TEAMSWORK
BUILD TEAMS RIGHT – PREPARATION

The following questions are a starting point to begin a dialogue with your team members and support the development of a solid team foundation. Reflect on the following questions and have them in writing to discuss with your teams. Then determine how your team will operate, develop some team agreements that reflects those decisions. You can refer to the sample team agreement template or develop your own format that works for your team.

LAUNCHING YOUR TEAM

Launching, organizing, and operating are the developmental stages that all teams go through. The first stage (launching) is when teams are initially put together or when there are changes to the make-up of the team. At the start of a team's time together there is often a great sense of anticipation (or dread) about the new team. Sometimes the initial reaction can result in greatness and sometimes to deep dysfunction. Some teams allow the enthusiasm or uncertainty to mask significant differences. As a result they make assumptions about the level of common understanding that people have about a whole range of expectations. These teams quickly focus on the tasks of the team and assume everyone is on the same page bout many of the key factors that make teams work.

Teams are unique combinations of professional relationships that also have a high level of social interaction due to the amount of time people spend together. This social interaction, while seemingly a distraction at times, is also an important ingredient in effective teaming because it ensures that communication is taking place frequently and fluidly as well as building trusting relationships. Whether you like it or not you, and your team, are in a long-term committed relationship.

Teams that succeed talk about things that matter right from the start. They make sure that they have agreement on a range of key factors. Reaching shared understanding about expectations is a critical success factor for teams. Shared understanding means that all members understand and agree to behavior-based expectations about key factors that influence a team's performance. Shared understanding is achieved through *conversations.* When it comes to the achieving a

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team's potential the results depend on the kind of conversations that the team has during the early stages of Launching, Organizing, and Operating.

The Launch stage is often given insufficient time. A few handshakes, a brief introduction (this is what I do, these are my qualifications, blah-blah-blah, the usual unimportant information) and let's get to work. Alas, people talk about the wrong things or they do not talk about the right things to the right depth and so the foundation lacks stability and resilience, two critical success factors for teams. If done right however, your team will have the base from which to build the rest of the team.

During your first weeks together take the time to build your shared understanding with each other so you can build a team structure that will be sustainable and high performing. Then continue these conversations as you grow and develop as a team. In particular ensure you discuss *the purpose and goals of the team as well as individuals, conflict, trust, support, values and behaviours.* This shared understanding is meant to guide the team agreement to become a living document, to be reviewed and adapted, thus guiding your effectiveness of working together.

PURPOSE AND GOALS

1. What are your personal goals for your program? And as part of a team?
2. What would like from your team to help you achieve your personal goals?
3. What is your expectation for what your team will accomplish?
4. What is the most important thing for you when it comes to the experience of working together?

TRUST

1. What builds trust for you when working on a team?
2. How would you lose trust in a team member?
3. How would you handle things if you start to lose trust in a team member?
4. How will you handle it if a team member loses trust in you?
5. What will you do if a team member doesn't follow through on their commitments?

CONFLICT

1. What are signs your team is having conflict?
2. What are each team members conflict style?

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3. What is "respectful communication"?
4. What kind of conflict supports effective teaming?
5. What will your team do to work through conflict?
6. What will you do if you are part of a conflict that is personal?
7. What will you do if two (or more) team members are having a personal conflict?

QUALITY

1. How do you expect teammates to prepare for your team meetings?
2. What is the quality standard you are aiming for?
3. How do you want to handle accountability?
4. What will you do if people have a different quality standard?

FEEDBACK

1. What is the best way for you to receive feedback? (Gentle, verbally, in writing, privately, as a group, etc.…)
2. When is the right time to give/receive feedback?
3. How do you respond to feedback?
4. Why would you give feedback?
5. How do you "check out" your assumptions? (or do you?)

VALUES/BEHAVIORS

1. What are three values that you think are important to teamwork?
2. What are behaviours that relate to those values?
3. What behaviors do you want to see in yourself and your team mates?

SUPPORT

1. What kind of support works to help you be a top team member?
2. What results in your disengaging? How can your team support you to stay engaged when that occurs?
3. How do you best support others?
4. What do you need to learn about support?

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