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HIGH PERFORMANCE TEAMS

When teams work best.

A human-centered leadership approach to building teams that think, decide and deliver together. Michael Lane Morris, PhD

Photo by @mitchellg on Unsplash

Notes

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DEFINING HUMAN-CENTERED LEADERSHIP

The process of inspiring and mobilizing people to co-creatively tackle tough challenges and do things that matter.

Michael Lane Morris and Jules Morris

Photo by @hizzzenkash on Unsplash

Notes

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THE CREATIVE ALLIANCES SYSTEM

High performance teams are collaborative partnerships.

BONDS
How we feel together



TASKS & TOOLS
What we do together



GOALS
What we achieve



Creative Alliances System™ © 2026 BombDiggity, LLC.

Text version of this diagram

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HUMAN-CENTERED LEADERSHIP'S PRIMARY AIM

Flourishing people and teams drive flourishing organizations.

Fully functional people, working in fully functional teams, build fully functional organizations.

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COLLABORATION: A KEY MINDSET OF HUMAN-CENTERED LEADERSHIP

All of us are smarter than any single one of us.

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A TEAM IS...

More than a group of people.

- A small number of people**
With complementary skill sets.
- A common purpose**
And clearly defined goals and performance objectives.
- Productive norms**
A shared working approach.
- Shared accountability**
Committed to accomplishing something together.

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TEAMS DEVELOP IN STAGES

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Every team goes through the storm.

Forming	Storming	Norming	Performing	Adjourning
Polite, unsure	Conflict over roles	Agree how we work	Trust and flow	Wrap up, let go

Bruce Tuckman (1965); adjourning added by Tuckman and Jensen (1977).

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REASONS TEAMS FAIL

Why good people end up on bad teams.

- Evaluation and reward systems**
Rewarding individuals while asking for teamwork.
- Hostile attitudes**
Distrust and conflict nobody addresses.
- Insufficient training**
Not enough training and development.
- Talent vs. task**
Members' capabilities do not match what the task requires.
- Technical challenges**
Problems with known answers that still get mishandled.
- Adaptive challenges**
Problems that require people to learn and change, treated as if they were technical.

Notes

CHARACTERISTICS OF GREAT TEAMS

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What the best teams have in common.

- Clear, elevating goals**
Everyone knows what matters and why.
- Results-driven structure**
Roles and processes built for the outcome.
- Competent members**
The right skills and the right attitudes.
- Unified commitment**
Team first.
- Collaborative climate**
Trust and open communication.
- Standards of excellence**
High expectations, held together.
- External support and recognition**
The organization backs the team.
- Principled leadership**
Leaders who unlock the team's talent.

Larson and LaFasto, Teamwork: What Must Go Right, What Can Go Wrong (1989).

Notes

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EXAMPLES OF HIGH PERFORMANCE TEAM MODELS

Five models, one question: what makes teams work?

01 Korn Ferry T7
Five internal and two external factors.

02 GRPR
Goals, roles, processes and relationships.

03 Team Basics
Katzenbach and Smith's triangle.

04 Conditions of effectiveness
Hackman's five conditions.

05 Five Dysfunctions
Lencioni's pyramid of trust.

Notes

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THE T7 MODEL OF TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

Seven factors, inside and out.



FIVE INSIDE THE TEAM

Thrust	Common purpose
Trust	In each other
Talent	Collective skills
Teaming	Work efficiently
Task skills	Get it done

TWO AROUND IT

- Team leader fit**
- Support from the organization**

Michael Lombardo and Robert Eichinger (1995), now part of Korn Ferry.

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THE GOALS, ROLES, PROCESSES AND RELATIONSHIPS MODEL

Start at the top of the pyramid.



Goals	Where are we going, and why?
Roles	Who does what?
Processes	How do we work and decide?
Relationships	How do we treat each other?

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THE TEAM BASICS MODEL

Real teams deliver three things.

PERFORMANCE RESULTS

Skills

Accountability

Small number of people

Specific goals · Common approach · Meaningful purpose

Commitment

COLLECTIVE WORK PRODUCTS

PERSONAL GROWTH

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CONDITIONS OF TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

Leaders design the conditions.

1 **A real team**
Clear boundaries, stable membership

2 **A compelling direction**
Challenging, clear, consequential

3 **An enabling structure**
Right size, mix, tasks and norms

4 **A supportive context**
Rewards, information, training

5 **Expert coaching**
At launch, midpoint and end

TEAM EFFECTIVENESS
Output that satisfies the people who get it
A team that grows more capable
Members who learn

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THE FIVE DYSFUNCTIONS OF A TEAM

It all starts with trust.

Inattention to results
Status and ego come first

Avoidance of accountability
Low standards go unchallenged

Lack of commitment
Half-hearted buy-in

Fear of conflict
Artificial harmony

Absence of trust
The foundation everything stands on

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PROJECT ARISTOTLE (GOOGLE)

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What makes a Google team effective?

2
years

180
Google teams

200+
interviews

250+
attributes

Impact	Does the work matter?
Meaning	Is it personally important?
Structure and clarity	Are goals and roles clear?
Dependability	Can we count on each other?
Psychological safety	Can we take risks without fear?

Source: Google re/Work: [Understand team effectiveness](#)

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Text version of this diagram

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PROJECT ARISTOTLE: THE PIECES THAT DID NOT MATTER

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Who is on the team matters less than **how** they work together.

Co-location **Consensus** *Extroversion*
Individual performance **Workload size**
Team size *Tenure*

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WHAT IS TEAMING?

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Teaming is a way of working.

"Teaming is a way of working that combines how we relate to one another, how we listen, and what we are listening for, the coordination of our actions, and how we share decision-making." Amy Edmondson

Not a fixed team

A dynamic process of working together in a flexible team to solve problems and find opportunities.

When structures shift

Used where stable teams are not possible: hospitals, power plants, military installations.

Any industry

An important skill for organizational effectiveness anywhere.

Amy C. Edmondson, Teaming (2012), p. 15.



Notes



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TEAMING IN ACTION

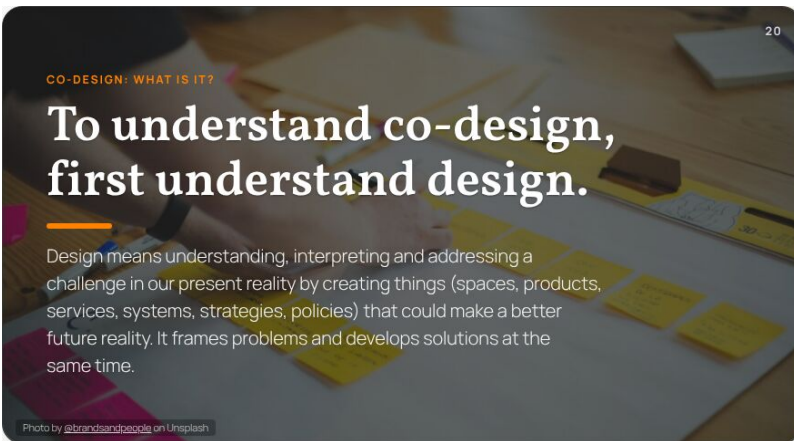
Strangers who must perform together, now.

In an operating room, people who may never have worked together have minutes to coordinate. Teaming is the skill that makes that possible.

- Speak up**
Ask, share and raise concerns early.
- Coordinate**
Make actions visible and hand off cleanly.
- Reflect**
Learn quickly from what just happened.

Photo by [@jacob on Unsplash](#)

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CO-DESIGN: WHAT IS IT?

To understand co-design, first understand design.

Design means understanding, interpreting and addressing a challenge in our present reality by creating things (spaces, products, services, systems, strategies, policies) that could make a better future reality. It frames problems and develops solutions at the same time.

Photo by [@brandisandjacob on Unsplash](#)

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CO-DESIGN: WHAT IS IT?

The "co-" is the point.

The prefix signals the collaborative, cooperative, collective or connective nature of the work.

- Together**
People come together to create things that respond to shared concerns and build a better future.
- Because of differences**
They come despite, or because of, different agendas, needs, knowledge and skills.
- Not only designers**
Participants may not be trained designers at all.
- Users as experts**
It engages the expertise of the people who use the products and services.

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WHEN TEAMS WORK BEST, FRANK LAFASTO AND CARL LARSON

“People with different views and perspectives coming together, putting aside their narrow self-interests, and discussing issues openly and supportively in an attempt to solve a larger problem or achieve a broader goal.”

LaFasto and Larson's definition of collaboration, from the prologue.

Photo by @silverblack on Unsplash

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THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE BOOK

**6,000 team members.
600 teams.**

- Increased collaboration**
Work is more collaborative than ever.
- Complexity**
Problems are too complex for any one person.
- Changes in social behavior**
How people work together keeps shifting.
- Mixed effectiveness**
Teams do not automatically work.
- Good for people**
Effective teams are good for people and good for the bottom line.

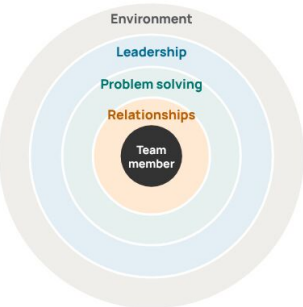
Photo by @silverblack on Unsplash

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THE FIVE DYNAMICS MODEL

Five dynamics, from the person to the organization.



- 1 The team member**
Knowledge and teamwork qualities
- 2 Team relationships**
Giving and receiving feedback
- 3 Team problem solving**
Focus, climate, communication
- 4 The team leader**
Six dimensions
- 5 The organization**
Practices, structure, systems

Text version of this diagram

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CHAPTER 1: WHAT MAKES A GOOD TEAM MEMBER?

Two things to look for.

Working knowledge

- Experience
- Problem-solving ability
- Core competencies for the work

VS

Teamwork qualities

- Openness
- Supportiveness
- Action orientation
- A positive personal style

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CHAPTER 2: TEAM RELATIONSHIPS

Feedback is the constant challenge.

Consistent challenges

Giving feedback, and receiving it.

Effective teams

Come together, identify opportunities, share information, solve problems and build collaborative capacity.



Photo by g3bzzerkash on Unsplash

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THE CONNECT PROCESS MODEL

Seven steps to repair a working relationship.

C

Commit

Commit to the relationship.

O

Optimize safety

Make it safe to talk.

N

Narrow

Narrow the discussion to one issue.

N

Neutralize

Neutralize defensiveness.

E

Explain and echo

Explain and echo each perspective.

C

Change

Change one behavior each.

T

Track it

Follow up and track it.

Lafollet and Larson, When Teams Work Best, p. 59

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CHAPTER 3: TEAM PROBLEM SOLVING

Three factors drive effective problem solving.

And the problem-solving dynamic: What is the goal? What energies, mental, physical and spiritual, will it take? What drains them?

01 Focus

Focused efforts toward the goal.

02 A productive climate

Where people can think out loud.

03 Productive communication

Clear, open and honest.

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FIVE STEPS TO EFFECTIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

Solve the right problem, together.

1 Identify the problem

Get the problem right first.

2 Set up collaboration

Create a collaborative setting.

3 Analyze the issues

Identify and analyze the issues.

4 Generate options

Identify possible solutions and alternatives.

5 Resolve the single question

Among the possible solutions, which is most desirable?

LaFasto and Larson, When Teams Work Best, p. 85.

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CHAPTER 4: THE TEAM LEADER

Six dimensions of collaborative leadership.

1. Focus on the goal

2. Ensure a collaborative climate

3. Build confidence

4. Demonstrate sufficient technical know-how

5. Set priorities

6. Manage performance

Photo by @alwardback on Unsplash

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THE TEAM LEADER, DIMENSIONS 1 TO 3

Keep the goal alive and the climate safe.

Focus on the goal

Define it in an elevating way. Keep politics out. Give everyone a clear line of sight to it. Keep it alive.

Ensure a collaborative climate

Make communication safe. Expect and reward collaboration. Guide problem-solving. Manage your own ego and need for control.

Build confidence

Get results. Make the team smarter. Show trust and delegate. Be fair and impartial. Accentuate the positive. Say thank you.

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THE TEAM LEADER, DIMENSIONS 4 TO 6

Know your stuff, set priorities, expect results.

01 Demonstrate know-how

Know your stuff, and ask for help when you need it.

02 Set priorities

Decide what must happen and what must not. Adjust priorities as things change.

03 Manage performance

Expect results and be clear. Monitor and review results together.

The Collaborative Team Leader survey appears in *When Teams Work Best*, pp. 151-154.

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CHAPTER 5: THE ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The system shapes the team.

Management practices

Clear direction and priorities. Balance resources and demands. Transparency.

Structure and processes

Foster effective decision-making. Keep people connected. Align communication.

Systems

Reliable information, standards of excellence and relevant rewards.

Photo by [jannethgrace](#) on Unsplash

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THE MARSHMALLOW CHALLENGE

Build the tallest tower you can.

In 18 minutes, teams of four to five build the tallest free-standing structure they can. The marshmallow must sit on top.

- 20 sticks of spaghetti
- 1 yard of tape
- 1 yard of string
- 1 marshmallow

Photo by @benryleandjessica on Unsplash

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BUILD A TOWER, BUILD A TEAM

What the Marshmallow Challenge teaches about teams.

Tom Wujec's TED talk shares what thousands of teams revealed: why kindergartners often beat business school students, and why prototyping beats planning.

[Watch on TED](#)

Notes
