



ESSENTIALS

Teams

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Teams have existed since humans began living in social groupings. Most people assume they know how teams work – after all, they have had first-hand experiences all their life – family, baseball teams, scouts and project teams at work. Despite this and the growing recognition of what teams offer in the workplace, the collective impact of teams on the performance of an organization is woefully underexploited.

“It is the long history of humankind (and animal kind, too) that those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed.”

- Charles Darwin

What is a team? When Use a Team versus Individual?

Katzenbach and Smith in *Wisdom of Teams* define a team as:

“a small number of people who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals and approach for which they hold themselves accountable.”

Teams outperform individuals when:

- The task is complex and/or cross functional;
- Creativity is needed;
- The path forward is unclear;
- Efficient use of resources is needed;
- Fast learning is necessary; and
- High commitment is desirable for implementation and achievement of results.

Lessons on Team Performance

Katzenbach and Smith studied teams to identify four key lessons for maximum performance:

1. No team arises without a challenge meaningful to those involved. Teamwork is not the same thing as a team. A common set of demanding performance goals considered important by the group will lead, most of the time, to both performance and a team. Performance is the primary objective; a team remains the means, not the end.
2. Leaders can foster performance best by building a strong performance ethic rather than by establishing a team environment alone. Simply organizing around teams and calling groups ‘teams’ will not generate the same results as a true team.
3. Biases toward individualism exist, but do not need to get in the way of team performance. Most of us grew up with a strong sense of individual responsibility. Parents, teachers, coaches and other leaders have shaped our views and focus on individual accomplishment; rugged individualism is highly valued in US society. Building shared value and commitment are key to ensuring individualism does not get in the way.
4. Discipline within the team and across the organization creates the conditions for team performance. Groups become teams through disciplined action. They shape a common

purpose, agree on goals, defining a working approach and develop complementary skills, and hold themselves accountable for results.

Team Size

So, what is the right size for a team to form? General recommendation is that a team be composed of representatives of the areas impacted by the problem and potential solution. More than 10 people is unwieldy – can't even agree on a time and place to meet; less than 4 and team may not possess the diversity of thought and experience needed to avoid 'groupthink.' Larger groups (25-50) can theoretically become a team, but they usually break into sub-teams.

Key Team Disciplines

Eight key disciplines have been found to improve team effectiveness:

1. **Shared purpose.** Purpose gives a team focus and direction. When the purpose is something clearly important to the individuals, they are more likely to feel their time is well spent. If the purpose is given to the team by leadership, the team must still spend time building common understanding, ownership and commitment to the purpose. If not specified, the best teams invest time up front exploring, shaping and agreeing on a purpose that belongs to them individually and collectively.
2. **Commitment to team.** Team members buy-in to the decisions and standards of the team, where buy-in is honest emotional support, not consensus. Waiting for everyone to agree is a recipe for mediocrity, delay and frustration. This requires clarity. Clarity is the removal of assumptions and ambiguity from a situation. Real clarity can only be achieved when team members can freely share ideas, thoughts and concerns in an unfiltered debate – [productive conflict](#). Most people don't need to 'get their own way' in order to buy-in, they simply need to be heard. This type of commitment extends beyond team meetings and to communications with the rest of the organization. Committed teams take the time to clarify their agreements and action plans so their communication is consistent when they interact with others outside the team.
3. **Leverage capabilities.** Teams develop and leverage a mix of skills, including:
 - Technical/functional expertise
 - Problem-solving skills
 - Interpersonal skills

No one team will have all the needed skills at the outset, but will have within it the capability to develop or obtain the skills needed through personal learning and development and reaching out to others in the organization for support.

4. **Communication.** Communication is critical to execution, change management and organization culture. Communication within the team and outside the team are critical to team success. Team communication includes:

- Team charter – a document that describes in clear, measurable terms the task the team is to accomplish, scope, timelines and membership. The team operate within the framework of the charter.

Project Title			
Project Description:			
Business Linkage:			
Expected Results:			
Metric:			
Expected Financial Impact:	EVA\$	IRR	NPV
Project Start Date	Est. Completion Date		
Team Members			
Employee Name	Expertise	Employee Name	Expertise
Required Signatures			
Project Champion:		Date:	
Team Leader:		Date:	

- Team meeting notes – document team discussions and agreements during formal meetings
- Team action plans – document team plans for execution – what, who, when, how

The meeting notes and action plans form the team ‘memory.’

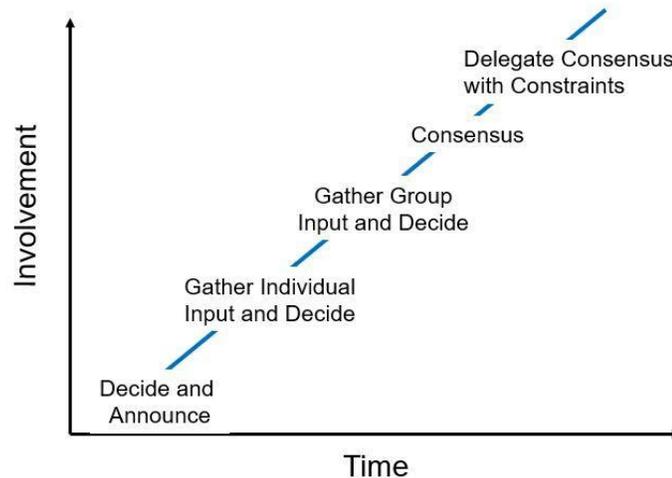
5. **Meeting Management.** To continue to feel that time spent with the team is worth the effort, that time must be well spent through good meeting management. Key are meeting roles, code of conduct, agenda and agreement to a decision-making process, conflict management and action planning.

Role	Responsibility
Meeting Leader	Sets agenda; keeps team focused on task at hand; ensures everyone participates.
Timekeeper	Watches the time allotted for each agenda item; notifies leader when nearing time.
Scribe	Makes ideas visible during the meeting.
Recorder	Takes notes and captures action items for follow-up after the meeting.
Process Monitor	Assures code of cooperation is followed during the meeting.

Five tips for better meetings:

1. Know and communicate the purpose of the meeting – is it tactical or strategic? Brainstorming, debate issues, explore alternatives or make recommendation?
2. Clarify the stake – why is the meeting important?
3. Add drama by putting the most controversial topics first
4. Spend enough time to end with clarity and commitment; ending on time means little if the meeting ends without clarity and commitment.
5. Provoke conflict – hold productive debates to get to the bottom of issues.
6. **Decision-making.** Effective teams intentionally decide how they will make decisions and then consistently use that method, recognizing the more involvement required for the method, the longer it will take to make the decision:

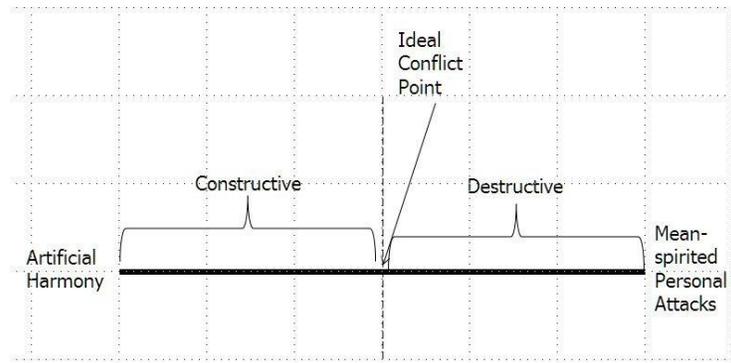
Decision Making Continuum



They also know when they are ready to make a decision, when they need to reach out to others for input, to reconsider or to stress-test their ideas.

7. **Conflict resolution.** Conflict is a fact of life in groups of people. It is simply a condition in which concerns of people appear incompatible; it is not good or bad in and of itself. Positive outcomes are possible when conflict creates deeper understanding of an issue; negative when it is not reconciled and results in poor decisions, deadlocks, wasted energy or apathy. It is therefore in the best interest of a team to learn to engage in productive debate – to find and hold the point between artificial harmony and mean-spirited attacks.

Conflict is actually a continuum:



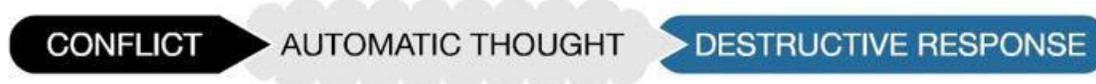
From: Lencioni Patrick. *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: Field Guide*. Jossey-Bass, 2005

Theoretically, the best place on the continuum is close to the middle. This is a point where a group is having productive debate without slipping into destructive territory. Even the best teams will occasionally step over the line. This is actually a good thing as long as the team is committed to working through it.

“Conflict cannot survive without your participation.”

- Wayne Dyer

In the heart of conflict automatic thoughts are put into our heads, no matter how irrational. These thoughts can lead to destructive responses such as arguing, gossiping/complaining about someone, belittling, being hypercritical, caving in, overpowering, defensiveness, passive aggression, dismissing others opinions, revenge, being overly dramatic, sabotage, exaggeration, sarcasm, exclusion, stonewalling, finger-pointing, or withdrawal.



* from, *Everything DISC Productive Conflict*, John Wiley & Sons, 2017.

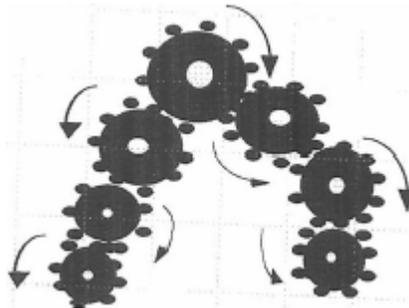
Creativity, trust, and higher performance are possible outcomes of productive conflict. In order to teach a team to engage in productive conflict, it is important to understand everyone’s viewpoints on and comfort levels with conflict as they can be radically different. Some people are comfortable screaming and shouting while others shutdown. A person’s conflict style is determined by a number of factors – temperament, cultural background, and family norms.

One of the best ways to understand your own and others conflict profile is to use a profiling tool such as Myers-Biggs (MBTI) or Everything DiSC, both of which address how an individual's style reacts under stress. In addition, there is an instrument focused solely on identifying your conflict mode, the Thomas-Kilmann Instrument (TKI).

8. **Planning for Results.** With smart trust, productive debate/conflict, commitment and accountability systems a team can identify actions required to accomplish its goals. This typically involves creating an action plan which identifies who does what, when and how in a way that everyone understands their role, the interdependence between roles and tasks and allows team members to put aside their own ego and focus on team success. The discipline is documenting the plan, making it visible, and using it to track progress and hold one another accountable.

Cohesive Leadership Team

A cohesive leadership team is a relatively small group of individuals with the capacity to translate intention into reality that is united around common goals, rewards and responsibilities for achieving and sustaining these goals. Such teams can transform an organization. On the other hand, if a leadership team is dysfunctional, that dysfunction will cascade throughout the rest of the organization. Think of an organization being composed of a series of gears where the senior leadership is the biggest gear and employees on the lowest level of the organization are the smallest gears.



One inconsistent communication or confusion about an activity's importance or refusal to provide resources by a leader will spin its way throughout the organization, faster and faster as it goes down the organization chart resulting in silos, turf wars and disengaged employees.

A cohesive team exhibits the following five behaviors:

1. Trust;
2. Constructively debates one another;
3. Commitment to important decisions;
4. Hold one another accountable; and
5. Pay attention to results

Being a team is hard work. This raises an important question: is the team able and willing to invest considerable time and emotional energy in becoming a cohesive team?

Building Trust

No quality or characteristic of a cohesive team is more important than trust; it is also rare. Trust is used inconsistently and is hard to achieve. The trust we are concerned with here is not the ability to predict one another's behaviors because we have worked together for a long period of time. Trust in cohesive teams is all about vulnerability- members are comfortable being open, even exposed to one another around their failures, weaknesses, even fears. Vulnerability-based trust is not a touchy-feely, theory. Quite the contrary; it is predicated on the simple and practical truth that people who are not afraid to admit the truth about themselves are not going to engage in political behavior that wastes everyone's time and energy. To identify low levels of trust within a team look for: meaningful conversations happening outside team meetings (mail room, hallway, or parking lot), frequently run out of time for discussion and debate, repetitive conversations with team members restating their view several times.

Recent neuroscience research has shown that higher levels of oxytocin create higher levels of trust and joy. Experiments have shown that a higher sense of purpose (common goal) stimulates higher oxytocin production in the brain. Trust and purpose then mutually reinforce each other to produce high levels of happiness, which in turn further promotes trust within the team.

Why is vulnerability-based trust so rare? Human beings, especially adults, have a strong desire for self-preservation. The idea of putting themselves at risk for the good of others is simply not natural. Instead we learn "look out for number one" and "don't let them see you sweat" and other such clichés that call us to think of ourselves before others.

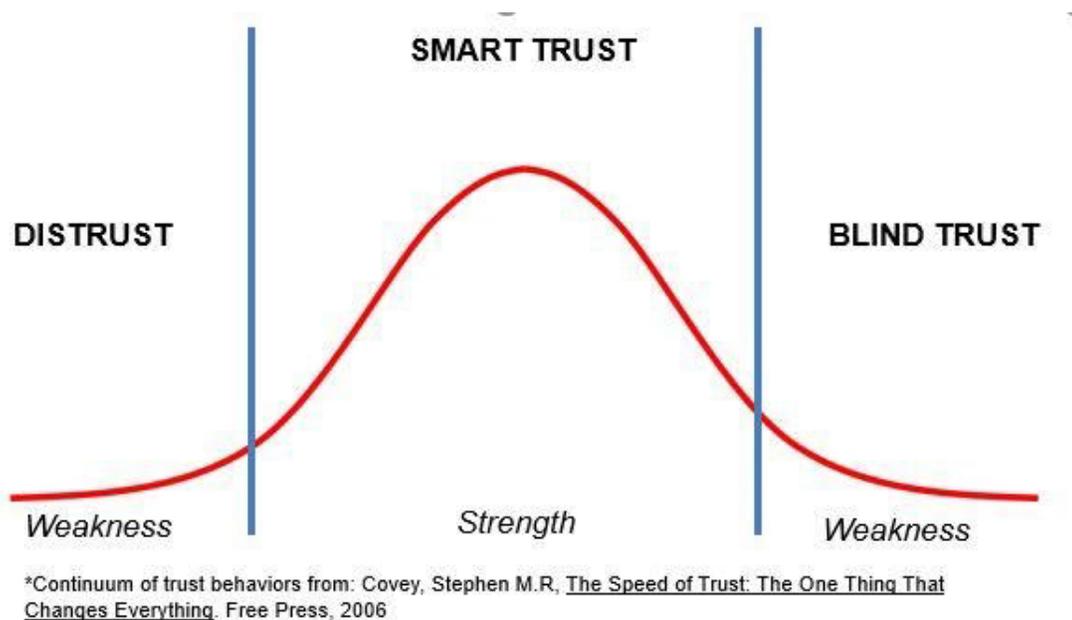
The key to building trust then is to help team members get comfortable being exposed to one another and able to say "I made a mistake" and "I need help."

Establishing real trust is hard, but doable; it does not have to take a lot of time. But, it does take courage. Leaders must be willing to take risks without a guarantee of success, to be vulnerable without knowing if it will be respected and reciprocated.

Stephen M.R. Covey defines 13 trust behaviors for building relationship trust:

1. Talk Straight
2. Demonstrate Respect
3. Create Transparency
4. Right Wrongs
5. Show Loyalty
6. Deliver Results
7. Get Better
8. Confront Reality
9. Clarify Expectations
10. Accountability
11. Listen First
12. Keep Commitments
13. Extend Trust

All 13 require a combination of character and competence. The first five primarily flow from character, the second five from competence and the last three are an equal mix of character and competence. The 13 behaviors work together to create balance; these behaviors exist on a continuum. Too much results in blind trust; too little results in distrust. The “sweet spot” is **Smart trust**:



A table comparing distrust, blind trust and smart trust for each of the 13 behaviors is included in the Appendix.

Achieving Commitment

Teams that achieve commitment do so because they know how to hold two concepts: buy-in and clarity. Buy-in is the achievement of honest emotional support, while clarity is the removal of assumptions and ambiguity from a situation. With leadership commitment, there is collective ownership for the decision which has a powerful effect on the rest of the organization.

Let's be clear. Buy-in is not consensus. Waiting for everyone to agree on a decision takes time and often results in mediocrity and frustration. In contrast, commitment is about a group of individuals buying into a decision when they don't naturally agree.

Good leaders provide for commitment by first extracting every possible idea, opinion and perspective about the situation from the team. Most people really just need to have their ideas heard, understood and considered. A leader must then have the courage to make a decision.

Commitment does not guarantee success, however; a team can fail to benefit from their commitment. That's because they fail to achieve clarity and alignment on a decision. Instead they make assumptions about what they have agreed to. A favorite example of this is:

“A team committed to complete a task. Anybody can do, but Everybody assumed Somebody else would do it so consequently Nobody did.”

Two techniques to align a team around commitments are relatively simple:

1. Commitment clarification: With five minutes to go to the end of a meeting, the leader asks: "What exactly have we decided here today?" He/she then captures the response on a flip chart or white board for all to see and checks for agreement. This makes commitments explicit and allows the team to identify and act upon discrepancies before leaving the meeting.
2. Cascading communication: Once commitment is achieved, team leader demands each member of the team communicate the decision(s) to their staff within 24 hours in a two-way dialog (staff are given a chance to ask questions for clarification). Even the most passive team members will state their concerns or misgivings of a decision if they know they will be expected to communicate it publicly in a short period of time.

Embrace Accountability

Accountability is the willingness of team members to remind one another of their commitments when they do not follow through with their actions. This is peer-to-peer accountability that is modelled by the leader. If the team knows that the leader will eventually step in and call someone out, they will not do it themselves. Likewise, if the leader does not call someone out, then the rest of the team members will hesitate to be "the heavy."

It is hard and uncomfortable to give someone critical feedback. Without accountability, a team chooses a path of slow, uncomfortable decline.

“Accountability is the glue that bonds commitment to results”

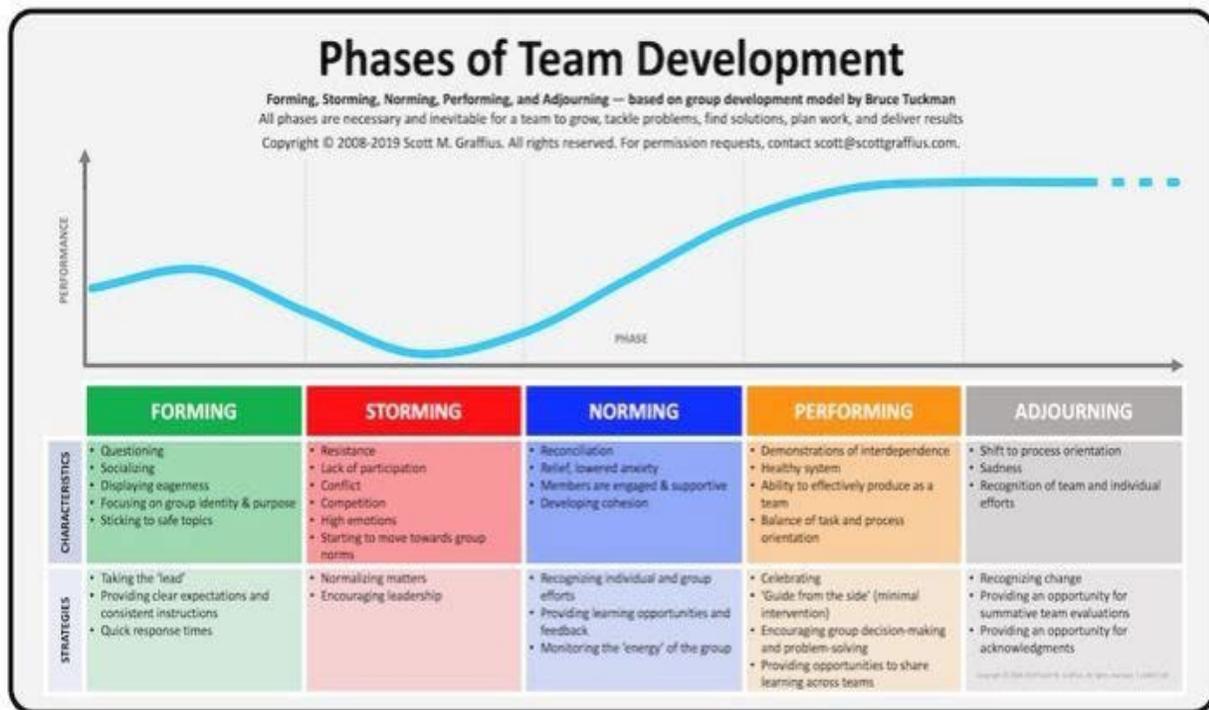
- Will Craig

Accountability systems prompt and encourage people to keep promises and then monitor where those promises are kept. Accountability systems instill discipline to consistently repeat good practices. Elements of accountability systems that measure and communicate performance expectations include:

1. a select few (12-15) indicators of overall performance; including measures used to improve the process and make daily performance decisions;
2. forums for two-way transfer of information;
3. long-term scheduling;
4. a formal problem-solving process;
5. clear, defined work processes

These system elements are building blocks to communicate performance expectations and results across the organization. Such a system organizes all the small things that allow your organization's teams to accomplish anything.

These disciplines will not appear over night, but can be built over time when the team leader and members intentionally work at it. Recognize that all teams will go through natural stages of forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning:



To move through the **Forming** phase, the team should spend time together to get to know one another, the team sponsor should provide clear direction and purpose for the team. The team leader should also involve the team in developing plans and roles. To move through the **Storming** phase, the team should develop trust in one another (see previous section on trust) and develop and implement a Meeting Code of Cooperation to set expectations on acceptable behavior.

To move through **Norming**, the team should obtain deeper clarity on its purpose, tasks and processes by leveraging team member expertise, experience and geniuses. It is also useful to expand the Meeting Code of Cooperation beyond meetings to a Team Agreement for decision-making and accountability.

To move through **Performing**, the team should refine its Meeting Code of Cooperation, Team Agreement and roles based on their experience on collaborative tasks. They should monitor progress and celebrate success.

As the team **Adjoins**, they should acknowledge and celebrate one another, evaluate the work together and capture lessons learned.

Focusing on Results

Even with trust, constructive debate, commitment, and accountability, a team can lose sight of its objective, the result it was formed to achieve. It is natural human behavior to lose focus,

mostly because we are hard-wired for self-preservation (strong tendency to look out for ourselves before others). To execute, the team needs to keep its goals front and center."

Everyone needs to know the "score." Like in sports each member of the team needs to know whether or no they are "winning" so they can do their part to improve the score. This can be done using some form of scorecard that is publicly posted. An example of doing this across an entire company may be found in Jack Stack's book, *The Great Game of Business*. The scores/measures should be quantitative and well-defined to avoid ambiguity, few and tied to the team objectives/goals. The scorecard should be reviewed frequently by the team so appropriate corrective action(s) are taken in a timely manner.

Still it is easy to become distracted. Four common distractions are: ego, career development and money, and my department, all which boil down to team members looking out for themselves and the staff they lead more than the team they are a member of.

The Ideal Team Player

What makes a good team member? Effective teams require a mix of skill: technical/functional, problem-solving and interpersonal. But is it just skill that makes a good team player?

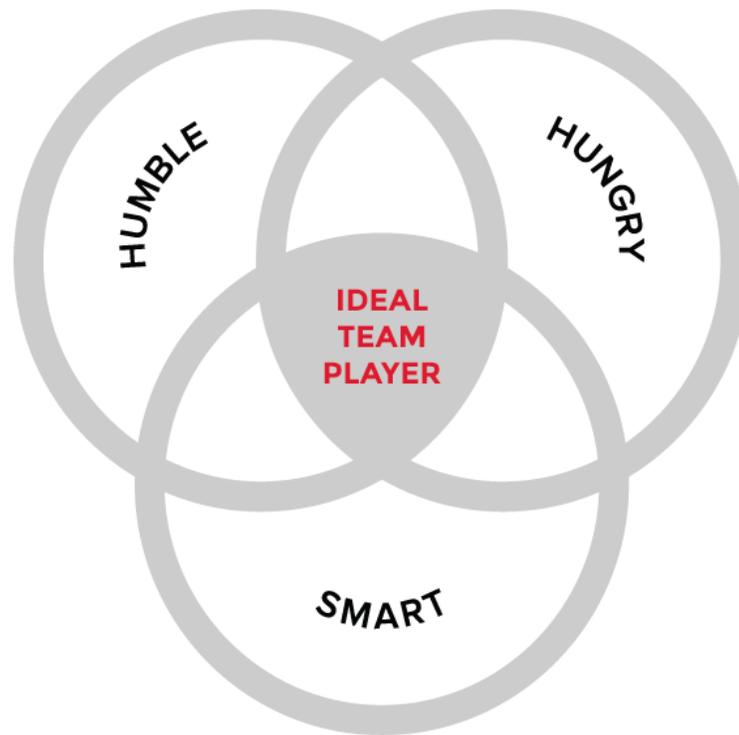
"Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success."

- Henry Ford

According to Pat Lencioni, an ideal team player exhibits three virtues:

1. **Humility** is the important of the three virtues. Humble team members lack excessive ego or concerns about status. They are quick to point out the contributions of others and slow to draw attention to their own. This virtue aligns with the Work of Leaders behavior [Execution: Feedback: Offer More Praise](#).
2. **Hungry** people are always looking for more- more to do, more to learn, more responsibility. They almost never have to be pushed by their manager to work harder or longer; they are self-motivated. Healthy hunger is a manageable, sustainable commitment to doing a job well and going above and beyond when it is required. This is analogous to the Work of Leaders best practice behavior [Execution: Momentum: Driven](#).
3. **People Smart**. Being people smart refers to a person's common sense about people – interpersonally appropriate and aware of what is going on within the group. They have good intuition and judgement about the subtleties of group dynamics. This virtue aligns with the work of Leaders best practice behavior [Alignment: Dialog: Receptive](#).

As Pat admits, these virtues are not new or earth shattering taken one-at-a-time. It is the combination of the three that makes them powerful. If just one is missing in a team member, teamwork can be more difficult, if not impossible.



From: Lencioni, Patrick. *The Ideal Team Player: How to Recognize and Cultivate the Three Essential virtues*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2016

What happens if a team member only has one of the three?

Humble Only – this team member is pleasant, kind-hearted, unassuming, but does not feel or demonstrate a sense of urgency to get things done or have the ability to build relationships with others. They do not make waves but are left out of conversations and activities. Pat calls these team members “*Pawns*.” The bottom line is that such team members will have little impact on team performance. Humble-only team member will survive long on teams that value artificial harmony and that don’t demand performance from each member.

Hungry Only – this team member will be determined to get things done but with a focus on themselves and no understanding or concern for how they impact others. Pat calls these team members “*Bulldozers*.” Hungry-only members can easily destroy a team but go unnoticed in organizations that place a high priority on results alone.

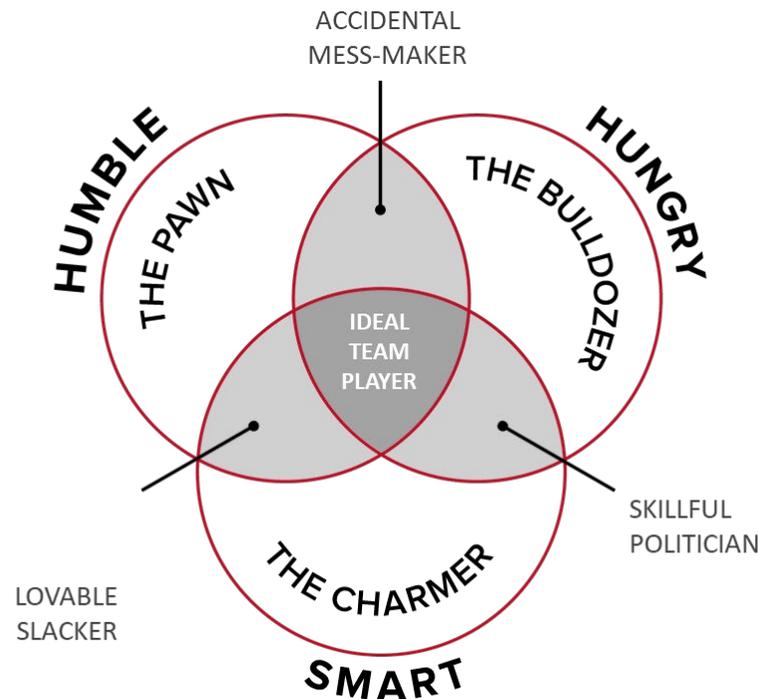
Smart-Only – this team member lacks humility and hunger but knows how to behave around others. They can be entertaining and likeable, but have little interest in the well-being of the team or results. Pat calls these team members “*Charmers*.”. Bottom-line, they provide little contribution to the team.

What happens if a team member only has two of the three?

Humble and Hungry – Known as “*Accidental Mess Makers*” these team members generally want to serve the team and get results, but lack any understanding of how they impact the rest of the team and create interpersonal problems within the team.

Humble and Smart - “*Lovable Slackers*,” these team members are adept at working with others and not looking for attention, but only do what is asked of them, rarely seeking more. They have limited passion and commitment to the work of the team and need motivation and constant oversight or will put a drag on the team.

Hungry and Smart – “*Skillful Politicians*” these team members are ambitious and so skilled at team dynamics they often appear humble, but in reality, they manipulate and scare other team members. These team members do well in organizations in which individual performance is valued over teamwork.



From: Lencioni, Patrick. *The Ideal Team Player: How to Recognize and Cultivate the Three Essential virtues*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2016

WARNING: It is not easy to identify these virtues and should not be done flippantly.

There are two areas where leaders should apply these three virtues:

1. Hiring Team Members. The most reliable way to ensure teamwork in your organization is to hire only ideal team players. Ask specific questions to tease out these virtues in

candidates. Have a small group individually interview each candidate, share responses and observations. Don't ignore hunches as they will come back to haunt you later.

2. Developing Team Members. While the three virtues are character behaviors versus competence behaviors, they can be developed/improved.

Developing Humility - This is the most nuanced of the three virtues and usually related to insecurity, maybe something rooted in childhood, family situation or a function of style. A manager may be able to help such an employee identify the root cause and admit the situation and then coach the employee to practice it. With practice, the employee may feel more comfortable with it.

Developing Hunger - A manager should give such an employee immediate, unambiguous feedback, repeatedly regarding their hunger behavior, or lack thereof. Praise the employee publicly when they exhibit signs of hunger.

Developing Smarts – Make it clear to the employee that it is not about intention that they do not recognize group dynamics or their impact on others, but quickly and lovingly get their attention to the situation so they can see and practice it appropriately.

In all three cases, it is most important for the leader to model the behaviors themselves. Once employees are hired with the three virtues and provided coaching to further develop them how does a leader embed these virtues into the culture and further ensure team effectiveness and results?

1. Be explicit and bold with expectations for teamwork and the three virtues.
2. Catch people doing it and hold them up as examples.
3. Address any behaviors that violate these virtues, small and large. Provide opportunities.

It is also important to have each team member doing work that gives them energy and joy.

The Working Genius Model

The Working Genius model is based on the belief that everyone has natural talents and gifts that can be used in all parts of life, with strong applicability to work. There are six types of genius:

The Genius of Wonder: the natural gift of pondering the possibility of greater potential and opportunity in a given situation.

The Genius of Invention: the natural gift of creating original and novel ideas and solutions.

The Genius of Discernment: the natural gift of intuitively and instinctively evaluating ideas and situations.

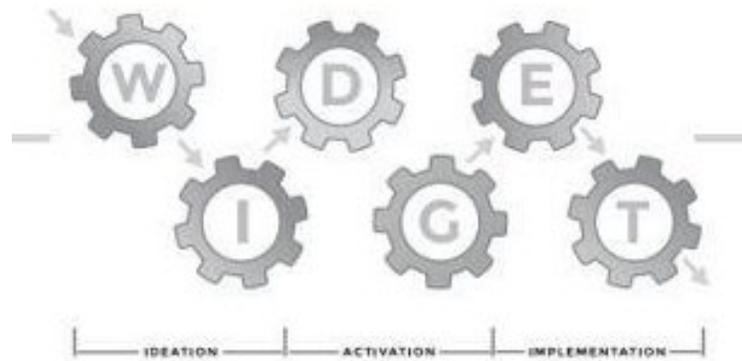
The Genius of Galvanizing: the natural gift of rallying, inspiring and organizing others to take action.

The Genius of Enablement: the natural gift of providing encouragement and assistance for an idea or project.

The Genius of Tenacity: the natural gift of pushing projects or tasks to completion to achieve results.

Two of the six types come naturally to you, you are good at them and they give you energy and joy; these are your areas of **Working Genius**. Two of them are neither natural nor energizing for you, and most likely, you aren't exceptionally good at doing them; these your areas of **Working Frustration**. The remaining two types fall in between; you can do them fairly well, maybe even very well, but you don't derive great joy or energy from them. These are your areas of **Working Competency**.

Each type of genius receives and/or gives something to adjacent types, creating a work flow leading from Ideation (Wonder and Invention) to Activation (Discernment and Galvanizing) to Implementation (Enablement and Tenacity) as depicted below:



There are two fundamental ways that a team can be transformed by using The Six Types of Working Genius:

1. Individual team members increase their productivity and morale by maximizing the time they spend in their areas of genius and minimizing the time they spend in their areas of frustration.
2. Ensuring the team has all six of the geniuses required to get something done.

When team members better understand their own and their coworkers' areas of Genius, Competency and Frustration, they are more capable of:

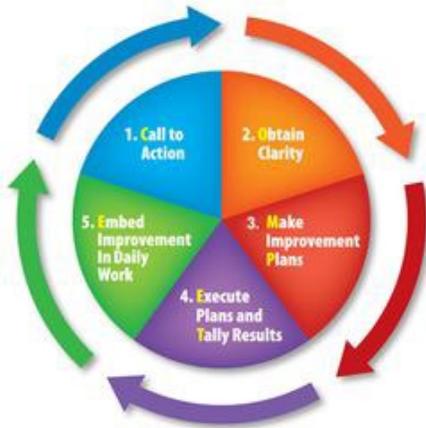
- Understanding why they have been successful or unsuccessful in past endeavors together.
- Avoiding making unfair and inaccurate judgments about one another's motivation.
- Alleviating their own guilt about struggles they've had in work.
- Making quick and concrete adjustments to their roles and responsibilities to better tap into one another's strengths, and avoid one another's weaknesses.
- Getting more done in less time.

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APPENDIX

Behavior	Distrust	Smart Trust	Blind Trust
Talk Straight	Lies, spin, double-talk, flattery to avoid discomfort	Truth told in a way people can verify; real and genuine. "What you see, you get." No hidden agendas or information.	Too much information too fast (people unprepared)
Demonstrate Respect	Fake concern. Ego	Genuine care for others. Respect for dignity of every person and every role, especially for those who cannot do anything for you. Kindness shown in the little things.	Overprotectiveness, jealousy, unproductive worry
Create Transparency	Hide, cover or make obscure; secrets, hidden agendas	Honesty. Simple language to let people know where stand. No manipulation of people or facts. No spin or false impressions.	Too much information too fast (people unprepared).
Right Wrongs	Hide, cover or make obscure; secrets, hidden agendas	Honesty. Simple language to let people know where stand. No manipulation of people or facts. No spin or false impressions.	Apologize profusely or repeatedly
Show Loyalty	Loyal as long as it is convenient	Credit given freely. Contributions of others acknowledged. No bad-mouthing others behind their backs or disclose private information; speak about people as if they were present.	Extremely loyal at the moment, but not to future well-being or principles
Deliver Results	Overpromise and under deliver	Get right things done right. Make things happen on time and budget without excuses.	Plenty of results with no consideration if they are the right ones.
Clarify Expectations	Not sufficiently clear with expectations or communications	Disclose and reveal expectations. Discuss them. Validate them and renegotiate as needed. Don't assume expectations are clear or shared.	Too detailed, micromanaging



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