



5 Steps to Building a Successful Team

By Cheryl Mann

There is a 5-step process that we have found to be very effective in building effective teams.

Before we start, it's important to remember that teams exist for one reason: to achieve results! However, it's also important to remember that teams must be sustainable in order to continue producing those results, so that's why we look at the inter-relationships among the team members -- to ensure that those relationships are working at the level needed for the team to continue producing results without getting burned out. Let's look at this process of building a successful team so that your team can get to the next level and be not only effective, but sustainable, in achieving its desired results.

1. Measure the current effectiveness of your team

In order to help your team be more successful, it's important to first look at how successful the team is currently. Measuring your team can serve as a benchmark for team development, as it gives you a current evaluation of your team as it exists today. The best way to do this is to measure your team's effectiveness, which can be done in several different ways:

- Personal interviews: Asking each team member a specific set of questions designed to measure their effectiveness is a great way to learn about what's really going on within your team. The disadvantage of this method is that some team members will not be forthcoming with information during face-to-face interviews because they are not anonymous. Results are best yielded when the interviews are done by an external facilitator who will maintain individual confidentiality.

- Simple measurement: A very simple method to use is to ask your team members "on a scale of 1 to 10, how effective is this team"? And see what their responses are so that you can ask some follow up questions to learn more about their perceptions.

- Assessment tool: In our opinion, this is the best method to measure the current state of your team because it is anonymous, unbiased and team members are generally very candid and open in their responses. The assessment results are then shared with your team in a specially-designed team development process that includes exercises to help the team improve in areas needed.

2. Create your vision of a highly successful team

This is where you can use the "begin with the end in mind" concept that Stephen Covey and others have used for years. This step is about using your imagination to create the most successful, productive, cohesive team that you desire! The vision of your team can include the following components:

- Team's values, priorities and desired results
- Organization's values, priorities and desired results for this team
- Your own values, priorities and desired results for this team
- Productivity factors: these are factors defined by Team Diagnostic International as the factors that support the team in achieving results, accomplishing tasks, staying on course to reach goals and objectives. They include strengths such as accountability, decision making, goal setting, etc.
- Positivity factors: these are factors defined by Team Diagnostic International as the factors that focus on the inter-relationships between team members and the spirit or tone of the team as a system. They include strengths such as trust, respect, clear communication, handling conflict, camaraderie, etc.

I encourage you to create your "desired team" vision with your team. Schedule a time to meet with them to allow for everyone to participate in this creative process! And, remember to think out of the box -- what would it look like to have a team that was achieving results beyond what you think is possible today?

3. Communicate effectively

This is a huge topic that I will only be able to scratch the surface in this article! However, here are the most important tips to remember in my experience of working with teams:

- Everyone receives information differently. Some people have to see it, others have to hear it, etc. How do you like to receive information? Remember that just because one way works for you, that same way doesn't work for all of your team members.
- Find out how each person needs to receive information in order to process it. Ask your team members "how do you like to receive information?" so that they can tell you whether they are visual learners, auditory learners, etc.
- Remember to communicate important information using several different methods so that all of your team members will receive the information you are trying to convey.

- Check in with your team regarding your communications and ask them how you can improve.

4. Develop a plan to turn your team vision into reality

Now that you've measure your team's current effectiveness, you've created a vision of your desired team and you've determined how to best communicate with them, it's time to create an action plan!

This step is about creating goals that support you in growing your team to the next level. We do complete workshops on effective goal setting and don't have space here to go into all of the details, but here are the basics:

Remember to set goals that are

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Realistic
- Time oriented (make sure each goal has a deadline!)

5. Take a stand for your team!

Whether you see yourself as "the leader" of your team or "a leader" of your team or "a member" of your team, you are in a position to influence your team. Take a stand for the improvement of your team! Here are a couple of ways that you can do that:

- Remind your team members of the vision you see for your team and what you see as being possible for your team. Remind them that it IS possible to grow to the next level! And, ask them what they need to grow to the next possible.
- Look for ways to build and develop your team. When was the last time your team had a meeting that was dedicated to enhancing your team's relationships? When was the last time that your team went out to lunch together, or did another fun activity? If you aren't familiar with the types of team development that be effective for your team, or if you don't have the time or expertise to develop a program, call in an expert to help you create a program for your team.

Investing time, energy and financial resources in your team can be simple -- it doesn't have to be complicated or time consuming. The important thing is that you do something on a regular basis to keep your team motivated, engaged and productive so that they can produce the results that you and your organization desire!

Are you a business leader struggling to get the results you need from your team? Despite the many challenges facing organizations today, it IS possible to take your team to the next level and get the results that you and your organization desire! Want to learn how? Visit us: <http://www.goalsinsight.com>

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