

Building Teams That Succeed

Teams of People, Not Robots

I want to give you a straight-forward, cookie cutter approach to building successful teams. I want to, but I can't.

The problem is the number of variables that come into play. Building team skills into an Executive Team that has worked together for years (but perhaps not well) is different than pulling together a set of people who barely know each other – if at all – for a short-term project. A large organization with many players to choose from to form their team has different issues than the small organization that doesn't really have options for who will be on the team. And the variables go much deeper than that since the organization's culture impacts everything.



So instead, I'll offer a few questions to encourage you to think beyond the tasks you want your team to perform and consider the human part of the equation. It's not an exhaustive list, but hopefully it will get your mental gears turning. Great teams don't happen by just putting people in a room together. It takes intentionality to transform a group of people into a high-functioning team.

1. **What can we do to intentionally build trust between team members?** Without trust, teams flounder.
2. **How will we build healthy relationships between team members?** Most people are more motivated when they recognize how their work impacts other people, especially people they know. Team members need to have a healthy mix of professional and personal connection. That mix won't look the same in every context.
3. **How will we promote team learning?** Not being willing to take risks and learn from mistakes severely limits a team's potential. That requires mutual transparency, vulnerability, and support without blame, suspicion, and personal agendas. Good learning also requires diversity on the team and getting team members to *value*, not just tolerate that diversity.
4. **How will we get the team to prioritize the success of the team over individual success?** This starts with bringing the right people on board to begin with: People with good character who share your organizational values and purpose. But beyond that, are your incentives and consistent messaging promoting individualism or collaboration?
5. **How will we foster the appropriate levels of risk-taking and innovation that the team will need for success?** If this team needs to stretch outside the norms of your organizational culture, how can you convince them it is safe for them to do that?
6. **How do we assure that team members have the methods and motivations for on-going accountability to each other as well as external accountability for the team's success?** Every team member needs to know they're accountable for their commitments to the team AND the team's commitments to stakeholders. Do their own job *and* help team members succeed at theirs.

Robots work well without this "soft" stuff. But people need inspiration, motivation, and emotional engagement. That moves them past mere compliance to the level of commitment that enables them to deliver their best performance.

enLumen Leadership Services: *Lighting your path to better leadership.*