



UNIT-1

Building High Performance Teams

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

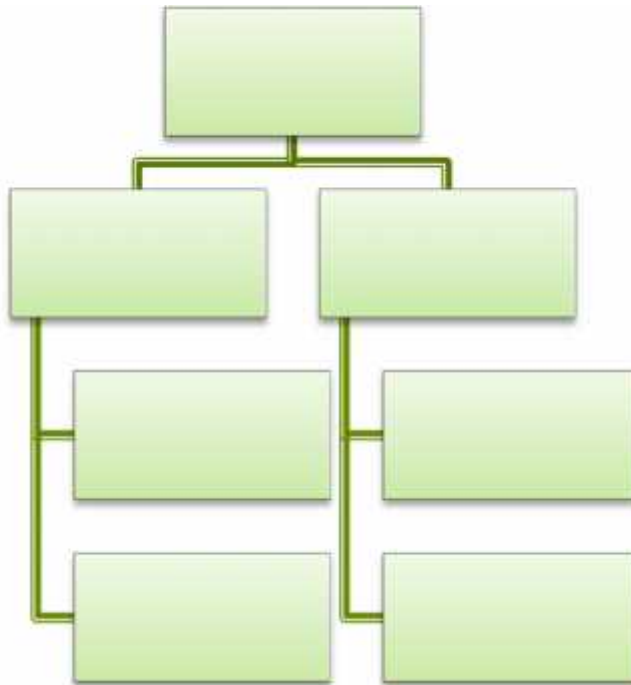
- ✓ Identify different types of teams.
- ✓ Build teamwork by recognizing and tapping into the twelve characteristics of an effective team.
- ✓ Promote trust and rapport by exploring your team player style and how it impacts group dynamics.
- ✓ Recognize the key elements that move a team from involvement to empowerment and how to give these elements to your team.
- ✓ Develop strategies for dealing with team conflict and common problems.
- ✓ Understand how action planning and analysis tools can help your team perform better.

Unit 1

Organizations Today

A Changing Structure

The traditional organizational hierarchy looks like this:



However, many companies continue to keep their organizational structure as flat as possible, allowing them some flexibility, easy access to decision makers, and a lean system of operating. Many organizations also choose a more web-like structure than typical hierarchies of the past. With the web structure, instead of simply reporting to people above, we can also report to multiple people through lateral connections.

Things have certainly changed in many places, and things are still changing, especially when we look at organizations that are based on the overlapping, interactive work of teams. The change from hierarchical to more of a fishnet organization demonstrates the partnerships, teams, and interpersonal relationships that make our companies thrive.

Many of us are already working in business teams, project units, and other ad hoc committees. Can you think of some of these alliances within your organization?

Trends in Business

Many businesses have shifted attention from their competition to their customers. They understand that it is easier to work with existing customers than to find new ones, so customer service is a key operational area. There is still plenty of interest on the competition, but the focus has shifted.

Working from home and setting up virtual networks are not replacing the office environment, but they are certainly having a large impact in some places. The use of mobile devices assists these efforts, as we become more and more reliant on virtual capabilities.

An orientation toward continual learning has replaced one-time training for many employees. Learning must be life-long for everyone.

Making Connections

From your reading, and your analysis of your own organization, can you identify some of these shifts that are happening?

If so, what impact is this having on your organization? On you?

Can you see other shifts within your organization?

Types of Teams

A rose may be always a rose, but a team is not always a team. While many groups are called teams these days, they may actually just be a group of individuals. We hear terms such as an executive team, a quality team, a service team, or a sales team, but just calling a group a team doesn't make them a team at all.

Types of Teams

There are several modern classifications of teams.

The Traditional Model

This refers to a group of people who have a traditional leader but who also share some of the leader's responsibility and authority. How much leadership is shared usually depends on the particular task and what the boss is comfortable delegating. The boss is in charge, but may allow other team members to take the leadership role on various issues.

The Team Spirit Model

This is a group of people who are perceived as happy working for one boss. These people demonstrate team spirit, though they don't function as a true team since they report to one person who is responsible for all results and does not share authority or responsibility among the team.

The Self-Directed Work Team

This is a group of people who manage themselves. No one person in the group has the authority to make all the decisions about the events that impact the group. This is referred to as a self-directed work team because everyone has authority and responsibility for all the decisions they have to make.

The Task Force Model

This is a group that comes together for a specific time to work on a special project or task. This group has traditionally been called a task force or committee.

The Virtual or Cyber Team

Members of these teams typically don't see each other in person, though they may connect frequently using technology. They are working together to accomplish goals, but meet via e-mail, phone, or over the Internet. They can also fit any of the four models listed above.

Defining a Team

We like this definition: “We can define a team as a group of people who come together under shared leadership, mutual responsibility, and conscious authority to achieve agreed-upon goals in a mutually effective fashion.” (From “Games That Teach Teams: 21 Activities to Super-Charge Your Group,” by Steve Sugar and George Takacs)

If you broke down this definition into its words and phrases, could you justify each one?

- Group
- Who comes together
- Shared leadership
- Mutual responsibility
- Conscious authority
- Agreed-upon goals
- Mutually effective

Team Norms

All teams, whether they know it or not, have norms, rules, or guidelines that guide the behavior of team members. In most cases they are not written down: they are simply understood because that’s the way the team always operates.

For example, if the group always starts ten minutes late, team members will adjust their behavior to start ten minutes late. If someone has their reports ready ahead of time and e-mails it to the grateful minute taker, others will follow suit.

Norms can be positive and thus help the team be an effective organization. For example, all team members show up on time for team meetings. Norms can also be counterproductive, such as when excessive joking and side conversations prevent a meeting from being productive.

Some teams spend time establishing a set of norms or ground rules before they begin their work.

Develop several norms for how you want to work together during this workshop.

What do you want?

What do you not want?

The TORI Team Building Model

Originally developed by Jack and Lorraine Gibb in 1978, the TORI principles of team building still hold true today.

- T is for **Trust**: Interpersonal confidence and absence of fear.
- O is for **Openness**: Free flow of information, ideas, perceptions, and feelings.
- R is for **Realization**: Self-determination, doing what you want to do.
- I is for **Interdependence**: Reciprocal influence, shared responsibility, and co-leadership.

Scoring Sheet

Criterion	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
Distance of Flight					
Hang Time (Length of Flight)					
Visual Appeal					
Creativity					
Teamwork					
Total					

A Team's Activities

Richard Beckhart said in 1972 that there are four activities a group should perform on a regular basis if they desire to grow into a team. These four activities remain essential for the success of every team.

- Set and adjust goals and priorities.
- Analyze or allocate the way work is being performed, according to team members' roles and responsibilities.
- Evaluate the way the team is working.
- Examine how the group handles agreement and conflict, and how group members relate to one another.

Making Connections

Think about some questions or activities that you could use for each element.

Set and adjust goals and priorities.

Analyze or allocate the way work is being performed, according to team members' roles and responsibilities.

Evaluate the way the team is working.

Examine how the group handles agreement and conflict, and how group members relate to one another.

The Five Stages of Team Development

The Five Stages of Team Development

There has been a great deal of study on teams and on group dynamics. Bruce Tuckman is responsible for this straightforward model, which emphasizes that all teams and groups go through five stages of development, although they do not necessarily go through those stages together or at the same time.

Forming

This is sometimes referred to as a team’s childhood. This is the first stage of development. This stage is not unlike how you felt when you learned you were coming to this workshop: some of you would have been a bit excited; some would have been anxious; others would have been concerned that they wouldn’t have the same level of experience and understanding as everyone else; while others feared this would be a waste of time. At this stage, team members may have no clear idea of what to expect or what they will accomplish. The team leader will be influential and will likely make many of the decisions. Your leadership style here is usually that of telling.

As team leader, you will make sure your team members know one another and know about one another so they can begin feeling comfortable together. You help them decide on their team goals and objective, and you share your expectations with them. You are the role model so you must demonstrate that you value each member of the team, and have high expectations that they will perform well.

Storming

This stage is often referred to as team adolescence. As members of the group work together, they become more comfortable voicing their own opinion and they may not agree with either the team leader or the other members of the team. There is often disagreement and conflict, with little cliques forming and alternate goals being suggested. Members of the team notice how different other members are and a pecking order may be established.

This can be a difficult time, particularly if turf wars develop. You are an even more important role model now, communicating with all team members, reminding them of how valuable each of their roles is, and helping them settle their disagreements in a civilized fashion: not ignoring them, but dealing with them openly and honestly. All the while, you are helping them get to know one another better and coaching them so they become more skilled at their job. Any group training at this point is often on team building.

Norming

This stage is often referred to as young adulthood for a team. Eventually, if you continue to encourage, support, and communicate with your team they will work out their differences and begin to see that they are quite a bit alike after all. Now they begin to enjoy being together and they start having more fun — so much fun that occasionally they may forget about the work they are to get done. You will find that the participating style serves you well when a group is in this stage of development.

Eventually your hard work and your support will pay off and your team gradually begins to trust one another and become a more cohesive group. Now they start enjoying work and the company of other team members. They begin to notice what you have been telling them all along: they really do have a lot in common. They start to socialize together and may even get so involved in social activities that they forget about what they are trying to accomplish. This is a good time to move away from being quite so hands-on and begin to delegate tasks. Cross-training can be useful.

Performing

Now the team is beginning to mature. They have skills, know their own strengths and limitations, and have a good deal of problem solving abilities. By now they have figured out (perhaps with your help) who does what to make the team effective and they work well together. The challenge for you now is to keep them from becoming bored. You will use your delegating and coaching skills to keep people engaged and active.

Finally they've arrived! You have a team who really are capable of working on their own. Hopefully you have been celebrating team successes ever since you started working together. However, don't stop now. They still need to feel appreciated. Encourage them to do some self-evaluation and some work evaluation to see if there are things they can do even better. Continuous suggestions for improvement should come from this group.

A word of warning: Group dynamics are never static, so don't ever be fooled into thinking your battle is won. If a new member joins the team, or their roles change, you may find your group right back in the storming stage again.

Adjourning

When the group has formally finished working together, or when things are winding down naturally, the group will disband. Celebrate successes and achievements, and then bring the team to a close. Alternatively, if this was not a

successful team, the group should evaluate what went wrong, and use the lessons for later projects.

Even if the same group is to work on future projects, they will still need to go through all of the stages, although they will likely form and storm very quickly.

Nurturing Teams

What can you do as a leader to move your team through each stage?

Forming

Storming

Norming

Performing

Adjourning

Important Factors in Team Development

Commitment

Members of the team can set their personal aspirations or ideals aside as part of their commitment to ensure the group goals are achieved.

Trust

Team members have solid relationships with one another. They also have faith that each member of the team will honor commitments and wholly support one another while working in a predictable, consistent way.

Purpose

The team has been oriented to understand their roles, level, or ownership, and see how they fit into the overall strategic plan for the organization.

Communication

Teams that communicate well save a lot of time by handling day to day exchanges as well as managing conflict, making decisions, and leveraging strong relationships to get their work completed.

Involvement

By its nature and title, team work means that everyone has a role and commits to working as partners, despite differences they may have.

Process Orientation

Process orientation helps the team to work together. Processes can include problem solving methods, planning techniques, meeting schedules complete with agendas and minutes, and a defined conflict resolution method.

Team Problem Solving

Armed with the information you have about your role as a leader and your team and how they might develop, think about some of the issues that you are dealing with as you work with your team. **Write down one concern, difficult employee, or difficult situation, that you are comfortable sharing with your colleagues in this room.**

Now, take five minutes to describe your situation and get some feedback from the other participants.

Characteristics of Great Teams

The 12 Characteristics

These 12 characteristics of effective teams were developed by Glenn Parker, who has devoted his life's work to studying and developing teams. For the remainder of the afternoon and part of tomorrow, the group will look at some of these characteristics.

- Clear purpose
- Informality
- Participation
- Listening
- Civilized disagreements
- Consensus decisions
- Open communication
- Clear roles and work assignments
- Shared leadership
- External relations
- Style diversity
- Self-assessment

Clear Purpose

It can be frustrating to be part of a group with no clear idea of why you are there or what you should be doing. Do your team members know and accept the vision or mission of the organization? Are they part of the goal setting for the department or unit?

A clear purpose will set the direction for the team. Without it, the team could easily question why they exist, and what they are supposed to accomplish. Part of the team forming stage should include defining goals and outlining objectives.

Informality and Participation

With high-performance teams, we encourage and nurture an environment that leads to greatest results. This means that a climate that is informal and comfortable, even relaxed, is encouraged. The team is observed to ensure that frustrations caused by boredom or personality conflict are dealt with so that participation levels remain high. As leaders, we encourage teams to interact comfortably and easily. We encourage lots of good-natured conversation and laughter.

Seating arrangements can facilitate this. A circle is usually the best seating arrangement so that people face one another, and a typical classroom arrangement is the worst where they have backs to one another.

Listening

High performance teams focus on using effective communication techniques, particularly listening and asking

questions.

Active listening means that we try to understand things from the speaker's point of view. It includes letting the speaker know that we are listening and that we have understood what was said. This is not the same as **hearing**, which is a physical process, where sound enters the eardrum and messages are passed to the brain. Active listening can be described as an attitude that leads to listening for shared understanding.

When we make a decision to listen for total meaning, we listen for the content of what is being said as well as the attitude behind what is being said. Is the speaker happy, angry, excited, sad...or something else entirely?

To improve your listening skills, use these tips:

- **Make a decision to listen.** Close your mind to clutter and noise and look at the person speaking with you. Give them your undivided attention.
- **Don't interrupt** people. Make it a habit to let them finish what they are saying. Respect that they have thoughts they are processing and speaking about, and wait to ask questions or make comments until they have finished.
- Keep your **eyes** focused on the speaker and your **ears** tuned to their voice. Don't let your eyes wander around the room, just in case your attention does too.
- Carry a **notebook** or start a conversation file on your computer. Write down all the discussions that you have in a day. Capture the subject, who spoke more (were you listening or doing a lot of the talking?), what you learned in the discussion, as well as the who, what, when, where, why, and how aspects of it. Once you have conducted this exercise 8-10 times, you will be able to see what level your listening skills are currently at.
- Ask a few **questions** throughout the conversation. When you ask, people will know that you are listening to them, and that you are interested in what they have to say. Your ability to summarize and paraphrase will also demonstrate that you heard them.
- When you demonstrate good listening skills, they tend to be **infectious**. If you want people to communicate well at work, you have to set a high example.

Civilized Disagreements and Consensus

Definitions

A civilized disagreement means what it sounds like: we can have a disagreement, but we're not going to let it ruin our relationship, nor are we going to behave badly while we work through it. We explain our positions, and even agree to disagree. (We will be spending more time on conflict later in the workshop.)

For important decisions, the goal is substantial (but not necessarily unanimous) agreement through open discussion of everyone's ideas and avoidance of formal voting or easy compromises.

One important element of achieving consensus is that you work toward a proposal or solution that all members will support and that no one will oppose. This is not the same as a unanimous vote since consensus doesn't have to reflect first priorities; the principles are not opposed and are fully supported by the group.

A resolution where everyone is totally satisfied requires these elements:

- Time
- Active participation of all group members
- Skills in communication (such as listening, conflict resolution, and facilitation)
- Creative thinking and open-mindedness
- Ideas to be heard and understood

The Perfect Menu

The CEO of your company has just decided to diversify from the core business and open a chain of restaurants. Your team's job is to design the perfect dinner menu for business clients, with an appetizer, main course, dessert, house wine, and one additional option.

Appetizer

Main Course

Dessert

House Wine

Additional Option

Open Communication

Team players can encourage open communication and trust by being dependable, pitching in and helping out, reading and responding to verbal cues, and candidly sharing views. The basic principles of good communication include the following items.

Objective

You should have an end result or objective clearly in mind before communicating. Examine your purpose. What specifically do you want the receiver to understand or to do, as a result of the communication?

Method

What's the best method for achieving your objective? Obviously, some communication methods or channels are better than others for a given objective. Weigh the alternatives (written or oral, group or individual, formal or informal) before selecting a specific method such as a letter, memo, meeting, telephone call, or e-mail.

Structure

How you organize and construct your communication is very important to its success. There are many considerations: How much or how little to cover? What's the best way to organize the message? How can you keep it simple and concise, yet complete? How can you gear it to your audience's needs (frame of reference)?

Feedback

In order to ensure that your message has been understood and to evaluate the emotions of your receiver (how does he/she feel about it?), you should encourage frequent responses.

Clear Roles and Assignments

For the first part of this morning, we will continue discussing the 12 characteristics of effective teams. Remember that the first seven characteristics were:

- Clear purpose
- Informality
- Participation
- Listening
- Civilized disagreements
- Consensus decisions
- Open communication

The next characteristic is clear roles and assignments. This is facilitated by making sure that each team member understands what they are to do, and how what they do fits into the bigger picture. Work is distributed fairly throughout the team, and action plans are completed.

Leader's Expectation Checklist

Area	Explanation	Rating (1-10)
Work Methods	Understanding our leader's expectations regarding required work methods and procedures when completing jobs or projects.	
Time Frames	Understanding due dates for the completion of projects; determining when dates have slipped and which completion dates are final and nonnegotiable.	
Work Responsibilities	Understanding each team member's role when we are assigned to a given job or responsibility.	
Customer/Supplier Interface	Understanding our leader's expectations when dealing with supplier problems or customer complaints or requests; understanding how far we should go to build effective relationships with other work groups.	
Work Priorities	Understanding which jobs take priority and the changes in work priorities; being able to clearly differentiate between hot jobs and other jobs.	
Performance Expectations	Understanding what our leader expects in the way of desired outcomes, what it means to do a good job, and the degree of effort we are expected to put into a job (as opposed to overworking low-priority jobs).	
Resources	Understanding what resources (facilities, support staff, equipment, software, and budget) have been allocated to perform a job and how much control we have over resource decisions.	

Shared Leadership

Being a leader doesn't mean doing it all yourself. Nor does it mean always being the one out in front. Shared leadership is an idea to consider when working in team environments.

What are some benefits of sharing the work of leadership?

What are some possible disadvantages of shared leadership?

The key to shared leadership is communication. If several (or all) members of the group are going to share in leading the group, they must agree on where they are going and how they are going to get there. They must also communicate along the way to make sure they are on track, and to resolve any problems that arise.

As an example, let's look at a traditional construction team. Typically, you have a supervisor (or foreman). This person directs the rest of the workers to get the construction project accomplished. Now, let's say that this team decided to use shared leadership and eliminate the supervisor's position. Without communication, this could be a disaster. You would probably end up in a situation where one person is laying carpet before painting has been completed. However, if the team meets each morning and lays out responsibilities and plans together, this shared leadership formula might work very well for them.

Team Player Types

What's Your Team Player Type?

There are many ways to discuss the personality types of people that we work and play with. Whether you use initials like the MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator), colors like Personality Dimensions, edutainment like True Colors, the names of animals, or Greek philosophers, the idea is that there are base temperaments that we can relate to, and that we prefer. The science behind this kind of assessment relates back to the work of Carl Jung. It has been substantiated through tens of thousands of people who have completed and validated the questionnaires.

Scoring Example

Add the total number of points that you wrote beside each letter of the alphabet in the questionnaire. Pay close attention, since the letters are not always in order!

Scale

- 4 = Most like you
- 3 = A lot like you
- 2 = Somewhat like you
- 1 = Least like you

Terms

1. A driving need for you is:

3	C	To find meaning in life
4	A	To learn and gain knowledge
2	B	To belong
1	D	Freedom to do what you want

Scoring

A	IIII
B	II
C	III
D	I

Your Score

A	
B	
C	
D	

Total A's _____ Total B's _____ Total C's _____ Total D's _____

The letter with the highest total is most like you. Write it here: _____

The other letters are your next preferred styles. If your numbers are close to each other (within five points), you probably find it pretty easy to flex your style to those other categories. If your numbers are far apart, or one is much lower than the others, that is the area you will find it challenging to work within. You'll have the knowledge of how to do it once you work through the material below.

What Does it Mean To Have a Number?

In reality, we are a blend of all types, moving within the numbers and flexing into the other styles that our circumstances and our comfort levels dictate. This means that we are more like a blended drink than distinct ingredients. You'll recognize that you may behave one way at work (super organized, for example), and might be more relaxed at home, but return to your super organized self when stress at home increases.

As you read the descriptions below, see if they agree with how you behave as a member of your team at work, whether you are in meetings or working on a project. You'll also get some insight into how to connect with the different types in the descriptions.

Mostly A's – Inquiring Rationals

Inquiring Rationals are often **drawn to jobs like banking and engineering**. They like to figure out how things work. They consider the structure and configuration of things. They process information intuitively and look at the big picture. These are visionaries, like Albert Einstein and Bill Gates. When it is time to make decisions, they apply logic, and they don't get persuaded by emotions. If they don't respect you, you won't keep their attention. Experience and competency are very important to Inquiring Rationals.

This temperament profile makes up approximately **five to seven percent of the population**. Other notables in this group are Walt Disney, Ben Franklin, Margaret Thatcher, and Napoleon. To connect with Inquiring Rationals on your team, demonstrate your expertise in your work.

As a member of the team, you are the person who keeps track of things, most often with checklists and guidelines. You can be counted on to know what the assignment is and when it is due. You get frustrated with team members who are not big on details, or who want to try something new. You like to follow a recipe and you know where your tools are. You probably don't like surprises very much.

Most of the time you complete assignments in a timely and efficient manner, with all the needed detail. You also share the information and materials you have with other members of the team, and provide the technical training or background that they need. People usually see you as dependable, systematic, proficient, practical, and efficient.

Too much logic might mean that you are demonstrating some rigidity. Tap into your sense of humor and try to keep other people's styles in mind, especially if you are leading a team. You may go into data overload with long reports, push for unrealistic standards, and tend to lose patience with team climate and process issues.

Mostly B's – Authentic Idealists

Authentic Idealists are **natural teachers, counselors, and leaders**. They are benevolent and intuitive, and they focus on global issues like world poverty and humanitarian issues. Idealists love metaphors, stories, and symbols, rather than statistics and figures. They make decisions that reflect their values, and rely on emotion and instinct as opposed to logic. In fact, statistics and facts bore them. They are looking for significance, and they seek the truth.

The Authentic Idealist temperament makes up about **ten percent of the population**. Notable members of this group include Eleanor Roosevelt, Billy Graham, Mahatma Gandhi, Jane Goodall, Oprah Winfrey, and Albert Schweitzer.

Authentic Idealists are people-oriented. They don't want to rock the boat, and their focus is on having everyone in harmony on the team. They can focus more on people's feelings than results. They will step in to resolve process problems (for example, with conflict or lack of involvement), listen attentively while withholding judgment, and offer praise and recognition to other team members.

To connect with the Authentic Idealists on your team, share your values and personal convictions. Be authentic and reach out to them by telling stories that demonstrate your empathy. Appeal to personal ethics and a higher calling. Show that you care about them and each person in the room. Authentic Idealists are more interested in how much you care than how much you can cite statistics.

If your teamwork style is that of an Authentic Idealist, your strengths include making deep connections with your team at an emotional and personal level. You motivate and encourage. You're a good storyteller, so you find innovative ways to present your information. You have wisdom to share and are eager to do so. Your lack of ego about what you know makes you likeable. You have a sincere enthusiasm and empower people to act. People see you as encouraging, enthusiastic, supportive, humorous, and relaxed.

Areas for development include a tendency to be overly sensitive to others. You're intuitive and will interpret meaning behind everything. This also means that you can get distracted by reactions of other individual in the audience, and that can make you lose track. You may see team processes as an end to themselves and fail to challenge or contradict other team members. Make sure that you are well prepared for areas you are responsible for, and that you accommodate other members of the team by being sufficiently serious and aware of the bottom line.

Mostly C's – Organized Guardians

Organized Guardians are extremely **dependable and loyal**, and they play by the rules. They have an amazing work ethic, stay down-to-earth, and they like routine. They are thorough and orderly. At times they are too serious, but they are practically always serious. They are good at taking care of other people. They want to hear about the bottom line, and they want the facts.

Organized Guardians will consider charts and graphs and follow a well prepared presentation longer than most people, but they can shut down when too much emotion is presented and may get bored with stories. This temperament makes up **40 to 45% of the population** and includes people like Queen Elizabeth II, Mother Teresa, George Washington, and Colin Powell. With their respect for tradition, they are drawn to the military and policing. These are also the people who will pass traditions to their children and grandchildren.

To connect with Organized Guardians on your team, be concise, organized, and support statements with data. Present information in a logical sequence, and don't wander off down a tangent. Quote other experts. Expect, and encourage, them to collaborate.

If you are an Organized Guardian as a team member, you will be very logical and organized. You'll take notes, and you'll know how to find them. You're a big picture thinker, looking for the better way to do things. You can be persuasive, and you don't need to be tied down by excessive details. You see the vision, mission, and goals of the team as paramount. You are flexible to new ideas and willing to help out even in areas outside of your defined roles. You are willing to share in the limelight with the members of the team. You work hard to meet your objectives. People usually describe you as forward-thinking, cooperative, independent, flexible, and imaginative.

Your weaknesses can be predictability. The data will be there, but you may have to remind yourself (repeatedly) to give the group opportunities for self-discovery and application. Draw on your compassion for others to add emotional depth to your work and an appreciation of the strengths of others. Sometimes you may be tempted to publicly complain about team failures. Resist the urge! You may overlook the mission at times by being too future oriented, or lose sight of tasks. Resist the urge to dream, and get on with the doing.

Mostly D's – Resourceful Artisans

Resourceful Artisans **crave action and live in the moment**. They are very social, confident, and persuasive. Donald Trump, Steven Spielberg, and Madonna are notable Resourceful Artisans. They're witty, playful, and fun. If they had a message to share, it would be that the world could lighten up a little. Like Organized Guardians, they can also perceive the world concretely. They can get bored with visionary tasks. They enjoy stories that they can easily relate to and imagine happening to them. This temperament makes up about **35% of the population**.

To connect with Resourceful Artisans, be real and spontaneous. Engage them with questions and discussion. Be prepared for them to challenge your ideas, and at times, authority. They will play the devil's advocate and look for weak links in anyone's argument.

If you're a Resourceful Artisan, your strengths include energy, personality, and creativity. Build in some interaction when you present your work to leverage your spontaneity. You are a natural storyteller, so tell some stories. You will encourage action, and you have good listening skills, so you are responsive to your team. While

most people will appreciate your candor, it may take some practice before you know when to back off an issue. You will challenge the team to take well-considered risks and push them toward high ethical standards. People usually see you as candid, honest, principled, assertive, and ethical.

Your weaknesses can show up in your organization and structure. Because you are living in the moment, you might avoid the homework that goes into the development of a brilliant report or presentation. You might avoid preparation and be willing to rely on spontaneity, but then you are less focused on content. Be careful not to be so spontaneous that you miss a good opportunity to deliver a powerful message. You can be too direct in communicating with other team members, and sometimes become rigid and inflexible. Avoid painting yourself into a corner by knowing when to back off.

What's Important?

We all have preferences for how we do things, and now we hopefully understand a bit more about them. It's also important to remember that we ALL have the range of preferences described here. You might be mostly A, but call on behaviors that are more closely associated with B, C, and/or D as needed. You might also be very close in your results to more than one type, so you'll find it easier than other people to flex your own style in response to what the group needs.

It's important to have a range of types in our workplace and on each team that we work with. The strength of having some people looking after facts and figures while others can appeal to emotions, spontaneity, or reinforce the importance of rules and tradition, makes our business effective. It's the blend, that presence of different temperaments with in a multitude of strengths, which keeps our world fascinating.

My Team Style

What are your individual strengths?

What are your individual weaknesses?

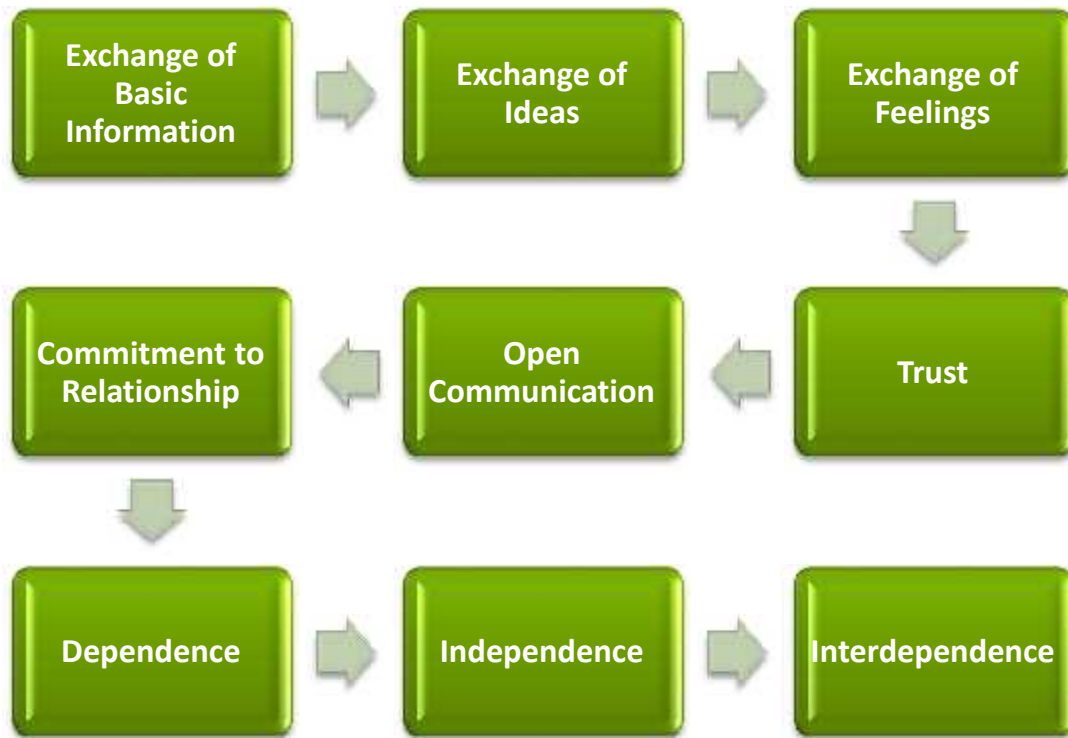
What are your team's strengths?

What are your team's weaknesses?

How can you shore up the weaknesses and leverage the strengths?

The Trust/Relationship Model

The diagram demonstrates how people relate once they have common ground and how they commit to the team and each other in a trusting relationship.



Lateral and Vertical Thinking

A team that experiences a long period of success uninterrupted by difficult challenges is likely to find that its members are firmly settled within their respective comfort zones. Success that is tempered by mistakes and failure that is not seen as negative will encourage innovation and continued creative efforts. One way to look at this is to consider lateral versus vertical thinking, something offered to us by Edward de Bono.

Lateral Thinking vs. Vertical Thinking

The emphasis in education has long been on logical, sequential thinking. Traditionally, this was seen as the appropriate way to use information and to learn. Creativity was considered as a mysterious kind of approach for artists and musicians, but is actually used by people everywhere in all kinds of efforts. Creativity, or lateral thinking, is not a substitute for logical (vertical) thinking but is instead a much needed complement.

Lateral thinking makes quite a different use of information from logical (vertical) thinking. For instance, the need to be right or come to a correct and measured result at every step is absolutely essential to logical thinking, but quite unnecessary in lateral thinking. It is sometimes necessary to be wrong to eventually come to the right conclusion. With logical thinking one makes immediate judgments, but with lateral thinking one may delay judgments in order to allow information to interact and generate new ideas.

What are some ways that we can encourage team creativity?

Creative Team Thinking

Creative Thinking Methods

Brainstorming

About Brainstorming

Brainstorming is the first thing that comes to most people's minds when we talk about creative thinking. In a brainstorming session, people are encouraged to say what comes to their mind, and all the ideas generated are recorded. People are encouraged to say whatever they are thinking, and are not to fear looking foolish since wild ideas are explicitly encouraged. There is no one right way to run a brainstorming session. Rather, you should tailor it to your needs and resources. In doing so, you may find it useful to consider the following guidelines.

Before Brainstorming

- Define your purpose. Think of what you would like to walk out of the meeting with.
- Choose the participants. The group should be large enough to provide a stimulating exchange, yet small enough to encourage both individual participation and invention. This usually means between five and eight people.
- Change the environment. Select a time and place that distinguishes the session as much as possible from regular discussions. The more different a brainstorming session seems from a normal meeting, the easier it is for participants to suspend judgment.
- Design an informal atmosphere. What does it take for you and others to relax? It may be talking over a drink, meeting at a vacation lodge, or simply taking off your tie and jacket during the meeting.
- Choose a facilitator. Someone at the meeting needs to facilitate to keep the meeting on track, make sure everyone gets a chance to speak, enforce any ground rules, and stimulate discussion by asking questions.

During Brainstorming

- Seat the participants facing the problem side-by-side. Physically sitting side-by-side can reinforce the mental attitude of tackling a common problem together. People sitting side-by-side in a semicircle of chairs facing a flip chart, for example, tend to respond to the problem depicted on the chart.
- If the participants do not know each other, the meeting should begin with introductions.
- Then, clarify the ground rules, including a no-criticism rule.
- Outlaw negative criticism of any kind.
- Once the purpose of the meeting is clear, let your imaginations go. Try to come up with a long list of ideas, approaching the question from every conceivable angle.
- Record the ideas in full view. Recording ideas on large sheets of paper gives the group a tangible sense of collective achievement, reinforces the no-criticism rule, reduces the tendency to repeat, and helps stimulate other ideas.

After Brainstorming

- After brainstorming, relax the no-criticism rule in order to bring the most promising ideas to the surface. You are still not at the stage of deciding; you are merely nominating ideas worth developing further. Circle the ideas that members of the group think are best.
- Take one promising idea and invent ways to make it better and more realistic, as well as ways to carry it out. The task at this stage is to make the idea as attractive as you can. Preface constructive criticism with: "What I like best about that idea is..." or, "Might it be better if...?"
- Before you break up, draw up a selective and improved list of ideas from the session and set up a time for deciding which of these ideas to take further and how.

Limitations of Brainstorming

There are some noted challenges with brainstorming, although it remains a favorite method of creative idea generation. Despite a facilitator's best efforts to get everyone involved, there are always some people who limit or filter what they say in a brainstorming session, and the sessions can sometimes benefit from the extroverts more than the introverts. Verbal traffic jams, where we are waiting for our turn to share, lead to filtering our own ideas before stating them or even forgetting what we wanted to say.

Another limitation to brainstorming relates to its very social nature. If we are involved in a brainstorming session and it is set to take place off site, or involves a particular group of people, production can be lower than expected in a brainstorming session. Fortunately, there is a great tool to overcome these problems: brainwriting.

Brainwriting

Brainwriting takes all the best elements of brainstorming (plentiful ideas creatively generated) and makes them even more effective. Brainwriting was originally made popular in Germany during the 1970's, although it may have originated prior to that. Further developed by creativity expert Arthur B. VanGundy, Ph.D. (1946-2009), brainwriting uses individual work to creatively increase the number of ideas generated.

There are several methods to brainwriting. The **interactive method** has everyone gather around a table. Each will write down one idea on a piece of paper and then pass the paper to the person beside them. That person will read what is on the page and use the initial idea as stimulus for a new idea, modify or enhance the original idea, and then pass the page to the next person. You can set a limit of 15-20 minutes for the exercise, which will end when each person gets their original page back.

There are plenty of variations you can apply to this exercise to encourage creative thinking. You could use differently colored paper or hang flip chart pages on the wall and have participants move around the room instead of passing paper around. You could also fold paper into paper airplanes, throw them to each other, and write all over the wings. Get as creative as you like! Another idea: have the writing surface somehow reflect the problem, the environment, or just get people moving.

In-depth research conducted by Dr. VanGundy demonstrated that brainwriting consistently produced more ideas than traditional brainstorming, given the same sized group and amount of time. He attributes the difference to "production blocking," where only one idea can be generated and written down at a time during brainstorming, as opposed to each member of the group writing simultaneously. (See Dr. VanGundy's books *Techniques of Structured Problem Solving* and *Managing Group Creativity*.)

Mind Mapping

Once the ideas have been generated, mind mapping can be used to organize them. With mind mapping, we start to draw links between the ideas and put them together.

Step One: Create a List

Topic

- Adopting a puppy

Related Ideas

- Adoption = community oriented
- Require warranty for good health
- Must be neutered/spayed
- Can be male or female
- What breed?
- Family dog?
- What size?
- Dry food, canned, or raw?
- Company during lonely evenings
- Training required!
- Requires brushing regularly
- Will get me out walking every day
- Needs a sweater
- I need to learn to trim nails
- Need a vet

Step Two: Create the Diagram

List each idea in its own box, with the main topic at the center.



Step Three: Link and Categorize

Now, you can begin linking and categorizing the ideas.



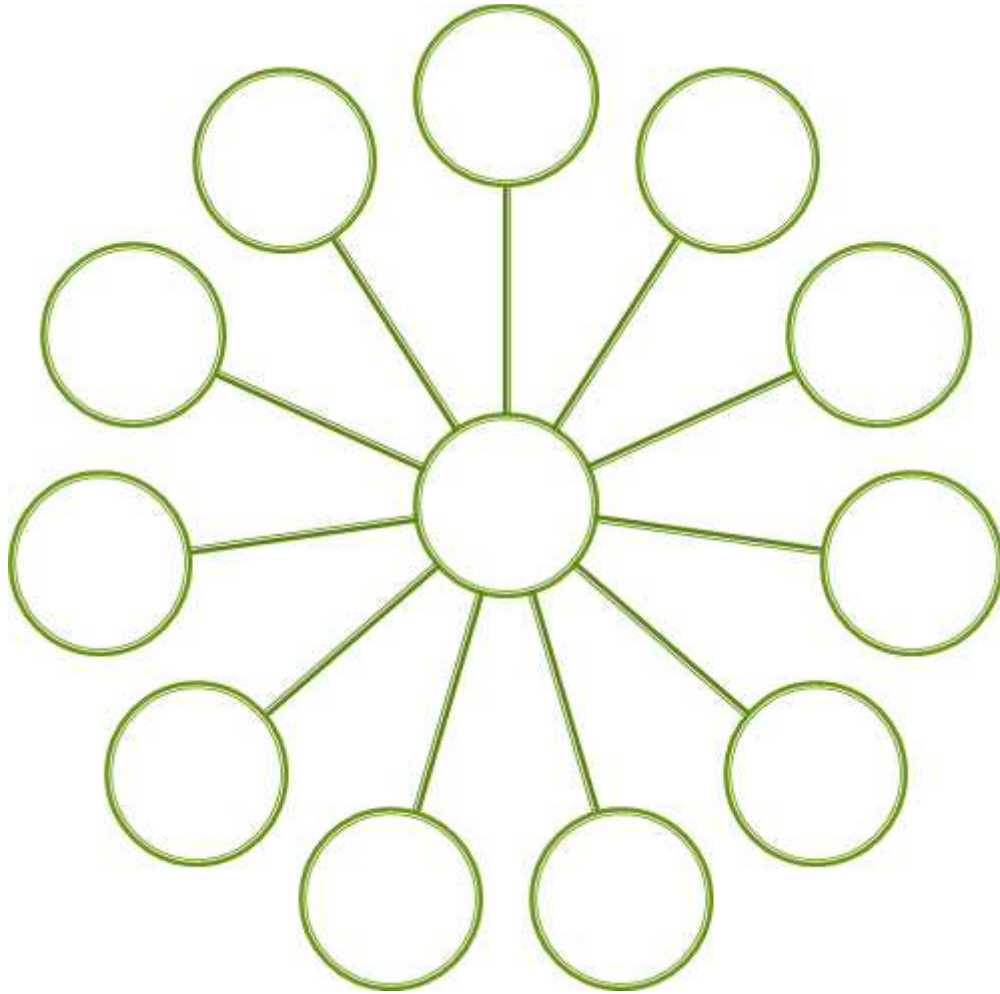
Step Four: Finalize and Review

Look at the final product. Evaluate and review as needed.



Brainstorming and Brainwriting

Write the topic that you want to brainstorm in the center circle of the diagram below. Then, write ideas about the topic in the outer circles. Be creative!



Six Thinking Hats

Edward DeBono is credited with designing a program for thinking that is well applied to a team process of making decisions, generating ideas, and avoiding things that bog a team down. Called Six Thinking Hats, the idea is to organize the team into separate strands of thinking to keep people focused and to thoroughly analyze a problem.

The six thinking hats method is designed to switch thinking away from a common debate or argument style to a map-making style. This process forces thinking into a two-stage process. The first stage is to create the map, and the second stage is to select the route to follow. If the map is good, the best route will often become obvious.

Each person is assigned to a particular hat, and responsible for putting that type of thinking on the map.

- White Hat: Facts, figures, and information that is already known or needed.
- Red Hat: Emotions and feelings, including hunches and intuition.
- Black Hat: Devil's advocate, negative judgment, difficulties, asks why it will not work.
- Yellow Hat: Brightness and optimism, positive, constructive, and why something may work.
- Green Hat: Creative, possibility, solutions, movement, provocation.
- Blue Hat: Process management, benchmarks, staying focused, action plans, and implementation.

At first, people often feel a little awkward about using the different hats, especially if they are assigned a form that they are not completely comfortable with. Awkwardness passes as the benefits to the system becomes apparent. In order to get the team used to the process, apply it in the form of an occasional request to use one hat or to switch from the black hat to a different color.

Value of the Six Thinking Hats

The great value of the hats is that they provide thinking roles. A thinker can look at things from a different point of view by acting each of these roles. Without the formality of the hats, some thinkers would remain permanently stuck in their most comfortable or usual mode, instead of unleashing some creativity.

White Hat Thinking

In this mode, the thinker imitates a computer. They remain neutral and objective, avoiding having to offer opinion, while providing facts or data that are required.

You can be asked to put on the white thinking hat or you can ask someone to put it on. You can also choose to put it on, or to take it off.

The white (absence of color) also indicates neutrality.

Red Hat Thinking

Wearing the red hat allows the thinker to say: "This is how I feel about the matter."

The red hat incorporates emotions and feelings as an important part of thinking. The red hat allows for feelings and emotions to become visible, and to become a part of the thinking map.

The red hat allows a thinker to explore the feelings of others by asking for a red hat view. When a thinker is using the red hat there is no need to justify the feelings or to provide a logical basis for them.

The red hat thinker can draw on strong emotions like fear and dislike, and also incorporate some more complicated ones like suspicion, intuition, relying on senses like taste or aesthetics.

If you find that an opinion has a considerable amount of feeling associated with it, they can also fit under the red hat.

Black Hat Thinking

Black hat thinking is specifically concerned with negative assessment. The black hat thinker points out what is wrong, incorrect, and in error. The black hat thinker points out how something does not fit experience or accepted knowledge, and why something will not work. Risks, dangers, fault with design or process also are included here.

Black hat thinking is a valued part of the discussion, and should not be seen as argument. The black hat thinker presents what is wrong, including errors in fact, or how something doesn't fit a belief. Risks as well as design and process faults can also be part of black hat thinking.

Black hat thinking can ask negative questions but it should not be used to cover negative indulgence or negative feelings. Those would be red hat functions.

Yellow Hat Thinking

Yellow hat thinking is positive and constructive. Think of bright sunshine and optimism with yellow hat thinking. Where black hat thinking is concerned with negative assessment, yellow hat thinking is concerned with positive assessment. Yellow hat thinking covers a positive spectrum ranging from the logical and practical at one end to dreams, visions, and hopes at the other end. This range allows probing and exploration for values and benefit.

Yellow hat thinking is constructive and generates action that includes concrete proposals and suggestions, action plans and implementation. Yellow hat thinking can be speculative and opportunity seeking but it can also permit visions and dreams to take place and receive consideration.

Green Hat Thinking

The person who puts on the green hat is going to use the mechanisms of creative thinking, look at possibilities and also provocation. Everyone involved is required to treat the output as a creative output. Ideally both the thinker and listener should be wearing green hats.

The green color symbolizes fertility, growth, and the nurturing of ideas among a search for alternatives.

Provocation is an important part of green hat thinking. A provocation is used to shift us out of our usual patterns of thinking.

Blue Hat Thinking

The blue hat is the control hat. The blue hat thinker organizes the thinking itself, and includes thinking about the thinking needed to explore the subject. The blue hat thinker is like the conductor of the orchestra, calling on the other hat to play their parts.

The blue hat thinker defines the subjects toward which the thinking is to be directed, defines the problems, shapes the questions, and provides the structure and focus for thinking to be taking place. Blue hat thinking determines the thinking tasks that are to be carried through and is responsible for summaries, overviews, and conclusions. These can take place from time to time in the course of the thinking, and also at the end.

Even when the specific blue hat thinking role is assigned to one person, it is still open to anyone to offer blue hat comments and suggestions.

Favorite Method Selection

Review the methods discussed in this session (brainstorming, mind mapping, brain writing, and six thinking hats) as well as any others that you know). Describe pros, cons, and applications of each type.

	Pros	Cons	Applications
Brainstorming			
Mind mapping			
Brainwriting			
Six Thinking Hats			

Team Shaping Factors

The Four Factors

There are four factors that interact to shape a team's performance and the development of trust. These factors are:

- Problems related to internal relationships
- Problems related to team focus
- Problems related to change and adaptability
- Problems related to external relationships

Effective problem solving involves a three-stage process (which we'll explore more tomorrow):

- Identification and definition
- Decision making
- Planning and organizing

The Conference

Background Information

You work for a very successful game and system development company called Mazingtendo. The company is a major player in the international gaming industry, competing strongly with companies like Nintendo, Xbox, and Sony. There are about 200 employees, and you all work on a creative game and system development team. Of the members of the team, one of you is the team leader while the others are team members. In the eight years since the company was founded, they have launched three successful game systems, each one more expensive and more successful than the earlier version. The game systems are sold around the world.

This enterprise is expensive, since the time spent in design, programming, testing, and marketing the new release is very time intensive. Your company pays its staff well, but you know that it would also be good to do some training to keep them at the leading edge of game development and see if there are things you could do to reduce the expenses that you already have.

The team leader is usually a former team member; this happens to be true in this case with Robin at the helm. The team leader gives help and instruction as needed, keeps track of the different projects, and keeps a creative team on track and engaged.

The team members work in an open concept office. There is a big common area for them to meet, talk, troubleshoot, play games, or hang out together. The team gets along well aside from some creative differences at times. They have possessive feelings about some of their ideas, and get possessive about their desk space and individual computers.

Here are some facts about the team members and their projects.

	Years With Company	Average Value Of Projects Completed Each Year
Argon	8	\$650,000
Leslie	7	\$700,000
Robin	7	\$600,000
Pat	4	\$650,000
Mackenzie	2	\$1,250,000

The Conference

There is a major industry conference coming up in Italy which one team member must attend. These opportunities are rare, and this conference will eat up the entire training budget for the year. Each team member feels that they have reason to attend the conference, so the team leader has decided to hold a meeting to discuss who will attend in order to reach a fair decision.

In playing your part, accept the facts as given and assume the attitude supplied in your specific role. From this point on, let your feelings develop in accordance with the events that occur during the role play. When facts or events arise that are not covered by the roles, you can make things up to stay consistent with the way it might be in a real-life situation.

My Role: _____

Team Leader’s Worksheet

What is your decision on who goes to the conference?

Did you agree on who would go to the conference?

Are you satisfied with the decision?

Do you feel the employees are satisfied?

If not, who do you think is dissatisfied?

Observer Worksheet

How did the leader present the problem?

In presenting the problem, did the leader display the attitude of asking for help?

Did the leader present all the facts?

Was the presentation of the problem brief and to the point?

Did the leader avoid suggesting a solution?

What things occurred in the discussion?

Did all group members participate?

Was there free exchange of feelings between group members?

Did the group use social pressure to influence any of its members?

On which member of the team was social pressure used?

How did the team leader behave?

Was the team leader permissive?

Did the team leader avoid taking sides or favoring any person?

What were the points of disagreement in the group?

What did the team leader do to help solve the problem?

Did the leader ask questions to help the group explore ideas?

Did the leader accept all ideas equally?

Did the leader avoid hurrying the group to develop a solution?

Did the leader avoid favoring any solutions?

Who supplied the final solution?

What did the team leader do, if anything, to get a consensus on the final solution?

Other Comments

Solving Problems

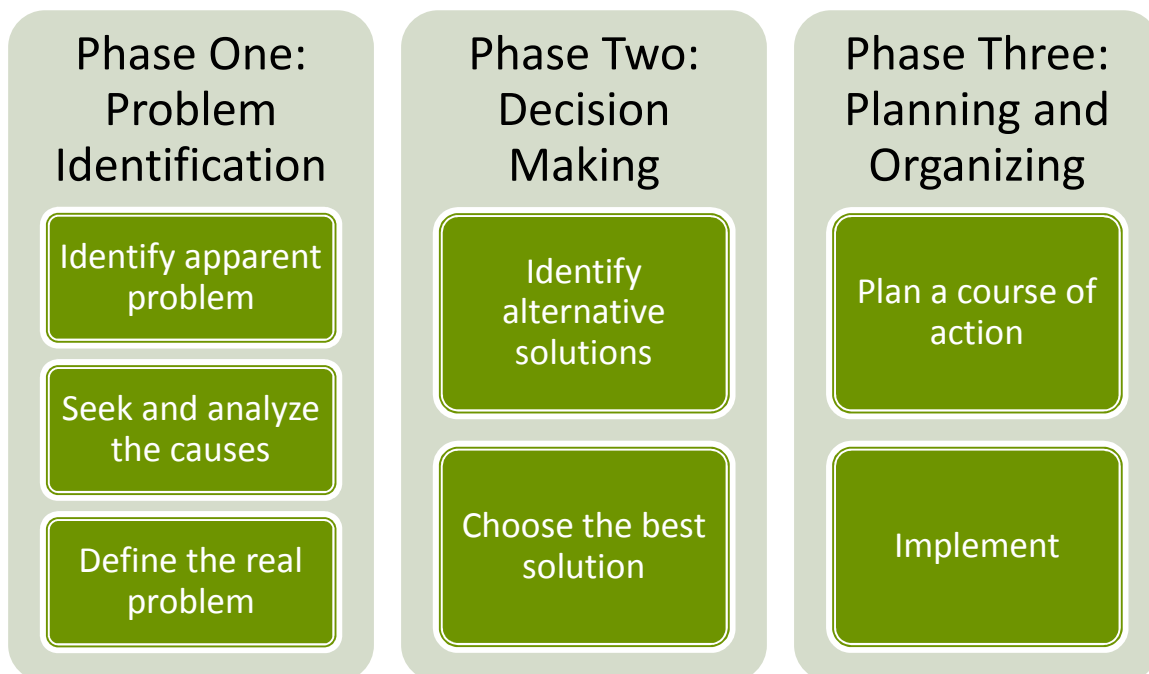
Problem Solving Model Overview

Team problem solving needs a three-phase approach, just as individual problem solving does. The process needs to take place in an atmosphere of trust and respect.

Whenever you read a book on problem solving, this model, in some form or other, is sure to be there. It may have six steps rather than seven, or it may have five steps. However, the model doesn't really change, just the authors' ways of breaking it down.

As you work your way from problem to solution, you are actually shifting your focus.

- When you define a problem, you ask yourself: What is my problem?
- As you try to analyze the root causes you ask: Why is it a problem?
- When you are generating options, you ask yourself: What are some ways I can solve my problem?



This model can be applied to a range of problem solving activities. It is the very basis for informed and consistent problem solving. If you are someone who loves tools, this is your basic tool.

We often spend too little time on the first phase and direct our efforts toward solving the problem as quickly as we can. The best problem solving, however, takes place when we identify the actual problem and analyze the causes. As an example, think of the common industrial-style toilets that are in offices everywhere. They're white and enamel, with a pretty standard size and shape, usually with a black seat. If we wanted to improve the toilet, what could we do? Assuming money is no object, and we could find anything we wanted, somewhere out there in the

Phase One

Let's take a look at the first phase of the three-phase model.



Here is a breakdown of each step in the problem identification process. In all three steps, your focus is on the problem itself. Only afterward will you start thinking about solutions.

Perception

You ask yourself: Is there a problem? Where is the problem? Whose problem is it? This is the sniffing, groping, grasping stage. It includes whatever you do to get a handle on the problem, and the eight essential items we reviewed earlier.

What are the symptoms? Funny noises in the engine, an unhappy look on your employee's face, or a change in the productivity rate? You've got to find out what the problem is.

Problem perception is closely related to problem definition and problem analysis.

The purpose of this phase is:

- To surface an issue.
- To make it okay to discuss it (legitimize).
- To air different points of view.
- To avoid perception wars.
- To get group agreement to work on the problem.

Steps in this phase include:

- Legitimize the problem; make it okay to discuss it.
- Asking, "How does the problem feel?" and, "What's the real problem?"

- Identifying the best/worst/most probable situation.
- Identifying whose problem it is.

Definition

Here, we state the problem as a question. Our goal is grasp the general idea of the problem and then draw the rope tighter to get a more specific idea of the problem.

Steps in this phase include identifying:

- What is the problem?
- What is not the problem?

Analysis

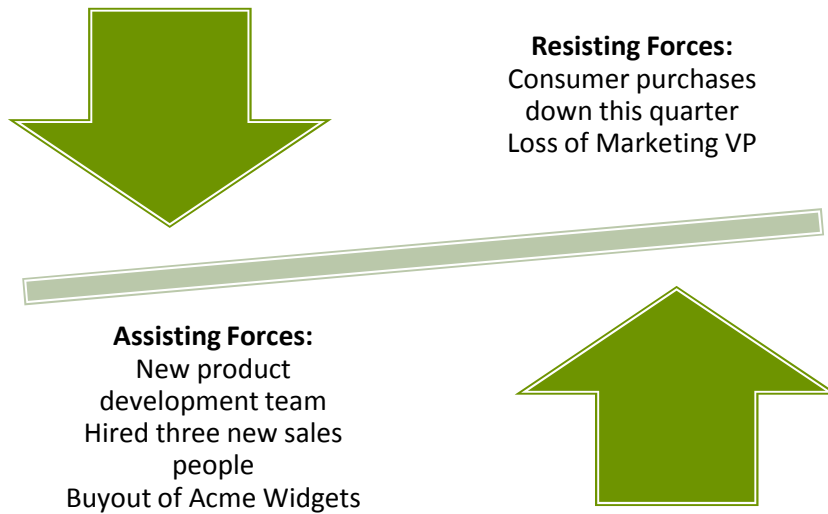
Now that we have a general idea of the problem, we will use analytical tools to define it even further. Steps in this phase can include the following elements.

Ask basic questions, such as who, what, where, when, why, and how.

Break it down into smaller pieces. For example, if we know that the problem is that revenue is down, we can break it down into possible areas of cause: manufacturing, shipping, or sales.

Use force field analysis. This is a structured method of looking at two opposing forces acting on a situation. Simply draw a line on a piece of paper. On one half of the line, list the forces that are working to solve the problem. On the other half, list the forces that are stopping you from solving the problem.

Let's say that revenue is down this quarter. Our force field might look like this:



Move from **generalizations to specific examples** as a way of testing what the problem is or is not. For example, you could say, "Our company has been doing poorly all year." We could further identify how the company has been doing poorly; let's say that the production department in particular has been less efficient, costing the company money. Then, we can look at what aspect in particular is doing poorly.

Ask the expert. Find a person who has dealt with this sort of issue before.

Phase Two

Until the three steps of problem identification have been covered, don't proceed to phase two. (If people don't agree on the problem, they will never agree on a solution!)



Creative Thinking Methods

Here are some tools you can use to come up with ideas.

Brainstorming

Draw a circle in the middle of a page and write down your problem. Then, draw lines from that circle and write down some solutions. Don't worry if they're wacky, impossible, or silly; this is a time for creative thinking, not critical thinking. Capturing the range of ideas is what is important here.



Checkerboard

This is a more organized form of brainstorming and can be particularly helpful for people who don't like how chaotic a brainstorming session can become. With this method, you organize your thoughts into a table. We still want creative thinking rather than critical thinking, but this method may help you develop ideas.

Here is an example of a checkerboard.

Main Issue	Possible Specific Solutions		
Create safe passage between building and parking/bus stop	Have security escort night staff to their cars or bus stop	Rearrange shifts so that people come and go during daylight hours	Set up a buddy system with employees
People missing work in snowstorm	Set up 50% of staff with ability to work from home during storms	Arrange for temporary shelters so that staff can stay overnight	Provide incentives for employees to put winter tires on their vehicles and learn safe winter driving
Threat of strike is rumored	Set up contract negotiations well before contract expires	Approach union and ask to speak with them	Set up contingency plan to ensure business continuity in the event of a strike

Next, cut up solutions and move them around, or use your computer. This can help you organize your ideas and generate even more solutions!

Research and Report

Look at what others have done. Do some research and prepare a report. What lessons can you learn from this information?

Evaluation

Now that we have some solutions in mind, it's time to evaluate the solutions to see which ones are feasible.

- Sort solutions by category. This can be similar to the checkerboard above, just with some critical thinking applied.
- Identify the advantages and disadvantages to each solution.
- Identify what you like about each idea and what you don't like.
- Number your ideas in order, from the one that seems the most feasible to the one that seems the least feasible. This is useful for small problems.

Decision Making

Once you have evaluated the options, it's time to make a decision. Here are some ways you can do it:

- Get a consensus from the group on the best solution.

- Don't limit yourself to one option; you may find that you can combine solutions for super success. (This is called the both/and method.)
- To make voting easier, you may want to eliminate the solutions that the group as a whole absolutely won't consider.
- Try to focus on agreements during all voting.
- Use straw voting: take a quick, non-binding yes/no vote on the current solution as proposed.
- Try negative voting: rather than asking who is for a solution, ask who is against the proposed solution.
- Back off! The group may need some time to evaluate the options before making a decision.

Phase Three

Our last phase should be planning how to implement the solution and performing the actual implementation.



Planning

For the planning portion, start by breaking the task down into smaller portions. Then, for each mini-task, plan the following information:

- What needs to be done?
- Who will do it?
- What resources will we need?
- How much time will it take? (Set a deadline!)

Once all the smaller tasks are planned out, you will have an idea of how long the main solution will take to implement. You may also want to make sure that the above questions are answered for the main task.

Implementation

Implementation is a cycle of three activities:

- Figuring out what you are going to do
- Doing it
- Reacting to what happened or getting feedback

Sooner or later, you have to try out your solution!

Solution Planning Worksheet

It can help to lay out what you are planning to do. Here is an example of a solution planning worksheet.

Problem: Revenue down 10%

Solution: Develop new product

Task 1	Engineering will design product.	
	What needs to be done?	Product needs to be designed.
	Who will do it?	Jim and Sue from Engineering.
	What resources will they need?	Unknown. They should have all resources in house; we will make sure they know we can assist in obtaining more resources if necessary.
	How much time will it take?	Targeted completion date: Dec. 31
Task 2	Prototype will be created.	
	What needs to be done?	Prototype needs to be developed.
	Who will do it?	Sam from Manufacturing, Jill from Engineering
	What resources will they need?	May need testing group; we will help provide this
	How much time will it take?	Targeted completion date: Feb. 28
Task 3	Product will be manufactured.	
	What needs to be done?	Product needs to be created.
	Who will do it?	Joe from Manufacturing

	What resources will they need?	All resources in-house
	How much time will it take?	Targeted completion date: Dec. 31

Interventions for Team Leaders

Problems and Solutions

Problem One

A team member asks questions or makes comments that are off topic.

How to Prevent It

All meetings should have an agenda so that team members know what is to be discussed. This can include a quick agenda or meeting objectives recorded on a whiteboard or flip chart.

How to Handle It

This requires tact and leadership by the chair of the meeting and the team leader (if they are two different people). You want team members to be involved and to get engaged. You also don't want to shut them down so that they no longer participate.

Suggestions:

- The leader can offer an apology to the team by saying something like: "I haven't made the objective clear. Let me try to put it clearly."
- The leader can tactfully ask: "Can you hold that comment until we finish what's on the agenda?" or "Would you like to me add that comment to the agenda (for this meeting or a future one)."
- The leader tactfully tables the comment by saying something like, "That's an interesting topic, and although we cannot add it to today's objectives, I would like to see you after the meeting to discuss it."

Problem Two

A side conversation takes place between two participants.

How to Prevent It

Set up objectives and an agenda so that everyone knows what is being discussed. Make sure the meeting is both interesting and beneficial to everyone there, and that people know why they have been included.

How to Handle It

If a side conversation develops, you should assume that it's about your topic. This gives participants the benefit of the doubt and helps to keep them positive even though they have been called on their behavior.

Suggestions:

- Your own silence may indicate that you have noticed their conversation and it's distracting. You can look at your notes if you like to indicate that the pause is for your benefit rather than theirs.
- If you feel the side conversation indicates restlessness among the group, take a short break.
- Directly ask the people talking if they would like to share their ideas with the rest of the team. This clarifies that you think they are discussing something that is on topic, and that you would like to hear it.

Problem Three

Team members seem distracted.

How to Prevent It

Your job as leader includes keeping the meeting interesting and productive so that participants are engaged. Consider where you are holding the meeting, the time of day, and competing priorities.

How to Handle It

If several participants seem distracted, stop and acknowledge what is going on. Consider a short break to allow people to deal with something pressing (although you also must consider the impact this has on others in the meeting).

If the number of distracted members is small, you could stop and ask someone to summarize what has happened so far. You could also call attention to the distraction, ask participants to set it aside, and fully engage in this commitment. Then continue on with the full participation of everyone there.

Problem Four

Two or more participants are arguing.

How to Prevent It

Clarify objectives under discussion to limit off-topic disagreements. Then, remind participants that there are suitable ways to work through a disagreement, which you will assist them with. Also remind them that their arguing is not conducive to the meeting outcomes (which you have covered in the ground rules when the team was initially

formed).

How to Handle It

Your first objective is to resume control of the meeting without fueling the conflict. If the argument is the result of something that is on topic, the leader can help participants constructively work through the problem. If the disagreement is off topic, you can restate the objective being discussed, while inviting the participants to speak with you afterward (so that you can facilitate their resolving these issues quickly and effectively).

You can say something like: “I want to hear from both of you, but I am also responsible for making sure we make the best use of time here while the whole team is present. Say what you think, respectfully, but also be willing to listen to and consider the ideas of others.”

If necessary, you may have to stop the meeting to deal with hot issues before the team can resume working together again.

Problem Five

One or two participants dominate the meeting.

How to Prevent It

Sometimes this problem can be anticipated, and the leader can make the most of that knowledge by starting the meeting by reviewing some rules of conduct. Encourage everyone to participate, take turns being heard, and to support one another. If there is a particular person who frequently dominates, speak with that individual prior to the meeting and let them know you need input from all participants and directly – though tactfully – ask them to temper their responses and involvement to encourage others.

If you ask questions and then ask for input by specifically inviting people to speak, you have help to stop domination. For example, you could say, “I’d like to talk about your ideas for improving customer service. Could each of you please take two minutes and write down what comes to mind?” Then, you can call on participants to answer the question and temper the involvement of those who frequently dominate by giving them a time limit. Make sure you invite people to speak by using their name.

How to Handle It

The key to your success as leader is to not embarrass your enthusiastic participant. Remember that they have good things to contribute, and it’s not that you want to exclude them, but that you are trying to increase the involvement of others.

Here are some techniques that you can use.

- Tactfully interrupt by inviting the next person to speak. You could say something like, “I think we’ve got the essence of your idea captured, Mike. Let’s see what someone else has to say. Jean, would you go next, please.”
- Give the individual a little more to do, and be specific about it. For example, “Fred, would you please make notes of the flip chart to record all the ideas we are generating among the group?”
- Interrupt the person tactfully, with something like this: “Jean, I hate to stop you there, but we’re going to run short of time and I’d like to get input from everyone here.”

Problem Six

Participants start checking their watches and/or phones, and even packing up to leave.

How to Prevent It

End your meetings on time. If the time must remain open because of a problem solving issue, let them know ahead of time by saying something like, "The meeting should finish by about 3:30 but we will stay here until we solve the problem."

Try to schedule meetings when people are not distracted by competing issues, like having another meeting to rush off to or paychecks to issue. Also consider that they could be anxious to leave if they feel you are wasting their time or they are not able to contribute. Make sure you can plan and run a productive meeting.

How to Handle It

When you notice people are restless, you have to take action.

- Renew their interest by asking a question, returning their attention to the agenda, or engaging them in an activity.
- End the current meeting and set a time for the next meeting.
- If you've wandered away from the agenda, apologize and get back on track.
- Consider offering refreshments.

Problem Seven

Members of the team are not participating.

How to Prevent It

Make sure you are always engaging all members of the team, and that you never embarrass or insult anyone. Establish an environment that encourages and even teaches them how to fully participate. Keep things interesting and productive (i.e., don't include people who don't need to be there) and you'll see more engagement.

How to Handle It

Your approach will depend on why people won't participate. Have you gone beyond the time you scheduled? Respect their schedules and end the meeting; you can book something else for later. Are they bored? Stimulate and engage them.

New leaders sometimes inadvertently embarrass or tease people, both of which are not appropriate. If the group has no respect for you they can be tough to engage. You can try to move on to another subject that is attention-grabbing so they can work beyond hostility, but you will have plenty of work to do in order to earn their trust.

Problem Eight

You, the leader, get off track.

How to Prevent It

You need to be well prepared and ready to meet the objectives. If you get off track it might be due to a comment by a participant, or it could be your own level of commitment to the team or the meeting. Maintain your composure, professionalism, and look after your engagement.

To prevent getting sidetracked by participants, you can learn to evaluate each comment and question that comes from the group very quickly. If the comment is not on topic, keep things on track by calling attention to the objectives and the importance of staying on track. Encourage an ongoing dialogue by recommending that discussion of that particular item be postponed until later in the meeting, or added to the agenda of a future meeting.

How to Handle It

If the leader recognizes they are off the subject an apology is all that's needed. "I'm sorry I got off the subject there. I wish we had time to explore this, but we need to focus on today's objectives first. The other topic will have to wait for now." If a participant realizes that the meeting is going off track, that participant can tactfully bring it to the attention of the leader.

Case Study

A Hidden Agenda

John came into Robin's office feeling exasperated. "I don't know what to do," he said quietly. "I've tried everything I can to get this team working together, but they won't make any decisions."

"Well, you've certainly had plenty of time," Robin said. "You were appointed to lead that task force two weeks ago, and I expected a lot by now. You should have generated at least some ideas and maybe a few proposals."

"It's like we sit down and the agenda goes out the window. I can't get them on track at all. Jorge keeps bringing up examples of failed programs in the past. Ashley interrupts all the time so I have to keep backtracking; I think she is trying to make me look foolish in front of the team. Trish never says a word and I have no idea why she is even there. I know that Frank is really intelligent but all he talks about is football and more football."

John sighed. "It's been a rough assignment, Robin," he continued. "I can't tell if none of them want the work, or they are working at odds with each other."

As Robin and John discuss the situation, Robin brings up the idea of hidden agendas, and explains that the leader needs a good understanding of group's dynamics to better direct what takes place. When a team is not working together, they are sometimes using meetings such as John's to satisfy their own needs at the expense of the team and individuals involved.

Here are some guidelines that might help you. You should consider confronting employees when:

- An employee's performance impedes your organization's goals or slows down production.
- An employee's actions will impede your own success. Ask yourself: Can I afford to ignore this?
- Other employees ask you to intercede. Internal bickering can cause low morale.
- The people involved ask you to intercede because they are unable to resolve their differences themselves.

You also have to stop and ask yourself if you are doing anything that contributes to this problem.

Even members of the most exceptional team will occasionally find themselves locked in conflict. Sometimes you, as team leader, are reluctant to ask for your team's help in resolving conflicts because you feel that the burden for conflict resolution rests entirely on your shoulders. This is not only inaccurate; it can also be detrimental to you and your group in a number of ways. Team leaders who appoint themselves sole arbitrators and harmonizers for their teams are headed for disaster.

Resolving Internal Conflict

When a team is in internal conflict, what can you do?

Remove all masks.

Sincerity is the ideal mindset for conflict resolution. If we cannot achieve sincerity, at least aim for authenticity. Being authentic means not hiding behind masks, but showing up as yourself.

Identify the real problem.

Often the real problem lurks somewhere behind or underneath the apparent problem. Conflict will not be resolved until the process can address the true problem.

Give up a must-win attitude.

When players compete too hard all the time, a good deal of life passes them by. They go to the wall to defend a position and will go down screaming, taking as many people with them as possible. Conflicts are not won; they are resolved.

Develop several possible solutions.

In reality, most situations can go in a variety of directions. It may be up to you to create the choices.

Evaluate options and select a solution.

Choose the best workable choice from the possibilities you have gathered. The goal is to choose the possibility that will hold the most for both you and the other party.

Case Study

Background

Fuel Majesta provides an environmentally responsible fuel that can be distributed throughout the country. The fuel is highly concentrated, non-toxic, and is produced in a highly secret process that is conducted with thermal heat, so there is almost no environmental impact in producing this fuel.

Since being founded by a small group of energy experts five years ago, Fuel Majesta has generated a lot of industry buzz and solid revenues. However, they face some significant human resource challenges. Although there are three local universities and a trade college that offer programs with skills that Fuel Majesta needs, there are four other smaller fossil fuel companies locally that attract most of the candidates graduating from these programs. The current Human Resources director prefers hiring candidates who apply rather than using alternative methods like networking and headhunting.

As well, the current Human Resources director previously managed an organization that had many excellent procedures and programs in place. However, their team has not had the time or resources to get these programs in place for Fuel Majesta. Existing programs like employee development, onboarding, and orientation have been neglected.

Fuel Majesta has also struggled to keep people in leadership positions. The Health and Safety team manager resigned last week, and the Director of Finance was placed on long term medical leave just last month. There are also many openings for support staff, including a daytime receptionist.

Task

Complete a SWOT analysis of Fuel Majesta's Human Resources team. This means that you need to consider elements of hiring, turnover, succession planning, absenteeism, labor relations, compensation, and benefits.

	<i>INTERNAL</i>	<i>EXTERNAL</i>
<i>P O S I T I V E</i>	Strengths	Opportunities
<i>N E G A T I V E</i>	Weaknesses	Threats

Developing Team Action Plans

Planning Tools

After working with your team to identify a tentative solution, you must move on to the next phase, and create a realistic and achievable action plan together. When you create the plan together, you get their support. Make sure that the plan is clear and concise (as opposed to ambiguous or vague) so that people know what is coming up. Good action plans include all of the following:

- What is achievable? What amount of improvement can we implement over the course of the plan?
- What's reasonable? How can we assign and undertake work so that everyone on the team gets involved and has a high level of commitment and buy in?
- What help do we need? We operate as a team within a larger organization or system, so perhaps we have access to people with resources, ideas, and more. How can we solicit their help or input?
- What could go wrong? We need contingency planning to prepare for anything that can or will likely put us off track.

Making Your Team Improvement Plan

There are five steps to constructing a team improvement plan:

1. Identify what's required in terms of action steps
2. Define goals agreed upon by the group
3. Decide who is responsible for what through assignments or people volunteering
4. Create a chart or some kind of clear tool that shows what's taking place
5. Create a contingency/troubleshooting plan

Intention vs. Actions

A frequent problem with teams is that they have wonderful intentions that are rarely translated into actions. To prevent this, use action statements instead of intention statements. Here are some examples.

Team Improvement Area	Intention	Action
We seem to lack foresight. Team members are too often taken by surprise with performance problems, such as errors or project delays.	We'll pay more attention to our planning.	During the next six weeks, each project leader will create a troubleshooting checklist detailing potential obstacles and indicating appropriate preventive actions.
Communication breakdowns are occurring within the team.	We'll schedule more meetings.	During the next three weeks, we will schedule two videoconferences and set up a shared web space where we can collaborate and have discussions about where things are at.
We're experiencing a lack of direction. There is some confusion within our team regarding our objectives and direction over the next few years.	During the next week, we will survey the team for their perspective of the team vision.	By the 15 th of this month, the team will meet to draft a vision statement. Prior to this meeting, each team member will have reviewed their projects and compiled a list of forecasted changes in our customer base as well as production results, while considering what they know of direction for the next two years.
We're receiving an increasing number of complaints from our internal customers.	We'll survey internal customers and ask for formal feedback on our performance.	On the 23 rd of next month, department leaders will host a focus group of internal customers to resolve these complaints and move ahead.

Action Planning Chart

Template

Here is a chart that can be used to plan out your team's actions to make sure its intentions are fulfilled.

Action To Be Taken	Team Member(s) Responsible For Action	Date This Action Will Begin	Date This Action Will Be Completed	Date For Team Review

Further Reading:

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