



# Team Leader's Guide

This Guide will cover the basics of team development, and give you the confidence to run a team development session with your team.

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## What is team development?

Team development is all about improving your team. This is done by discussing your strengths and weaknesses as a team, and how you want to improve, in a structured, open and constructive way.

The Team Review, used in conjunction with this Guide, gives you a structure to run a successful team development session with your team. You can set up a team review [here](#).

## Why should I do team development with my team?

The research is clear; teams reviewing and improving the way they work together is one of the best ways to boost performance and increase happiness at work:



**Klein et al 2009:** Does Team Building work, Small Group Research, vol 40, No 2: Meta-analysis, team building workshops produced positive results when considered over all studies. Up to 16% of subsequent team performance.

**Salas et al 2008:** Does Team Training Improve Team Performance? A Meta-Analysis, Human Factors, 2008: 12% -19% increase in team performance.



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## How does a highly effective team behave?

**Aligned Direction**



**Builds trust**



**Clear organisation**



**Collaborative teamwork**



**Listens to one another**



**Empowers Team Members**



**Effective decision making**



**Leads Change**

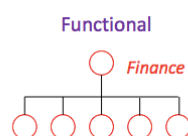


## Common team problems



Patrick Lencioni, The 5 Dysfunctions of a Team

## Different types of team



Matrix / Cross-functional / Cross-business unit

Production Research Finance Sales

Product A team



# Team Leader's Guide

## I want to help my team improve. How do I do it?

All teams have the capacity to improve. One of the most effective ways of driving team performance is through team facilitation; evaluating areas of strength, and areas of weakness, and having the team work on the areas they choose to work on. The biggest benefit for teams comes from working on their own real-life problems, together as a group.

Facilitation is the skill of helping a group or team develop ideas and solve problems. You can use these skills to bring the best out of your team: help your team to identify those areas in which you're succeeding, where having difficulty, reflect on those areas, and work together to improve them.

There's no one right way to facilitate a team development session; you might choose to tightly structure the session, or feel that the best approach would be to see where the session takes you.

You might like to consider the following principles to guide your work with the team:



- Support, encourage, and prompt insight.
- Establish the ground rules at the beginning.
- Use open questions, and bring people in to the discussion.
- Not take centre stage; hold the room for discussion to take place, but rely on others to generate the ideas (unless they get really stuck).
- Encourage open dialogue.
- Make sure that no-one talks too little, and no-one talks too much.
- Have a structure to the meeting, but be flexible within that structure ('go with the flow').
- Have a time limit set for the beginning, share it with the team, and stick to it.
- Actively involve all members of the team in dialogue and decision making.
- Set a tone that engages and energises the team.
- Encourage constructive disagreement.



## How should I run a session with my team?



**Step 1: Review the Team Review before meeting with your team.**

What themes have been brought out? What do the team indicate that they would like to work on? Think about where you'd like to get to by the end of the meeting.



**Step 2: Click the link in the report to the suggested exercises for your team,** or browse the Expert Guidance section to choose your own exercises.



**Step 3: Meet as a team, and talk together as a group about the report.** Review and agree together what you would like to work on.



**Step 4: Encourage Dialogue.** Use the suggestions within this Guide to help everyone have a great discussion together. Your organisation may have access to trained facilitators too.



**Step 5: Work on the recommended exercises or see where the session takes you.** Listen carefully to each other. Remember to keep an open and constructive tone to your discussions.



**Step 6: Agree actions.** Finally, conclude by agreeing who will do what, by when, to improve your team processes. Agree a date to check you have followed through. The more effective your team, the more engaged and fulfilled you and your colleagues will feel.



## Team Development work - a case study

Jane is the Business Development Lead for her organisation. She manages a team of 11 business development personnel, who report into her. She has been in the role for 6 months. Her previous experience was of working with 2-3 direct reports, and this is a bigger team than she is used to. A couple of months into the job, Jane was faced with falling business revenues. She wasn't sure why that was, but felt that her team weren't working well together.

Jane decided to undertake a team review. She set up a review using the Teams & Leadership link on her intranet, shared the link with her team and asked them to fill it out within 3 days. She booked a room for the next week, and scheduled a 3 hour session.

Her team members filled out the confidential questionnaire. She went back to the Review Dashboard on the Teams & Leadership platform a couple of times over the next two days to see how many people had filled out the questionnaire.

Once all team members had completed the questionnaire, Jane downloaded a PDF of the final report. Her team scored 68%, which she was told was a pretty good score. Her team scored themselves particularly well on 'Can-do Culture', 'Generating Optimism' and 'Leading by Example', but scored low in respect of 'Clarity of Team Objectives', 'Roles and Responsibilities' and 'Quality of Performance Data and Reports'. Her team voted in the majority to work on 'Roles and Responsibilities'.

The comment sections revealed that the team liked working together, felt they had good relationships with their customers and stakeholders and that they were enjoying working under Jane. However, there were a number of comments that revealed that the team thought that individual roles and responsibilities were confused, and that the team were not completely sure of where they were supposed to be focusing their attention. They had done some 'visioning' work previously, but there was confusion over how that translated into what the team did day to day.

Prior to the day, Jane circulated the Team Review around her team. She took a look through the Team Leader's Guide and another look through the Team Review. She also had a look at the suggested exercises listed in the Team Review, and some of the relevant pages in the Teams & Leadership Expert Guidance section. The day before, Jane sent around a short agenda:

9am: Coffee and Welcome  
9.15am: Team Review - a talk through  
10am: Whole team discussion around Roles & Responsibilities  
10.30am: Roles & Responsibilities exercise  
11am: Framework for team roles  
11.45am: Conclusion, thoughts and feedback  
Midday: Close

Jane's team arrived at 9am on the day of the team development session. One person had called in sick, and another had been called away to external meetings. After everyone had settled, Jane welcomed the team. She thanked them for contributing to the Team Review. She said that she had an idea where the session would take them, and that she had designed an agenda to that end.



## Team Development work - a case study

She said because of the limited time she would be trying to keep them focused on the task in hand, but that she remained flexible and interested as to where the session would take them.

Jane outlined what the Team Review had said, the areas which they thought they were performing well in, and the areas of improvement. Everyone agreed that there were some clear themes that had arisen out of doing the Team Review, and that sorting out everyone's roles and responsibilities was at the top of the list.

Jane said that she thought they should start with a group conversation about what wasn't working well in terms of the clarity of what the team were doing day to day. This was well contributed to, and Jane needed to make sure some of the quieter members of the team got their say. Jane wrote up some of the developing themes on the whiteboard in the room. At the end of the session, the team had distilled 3 main areas where a lack of clarity about 'who is doing what?' meant they were missing the mark in terms of their business objectives

After 45 minutes, Jane said that she would like them to move on to the exercise she had planned. She handed out a RASCI Responsibility Matrix to everyone there. She then spent 10 minutes explaining what 'RASCI' meant, using the material she had downloaded from the Expert Guidance section. She split the room into 3 groups, gave each group one of the b3 areas to think about, and asked them to get stuck into the exercise. They were to come back with a proposal for who should be doing what, and a summary of how that would improve the team's work.

After half an hour, Jane quietened the room and asked each group in turn what they had come up with. Each team had filled out the matrix with reference to the area they had been assigned:

1. One team had come up with ideas about how tasks should be assigned in the area they had been looking at, in order to improve things. This met with general agreement, and the team agreed actions to get this organised immediately.
2. Another team came up with several ideas but wanted wider discussion in the team before proposing something to the rest of the team. They agreed to continue with this outside the meeting, talk to one or two key colleagues, and were confident they could come back to the next meeting with a couple of options to consider.
3. The third team reported back that there were disagreements in the team about the best way forward. The area they were looking at had been a bit of a problem for several months. Jane suggested she would talk to the relevant team members over the next couple of weeks to see if they could sort out the best way forward. She would report back at a team meeting in two week's time.

Jane regained the focus of the room to summarise. She was delighted with the outcome and thanked people for a really constructive discussion. The team agreed that it would be helpful at some point to produce a RASCI table for the team's work as a whole, so that everyone could be clear about who did what, and new members could have it as part of their induction.



# Team Leader's Guide

## Common behavioural issues in teams

Keep an eye out for the following behaviours, and call them out if you see them:



**First and loudest:** One or two people dominate the discussion and others hold back.

**Groupthink:** High performing teams tend not to listen to others outside the group (see: Challenger Disaster).

**Conformity:** A tendency to agree with the group.

**Deference, power & HIPPOs:** People have a tendency to defer to authority and power. (N.b: HIPPO: the 'Highest Paid Person's Opinion').

**Conflict denial and avoidance:** People naturally avoid conflict, and often these issues are buried, and become un-discussable.

**Un-discussability:** Difficult issues which are avoided. Consider also the 'undiscussable undiscussables': Very toxic issues, which are so toxic that the fact of their existence is not talked about openly in the team.

## What do people want out of work?

Many of the things that make us and our teams more effective also make us happier and more fulfilled at work. We have it in our power to change together in our teams. Research shows that people need the following:



- Being valued and appreciated
- Feeling heard, and that they have a voice
- Clear, challenging but achievable goals
- The opportunity to apply skills and build new ones
- A trusting and optimistic team culture
- Fair treatment of everyone in the team
- A co-operative team where any disagreements are resolved
- Accurate fair feedback and help to improve
- A supportive team, who enhance individual effectiveness and well-being





## Communicating Constructively

Being a good listener when a colleague has things on their mind - being there for them - is a natural form of social support and helps to build colleagues' resilience.

The matrix below shows four possible ways of responding to a piece of good news shared by a colleague. Destructive responses obviously don't help, but it is also interesting that 'passive constructive' replies do nothing to build relationships. What really works, according to the research, is an active and positive response.

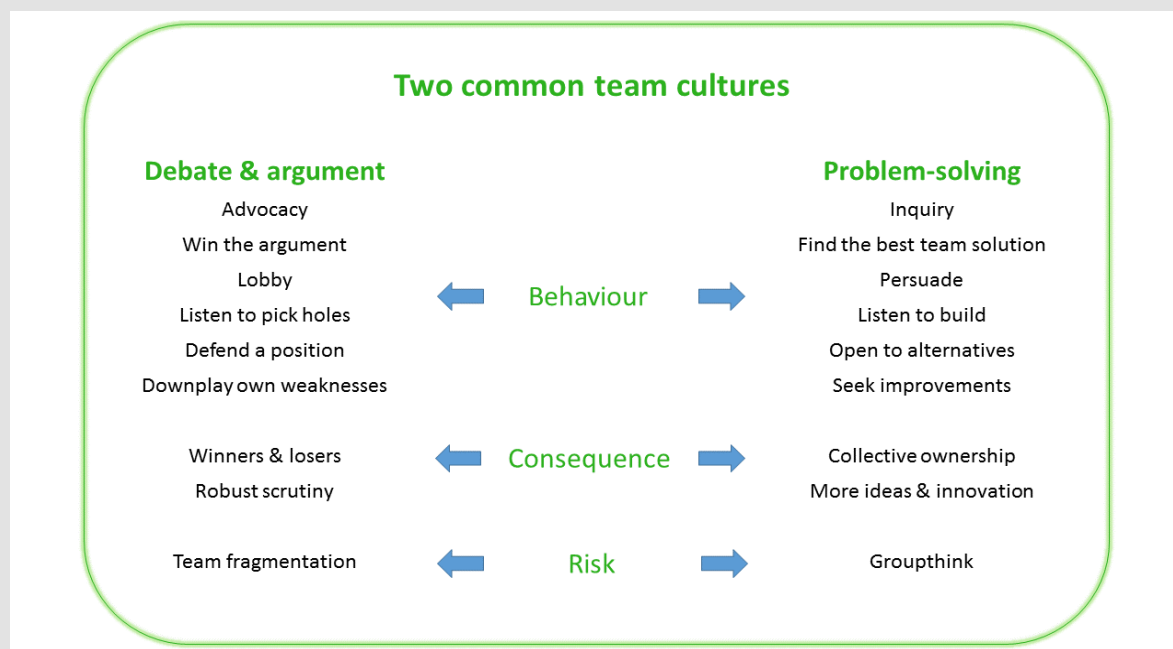
Consider the possible responses to the following statement: *'My four year old got her first gold star for potato painting today'.*

	Destructive	Constructive
Active	Don't they teach proper subjects like spelling any more?	That's great. Was she pleased? What does she like best about school? 
Passive	I had a great weekend fishing.	That's nice.

## Identifying team culture

Is decision-making in your team more like a heated argument or a cool joint problem-solving session?

A problem-solving approach produces more innovation, better decisions and more collective ownership of the eventual decision.







# Team Leader's Guide

## Setting Ground Rules

When running a team development session, setting ground rules at the start of the meeting is vital. It strikes a constructive, inclusive and confident tone, and encourages good behaviour. Here are some possible ground rules. Adapt them together to suit your team.



- Prioritise evidence over opinion
- Make decisions on the basis of analysis, not power
- Seek solutions that meet shared objectives
- Listen up: critique ideas, but respect individuals
- Speak up: encourage different views; there are no stupid questions
- Hush up: be conscious of talking too much.
- Be prepared to change our minds, but not just to conform
- Disagree without being disagreeable
- Act towards others as you would have them act towards you

## Coaching your team to perform better

Coaching is traditionally associated with one to one work. However, the principles of the coaching relationship can be applied to the Team / Team Leader dynamic. Consider the following when working with your team:

### **Listen**

Body language matters - try to indicate receptivity and patience (e.g. no frowning, looking away, folded arms). Don't interrupt. Let the other person finish what they are saying. Allow a pause to let what they have said sink in before you reply.



### **Empathise**

Demonstrate that you are trying to connect with what the other person is saying and feeling. Try to tune in to the other person's viewpoint. Listening well does not mean you agree with what the other person is saying, but that you are prepared to listen carefully.

### **Be curious**

Listen with enthusiasm and curiosity - reflect back what you have heard, ask for clarification or to hear more. Ask open-ended questions, not questions that just require a yes or no answer, to draw people out further.



# Team Leader's Guide

## Overcoming impasse in team development

Impasse is a common feature of team development. Teams can get stuck, and get frustrated. Don't lose heart. It's normally part of the improvement process, not the end of the line. Try the following to break through:



**Check in with everyone about how they are feeling.** Leave the issue alone for a moment.

**Stop.** Take a break, breathe. Let the team know it's normal to reach impasse.

**Re-set the tone.** Debate ideas, not the people behind them. Stay flexible, and listen well. Reframe the conversation.

**Look for areas of agreement.** What can you all agree on?

**Start again.** Leave the conversation and come back to it again from the start. Clarify your terms of reference.

**Break the problem down into constituent parts.** Don't try and climb the whole mountain range in one go, conquer each foothill in turn.

**Good is better than perfect.** What will happen if the situation remains as it is? Is this tenable long term? If not, is there a good-but-not-perfect solution?

## Defensive routines in the zoo

People respond and behave in different ways when confronted with a disagreement in a team. Does the team recognise any of the following? Which one are you?



**Ostrich:** Denies the disagreement exists.

**Turtle:** Withdraws into their shell.

**Gorilla:** Forces people to accept their point of view.

**Lemming:** Follows the crowd.

**Owl:** Intellectualises the issue until everyone feels inadequate and shuts up.

**Sheep:** Says it's so much pleasanter if you don't disagree.

**Weasel:** "I'm sure we'll find a way to see eye to eye".

**Alligator:** Watch out, they can snap!



# Team Leader's Guide

## Some good questions if you need inspiration

Here is a list of some of the most common issues which teams face, and questions to help you start a conversation with your team.



### VISION & OBJECTIVES

- What is our vision as a team?
- What do we hope to achieve over the next 12 months?
- Are we clear what we are trying to achieve together as a team?
- Does the team manage performance as a team?
- What are we not currently doing that we want to be able to do?
- What is working well? What's not?
- What are our main challenges?
- Are there any burning issues for us to address?
- Are there any particular stressors?
- Do you put enough emphasis on what your customers want?



### TEAM DYNAMICS

- What is the atmosphere within the wider team that we want to foster?
- What is the way of working as a team that we want to embody?
- How do we want to react when things get difficult?
- What do we want our stakeholders (customers, colleagues, team members) to see, when they look at us as a team?
- Do we resolve disagreements well?
- Do we thank and support each other enough?
- Do we communicate with others in an optimistic and confident way?
- How good are we at influencing people outside the team (our stakeholders)?
- Are we clear about everyone's roles and responsibilities?
- Are we constantly trying to innovate?



# Common Team Leader concerns

Receiving feedback by your team can cause anxiety to some team leaders, but it doesn't have to.



## **"I'm worried that the team's feedback will be negative / reveal areas in which I'm failing"**

No team is perfect. No team leader is perfect. Every team (and every leader) can improve. There are a number of principles which, if adhered to, will make it likely that you will get it pretty much right. Have a look through 'What makes for great team work?' above for a starting idea.

You can't change everything overnight, but can often make swift improvements on some things. What does the Team Review state are the areas which your team is behind the curve, and what subjects does the team say it wants to work on? Start there.

Finally - team leaders often worry about getting thrown under the bus by their team. Relax. This is extremely rare. Team members are more interested in identifying areas of improvement, and having their views heard and considered.



## **"My team are going to use this as an opportunity to list their grievances"**

There is a chance that will happen. There are ways you can deal with it.

If grievances do appear in the Team Review, they may be new to you but are unlikely to actually be new. They are likely to have been well rehearsed and discussed over a period of time. They may be collectively felt, or be pushed by individuals.

The Team Review process is designed to get you, and the rest of the team, talking about the issues which you are facing. This is an opportunity for you all to address these issues, take control of the narrative, and discuss them in a structured way. You can collectively bring them to the table, and away from the water cooler. The Team Review will help you, as the grievances will probably have come up in advance in the 'What Team Members think you can improve' section.

Your team will respond well to having the opportunity to have these issues listened to, and taken seriously. Set aside time to hear out the team's concerns. Bringing the issue to the whole team, and addressing it as a team, will help separate the legitimate team-wide concern from the vocal individual who happens to be shouting the loudest.

First and foremost, listen. Get all the facts and issues out onto the table before looking for solutions. Ask team members for your views (all of them, not just those who talk most). Don't allow interruptions. If performed with thoughtfulness and care, this will allow the team to see individual hobby horse issues for what they are, and encourage productive, solution focused thinking for the larger, team wide issues.



# Common Team Leader concerns



## "There's an individual / collective in the team who will want to make this meeting about their needs / priorities. How do I stop losing control?"

You are the team leader, which means that the team are relying on you for guidance, structure, and support. Allowing control of the agenda to be wrested from you undermines you, personally and professionally.

In order to avoid this, consider the following:

1. **Develop Ground Rules**, both for the team discussion and going forward. These include rules such as 'evidence first, opinion second'. Collectively agreeing rules makes it easier, and less directly confrontational, to intervene when an individual is trying to take control.
2. **Time limit your meeting**, and set an agenda. If you suspect that someone will try to hijack a meeting, a set agenda can help. Time limiting also gives you a ready-made reason to move them away from their topic of choice ('I'm afraid we only have 45 minutes remaining, and need to discuss X and Y. Let's come back to what you are saying at a another time').
3. **Assert yourself**. This behaviour has probably arisen as a series of small incursions, pushing a little each time. The next time it happens, be clear and firm in your intervention. Thank the person for their contribution, state the reason that you are moving on (e.g. to give someone else an opportunity to comment, time limitations, etc), and change the room's focus. It can take guts, but it is effective.



## "This is a distraction from us getting on with the job / Doing this is a waste of time"

Team members are sometimes reluctant to engage in change processes, especially if they feel they have 'seen it all before'.

The difference with Teams & Leadership is that this change is their change. It is up to the team to identify what isn't working, and do something about it. The process is often cathartic for team members, who feel that they can start talking / sorting out issues that have been unarticulated, or unaddressed, in the past.

If you find this attitude persisting, emphasise that you all have a real opportunity to change the way you work together, and address the issues that come up for the team. The question is: would you rather keep going as you are, or try to do things better? Most teams will choose the latter option. Ultimately, if there is an intransigent element of your team who will not engage, it might be worth consider whether they are a good fit for the team going forward.



# Common Team Leader concerns



## **"I'm worried that the team won't answer truthfully."**

A team which cannot be honest with each other is not a well functioning team.

There are a number of reasons why team members might have trouble having honest conversations with each other - hierarchy, fear of being shown up, apathy, lack of confidence (in themselves or the other person), etc - but it boils down to a lack of trust between team members.

Often team members will be honest with certain sections of the team, or individuals, without sharing their concerns with the group.

The Team Review asks for anonymised feedback from team members. This allows people to raise issues and concerns directly with the group, without the exposure that comes with being identified. Our experience is that this gives team members more freedom to be honest about what's wrong.

The main focus for a team who don't trust each other is to build that trust; that starts by learning more about each other, and each person's hopes, concerns and challenges. The Team Review is a great way to begin that process.



## **"I already know of one difficult issue in particular that's going to be flagged, and is a waste of time to talk about"**

If a topic is coming back again and again, it needs to be addressed.

The development session is a great opportunity to grapple with the big challenges facing the team. If you're avoiding it, ask yourself why. Even if you think it's a waste of time, it isn't for others in your team, so you can use the time to either solve the problem, come up with an approach to the issue, or decide together to park the issue once and for all.

Lastly - even the most seemingly intractable problems can have a solution. Grapple together, as a group - remember, doing nothing is as much a choice as doing something.



**Good luck with your Team Review!**

### **Any questions?**

Please email [support@change-fx.com](mailto:support@change-fx.com) for help, access Teams & Leadership on your organisation's intranet or visit [Teamsandleadership.com](https://teamsandleadership.com) for further information on the range of Teams & Leadership offerings.