



Further Reading, 'The Discipline of Teams' (condensed), HBR article, 1993 – Katzenbach and Smith

Summary

1. Clarify **purpose** – “*winning at...*”
2. Translate the purpose into specific, measurable **performance goals** / milestones
3. Develop the **capability** and skills required to succeed
4. Draft a **social contract**, agree how the team will work together to achieve the shared goals
5. Deliver on promises – team trust and connection is built and maintained through mutual accountability
6. (added by me) – Review! Commit to ‘slowing-down to speed up’. Continuous improvement is only possible if teams surrender to the discipline of effective evaluation and review.

1. Purpose

The essence of a team is common commitment. Without it, groups perform as individuals; with it, they become a powerful unit of collective performance. *This kind of commitment requires a purpose* in which team members can believe...

“Whether the purpose is to “*transform the contributions of suppliers into the satisfaction of customers,*” to “*make our company one we can be proud of again,*” or to “*prove that all children can learn,*” credible team purposes have **an element related to winning**, being first, revolutionizing, or being on the cutting edge.”

... Most successful teams shape their purposes in response to a demand or opportunity put in their path, usually by higher management, but (with) enough flexibility for the team to develop commitment around *its own spin on that purpose*, set of specific goals, timing, and approach. The best teams invest a tremendous amount of time and effort *exploring, shaping, and agreeing on a purpose* that belongs to them both collectively and individually. This “purposing” activity continues throughout the life of the team.

2. Performance Goals

The best teams also translate their common purpose into **specific performance goals**, (milestones) such as reducing the reject rate from suppliers by 50% or increasing the math scores of graduates from 40% to 95%. Indeed, if a team fails to establish specific

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performance goals - or if those goals do not relate directly to the team's overall purpose - team members become confused, pull apart, and revert to mediocre performance.

"Transforming broad directives into *specific and measurable* performance goals is the surest first step for a team trying to shape a purpose meaningful to its members."

The specificity of performance objectives facilitates *clear communication and constructive conflict* within the team... the clarity of the goal forces the team to concentrate on what it would take either to achieve or to reconsider the goal.

"Performance goals are compelling. They are symbols of accomplishment that motivate and energize. They challenge the people on a team to commit themselves, as a team, to make a difference. Drama, urgency, and a **healthy fear of failure** combine to drive teams that have their collective eye on an attainable, but challenging, goal. Nobody but the team can make it happen. It's their challenge."

3. Complementary Skills

Teams must develop the **right mix of skills**; that is, each of the complementary skills necessary to do the team's job. As obvious as it sounds, it is a common failing in potential teams. Skill requirements fall into three fairly self-evident categories: technical or functional expertise; problem-solving and decision-making skills; interpersonal skills.

"Common understanding and purpose cannot arise without effective communication and constructive conflict, which in turn depend on interpersonal skills. These skills include risk taking, helpful criticism, objectivity, active listening, giving the benefit of the doubt, and recognizing the interests and achievements of others."

In all the successful teams we've encountered, *not one had all the needed skills at the outset*... teams are powerful vehicles for developing the skills needed to meet the team's performance challenge. Accordingly, team member selection ought to ride as much on skill potential as on skills already proven.

4. Commitment

Effective teams develop **strong commitment to a common approach**; that is, *to how they will work together to accomplish their purpose*. Team members must agree on who will do

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particular jobs, how schedules will be set and adhered to, what skills need to be developed, how continuing membership in the team is to be earned, and how the group will make and modify decisions. This element of commitment is as important to team performance as the team’s commitment to its purpose and goals.

“When individuals approach a team situation... each has strengths and weaknesses reflecting a variety of talents, backgrounds, personalities, and prejudices. Only through the mutual discovery and understanding of how to apply all its human resources to a common purpose can a team develop and agree on the best approach to achieve its goals.”

At the heart of such long and, at times, difficult interactions lies a commitment-building process in which the team candidly explores who is best suited to each task as well as how individual roles will come together. In effect, the team establishes a **social contract** among members that relates to their purpose and guides and obligates how they must work together.

5. Accountability

Team accountability is about the **sincere promises** we make to ourselves and others, promises that underpin two critical aspects of effective teams: commitment and trust. Mutual accountability cannot be coerced any more than people can be made to trust one another. But when a team shares a common purpose, goals, and approach, mutual accountability grows as a natural counterpart.

“Too often (leadership teams) confuse the broad mission of the total organization with the specific purpose of their small group at the top. For a real team to form, there must be **a team purpose that is distinctive and specific to the small group** and that requires its members to roll up their sleeves and accomplish something beyond individual end products... real teams at the top (are) often smaller and less formalized (– i.e. not just the CEO’s direct reports!) Far too many groups at the top... needlessly constrain themselves from achieving real team levels of performance because they *assume* that all direct reports must be on the team, that team goals must be identical to corporate goals, that the team members’ positions rather than skills determine their respective roles...”

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CLARIFY



ENERGISE



ENCOURAGE

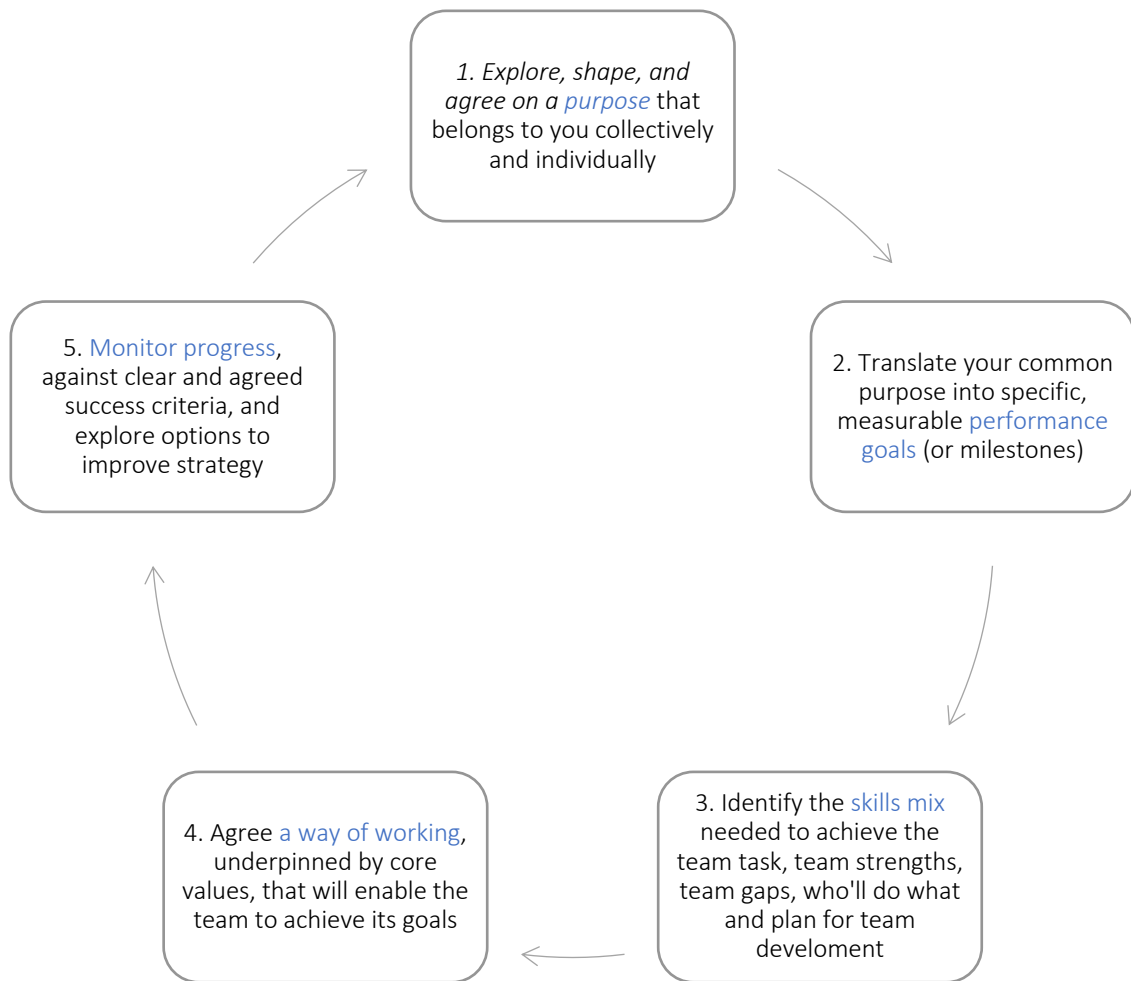


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