



# Team Building



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## About the Tutorial

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Teams that are not related to a working environment usually are formed around a common set of thoughts, beliefs and clear objectives. When a person with opposing thoughts tries to be a part of such a team, he would realize soon that he/she does not belong in that team, as there will be a conflict of personalities. These members soon quit the team.

This tutorial is designed to give an insight into the teambuilding process and explaining how to share information with individual members of a team.

## Audience

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This tutorial is designed for managers who have been assigned a new team, often comprising of people for whom it will be their first time as a working professional. Many issues of ego, immaturity and insecurity prop up in such teams, so the manager needs to astutely deal with the young team.

## Prerequisites

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Before proceeding with this tutorial, you are expected to know the basics of organizational structure and the working model of your company.

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# 1. Team Building – Introduction

You probably have been a part of multiple teams at different stages of your life. In fact, it won't be a long stretch if one were to guess that you have been a member in many teams at the same time too. While it might sound improbable, allow me to walk you through a familiar situation in the past where you woke up as a member of your family, walked to the school as an alumnus, got into your class as a classmate, participated in a game as a teammate and ultimately worked in a company as a part of a team.

This means you understand how teams basically function and what holds them together. The most common property will be an exclusive condition that will pool some people under one bracket. From the time you entered the school till the time you formed a team to play baseball during the P.E. Class, you have been filtered through at least three exclusive conditions, which are:

- Being a student in your school,
- Being a student in your class and
- Being a member of a team.

You will also realize that **every team is formed with some purpose** in mind and where there is purpose, there is a good chance that there will be a desire to excel in fulfilling that purpose. It is this desire, coupled with a motivation to be successful, which differentiates the regular non-work teams from those in the workplace.



For the teams to arrive at a consensus decision, it is very important that the manager creates an environment where everyone's opinion is heard. However, in real scenarios, it is quite difficult to achieve this feat because aggressive and assertive people tend to get the most attention.



While aggressive people disrupt discussions, assertive people calmly put points across, while allowing others to speak. Less forthright team members can often feel intimidated between these people which makes them not speak. This leads to one-sided discussions and gives the incorrect message of the popular view being the team's view. However, a proper team is the one where each and every member's voice and ideas are given clear justification and importance. This makes all the team members feel as if they have contributed to the team's cause.

## 2. Teams in a Working Environment

Teams that are not related to a working environment usually are formed around a common set of thoughts, beliefs and clear objectives. When a person with opposing thoughts tries to be a part of such a team, he would realize soon that he/she doesn't belong in that team, as there will be a conflict of personalities. These members will soon quit the team. However, the working dynamics are very different with workplace teams.

In the workplace, it is almost a norm for a manager to get people with completely different temperaments, some of which are:

- Belief Systems
- Motivating Factors
- Code of Ethics
- Styles of Functioning
- Career Goals
- Personality Traits

It might appear to an outsider that developing a team out of such different people is a recipe for disaster. However, it is a miracle that the **best organizations in the world** thrive on people with characteristics as far from one-another as possible, working together in complete harmony and synchronization.

To understand how this is possible, it is important to identify the common core that drives a team. There are three kinds of teams that have three very different ways of functioning. Depending on their working style, their managers chalk out a common program for all the members, which then is used as a motivating factor by each of the members in these teams.

There are three such types of teams:

- Multi-disciplinary Project Team
- Ongoing-process Project Team
- Strategic Planning Project Team

Let us now discuss each of these teams in detail.

### Multi-disciplinary Project Team

In these teams, people from different fields of expertise collect together to complete a given task. Such tasks generally involve many functions, so often many individual teams working on one project are asked to come together as one single team for better coordination. As such a team is formed on special occasions, it doesn't have one reporting authority, so the person who is assigned the responsibility to manage them doesn't have total managerial control over it.

An ideal example could be the working of an event manager; every team involved in the event will have a team leader, be it catering, musicians, decorators, etc. He won't have managerial authority over them, but he will be coordinating their operations.

### **Ongoing-process Project Team**

This kind of a team is comprised of people working in one process for a long period of time. The team members are familiar with all scenarios and have also gained experience and expertise in handling these issues.



In such cases, the job of a manager is basically limited to providing supervision, authorizing certain processes and providing team support and motivation. He doesn't need to be worried about the functioning of the team in itself, simply because the members of the team have been working in the process for long.

### **Strategic Planning Project Team**

In such projects, the goals of the team keep changing all the time, depending on the scenarios and conditions they are working under. The team members have the liberty of not reporting directly to the team manager.



In such teams, scenarios and possible outcomes are discussed in detail and all team members have to be involved in this preemptive planning. These teams work on the principle of collecting prior information and later implementation.



### 3. Team Leadership

There was a time when a team leader was selected. Nowadays, team leaders are elected. There is a humongous change in the attitude between both the approaches. Earlier, people who used to perform the best, had a go-getter attitude and had natural leading abilities were automatically promoted as team leaders by the management. However, the tea leaders nowadays aren't selected by the management, but are elected by the members of the team themselves.

Today, a person whom the rest of the team unanimously, or in majority, vote as the one they are most comfortable working under is elected the team leader. In short, the focus has shifted from **individual performance** to **group dynamics** and **interpersonal skills**.



The reason behind this is while a good performer as the team leader will inspire the rest of the team to also do well, the team leader himself might be too obsessed with the team performance to be worried about the team members themselves. Also, because of his good record, he might himself not be familiar with failure, so when people in his team don't deliver, he would mistake their genuine failure as either indiscipline or willful deviance.

An elected team leader, on the other hand, will share a personal equation with all of his teammates, which gives him a good insight into their strengths and weaknesses. When the time of delegating responsibilities comes, he will know whom to assign what work. The selected team-leader will rather hand over responsibilities as per his whims and fancies, and them **compel people** to provide good results. As he himself is a good performer, he would deem every work doable by everyone else too, so people will naturally hesitate in telling him that they aren't good in a particular field.



In today's world, if a person wants to be successful as a team leader, then he needs to ask himself a couple of fundamental questions:

- What leadership does my team want and what type of leader will inspire them?
- What changes I need to make in my attitude, personality, and behavior to be that person?

In such teams, it is common to find one person responsible for the completion of a task walking up to the expert on that task in their team, who in-turn might have been assigned a different task!

## 4. Identifying Performances in a Team

The definition of a good team will change depending on the responsibility of the team, their working process and the team size. Experts state that a team should have five to nine team members; ideally six.

One of the earliest observers of the effect of a team size on the individual performances of a team was **Maximilien Ringelmann**, a French professor of Agricultural Engineering. He proposed a theory named after him as **Ringelmann Effect** which stated that when individuals are made to work in groups, the individual performances drop.

Ringelmann discovered this phenomenon when he had asked a few persons to tug at one end of a rope, whose other end passed over a pulley and was attached to a scale with 500 pounds of weight placed on it. He asked each person to try and lift the scale up to the maximum height he can.

Every participant gave his best effort, and Ringelmann noted the results of their efforts. He then calculated the average of all the different heights that these individuals could lift the scale up to. Next, he compared the results with the collective effort put in by the same people, now tugging at the rope in a group.

He found that when he asked more people to pull on a rope, each individual assumed the other guys are going to put in the needed effort, so even if the number of participants was more, the height they lifted the scale to was considerably lower than expectation.

In numerical terms, if the average height that each individual lifted the scale to was 2 meters, he was expecting the entire team to lift the scale to at least thrice of that, but he found that the collective effort only lifted the scale up to 3.5 meters. Ringelmann termed this phenomenon **Social Loafing**.



This means that the people were confident that someone or the other would put in the desired effort, which will effectively mask their own under-performance. This phenomenon is rampant in teams where everyone is working on such a task where it's impossible to identify or measure an individual's participation, efforts or contribution in a team.

The reason behind this phenomenon getting the most observed in these teams is because of the nature of work. As there is no way to find out the extent of individual contributions, there are also very less opportunities of rewarding individual performances, which means people are generally less motivated to put in their best, thinking that they can coast on their team-members' efforts.

All these experiments point toward the simple working philosophy that small tasks should be assigned to small teams. That is why companies generally designate such tasks to teams with lesser number of members, ideally six, so that they can test the levels of involvement and contribution of individuals towards the task, as well as the cohesion and cooperation they share with their team-mates.

However, the reality is that a manager or a team leader working in the real world has very little control over the team-size, even if he knows the nature of the task and the ideal team-size for it. It is something that the management decides, after analyzing the volume of work and the time it is supposed to be completed in.

# 5. Constituent Factors of a Good Team

In a cross-functional project team, the size of the team is directly related to the number of different functions that are supposed to be carried out. In such scenarios, the manager needs to focus more on getting the best out of the large team, instead of worrying about functional control.

In some teams, the members will be resources of such high expertise and experience, that they are answerable to only the higher management. So much so that even their reward system will be decided by the higher management and not the team manager. A team manager here needs to fulfill the duty of being the coordinator and the person to keep all parallel processes running smoothly.



Many such similar situations might crop up in a diverse working scenario, so the team manager needs to realize that the sooner he stops trying to build an ideal team, and starts working on applying basic team building principles to the team he has, the better it is for his team's performance.

A few basic team building steps are given below:

- Defining Success Criteria and Rewarding it
- Defining Team Principles
- Valuing All Contributions
- Leading by Example

These team building steps will certainly help in easing out any situation in diverse working scenarios.

## 6. Defining Success Criteria

When a manager stands in front of his team and says that he wants them to succeed, he needs to first tell them what he understands “success” as. In absence of a clear definition of what success means to the team manager, the team-members might easily feel satisfied with their output, even if it’s an underachievement by the manager’s standards.

For these reasons, it is essential for the manager to clearly define and communicate the team objectives. This allows all members of the team to get a realistic, quantifiable and measurable idea of the goal, irrespective of their individual skillsets and experience levels.



The manager needs to check if the team is meeting these success levels weekly, by monitoring and reviewing the team’s performance on a weekly basis, and sharing feedback. However, with some other teams, like strategic teams, the objectives are not always fixed, clearly defined and measurable.

In such cases, team members often get demotivated and bored. In some cases, managers also try and set unrealistically high targets for their teams, knowing fully well that such targets are unachievable, just for the reason of extracting the maximum effort from their team.

### Example

Let us take the example of a team working on providing customer service on credit cards to their customers. Now, the peak hours of calling are generally from 9 in the morning till 11, and then again from 3 in the afternoon till 5.

In these hours, the call volumes are so high that even if the agents start wrapping up calls as fast as they can, some customers might still be found queueing for their chance to speak to the customer executive even after several minutes.

The ideal solution in such a scenario is to double the workforce. However, the logistics won't agree and the solution might not fly by the management, who would be clearly wary of the huge initial overhead expenses.



Managers might train their teammates to be as efficient as possible and identify the customers' issues in the first few seconds itself, so that they can provide a speedier resolution. However, the truth is that about 30% of these credit card related calls to the customer care department are on billing, on which the customer care agents will have no idea as to how to handle. To identify the issues, the customer care executives will have to contact the bank itself and get confirmation on their records.

This is undoubtedly a double-layered, lengthy procedure even if the team at the bank is quick in responding. Most customers prefer that the agent gives them a callback in such scenarios, which means that there could be no resolution provided to these customers on their calls itself.

Now imagine a manager walking into the office and mentioning it explicitly and categorically that he wants a 95% issue resolution on the first call itself. You can almost imagine the mixed emotions of discontent, bewilderment and frustration that will be cooking in the eyes of the agents on this announcement. The team will fail to connect with the manager's vision and won't feel up to it. This is a standard issue in top-down managements, where people sitting at the top have no idea of the day-to-day ground realities of the job and make policies that don't reflect the real picture of the market.

Many times, expectations are set by people who have no idea on ground realities, which makes their definition of success criteria an unrealistic one for his team. Sometimes, it is not a manager

who doesn't have any idea on the working reality, but someone who clearly worked in a different era who creates an issue.



A person who used to sell six Ford cars a week in the 90s can't expect even the best in his team to do so today, simply because there are many competitors in the market who provide competitive services and come in equally enticing price ranges.



## 7. Rewarding Group Success

A manager generally has the ability and authority to reward the high-performing team members of his team, if he is directly responsible for his team. However, these rewards may have some limitations or maybe perceived in the team as delivering limited satisfaction.

The reason behind this is the ability of awarding the truly motivating and influential rewards lie with the higher management. These rewards include salary hikes, monetary perks, etc. The decision to give these rewards lies with the management and they in turn depend on the organizational structure. However, many times, a manager will have some teammates who associate with his team on freelance or contractual obligations. Even if these people are not a part of the organization, their performances will be the sole responsibility of the manager.



These people can be motivated through non-monetary rewards, like the promise to secure more work for them from your organization if they fare well in the current task. These people pay a great value on securing more work and employment, so even if they don't get any monetary increments, they still get motivated to work, so that they can be recommended for other such assignments.

Everything said and done, the truth is that in big organizations, the sheer complexity and diversity of their functioning and working processes makes it tough to reward the entire team satisfactorily.



So, in situations where a manager is trying to offer a suitable reward to the team, he needs to first take a note of the contribution and efforts of his team. Depending on their involvement in the team, the different team members can be rewarded by:

- Special mentioning of their names in the management's performance report praising their efforts.
- Listing team's achievement in meetings, to make team-mates realize their efforts are acknowledged.
- Requesting a member from the board or higher management to praise the team's performance.
- Organizing a team fair, dinner or outings for team-members to celebrate their success.

It is important to note that the amount of money spent in such treats is of far less importance as compared to the morale lifting that people in the team will get from seeing that their efforts are being rewarded.

## 8. Leading by Example

A manager needs to realize that the team members that he is now managing have seen him as one of them till recently. To earn respect in their minds, he needs to **lead by example** and demonstrate his competencies that convinces them that he is a good manager.

A very effective method to break the "**He vs. Us**" attitude that the team most often nurtures against a team manager is by unofficially handing over to them some control on their workings and functioning, even if the team members don't have any of these powers of autonomy in writing as their duties or responsibilities.



Sometimes, the team members will have more technical knowledge and experience than the manager itself, however that shouldn't deter the manager from asserting himself, because his job is more related to applying soft skills and coordination. A person can acquire technical skills, however no amount of technical expertise can substitute leadership skills.

It can be sometimes frustrating to find people not performing up to their potential. However, a manager should resist the strong temptation of expressing his frustration, either in speech or via his body language to the team members.

Sometimes, getting upset in adverse situations is totally justified; however, a manager should practice not exhibiting his emotions in front of his team, which will influence his team to also follow suit and behave professionally.



The biggest challenge for any manager is to keep his team motivated, especially if it is a team working in an ongoing process. The reason such teams quickly get demotivated is also due to the absence of any career opportunities, monotonous work and fixed pay.

Some managers request their management to split the annual bonus to be given to the team into multiple portions, like quarterly bonuses. Regular incentives, recognition and praising also helps in motivating such teams.

## 9. Namesake Teams vs Real Teams

Some organizations use the word **Team** to describe a group of people working on a single task. For example, a sales team might consist of a lot of salespersons who have been given a similar task of getting sales done. However, the salespersons themselves might rarely interact with one another as a team as their work can largely be done independently and they work in different territories.



Such people might be operating independently of one another, yet the management would still prefer to club all of them under **Sales Team**, as it makes their task easier when it comes to sharing information and collecting feedback. When they send a mass mailer saying "There's a meeting at 4 with the Sales Team", they expect all salespersons to gather in the meeting room, and not the accounts people.

In contrast, a real team has a group of people who work in synergy with one another on one common goal. In such teams, the entire team is a collection of people who complement one another, where one's deficient skills will be filled up by someone else's expertise in the same domain. They are a cohesive unit and rarely will be able to deliver the same degree of quality when working as individuals.

In addition to the working style and interdependency of the teammates, there are further differences between a namesake team and a real team, such as:

- Namesake Teams
- Real Teams

Let us now discuss the differences of these two teams in detail.

### Namesake Teams

- Only managers have the authority to set goals.
- A manager assigns work to team members individually.
- Team members are answerable for only their own performances.
- Meetings held on one-to-one basis between manager & team member.

### Real Teams

- Team can set internal goals
- The whole team takes the responsibility for the final work
- Manager assigns tasks to the team as a whole, not individually
- Feedback mostly held on one-to-many basis between team members



In addition to these differences, there is also another very important difference between the operational styles of these two teams: that of conflict.

- In namesake teams, there are very less chances of conflict because everyone works independently, reports directly to the manager on a one-one basis, and works on separate territories. Until this happens, there's no reason for any internal conflict.

- On the other hand, conflicts are frequent between members in a real team, primarily because every performer will be held accountable for everyone else's performance. Most of the conflict comes from the different approaches and ideas and finding out the one approach that will work for the entire team. Fortunately, such conflicts are resolved in some time and are considered normal, even healthy by the management.

Depending on the kind of team that you are supervising, you need to be flexible with your managerial methods and skills. For example, if you are supervising the performance of a real team, then you need to work with them closely and collect a daily or weekly report of their progress as a team.

The same, however, can't be practiced in the case of a namesake team, where team meetings don't need the complete attendance of all the members. Performances are also largely individual in scope, so there is no need of asking all of them to attend a meeting on performances.

# 10. Factors in Team Building

The biggest factor in the smooth team building for a manager is how much he respects the time of his team. In the limited time he has to interact with his team, he needs to keep them informed of their progress, share their feedback on performance, identify areas of improvements, and share details of project and updates with them.

It is essential to find out how much management your team needs and how much they are comfortable operating on their own capabilities. A non-meddling manager who works silently in the background, coordinating different taskforces and keeping up with deadlines is a valued asset in any organization.



The most productive way of guiding people is giving them clear instructions and timely support. The other method is regulating the holidays and illness policies of the organization. These policies, coupled with team meetings, factor heavily in time management techniques. Making sure that minimum time is spent in these time-consuming processes ensures that the team gets the maximum time possible to complete task.

Most successful managers divide their teams into sub-teams when it comes to having a meeting or sharing feedback, simply because discussing one area of concern involving a part of the team doesn't require the presence of the entire team. This saves a team a lot of time and will also prevent any frustration that people might feel in seeing their time being wasted, when they could have utilized it more productively.





Such sub-teams not only keep the discussion on focus, but also makes the exchange of information faster and more specific. Moreover, mass communication tools like emails can now be used to keep everyone informed, which further reduces the need to have such large team meetings. However, this shouldn't be used as an excuse to not identify individual members of the team who deliver high-quality performance.

People working in a team perform well so that their efforts lead to higher visibility among their peers, which in turn, boosts their chances at career growth. It is very important to mention the individual performers in a team, as it is a big motivating factor for them and the rest of the team as well.

# 11. Team Building Worksheets

The following activity promotes team building and is used by many managers to establish a strong bond of communication between members of a team, who just got acquainted with one another, as in the case of a new team. This activity also helps them in acquiring problem-solving skills as a team. The team members are made to analyze information, negotiate conditions and cooperate. The manager will need to book a big, largely furniture-free room for this.

The participants are given a scenario, most commonly a shipwreck incident. The members of the team are told to pretend that they are all sailors and they have been shipwrecked. They only have a lifeboat, in which each of them is currently seated, after being rescued off the sinking ship.

The team has salvaged a few random items from the ship just before the ship sank. The team members must now arrange these items in an ascending order of importance. Members must agree which items are most important for their survival.

The list of items salvaged is given in the following worksheet in the first column. The second column is where the teammates are supposed to fill up their own order of priorities. In the third column, they are supposed to get a team ranking. This is where they need to discuss with their team and arrange the objects in priority.

The manager should give them plenty of time to brainstorm and clash ideas to get to the final priority list. This will give the team ample time to counter reason with reason and will give the manager an acute idea of the different perspectives of problem solving.

| Objects Salvaged | Round-1      | Round-2        |
|------------------|--------------|----------------|
|                  | Your Ranking | Team's Ranking |
| Mosquito Net     |              |                |
| Fuel Canister    |              |                |
| Water Bottle     |              |                |
| Shaving Razor    |              |                |
| Compass          |              |                |

|                    |  |  |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Emergency Food     |  |  |
| Sea Map            |  |  |
| Floating Cushion   |  |  |
| Rope               |  |  |
| Watch              |  |  |
| Waterproof Blanket |  |  |
| Fishing Rod        |  |  |
| Harpoon            |  |  |
| Bottle of Rum      |  |  |

In some cases, the team may have an aggressive member who would try and trivialize all items and push them down the order. In that case, the manager can provide the rest of the team a counter-argument, which they can use against him. A list of such counter-arguments is given below:

| <b>Objects Salvaged</b> | <b>Functional Counter-arguments</b>                       |
|-------------------------|---|
| Mosquito Net            | Needed to keep insects from biting and spreading diseases |
| Fuel Canister           | Needed to form fire signal                                |
| Water Bottle            | Needed to store water                                     |
| Matchsticks             | Needed to light fuel on fire                              |
| Compass                 | Needed to determine direction                             |

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Emergency Food     | Needed to sustain energy                                      |
| Sea Map            | Needed to find nearest land site                              |
| Floating Cushion   | Needed to keep a person falling aboard by accident afloat     |
| Rope               | Needed to tie the floating cushion as a troll behind the boat |
| Watch              | Needed to keep track of time                                  |
| Waterproof Blanket | Can be used to collect rainwater, or protection against rain  |
| Fishing Rod        | Needed to catch fish and feed                                 |
| Harpoon            | Needed to stave off attacks from predatory sea creatures.     |
| Bottle of Rum      | Needed as disinfectant on wounds                              |