7 Keys to a Highly Effective Team

Leader Tool Kit

- Establish Vision
- Establish Mission
- Connect and Communicate
- Build Trust
- Clarify Roles
- Create Norms
- Set Goals

What Successful Leaders Do

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Please complete the below self-assessment. These seven strategies are used by successful leaders to mitigate common mistakes and issues that happen in teams. Use this periodically to assess your leadership.

Ask yourself "**Have I intentionally implemented this strategy with my team?**"

SCALE: Rate yourself on a scale of 1 – 4.
1 = I haven't started applying this strategy with my team.
2 = I've done some work with this strategy, but it's minimal.
3 = I've applied this strategy, but I have room for growth.
4 = I've applied this strategy, and it's working well.

Establish **vision** and **mission** for the team

1	2	3	4

Provide **role** and **expectation clarity**

1	2	3	4

Set **goals** for the team

1	2	3	4

Create **team norms**

1	2	3	4

Facilitate team members **getting to know each other**

1	2	3	4

Encourage **regular communication & communication channels** to support it

1	2	3	4

Build **trust** in the team

1	2	3	4

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Now what?
This guide is just that- a guide to help you begin to establish a successful working relationship as a team. These activities are flexible. They can be used during the formation of your team, as a "reset" to an already established team, at the beginning of the new year, etc. They can be done as a leadership team then refined by the team, together as a team, or in 1:1s.
These keys are critical to the success of any team, **however dysfunction will arise faster when the team is in a virtual environment.** Successful leaders know that there is no one-size fits all approach to leadership, so make this guide work for you!

Your Team's Vision

With your team:
What is the long-term desired goal of this team's work?
Then, begin to brainstorm one sentence visions for your team. Remember, the purpose of a brainstorm is to get as many ideas as possible in a short period of time. Once you have a robust list, begin to edit the list. Your final vision statement should be:

- **Inspirational**

- **Clear**

- **Memorable**

- **Concise**

Our Team Vision Statement:

EXAMPLE VISION STATEMENTS
Nike: "To bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete in the world." (11 words)
Apple: "A computer in the hands of everyday people." (8)
Charles Schwab: "Helping investors help themselves." (4)
Disney: "Make people happy." (3)

Your Team's Mission

Establish a Mission Statement for Your Team

Mission Statement: What you do + who/what you do it for

A one—sentence statement describing the reason your team exists.

Create a Mission Statement for your Team:
Why does your team exist? What is the work you do? Who is it for?
Repeat the Vision Statement brainstorm activity. Your final Mission Statement should be:

• **Clear:** Simple Language

• **Concise:** No fluff. 5-14 words/20 max.

• **Useful:** Inform. Focus. Guide.

Our Team Mission Statement:

EXAMPLE MISSION STATEMENTS
TED: Spreading Ideas. (2 words)
The Humane Society: Celebrating Animals, Confronting Cruelty. (4 words)
Smithsonian: The increase and diffusion of knowledge. (6 words)
Monterey Bay Aquarium: To inspire conservation of the oceans. (6)

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Remember!
Your team vision and mission should directly support the overall organizational vision and mission. This helps ensure strategic alignment.
Far too often vision and mission statements become empty lip service. It is critical that leaders "walk the talk" of the mission statement.

Provide Role & Expectation Clarity

Role Clarity is critical for any employee, especially when functioning in a team environment. When roles are not clearly defined, this can lead to conflict and confusion. Role and expectation confusion can contribute to mediocre performance, frustration, and eventually burnout. Set yourself and your team up for success by creating role and expectation clarity.

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5 essential questions leaders should answer for each person they lead. Put yourself in each team member's "shoes" and ask yourself ...
Q1 - What is my role on the team?
Q2 - What is expected of me?
Q3 - How do I contribute to the overall vision of the team/organization?
Q4 - What does success look like in my role?
Q5 - What is at stake if I fail in my role?

Team Member Name	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5

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Next Steps…
Once you've completed this exercise, have 1:1 with each team member and discuss these questions. This will allow you to understand their current level of understanding and perspective and, together, you can create alignment.
Keep in mind…
As a leader, it is your responsibility to create an effective team structure which includes ensuring understanding of roles and expectations. Continue these conversations as the year progresses to ensure continued alignment.

Create Team Goals

Goal setting is much more than simply saying you want something to happen. Unless you clearly define exactly what you want and understand why you want it the first place, your odds of success are considerably reduced. **The more you can involve your team members in setting goals for themselves and the group, the more committed to those goals they are likely to be.**

- Goals should give your team something to reach for.
- Write down the goals for your team and each of your direct reports.
- Goals must be accepted and recognized as important.
- Goals should align with or support the organization's priorities.
- Revisit the goals on a regular basis.

Team Member Name	Q1	Q2	Q3

Leader Foundation

As a leader it is your responsibility to create goals for yourself and your team, however you should do create goals in isolation. An effective leader:

- Collaboratively sets goals, removes obstacles, and provides timely and constructive feedback to the team and individuals.
- Ensures goals are clear with an identifiable sequence of actions and objective with measurable indicators to evaluate progress.
- Knows that moderately difficult goals are best. If a goal is too hard, high achievers may give up early because they cannot "see a successful path."
- Develops goals that support the organization's priorities and personal development for individuals.
- Revisits goals throughout the year- formally (1:1s) and informally (over coffee).

Develop Team Norms

What is a Norm?
Norms are mutually agreed upon standards of behavior.

Why are team norms important?
The establishment of team norms helps build team discipline and trust between team members. Leaders should reward and recognize behaviors that align with the team's norms.

Norms, if managed well, can help leaders develop the culture they want to create for the team.

During a regular team meeting, prepare for the following discussion. Prior to the meeting, give team members advance notice that you will be discussing "team norms" and ask them to begin thinking about the best and worst teams they have served on.

Step 1. Prompt your team to think about the the *worst* team they have served on. Ask them to write down what made that experience so terrible. Direct them to be as specific as possible about their reasons.

Then, ask team member to share their experience with the team..

Step 2. Then, ask team members to think of the **best team** experience they have had. Have the write down what made that experience so good. Allow each team member to share their experience with the team.

Step 3. With these comments in mind, discuss as a group what makes for a **good** team experience and what makes for a **bad** one.

Step 4. Ask team members to suggest behaviors that would make serving on the team a positive experience and contribute to the team's success. Pay attention to the most relevant issues or actions that could affect the team's biggest challenges.

Keep track of suggestions on a whiteboard/large post-it note so all team members can view.

Step 5. As a team, discuss the suggestions and decide which ones the team agree it will adopt. Your list should include behaviors and actions that address communication, team meetings, responsiveness, decision making and work processes.

As part of this step, flag any concerns or challenges that the team thinks they may struggle with. When flagging this as a challenge, a team can be direct (and possibly be more creative) about how its members communicate, accomplish the work, make decisions and move forward.

Remember, all team members should adhere and support the team norms so candor is critical during this step.

Step 6. Transfer the team's list of "must-do" behaviors into a document so all team members have access to it. Your team may choose to post the list on a team website for quick reference.

Also discuss how to respond to a team member who doesn't follow the norms. What is the mechanism for dealing with this situation? Ideally, the team members will take ownership of team norms, calling out inconsistencies and violations rather than expecting the team leader to police the process.

Areas to consider when forming norms:
- **Communication** – Address individual behaviors like respect, when to email vs. call vs. meet in person, remote and virtual communication, etc.
- **Decision Making** – Address how decisions are made and how you know when a decision has been made.
- **Work Processes** – Address how work gets done and how to manage work when someone is out of the office.

Leader Foundation
It is never too late to establish norms, the key is buy-in and accountability. Corporate culture can propel an organization to meet it's strategic goals and objectives. Leaders communicate culture by their daily actions and the behaviors they reward and criticize. Norms help leaders do this.

Team Norms are:
- Limited in number – simplicity is key
- Important to the team
- Supported by each team member
- Respectfully reminded to members when they are broken

Connect and Communicate

You can't simply call a group of co-workers a team and expect them to operate and function as a unified team. As a leader, you must help them discover shared interests and build relationships. Here a few ideas to get you started! **Which ones will you try? What other ideas do you have?**

UNDERSTAND WORK STYLES:
5 Questions to Ask to Understand Yourself and Your Team

Understanding workstyles can help form meaningful and impactful norms. As new members join the team and new projects begin it can be useful to revisit this discussion.

1. **What are some misperceptions people have had about you in the past?** Perhaps they haven't said it to you directly, but a friend or family member has jokingly commented about it.
2. **What do you care most about in terms of how work is done?** For instance, think about how you like materials to be prepared for a broad audience.
3. **What are some ways that you tend to communicate?** Some people tend to be direct, but others take a more indirect approach. Consider where you fall on the spectrum.
4. **What are your hot button issues?** Maybe you want to know ahead of time if someone is about to miss a deadline, or you don't like people interrupting you in a meeting.
5. **What are some quirks about you?** For example, one direct report has expressed that he isn't a morning person so asked people to defer critical meetings till after 10 am.

ENCOURAGE MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE:
5 Questions to Ask Yourself and Your Team Regularly

1. (understanding) **Wait, what?** Ask for clarification before drawing conclusions or making a decision.
2. (curiosity) **I wonder why or I wonder if.** Remain curious about the world or how I might improve the world.
3. (progress) **Couldn't we at least?** Enable you to get unstuck or a way to get started.
4. (good relationships) **How can I help?** Avoid the "hero/savior complex". The instinct to lend a hand.
5. (the heart of life) **What truly matters (to me)?** Forces you to get to the heart of issues.

MAXIMIZE COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

When used well, technology can help increase communication and collaboration.
Is your team leveraging technology effectively? Does everyone know how to use the tools you use? Tools that are approved by our Cybersecurity office include:

- Collaboration Tools: Microsoft TEAMS
- File Sharing: Microsoft TEAMS, OneDrive, Sharepoint
- Organization: Planner, Project, To-Do List (all available on Office365)
- Survey Tools: Microsoft FORMS, Qualtrics, SurveyMonkey, GetFeedback
- Virtual Meetings: Microsoft TEAMS, BlueJeans, WebEx

Leader Foundation
Effective strategies to encourage communication and connection include:
- Encourage meaningful dialogue (move beyond "how's the weather?)
- Understand workstyles
- Create a culture of candor
- Create an inclusive team environment (which requires trust!)
- Use technology effectively

Building Trust

<u>**Leverage "swift trust."**</u> There are two ways to assure you take best advantage of the benefits of swift trust. Managers should 1) tout the competence of the different team members and 2) ensure that the team has clear goals that everyone understands. Over time, swift trust tends to decay, but it can help hold a team together until another type of more lasting and tested bonding has a chance to develop: interpersonal trust.

<u>**Pro-actively build interpersonal trust.**</u> One theory is that we tend to trust others who we perceive to be similar to us because we believe that those individuals will react to various situations in ways that we can understand (and even predict). Managers can help encourage such personal connections.

<u>**Communicate with predictability.**</u> The key to good communications is not quantity but quality. Think about how you might not have seen a good friend for years but then when you reconnect you're able to pick up where you left off with a truly deep conversation about your life. Smart managers recognize that, especially if they've had problems in the past with employees being overwhelmed by an information overload of countless e-mails and frequent meetings. But what might be surprising is that something other than quality is also crucial: predictability.

Strategies that help build trust

1. **Communicate with predictability.** The key to good communications is not quantity but quality. But what might be surprising is that something other than quality is also crucial: predictability.

2. **Lead by example.** Show your team you trust others: your team, your colleagues, your boss, Georgia Tech, the USG. Do what you say, when you say it.

3. **Communicate openly**. Create an environment that promotes and supports candor– the ability to challenge directly while showing you care personally.

4. **Get to know one another personally.** Create situations that help your team get to know one another on a personal level: values, priorities, hobbies, work history, etc.

5. **Productive conflict**. Mistakes happen. Instead of shying away from conflict, which lowers morale and undermines trust, encourage the group to think about mistakes and conflict in a constructive way. How can we learn from this situation to move forward together?

6. **Discourage cliques**. People naturally gravitate towards others who share common interests or work tasks. That's okay, but sometimes these work groups can make others feel isolated and undermine trust.

Questions to ask yourself:
When you have important or relevant information (that is not confidential) are you sharing it immediately?
How are you sharing the information?
What do you currently do that inspires trust?
What do you do that may undermine trust?
Are you role modeling the behaviors you expect your team to display?

Resources

Mission & Vision
- Article: *Google Trains its Managers to Create a Team Vision with this Framework. You can use it, too*. From Inc. Magazine.
- Ensure your team's mission and vision are aligned to Georgia Tech's vision, mission, and strategy with the Pyramid of Purpose
- re:Work's Guide to set and communicate a team vision

Roles & Goals
- Clarifying roles and setting goals is an iterative process- especially during times of uncertainty and change. Visit GTHR Forms and Guides page for additional resources for goals and performance reviews.
- Steer clear of these 8 Goal Setting Mistakes
- Article: *The hidden risk of unrealistic expectations in the workplace*
- Article: *The biggest mistake you (probably) make with teams*

Team Norms
- Article: *How and Why to Create Team Norms: Adopting Guidelines for Team Member Relationships*
- Feeling stuck? Follow these *10 Steps for Establishing Team Norms*
- Article: *How to Create Executive Team Norms – and Make Them Stick*

Connect & Communicate
- For more on workplace communication and workstyles, visit GTHR Workplace Learning & Professional Development page and view the course catalog for upcoming classes.
- Article: *How to Communicate with Your Team More Effectively*
- Article: *A Lack of Workplace Connection is Costing You*
- Article: *Making Virtual Teams Work: Ten Basic Principles*
- Article: *Working in a Virtual Team: Using Technology to Communicate and Collaborate*

Build Trust
- Article: *Proven Ways to Earn Your Employees' Trust*
- Article & Infographic: *10 Proven Ways Good Leaders Build Trust With Their Employees*
- Article: *Building Trust Inside Your Team: Ways to Improve Team Cohesion*

Continue the journey…
- Visit GTHR's Manager Resources Page for resources on managing employee transitions, managing talent, and HR Topics for Managers.
- Visit GTHR's Workplace Learning & Professional Development page to learn about MentorTech Partnerships, Professional Development Circles, our Interruptions podcast series, the New Employee Experience, and view the campus learning directory.
- Take on-demand leadership and management classes via LinkedIn Learning