Team members can make decisions and take actions across boundaries increasingly in the face of uncertainty.
- Team members encourage one another and their ideas across boundaries, grouped or virtual.
- Team members constructively discuss and challenge one another's ideas and approaches.
- Team members feel comfortable collaborating and coordinating pre-decisional products across boundaries and levels — both bottom up and top down.
- Team members are quick to resolve differences and find common ground.
- Team members feel safe sharing ideas and collaborating with one another. Sharing, sharing, sharing.
- Team members feel confident briefing superiors about their levels of informal coordination across boundaries.
- Team members have and use standard operating agreements for formal and informal collaboration, particularly across boundaries.
- Transition and succession plans within teams are understood and facilitate smooth hand-off of responsibilities across boundaries.
- Team members quickly identify barriers and obstacles to collaboration and find effective work-arounds.
- Team members do not feel that “everything must go through the boss” before it is shared, particularly across boundaries.

## **Tip F: Individual Preparation for High-Performance Team Membership**

Each team member brings valuable knowledge, skills, and attitudes to the team dynamic. Before the members can be an effective high-performance team, each member needs to know himself and consider how his “style” might affect the larger team. Once the team is formed, it is valuable to take a few minutes and allow each member to introduce himself, using some of the questions in Table 3-1 as a guide for the discussion.

Remember that the answers to the questions in Table 3-1 are shaped by organizational bias and cultural habits. Highlight with the team where differences in perspective occur and discuss ways to overcome the differences. Each member should try to think and project beyond oneself — seeking first to understand other team members’ positions before stressing his/her own status/position.

What is this team about?	What do you know so far?
Why am I on this team?	What skills, knowledge, and abilities do I bring?
What knowledge do I need?	Make a quick list.
What skills should I acquire?	
What relationships should I cultivate?	How do I build the relationship? What do we have in common?
Who do I know who is not on this team but might be valuable to it?	How big is my personal Rolodex? Does it extend across boundaries?
What experiences have I had that will be helpful?	How do I tell a short story of those experiences to others to help others understand my perspective?
What tools (IM/KM) will I need to be able to use?	Am I comfortable with technology? What tools will the team need? How do I gain access or receive training? Who will hold training?
How does my experience and learning style fit with this team?	How do I learn best? Discuss your learning style with other team members and plot the different styles. Discuss how to balance these styles when teamwork is produced.
How do I like to receive objectives, deliverables, milestones, tasks, guidance, etc.?	Do I like specific and clear tasks, or general guidance with latitude? Do spoken instructions work well, or do I need written requirements?
How many people are on this leader team and where are they from?	What do I know so far? How diverse are we? What boundaries have been crossed?
What organization, function, or culture bias represented on this team do you have?	Early recognition helps break down barriers and establish effective team operating procedures.
What are your pet peeves about working in a team?	Getting these out early helps everyone understand and accept your style and establish agreements as to how you can effectively work together.

Table 3-1. Questions to better understanding.

## Tip G: Initial Team Assessment

Grade each category and subcategory with a “Strongly Agree,” “Disagree,” or “Somewhat Agree,” to obtain a clear assessment of the team and its members.

### • Purpose

- Everyone has same picture of overall purpose.
- Team discusses, agrees, and reviews clear, simple goals.
- Everyone follows the same process for doing similar work.
- Team looks for ways to interconnect and improve work processes.
- Everyone understands the deliverables.
- Team develops and reviews measures and milestones for deliverables.

### • People

- People have the freedom and flexibility to do their work.
- Team roles, responsibilities, and competencies needed are continuously clarified.
- Leadership is widely distributed and shifts as needed.
- Individuals are encouraged to lead and to follow as appropriate.
- Key system interdependencies are clearly articulated.
- People are encouraged to talk across levels.

### • Links

- A variety of media are available and accessible.
- Team knows how to use collaboration tools consistently and creatively.
- Team has collaboratively established and actively applied operating agreements.
- Team actively implements strategy for engagement across organization boundaries.
- Team members build social capital through multiple connections.
- Team has high level of trust.

- **Time**

- Team has clear milestones and schedules of dates.
- People are aware of ongoing key team dates and cultural calendar.
- Task timelines are collaboratively established.
- Team is able to adapt to rapidly changing conditions.
- Team has clear view of its life cycle and current phase.
- People discuss team processes and suggestions for improvements.

## **Tip H: Coaching Tips and Techniques for High-Performance Teams**

### **The Coaching Role**

Coaching is the art of improving the performance of others, including specific interacting skills and encouragement of achievement.

This role is used in both formal and informal settings, both in-house and across boundaries.

- A good coach takes the following steps: listens, asks questions, provides feedback, and then helps generate creative ideas.
- A good coach encourages and facilitates team development across boundaries.
- A good coach uses questions to generate discussion, allowing the team to reach individual and shared conclusions.
- Good coaches avoid telling people what to do or how to do it. Rather, a coach interacts in ways that are persuasive across the various boundaries present in the team.

### **Why Coach?**

By coaching, leaders free up more of their own time and improve the team's performance across its various boundaries. They delegate more and supervise less, boosting team productivity and confidence. The team-building team approach can come from within the team or from an external source. It takes effort to develop positive team qualities and maintain performance, and even more effort to improve them.

### **Coaching the Team Exercise**

The team exercise is based on asking a series of questions to make the team address issues early on, to ensure a working team in the event of a crisis. The questioning creates dialogue, which improves awareness and leads to a higher degree of actionable understanding. Through the dialogue, the team develops shared understanding and trust.

When coaching a team exercise:

- Frame initial questions to clarify the task and the situation. There will often be disagreements on both.
- Find common ground. Try to get the team to come to agreement on one issue.
- Build to another agreement. When there is disagreement, try to get

at the specifics of what is disagreed upon, before building to said agreement.

- Often breaking down a task or mission gets at the specifics, which can easily be negotiated.

Once the requirements and the situation (to include the operating environment) have been identified, then ask: “What would that look like?” or “How would the team work through this situation?” Coaching the team to describe the situation out loud builds mental models of actions required and obstacles. This can identify work-arounds that help develop team consensus and shared understanding.

Once the situation has been described and each team member has contributed, ask “what if?” questions. Do so in a manner that is not offensive to the culture of one or more team members. This expands team perspectives. Next, ask for a recap of actions, including things the team agrees on and disagrees on. Ask what operating procedures (Rules of Engagement) will need to change. Ask “Who is doing what?” so expectations are clear.

Repeat the exercise as often as needed to ensure clarity and understanding. Remember, in most unified action teams, authority over team members is limited and the best work is done through co-opting others and providing a positive result to both their organization as well as the team (see Table 3-2).



<b>Inter-Cultural Approach to Conflict</b>	Different organizations have different approaches to conflict resolution and problem solving. Some confront the issue directly, while others assume participants are sensitive to what is being communicated. Others have formal conflict resolution procedures. Use the team exercise to determine conflict/resolution cultures in the team and identify differences. Adopt an approach-to-conflict agreeable to all, and address in operating agreements.
<b>Organizational Regulatory Obstacles</b>	As the team progresses through its job or mission, continually identify conflicting laws, regulations, and policies governing each team member. For example, contracted personnel, government employees, and military have different labor laws or judicial systems that must be adhered to, which influences work schedules, individual taskings, and levels of collaboration. Find solutions/compromises. For recurring issues, consider collaborative knowledge to adhere to so the team does not “reinvent the wheel.”
<b>Uncommon Language or Lexicon</b>	Language and lexicon vary. Even those who speak the same language have a difficult time when agencies use different lexicons (i.e., military acronyms). To overcome these barriers, build a collaborative list defining various acronyms, abbreviations, and terms. Other work-arounds include translator tools or translators. Ideally, pair those who speak common languages. When developing a scenario during a team exercise, be mindful of language and lexicon.
<b>Incompatible Data/IM Systems and Tools</b>	Since organizational needs differ, some products used are incompatible across organizational boundaries. The idea is to find the most commonly understood information management tools/systems to meet the team’s needs or default to the “lowest common denominator.” Select the tool with the best availability and capability while providing a common operating picture. Always have a standing training plan for systems being used to enable leaders from different digital cultures.

<b>Incongruent Security Access</b>	Not all members have the same level of access to classified/unclassified information (i.e., civilian agencies, non-government organizations, foreign personnel). If possible, ensure members have proper security access before joining the team. In some cases, interim clearances can be granted. If a clearance or interim clearance is unavailable, the member must be placed in a position that doesn't require a clearance. Consult a security manager whenever foreign access to classified information is required to alleviate access barriers.
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**Table 3-2. Overcoming common obstacles to building effective teamwork.**

## **Tip I: Building Relationships**

The team's social processes at work will enhance a member's capacity to work independently in the future. The transforming process has chain-reaction characteristics; professional and social relationships based on universal trust and confidences expand rapidly and freely, and lead to the emergence of high performance.

As a highly adaptive and productive team approach develops, trust improves as members build relationships and see firsthand the skills and work ethic each member brings. Likewise, the group develops team competencies as the members learn to work together and accomplish a sum greater than each individual could achieve. As the team works together and performs successfully, confidence develops, which acts as a catalyst for even higher performance.

Adaptive and productive teams thrive on work-arounds and are adept at building relationships, global collaboration, working with new technologies, and overcoming obstacles imposed by traditional hierarchy. The methodology is not an exercise or training; it is a way of thinking, understanding, and acting. This approach helps the team develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to support high-priority issues facing the team, and enables the members to identify and overcome obstacles that can prevent the team from accomplishing the mission.

### **Some Points to Remember**

- Identify and include all stakeholder representatives in the team.
- Establish a personal rapport with other leaders by finding initial commonalities. Examples could be:
  - Common history/experiences.
  - Common contacts/interests.
  - Common competency.
- Determine the team's readiness to collaborate.
- Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each team member.
- Distinguish between values, interests, and positions.
- Build personal relationships.
- Team members are in this together. The team's success is interdependent, not independent. Close socialization fosters further growth of mutual confidence and trust among members of teams.

- The close relationship among team members and with members of other teams is the primary mechanism for best practices, transforming previously top-down bureaucratic and organizational structures into bottom up/lateral knowledge.
- Due to the pervasive nature of the collaboration within the framework of the rapidly forming relationships, the process of transformation helps to demolish existing organizational barriers.
- Individuals and groups who have been physically and/or organizationally isolated convert into “swarms” and converge whenever needed based on the exact match to the requirements of the task and mission at hand. Such swarms are essential when addressing new problems affecting performance at a complex level.
- Improved relationships, communications, and collaborations have been shown to restore coherence to disorganized multi-organizational efforts and help in aligning those efforts with the underlying organizational strategies.

## **Tip J: Team Exercise Questions to Develop Vision and Purpose**

### **Shared Vision**

A shared vision exists when members of the team have a common understanding of the following:

- The overall mission.
- Goals and sub-goals of the mission.
- Strategies for reaching the goals.
- Team members' strengths and weaknesses.
- Values and preferences of the team as a whole and the individual members.
- The roles each member will play.
- The big picture.

Benefits of shared vision: It's widely known that teams with shared vision have better coordination and less conflict than teams without.<sup>2</sup> Members of such teams tend to be better able to predict one another's behaviors and act quickly in the face of changing circumstances. Leaders of these teams are more confident in giving their members more responsibility, increasing the team's ability to adapt. Teams comprise members from many backgrounds, organizations, cultures, and agencies, each bringing his or her own skills, biases, and agendas. It is easy to see, then, how this can result in lack of a common vision. Through the team exercise process, team members can identify where differences exist and come to a rapid common understanding.

### **Getting Started with the Team's Process to Develop a Shared Vision**

This initial discussion focuses on gaining a clear understanding of the mission/task at hand. To begin the exercise, share a vignette with the team and prompt a discussion using any or all of the following questions. Ensure each team member shares what he would do, given the scenario, and why.

- What is important about this mission/task and why?
- What team and/or mission goals need to be considered and why?
- What strategies should the team consider to reach these goals and why?

- Which team member should be responsible for what and why?
- With whom should the team collaborate?
- Who needs to be co-opted/recruited into the mission, and what does the team have to offer the individual/organization/agency?
- What are the higher headquarters, or commander's, preferences and what guidance does the higher headquarters offer?
- What would the team expect in the way of resources from the higher headquarters and why?
- What work-arounds might the team use to deal with this situation?

Once the initial conversation is complete, use the next period of time to compare and contrast what members have said. Then engage a conversation around "what ifs" extending the vignette in different ways. It is best to manage the conversation so members' responses are short and specific with prompts such as the following:

- How would the team recognize this new situation if it occurred?
- What would be some cues or indicators?
- How would this new development affect the overall mission?
- In this new situation, whose roles would change? And to what?
- What could the team do to prevent this new situation from occurring?
- Would the team need to develop work-arounds for this situation?

### **Tip K: Team Exercise Questions to Develop Trust**

Among the meanings associated with trust is the expectation that a person has a high level of integrity and dependability. People are more willing to put themselves at risk if they are confident the other person will do what they expect. Rapid development of trust is important because team members typically:

- Have different backgrounds and experiences.
- Must quickly work together as one team.
- Have little experience or exposure with one another.
- May make assumptions about one another's experiences or competencies and establish false expectations resulting in the erosion of effectiveness.

People tend to initially develop trust by superficial factors such as rank, position, resumes, or combat patches, which can lead to assumptions about a person's prior experiences and/or qualifications. These assumptions can incorrectly influence trust as they may not be accurate. Direct experience with one another over time, however, allows team members to develop more informed, deeper levels of trust.

Team exercises offer an expedited process for developing deeper levels of trust by discussing prior experiences in a context common to the team. This development, combined with building on small successes, results in improved confidence across the team, which, in turn, adds to more trust and confidence.

### **Getting Started with the Team's Process to Develop Shared Trust**

Again, with the vignette in hand, begin a conversation about team members' prior experiences in similar situations. It is advisable to begin by sharing personal experiences in comparable situations. Avoid hypothesizing about what might have been done and instead discuss why the approach/scenario played out like it did. The "why" provides insight into the member's skills and thinking process, both of which contribute to developing trust. It is equally important to be straightforward with the team about areas where a member has no experience.

Have the team members share prior experiences to similar situations with prompts such as:

- What similar situation have you been in and how did you handle it?
- How could you apply that experience to this one?

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- What help would you expect from your team members in a situation like this and why?
- What skills or knowledge do you think we need for this situation that our team does not have?
- What would concern you in regard to this team's ability to deal with this situation and why?
- What work-arounds would we use to deal with this situation?

As with the previous exercise, be sure to compare and contrast team members' experiences and consider alternatives.



### **Tip L: Team Exercise Questions to Develop Competence**

As with the previous team exercise, have the team create a situation in the context of the operation (or use a situation that has already developed), focusing the discussion this time around the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to develop a shared understanding of team competencies required to accomplish the mission. Also discuss whether those knowledge, skills, and attitudes are resident in the team. This serves as a gap analysis, as building trust with honest conversation reveals the team's strengths and areas for improvement. As recommended above, encourage discussion of the reasons behind people's answers, which provides insight into the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to develop competence. As per the previous exercises, prompt discussions with these kinds of questions:

- What skills or knowledge does the team need to successfully deal with this situation?
- Have any of the members been in a similar situation? If yes, what did the member(s) do and why?
- What skills did the member(s) need to be successful? What would the member's experience tell the team what skills are needed and why?
- Who on the team possesses those skills?
- Who on the team is best suited to provide those skills?
- How would the team members develop those skills?
- Would the team need any specific work-arounds to deal with its lack of competency in this situation?
- With whom should the team collaborate?
- Who needs to be recruited into the mission, and what does the team have to offer the new recruit?

Complete the discussion by comparing and contrasting what each team member brings to the team, considering alternative situations and work-arounds.

## **Tip M: Conflict Resolution Tips and Techniques**

Negotiating principles<sup>3</sup> include the following:

- Set the tone early, offset any bad rumors, and be candid.
- Use “human factors” and be open about feelings and motives, as this will enhance trust.
- Avoid presenting too many issues; highlight the strongest ones.
- Avoid deadlines to reduce the chance for needless concessions.
- Summarize frequently to enhance understanding.
- Present arguments calmly, without personalization, and make sure they are logically supported.
- Avoid use of personal opinions in arguments.
- Avoid ultimatums and other forms of non-negotiable demands.
- Acknowledge the validity of the other leaders’ arguments. Doing so will help encourage participation.
- Avoid known cultural taboos possibly existing within the team; respect known cultural biases.

### **Separate the Substance of the Deal from the Relationship with the People**

- Be hard on the dilemma, as consensus develops through extensive sharing, but soft on the people.
- See the dilemma from the individual’s point of view.
- Make the proposal consistent with the individual’s values, which is often a “lowest common denominator” across boundaries.

### **Focus on Shared Values and Interests, but not on the Sides Taken**

- Values shared across boundaries define the deal.
- Each leader in the team has multiple interests; be clear and discover other members’ interests.

### **Brainstorm Options for Mutual Benefit**

- Be creative; think outside the box.
- Having an open mind is crucial when crossing boundaries, as well as a willingness to hear and consider new or different ideas and perspectives.
- Identify shared interests.

### **Use Objective Criteria for Decisionmaking**

- Strike a deal based on shared principle, not pressure.
- Agree on fair standards and procedures shared across boundaries.
- Frame issues as a collaborative quest.

### Tip N: Nested Teams

In today’s fast-changing environment, teams are frequently nested into a larger network of effort. The team’s inoperability, however, is often spotlighted as the natural by-product of stovepiped biases, cultures, regulatory systems, geographical dispersion, methodologies, inconsistent languages or lexicons, and juxtaposed organizational interests. These boundaries serve as obstacles to interoperability and high performance. Consequently, friction and stagnation reduce agility and ability, sometimes with deplorable results.

In the example below, the whole of the U.S. Government represents the larger entity. Its nested departments, sub-organizations and embassies and military geographical commands with its subordinate commands are all nested to support a common cause. The teams of leaders, represented by the white ovals and red dots, serve as points of coordination, integration, and collaboration, allowing each organization’s voice to be heard at each level, as well as bringing the weight of the organization’s resources to bear on the problem set it is most capable of addressing. The nesting implies a commonly held and agreed upon purpose and vision. The lines represent the connections and denote the complexity and quantity of groups that must be orchestrated.

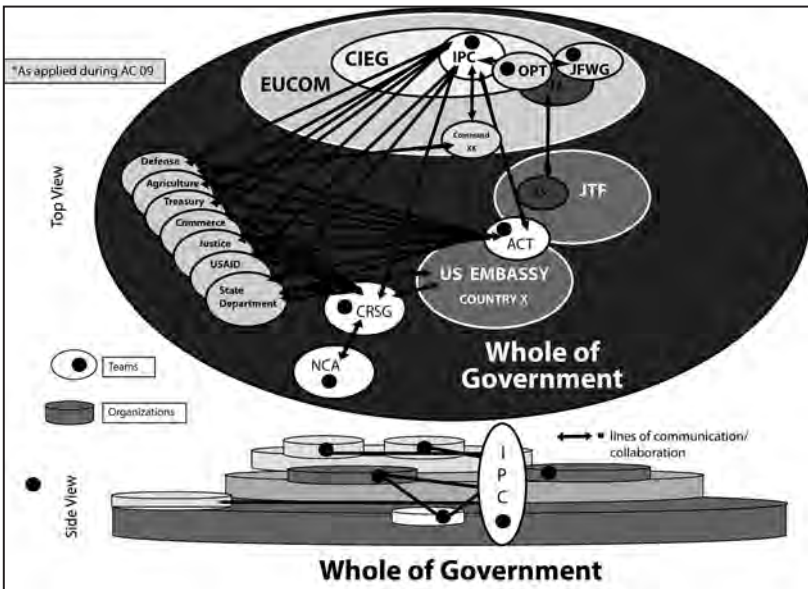


Figure 3-1. Illustration of nested organizations and team networks.

**Reference Key to Figure 3-1:**

**IPC:** Integrated Planning Cells from the U.S. Government, consisting of representatives from each government department or agency which is assigned in a crisis to the Geographical Command.

**ACT:** The Advanced Civilian Team from the U.S. Government, consisting of representatives from each government department or agency and assigned to the embassy in the affected country and the Joint Military Task Force (JTF).

**CRSG:** Department of State lead Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stability Group, located in Washington, D.C., and consisting of representatives from each U.S. Government department and agency. CRSG provides recommendations to the NCA.

**NCA:** The National Command Authority, including the President of the United States and his closest national security advisers.

Other teams represented here show only a small representation of the doctrinal and ad hoc teams that are formed and operational during a national crisis.

## Tip O: Conduct a Virtual Meeting

### Wise Virtual Meetings

A handful of “rules,” if observed, can make virtual meetings even more effective and efficient than face-to-face meetings.

- **Everyone attends the meeting in the same way.** Some believe that the most successful virtual meetings take place when everyone dials in, regardless of location. This puts people in close proximity to their information, comfortable at their own desks, and participating with the same advantages and challenges. If the members have the opportunity to meet face-to-face, surround it with as much social face time as possible. Extensive research indicates that dense social networks build trust.
- **Use screen sharing with a conference call.** Conduct a mandatory screen-sharing conference call so the audience does not lose focus. A Harvard Business Review article stated four out of five successful “far flung teams” used the combination of conference calls, screen sharing, and an online repository or team room as key enabling technologies.
- **Have a timed-out agenda for the meeting.** Without one, the team wastes the precious resource of real-time communication. A good agenda ensures the attendees know the meeting is for an important purpose. It also guides the team in knowing how long to spend on each item. As noted above, avoid meetings longer than 90 minutes due to inevitable attention lag. Once the team is in synch, the agenda can be set in real time; as trust grows, this becomes easier.
- **Rotate new roles.**
  - Facilitator, notetaker, and telephone buddies are critical skills everyone needs to learn. The facilitator is the person who leads the call, makes sure the team follows the agenda, and encourages participation by frequent prompting and polling. Though the team leader often takes this role, many successful virtual teams rotate facilitation.
  - The notetaker is the person who literally takes notes during the meeting and posts the notes as soon as possible. This person is responsible for reporting and synthesizing the key aspects of the meeting so that anyone who couldn’t attend can follow the conversation. For example, “The next item on the agenda was the review session on September 16, XXXX. CPT John Doe suggested we invite the CG’s chief of staff. We decided to hold the whole review virtually due to of possible scheduling conflicts.” Other note taking considerations include the following:

- \* Keep the notes to a page, if possible, and date them. Include the agenda.
  - \* List the names of those attending and those invited who could not attend.
  - \* One highly successful virtual team keeps track of decisions and due-outs (responsibilities with due dates).
  - \* Edit the notes immediately after the call while the information is still fresh.
  - \* When a meeting is scheduled, block out enough time to ensure all note-taking tasks can be completed directly after and disseminated as soon as possible.
- Telephone buddies phone those who are attending remotely during the meeting breaks. This way, those who are not physically present can continue the dialogue with those in the room. While it seems like a small gesture, accommodating those not there physically, it is a good practice to build relationships.

• **Begin each meeting by getting “voices in the room.”**

- At the start of the call, project the “face clock” — where a picture of each person on the call appears at a different hour — on the screen. Using this “virtual conference table” makes facilitation easier and encourages people to announce their names each time they speak. For example, “This is Captain Jones at three o’clock.” Reinforce this behavior at least until everyone agrees that they can recognize one another’s voices.
  - Remember, the first time a new person joins the call, team members need to identify themselves each time they speak. Pose an unexpected trust-building question (e.g., “What did you have for breakfast?”) to ensure everyone speaks at the start of the meeting.
  - Use early moments of a meeting to celebrate achievements, opening the session on a positive note.
- **Send read-aheads, avoid status reporting, and spend most of the time resolving conflict and making decisions.** Do what is possible outside the meeting, including getting up-to-date on any project status. Status reports are sometimes necessary, but these reports are not the best use of same-time conference calls. Resolving differences and making complex decisions should be done in real time. In other words, use the meeting to generate heat — discuss, disagree, and decide.

- **Check-in with everyone periodically during the meeting.** One successful team stops the meeting every 10-15 minutes and calls on people by name to elicit questions, comments, and concerns. While this technique was rough and choppy the first few times, it eventually became part of the culture.
- **Check-out around clock.**
  - At the close of the meeting, ensure members participate in a brief after action review, so they can reflect on what they've done together and say goodbye. These two actions are simple trust-building practices.
  - Make sure that those who are face-to-face talk into the microphone.
  - Don't engage in any purely face-to-face team-building activities, as there is no way remote members can participate.
  - Discourage audible side conversations; however, encourage the use of "chat" during meetings. This keeps back channels open and allows trust-building to continue, much as it would when people are face-to-face and they're nodding in approval and indicating differences of opinion.
- **Use information technology applications to maintain "open" rooms.** Take advantage of any of these applications to cut down on meeting set-up time and reduce the need for pre-coordination.



## Tip P: Example of Organizational Collaboration Guidance

To be effective, teams need to commit to shared ways of working and interacting. This is particularly important for teams lacking the familiarity of daily face-to-face contact and for those coming from diverse organizations and cultures. By agreeing to certain common behaviors, the team can organize a set of operating principles addressing many areas where teams can go astray. A team usually exists across boundaries of organization, function, level, or culture, so the team may not have traditional rules and regulations applying to every situation. Thus, the team may have to invent new approaches that are consistent with the common thrust of the participating organizations' procedures. In order to develop informal and formal collaboration within and among teams, the following commander's guidance is provided:

- Collaborate. Sharing knowledge is more powerful than owning knowledge. Share, share, share!
- Leaders, supervisors, and decisionmakers are responsible for making collaboration a natural method of accomplishing staff actions and informing subordinates and seniors of ongoing efforts. Mentoring, training, and personal example are critical to establishing a collaborative environment.
- Using knowledge obtained through informal collaboration with everyone involved is the operating principal. This is especially important when collaborating across boundaries of organization, level, function, or culture, where acceptable use of knowledge shared may not be as well understood.
- The use of informal collaboration and coordination should never circumvent the formal decision authorities and formal decision processes, although it is the methodology the team should use to enable those authorities to take well-informed actions to accomplish the team's executive responsibilities.
- Knowledge shared through informal collaboration builds solutions in a quick, effective manner, but should not be perceived as a formal position, decision, or policy of the command.
- When coordinating informally, everything must be marked or referenced (as simple as stating at the beginning of a teleconference) as pre-decisional.
- Include the following in e-mail exchanges when collaborating across boundaries or in an environment where trust has not been established: "This is informal sharing of content so all can be more fully informed when necessary formal decision processes are exercised."

- Ensure the collaborative environment meets the appropriate classification and information security requirements. Classification levels are not a barrier to effective collaboration; however, they remain a necessary protection of information and knowledge providing the team with freedom of action.
- When collaboration is abused or misused, restrict or deny access to the individual or group until trust is re-established. The goal, however, is to return the individual or group back into a trusted status as soon as the abuse/misuse is identified and resolved. In the interim, ensure others who may be surprised or affected by the violation are notified.

## Endnotes

1. Lipnack, J., and Stamps, J., *Virtual Team: The Age of the Network*.
2. Linda Pierce, Ph.D., U.S. Army Research Institute, *Scenario Training for Adaptive Leaders*, initial draft concept. 2008.
3. Fisher, R., and Ury, W., *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*. The Harvard Negotiation Project.



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