



How do you develop and maintain a high performing team?

Using teams to meet today's challenges

These days our environment seems to be not one of stability but one where turbulence is the norm and the only constant is change. Organisations and teams are challenged to look for innovations and new ways to meet market demands quickly and efficiently. To succeed today we need the creativity, knowledge, skills, experience and perspectives of a wide range of people to solve problems, make good decisions and deliver solutions to colleagues and customers. We need Teams!

Definition of team: A group of people working together towards a common goal.



Unlike this "Storming group" during the first activity on our Team performance acceleration workshops. Not much common goal, alignment or leadership here. .

High Performing Team - Lessons from the Geese:

At W2 we are very lucky to work in a beautiful part of Perthshire Scotland and look out over the mighty River Tay which is on the flight path of migrating geese. It is inspirational to watch their progress and admire their selfless team work. On their journey, migrations can be from 2,000 to 3,000 miles with an average speed of 40 miles per hour. That is a challenging task for any team. So what can we learn from them?

Lesson 1:

As each goose flaps its wings it creates uplift for the birds that follow. By flying in the V formation the whole flock adds 71% to its range.

Lesson for us: People who share a common direction and sense of community can help each other get where they are going more quickly and easily because they are travelling on the trust of one another

Lesson 2:

When a goose falls out of formation it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of flying alone, and quickly moves back to take advantage of the lifting power of the other birds.

Lesson for us: If we have as much sense as geese we stay in formation with those headed where we want to go. We are willing to accept their help and give our help to others

Lesson 3:

When the lead goose tires, it drops back into the formation and another goose flies to the point position.

Lesson for us: It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership.

Lesson 4:

The geese flying in formation honk to encourage those upfront to keep up their speed.

Lesson for us: We need to make sure our honking is encouraging. In groups where there is encouragement, production is much greater. Individual empowerment results from quality honking!

Lesson 5:

When a goose is sick or wounded, two fall out of formation and follow it down to help and protect it. They stay with it until it dies or is able to fly again. Then they launch out with another formation or catch up with their flock.

Lesson for us: Stand by each other in difficult times, as well as when times are good and we are strong.



Lessons from geese video .

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrgz6pqSutI>

High Performing Teams - 8 Factors that help

1. **Clarity in team purpose** and goals - everyone understands and is clear how it supports the organisation's mission
2. **A work plan** helps to determine the resources needed, identifies and schedules the mile stones. A team works best when everyone understands how they will work.
3. **Clearly defined role and responsibilities**, which use the talents of the team. Everyone understands their duties and who is responsible for what tasks
4. **Clear communication** good open and honest discussions take place with clarity. People actively listen and explore ideas and feedback flows.
5. **Beneficial behaviours** team members use positive engaging behaviours and show respect. Feelings are expressed honestly and constructively discussed
6. **Defined decision procedures** discussions take place and agreements are made as to how decisions will be taken, **and** at what level of responsibility and accountability
7. **Balanced participation** in discussions and contributions, support people's natural styles and preferences. Remember DiSC styles.
8. **Established ground rules** what is expected the "norms" and what is unhelpful to the team? This should be discussed and agreed and people given feedback on them

4 Stages of Team Growth-

Teams do not come into existence as a high performing team. Bruce Tuckman and Mary Ann Jensen suggested groups go through four clearly defined stages of development.

As you read, consider your own team, and what stage best reflects them currently?

Forming: This is the orientation stage, where individuals have not yet gelled. People are cautious when making a transition from individual to team member status. Feeling their way with processes, and the boundaries and group behaviours

Team characteristics	Leader's actions
Slow progress on work	Leader should build trust and confidence
Suspicion, fear, or anxiety about the job ahead	Help people to get to know each other
Excitement, anticipation, and optimism	Provide a clear direction and purpose
Tentative attachment to the team	Involve the members in plans, agreeing roles and team values
Attempts to define the task and how it will be accomplished	Provide enough information to get started
Long discussions of the issues: impatience from some members	

Storming: This is the conflict stage in the group's life and can be uncomfortable. People are impatient at lack of progress, but still too inexperienced to know much about the right approach or right decision; communication breaks down.

Team characteristics	Leader's actions
Resistance to working together, not wanting to collaborate	Leader needs to build self-direction
Resistance to and feeling uncomfortable with new working methods	Resolve any issues of power and authority
Arguing over minor issues, agreement on major	Develop agreements about how and who will make decisions
Defensiveness and competition	Allow team to be more independent, individuals to take responsibility
Questioning the team sponsor	
Concern about excessive volume of work, unrealistic goals	

Norming: People are getting used to working together. They are helping and beginning to understand one another. Many teams reach this stage and feel they can do no better.

Team characteristics	Leader's actions
A sense of cohesion, team spirit Acceptance of the team and being part of it Relief- things are working out More friendly and open discussion Confiding in one another, discussing problems Constructively giving feedback Maintaining the ground rules etc the "Norms" Significant progress is made	Leader needs to build co-operation Fully use the members' skills, knowledge and experience Encourage and acknowledge member's respect for each other Encourage members to work collaboratively

Performing: People have discovered and accepted each other's strengths and weaknesses. They are performing together, enjoying working together, and anticipating the needs of others.

Team characteristics	Leader's actions
Satisfaction at teams progress Close attachment to the team Understanding of group processes Constructive self-change Ability to resolve group problems	The leader should build openness Ensure methods and procedures support co -operation Help the team understand how to manage change Represent and be an advocate for the team to others Monitor progress and celebrate successes and achievements

Actions and Applications

We hope you are inspired to take action and to consider whether your team has reached high performing Stage Four?

Where are the barriers?

What actions can you take to influence the improvements?

If you are a follower- how clear are you on the 8 success factors and what stage has your team reached?

Good luck in your team journey and never stop learning!