

THE 13 BUILDING BLOCKS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE TEAMS¹

Teamwork is all about individuals working together to accomplish more than they could alone, in an enjoyable and satisfying environment. There are a number of characteristics or 'building blocks' that can be identified in effective teams. They include:

1. Clear purpose and agreed goals
2. Clearly balanced roles
3. An ability to be open in communication and to manage confrontation
4. A capacity to provide support and build trust
5. A willingness to work cooperatively and resolve conflict
6. Use of sound procedures for gathering, discussing and acting on information
7. Appropriate leadership
8. Opportunity to regularly review the team's effectiveness
9. Space for individual development
10. Reliable or 'sound' relationships both within the group and with external stakeholders
11. Good communications
12. Strong cohesion and team stewardship
13. Time taken for creativity, innovation and celebration.

¹ Reference: Team Development Manual; Mike Woodcock, 1989

1. CLEAR PURPOSE AND AGREED GOALS

This building block describes how clearly the team understands its purpose and whether there are clear and agreed goals in place.

A clear purpose and agreed goals are an essential prerequisite of the effective team, providing a clear reason for why the team exists and what they want to achieve. The team that looks ahead foresees difficulties and seizes opportunities.

A team with an effective purpose and team goals is a team in which:

- Everyone knows why the team exists, its purpose
- Everyone is clear on where they are going, what is expected, what the priorities are and the progress they are making.
- Decisions are not forced upon members and are democratically agreed.
- Adequate time is allocated for planning and this is done as a team.
- There is understanding about what other teams are also aiming for and is willing for all to pull together in the same direction.
- There is the right emphasis on results.

This would typically translate into a team that has fewer demands on management, fewer conflicts, greater creativity and initiative, less need for punishments and more effective use of time and energy.

In a team which has no clear view of its purpose, (its reason for being) and what it wants to achieve. Individuals cannot contribute in any optimum way towards its success. There could also be a perceived gap between the team objectives and personal objectives. People may feel decisions are forced on them.

Questions to consider:

1. Is there a clear understanding of the purpose, values and strategic objectives of the organisation within the team?
2. Do we have a team purpose; are we clear on why we exist?
3. Do we have clear and well-understood team goals?
4. Are our team goals aligned with the organisational purpose, values and strategic objectives?
5. Do individuals have a clear sense of their personal key performance areas and how they link to the above?
6. Does the team feel that objectives are imposed or that they have had a stake in evolving them?
7. Have our team goals been effectively deployed throughout the organisation?
8. Do we understand the goals of other organisational teams?
9. How could planning for the team be improved?

Some of the main barriers to achieving agreed goals:

- Performance judged on inputs rather than outputs. Focus on results, and try to avoid phrases like 'to report', 'to administer' or 'to coordinate'.
- Managers and direct reports don't share a clear understanding of what is expected ... can lead to different standards being expected from each side.
- The 'why' of the goals is not well-understood. Asking the question 'why' to every goal will ensure the how will fall into place.
- Some of the goals might be considered meaningless work and needs to be explored to ensure the 'why' is clearly understood.

Some ideas about setting clear and agreed goals:

- Must be democratically conceived.
- Individuals are involved in determining their own area of responsibility and targets.
- Emphasis on results achieved, rather than 'things to do'.
- SMARTA – Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic, Timebound and Aligned.
- Review regularly – the environment changes and you must respond accordingly.
- Deal with single issues – don't mix up unrelated elements.

2. BALANCED ROLES

This building block describes how well the roles within a team are covered and to what extent the team has an optimum balance of skills and abilities.

One of the great strengths of the effective team lies in the blend of different talents and abilities of its members. Achieving this requires considered composition of the team's membership. This is often related to the styles or modes people operate in, rather than a particular expertise they may have.

Remember that each of the roles is NOT an individual member. Some individuals may act almost exclusively in one of the roles, others may represent a blend of roles, and many members will take on several. Ideally, team members are able to adopt different roles in different situations.

A team that has the optimum balance of skills and abilities and is operating with a balance of roles covering:

LEADER

Not always the same person – may be different leaders for different situations and in different stages of team development. Seen as the one who identifies strengths and weaknesses, determines contribution, leads the setting of objectives and monitoring of performance. The main role of the leader is to get the best out of everyone and to review the different needs of the team at different stages of its development and for differing tasks.

SUPPORTER

Makes people feel at ease and builds morale. Wants people to work in the right conditions to give their best. Takes a lead in resolving conflict and is someone others feel they can turn to for advice.

CHALLENGER

Usually adopts an unconventional approach, and will look afresh at what the team is doing. Will challenge the accepted order, and can be accused of rocking the boat. Without a

challenger, the team may become complacent without this stimulus to review itself radically.

EXPERT

This role is about providing expert opinion and a professional viewpoint. May make little other contribution, and is therefore sometimes a part-time member – but necessary to provide the team with the required expertise.

AMBASSADOR

This role in the team is about ‘going abroad’ and building external relationships with other teams. This is the team’s public relations function – a bridge builder who makes connections and knows the right people.

REVIEWER

Through insightful observations and constantly reviewing the past, this role focusses on helping the team to perform better in the future. The hallmark of highly successful teams is the presence of internal review, the ability to give feedback to the team and to act as a mirror enabling the team to see itself. The person playing this role will look out for the potential pitfalls.

JUDGE

Listens, questions and ponders before making a decision. May stay out of the argument and doesn’t advocate for one view or another. This role is most concerned that all sides be properly considered and will not be rushed. Good at stopping others being carried away with their own enthusiasm, seeking out the truth and seeing that justice is done.

INNOVATOR

Uses imagination to the full. Ideas person, always suggesting new ways to do things. The role of innovator ensures that new ideas are evaluated, nurtured and developed. Builds on others’ ideas, visualising opportunities and transforming ideas into practical strategies. Capacity to grapple with complex problems and provides new approaches with vision and ingenuity.

DIPLOMAT

This role is about finding the diplomatic solution, utilising high order influencing skills and good negotiation skills. Plays a large part in steering the team towards successful

outcomes. Builds alliances within and outside the team, trying to ensure that solutions are acceptable to all. Can be accused of 'papering over the cracks' in an effort to compromise and going for the possible, rather than the ideal situation. In difficult times, the diplomat finds a way through the minefield.

CONFORMER

Adapts a conservative, cooperative stance – always ready to help out and fill in gaps. This role helps others feel at ease. Often has broad experience and is able to do many jobs in many areas. Invaluable as a fixer, but will seldom challenge or rock the boat.

OUTPUT PUSHER

This is the role of results orientation. The persistent drive to achieve tangible results and a focus on timelines and milestones.

QUALITY CONTROLLER

"If a job is worth doing it is worth doing well". The inspiration for the team to strive for higher standards and ensure quality is maintained, looking for quality of relationships, task and process.

If there are a number of roles not currently being covered, this will impact on day-to-day team functioning. The impact this has on the team will be dependent on which role(s) are not being currently covered.

Questions to ask:

1. What roles do members of the team most commonly take?
2. Are people inclined to favour a role with which they are most familiar?
3. Do we value the contribution each role can have towards an effective team?
4. What roles do the team overlook?
5. What are the implications for the team?
6. What would the team need to do to get better balance in the roles?
7. Is it easy/hard to develop greater flexibility around roles? Will it require a period of learning?
8. Would the team and/or organisation have a better business if the roles were more diverse?

TEAM ROLES SUMMARY

<p>Leader</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assesses team needs ▪ Leads objective setting ▪ Monitors performance ▪ Gets the best out of everyone 	<p>Supporter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supports and encourages ▪ Builds morale ▪ Resolves conflict ▪ Gives advice 	<p>Challenger</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Challenges the accepted order ▪ Challenges complacency ▪ Promotes radical review
<p>Expert</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expert opinion ▪ Professional viewpoint ▪ May be a part-time member 	<p>Ambassador</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Builds external relationships with other teams ▪ Team public relations 	<p>Reviewer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Observes and reviews the team ▪ Mirrors the team and provides feedback ▪ Identifies potential pitfalls
<p>Judge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Listens ▪ Questions ▪ Ponders ▪ All sides considered ▪ Won't be rushed 	<p>Innovator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Imaginative ▪ Ideas and new ways ▪ Visualises opportunities ▪ Transforms ideas into practical strategies 	<p>Diplomat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Finds diplomatic solutions ▪ Strong influencing and negotiation ▪ Builds alliances within and outside of the team
<p>Conformer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cooperative ▪ Conservative ▪ Helps out ▪ Fills the gaps 	<p>Output Pusher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Results orientation ▪ Timelines ▪ Milestones 	<p>Quality Controller</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strive for higher standards ▪ Ensure quality is maintained

3. OPENNESS AND CONFRONTATION

This building block describes the level of openness and confrontation within the team and whether members are able to state their views, air their differences of opinion, raise interests and problems, confront their issues and all in an environment without fear of retaliation or ridicule.

A team with effective openness and confrontation is a team in which:

- Problems and issues are confronted rather than avoided.
- Delicate or unpleasant issues are not avoided but are confronted honestly and squarely.
- People are encouraged to speak out.
- People say what they really think and feel able to stand their ground.
- People hear the truth rather than what they want to hear.

The team is not working effectively when the atmosphere is one of 'back stabbing' and being 'cut throat'. Where members are less willing or able to express themselves openly, much energy, effort and creativity is lost. Where there is negative conflict, which relies on rumour and opinion, not on fact, that is hostile and has an intention to wound. Openness can be inhibited by a lack of honesty, genuine concern, interest in others and where only part of the truth is shared.

Effective communication comes when people share their experience, views and feelings.

A key part of openness and confrontation is how we give and receive feedback.

Feedback is generally most helpful when it:

- Takes into account the needs of the receiver.
- Describes events, rather than evaluates them.
- Concentrates on things the receiver can do something about.
- Is specific.
- Is given as soon after the event as possible.
- Is checked to see that the feedback is understood.

Openness and confrontation will improve in a team when team members begin to know themselves and others better, and when they build relationships within the team where true strengths and weaknesses are recognised and acknowledged to others so that help can be offered and obtained. Requesting and receiving help increases mutual understanding and respect among team members and fosters genuine openness.

Properly managed conflict creates greater understanding among members of a team. Openness and trust will develop when a team uses conflict positively, deals in facts and encourages dialogue until sound understanding is achieved.

Openness will also be increased through:

- Active listening; this includes more than just hearing.
- Forgetting our personal feelings when listening to others' views.
- Not evaluating what we hear as we hear it.
- Not looking around, or being distracted.
- Hearing everything – not just what we want to hear.
- Putting to the back of our minds what we want to say in response or defence.

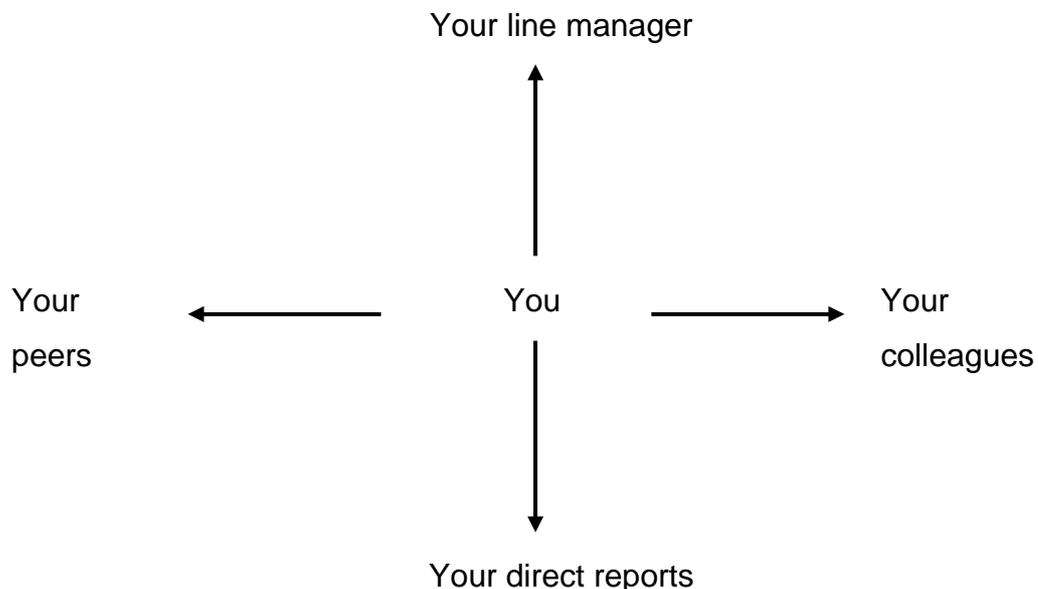
4. SUPPORT AND TRUST

This building block describes how effectively the team supports and develops trust among its members; how 'safe' the environment is and how strengthened the team feels by the assistance provided to each other.

In a team where there is support and trust:

- People work together when the going gets tough.
- People are willing to admit their mistakes.
- People support each other and where there is no backstabbing or recriminations.
- Trust is high.
- There are not defined territories.
- People are developed and allowed to stand on their own two feet.
- There is a sense of belonging.
- There is time spent discussing fundamental values and the supportive behaviours to help the team to work together.

Support and trust is best achieved when team members feel they don't have to protect their territory or function, when they can talk freely about their fears and problems, and when they are offered support NOT sympathy. People can only provide support and trust if they feel people are frank and open. Support and trust needs to be in four directions:



Poor support and trust can translate into poor team operations and a breakdown in team functioning. It is an area that is clearly led from the top and the leader plays a critical role in establishing the environment where people feel supported and where trust is developed.

The leader is the role model from which others will take their lead. The leader can demonstrate support by:

- Listening
- Praising
- Appreciating
- Encouraging, and
- Dealing with issues people perceive as being real and important.

Support and trust in the team can be improved by:

- **Honest dealings**
 - Not going behind people's backs or talking with 'forked tongues'.
- **Pragmatism**
 - Being specific and practical with the team issues, with an attitude of 'the possible' – finding ways of making things happen in spite of difficulties, and not opting for the general 'motherhood' type solutions.
- **Predictability**
 - Changeable and incompetent leaders are hard to trust.
 - People feel more comfortable with order and predictability.
- **Loyalty**
 - The leader who supports their followers through thick and thin will earn trust. Keep recriminations internal – defend the team publicly come what may. (This is for all team members not just the leader.)

5. COOPERATION AND CONFLICT

This building block describes the level of cooperation within the team; how well they work together and how effectively the team manages conflict to achieve long-term sustainable solutions.

In a team where there is cooperation and effective conflict management:

- Conflict is considered to be constructive and underlying issues are not left to fester.
- People are listened to.
- There are seldom fights but acknowledged and explained differences.
- People share and work together in an environment of trust and affiliation.

A team that has a cooperative atmosphere has members who are more ready to be involved and committed, to readily share information, and to listen to the ideas of others and build on them. People find more ways of being helpful to each other and the team. Cooperation encourages high morale, individuals accept each other's strengths and weaknesses and work together to create a balanced, broad portfolio of skills and abilities, fully utilising all available wisdom and knowledge. Problems are shared and everyone pitches in to get them solved.

Where true cooperation exists, conflict is seen as constructive, debate is encouraged and welcomed and seen as essential to get all options and views considered and to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Cooperation requires:

- People to put the team's objectives before their own.
- People to share the rewards for the team's efforts.
- Individuals who are committed and willing to be involved in the work they do.
- People who trust each other's ability.
- Information that is shared, not hidden.
- All abilities, knowledge and experiences utilised.
- Working through conflict to help achieve objectives.
- Understanding that conflict is an inevitable and integral part of change.

Conflict is so often seen as the opposite of cooperation. Of course, constant disagreement will make it difficult for the team to achieve and progress, but a certain amount of conflict will prevent a team from becoming complacent and lazy, and is often the source of new ideas. This has been described as 'creative abrasion' and is a key ingredient of the creative group process.

In a team where underlying conflict is not resolved or there is destructive conflict operating, could be manifesting itself in many undesirable behaviours. People could be potentially feeling frustrated, hurt, alone, unsupported, unheard and angry. Without trust and openness (Building Blocks 3 and 4), cooperation cannot occur. Without cooperation, there is no real teamwork.

Destructive conflict usually arises when:

- Individuals defend their image.
- Individuals feel threatened.
- It is ego driven.
- Personality differences / preferences are not well understood.
- People are judged and not listened to.
- When people *react* to what they've heard.

Constructive conflict usually arises when:

- It has a win / win problem solving focus.
- Individuals listen, clarify understanding and choose their responses based on what was meant and not what was heard.
- People are open and candid with each other.

Resolving unhelpful conflict means:

- Exploring what is causing the trouble between individuals or groups.
- Bringing the parties together to analyse and discuss the issues.
- Clarifying expectations and roles.
- Using constructive criticism and feedback.
- Learning how and when third parties can be helpful.
- Getting common agreement – both sides committed about future actions.

Collaborative Problem Solving

When seeking an elegant solution, there are basically three kinds of conflict:

1. Conflict of emotions: The emotional components include anger, distrust, defensiveness, scorn, resentment, fear and rejection.
2. Values conflict: This is based on an individual's own value system being misaligned with the environment.
3. Conflict of needs: This can be a disagreement over policies and practices, differing perceptions or differing conceptions of roles.

Each may play a role in the overall concern and each can be dealt with; however, it is usually a sound strategy to deal with the emotional aspects of conflict first. There is rarely any 'solution' to values conflict; however, approaching this from the view to better understanding the other person and helping them to develop more tolerance for both positions can have a very positive outcome.

When resolving a conflict of needs there are four possible outcomes.

	I Lose	I Win
You lose	1. Lose/Lose	2. Win/Lose
You win	3. Lose/Win	4. Win/Win

1. I Lose – You Lose

This can be the result of unresolved conflict where no agreement is reached or from compromise (mini lose/mini lose). In both situations neither party fulfils their needs. In compromise, each party settles for something less than its full needs, and even though maybe not immediately evident, leads to a 'slow death of the relationship'.

2. Domination – I win, you lose

This is when one imposes one's own solution onto the other person. The person who dominates the decision-making comes up with a solution designed to meet their own needs. This builds resentment into the relationship flowing towards the person imposing the solution.

3. Capitulation – I lose, you win

This is where one gives in to another person's needs, forsaking their own. When one habitually capitulates to another person, there is a flow of resentment that builds. Denial and avoidance also fall into this area, with a person's own needs not acknowledged and hence unlikely to be met.

4. Collaborative Problem Solving – I win, you win

In collaborative problem solving, people understand they have conflicting needs and they join together to find a solution acceptable to both. No one loses, no one gives up or gives in, and both parties benefit. It's about being partners in agreeing on a solution, not opponents in a competition.

There are seven steps to collaborative problem solving:

1. Define the problem in terms of needs, not solutions.
2. Address the short-term need.
3. Brainstorm possible solutions.
4. Select the solutions that will meet both parties' long-term needs and check possible consequences.
5. Plan who will do what, where and by when.
6. Implement the plan.
7. Evaluate the process and solution and agree on the benefits.

Step 1:**Define the problem in terms of needs, not solutions.**

This is an accurate statement of the problem in terms of needs. If defined in terms of solutions, a win/win outcome has been eliminated. Either choice of solution results in one who wins and one who loses. Defining the problem in terms of needs, often takes about half of the time required for the whole process! The process requires asserting one's own needs, listening reflectively until you understand the other person's needs and then stating both sets of needs in a one sentence long summary of the problem.

Step 2:**Address the short-term need.**

Is there something that can be done in the short term to keep things going and the relationship strong?

Step 3:**Brainstorm possible solutions.**

Brainstorming is about quantity, not quality, coming up with as many possible solutions, as many options as possible. No idea is ever a bad idea during this step.

Step 4:**Select the solution that will meet both parties' long-term needs and check possible consequences.**

This is the time to clarify the proposed solutions. The focus here is not to eliminate options but to choose via consensus what is the best solution to meet both parties needs. The aim is to select a solution that is mutually desirable.

Step 5:**Plan who will do what, where and by when.**

Working out the nitty-gritty details of how the solution will be implemented. In some instances it may be worth writing out the details of what has been agreed to as a reminder for both parties.

Step 6:**Implement the Plan**

This is the point of action. It is important to complete your action steps on time as promised. If the other party was a full participant in the problem-solving process and if their needs were met by the solution, there is a high likelihood they will fulfill their part of the agreement. People are human and sometimes do not live up to agreements which were made with sincerity. In these situations an assertion message followed by reflective listening maybe appropriate.

Step 7:**Evaluate the process and solution and agree the benefits.**

This is the time for reflection and feedback. What did you like least/most about the process, what was most/least effective, what could have been done better, and what learning can be shared with others. It is also beneficial to touch base with the customer at this point to ensure the solution is sustainable and effective.

6. SOUND PROCEDURES

This building block describes team methods, in particular its decision making effectiveness.

Effective teams think results first, methods second ... BUT, realise that sound methods and decision making result in achievement. To achieve good decision making, team purpose and goals need to be clear, the team must develop the ability to collect information quickly and discuss alternatives openly, and then be committed to their decision and ensure that action ensues quickly.

Effective teams decide what information is needed and allocate the collection of this to the most appropriate members. This information is then openly and frankly discussed. Team members are aware of their own values and recognise the bias and prejudice that these values can have on their views and decisions. They take into account the consequences of alternative decisions and the impact these will have on other teams, the organisation as a whole, customers and suppliers. When the decision is made, there is unified commitment to it and the team ensures that action follows. Plans are made for implementation using the team's knowledge and skills as effectively as possible and the resultant action is closely monitored and reviewed. They are also willing to learn from the consequences of decisions and to modify the implementation if it is not working out as expected.

Effective decision making is a team in which:

- Decisions are taken at the appropriate level and with the appropriate people.
- There is adequate information collected on which to base decisions.
- All the options are considered before action agreed.
- The individuals are committed to team decisions.
- Strong personalities do not dominate.
- The knowledge and skills of each team member is fully utilised.
- Team members feel sufficiently involved in the decision making process.

There are five main steps to effective decision making:

1. Understand the reasons why the decision is being taken. (Issue and opportunity.)
2. Analyse the nature of the problem.
3. Examine all the alternatives and the envisaged benefits and consequences.
4. Implement the agreed actions.
5. Review, evaluate and adjust.

Questions to consider:

1. How is decision making accomplished?

- Formal/informal?
- What levels?
- Are people really involved?
- Is information collected properly?
- Do people have the right information?
- Is there gossip/rumour?
- Are there 'power groups'?

2. How are decisions implemented?

- Do the implementers have the authority?
- Are they effectively communicated?
- Are there the right resources?
- Are resources present and coordinated?
- Are people resistant to change?

3. How are decisions reviewed?

- By whom?
- How often?
- Does the review change anything?

Questions to consider, i.e. which happens in your team?:

"I make the decisions around here."

"I will seek your opinion before I decide."

"I take decisions with the people of my choice."

"We take the decisions."

Are decisions being made in the right place in the organisation and within the team?

7. APPROPRIATE LEADERSHIP

This building block describes how appropriately a team feels it is being led and managed. It describes whether the team members are trusted, prepared to stand up and be counted, all pitch in and feel that their jobs are meaningful and interesting. From the leader's point of view, it assesses whether they are true to themselves, treat others with dignity, empower team members, don't hold onto yesterday's attitudes, care that people are happy in their work and make the best use of their people.

This is a very broad assessment of team leadership; a more detailed assessment can be obtained through the leader conducting a thorough 360° assessment including their direct reports.

Teams that are led appropriately will be happier in what they do and will operate at maximum effectiveness with a team of committed people all giving their best.

Effective leaders believe that people:

- Are willing to work, providing the work is meaningful.
- Are basically honest.
- Take an active interest in their team.
- Respond best to responsibility and freedom to act.
- Value honest praise and resent excessive punishment.
- Are interested in the quality of their working life, as well as their personal life.
- Use delegation to show confidence in their team.

A successful team leader:

- Is true to their own beliefs.
- Uses delegation to aid achievement and development.
- Is clear about standards.
- Is willing to give and receive trust and loyalty.
- Has personal strength to maintain integrity.
- Is receptive to people's hopes, needs and dignity.
- Faces facts honestly and squarely.
- Encourages personal AND team development.
- Establishes sound processes and procedures.
- Tries to make work happy and rewarding.

A poor leader:

- Believes people are fundamentally lazy and have to be pushed to work.
- Is primarily interested in their own benefit.
- Uses discipline and control to get results.
- Believes punishment rather than reward will get the best out of people.
- Has a poor sense of self.
- Acts incongruently with their true self.
- Uses delegation inappropriately or not at all.

To improve on effective delegation, the leader needs to:

- Analyse the areas of accountability and identify those that can be delegated.
- Consider who COULD tackle it and who would WANT to.
- Allow for training and development.
- Give full authority boundaries as well as responsibility.
- Provide ongoing support and coaching.

8. REGULAR REVIEW

This building block describes how effectively a team reviews its own workings; not just its achievements but *how* it works.

Effective teams look at the way their team works and learn from this experience to consciously improve teamwork.

Regular review can improve performance by:

- Ensuring adequate effort in planning.
- Improving decision making.
- Increasing support, trust, honesty.
- Clarifying objectives.
- Identifying development needs and opportunities.
- Increasing effectiveness of team leadership.
- Making meetings more productive and enjoyable.
- Decreasing fire fighting.
- Increasing involvement and commitment.

Effective reviewing comes from a team that is willing to:

- Spend time and question the content and relevance of their team meetings and how the team operates.
- Learn from their mistakes.
- Welcome outside opinions.
- Receive feedback about their performance as individuals and about the performance of the team as a whole.
- Spend time reflecting as well as doing.
- Challenge the accepted order and change procedures or processes when needed.
- Raise delicate issues.
- Reward both individual and team performance.

Poor team review can result in team stagnation and a decline in overall teamwork over time.

Reviewing the team's effectiveness can be as easy as completing 13 questions:

1. Do we have the right mix of team members?
2. Are we clear on what we want to achieve?
3. Are we sufficiently open and do we confront the real issues?
4. Do we support and trust each other?
5. Do we cooperate with each other and use the conflict of ideas and approaches productively?
6. Are our working procedures and decision making strategies sound?
7. Are we well led?
8. Do we review whether we could operate in a better way?
9. Do we utilise opportunities for development?
10. Are our relations with other groups productive?
11. Do we communicate well within our team and with other key stakeholders?
12. Are our behaviours congruent with values and purpose for the team and organisation?
13. Are we creative and innovative?

Other review options include:

- Completing self assessment / diagnostics.
- Team self review on a regular basis.
- Use of a facilitator to observe.
- Conducting team building activities / review activities.

9. INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT

This building block describes how well individuals are developed within a team.

Effective teamwork seeks to pool the skills of each individual in order to produce better results. Whilst the aim is for a team to be greater than the sum of its parts, it is important that individual skills are developed to contribute to effective team performance.

Effective individual development occurs in a team where individuals feel:

- They are encouraged to grow and are supported by the team to do so.
- There are sufficient development opportunities created.
- People are supported to learn and personal development is taken seriously.
- The right kinds of skills are developed.
- The team leader has the skills to develop others.
- The organisation spends enough time developing the senior leaders.
- Those that are trained remain with the organisation.
- Team members have access to the coaches they need.

As individuals, we are responsible for managing our own development and ensuring we are achieving personal effectiveness as a part of our quest to achieve team effectiveness.

It is about seeing opportunities, seizing them and making things happen and doing it continually.

Someone who has the characteristics of personal effectiveness:

- Is active not passive.
- Seeks challenge.
- Seeks insights into themselves.
- Sees and uses time and energy as valuable resources.
- Is in touch with their own feelings.
- Shows concern for others.
- Is relaxed, open and honest.
- Stretches themselves and sets high standards.

- Has a clear understanding of their personal values.
- Welcomes feedback – sees it as helpful, healthy and not threatening.
- Sees things through.
- Tolerates and uses opposing views.
- Uses conflict constructively.
- Increases the freedom of others.
- Sees life as enjoyable adventure.
- Offers genuine help to others.

Consider the following questions:

- How much development do you want?
- Why?
- Who should define the needs / solutions?
- What are the manager / employee roles?
- Does the line manager deliver on their promises?

10. SOUND INTERGROUP RELATIONS

This building block describes how effectively a team develops strong relationships with other groups or individuals.

Just as effective teamwork relies on individuals working well together, effective organisations are made up of teams who relate well and perform well together.

Cohesive teams might be perceived as a threat by others, so highly effective teams reach out to other teams and ensure their efforts are well supported and ensure help is forthcoming from other teams when needed.

Strong, sound intergroup relations result in a team having a greater ability to influence the organisation. Also more help becomes available, there is easier flow of information, easier problem solving, less anxiety and happier more enjoyable working lives.

A team with sound inter group relations feels:

- It works cooperatively and effectively with other parts of the organisation and has strong, warm relationships.
- Help is forthcoming from other parts of the organisation, as well as being able to reach out to help other groups.
- It is understood by other teams.
- It doesn't defend its boundaries and is open to the needs, views and ideas of other teams.
- It has sufficient influence on the rest of the organisation.
- Information flows freely between teams.
- The organisation as a whole is a happy place to work in.

Effective external relationships are built by:

- Ensuring actions and decisions of the team are communicated and understood.
- Trying to understand the other teams' points of view.
- Continually seeking ways to work with other teams.
- Not being too rigid in defending team boundaries.

- Reviewing and amending boundaries and responsibilities between teams from time to time.
- Positively anticipating and eliminating potential inter-team problems before they arise.
- Listening to others.
- Using others as a source of ideas and comparison.
- Understanding and utilising the differences in people.

Poor working relationships with other teams, a lack of organisational focus or not working towards mutual benefit, can create the perception that the team is creating a fortress around it and not welcoming support or ideas.

Internal barriers can be overcome by:

- Bringing different teams and departments together physically – getting them to plan together and clarifying roles and objectives.
- Networking inside and outside of work with members of other teams.
- Getting to know new team members in other teams.
- Making sure your new team members liaise quickly with other groups.
- Setting up joint issues meetings.
- Arranging joint training and development activities.
- Developing win-win situations.
- Improving channels of communication.

11. GOOD COMMUNICATIONS

This building block describes how effectively a team communicates at four levels:

- Between individuals.
- Within the team.
- With the rest of the organisation.
- Outside of the organisation.

Those teams that have strong communication links with other teams in an organisation and with key stakeholders outside of the organisation, are more likely to secure cooperation and achievement of their aims. Strong communication within the team is the oil that enables the team to operate effectively.

A team with effective communications believes:

- Members communicate effectively with each other.
- It communicates and 'sells' itself effectively within the organisation, resulting in cooperation from other teams.
- It has few misunderstandings.
- It successfully gets its message to the outside world.
- It clearly understands what is expected of it and has the information to do its job effectively.
- It listens to clients and each other.
- It has effective information systems to support the team and knows how to improve communication when needed.

Poor communications can translate into poor team operations on a day-to-day basis and reduced effectiveness in the long term. This is often the centre of frustration for many teams.

Communications within a team can be enhanced by:

- Improving the communication skills of individual team members.
- Facilitating a better flow of information and ideas between team members.

Skilled communicators:

- Have a strong sense of self.
- Know their own strengths and weaknesses.
- Have concern for their impact on others.
- Have interpersonal awareness; are sensitive to the needs, feelings and perceptions of others.
- Are good listeners.
- Are sure in their own beliefs and values.
- Have the ability to deal with a variety of people.
- Have the ability to deal with a variety of situations.
- Have presence and chairmanship.
- Are assertive.
- Have writing skills.
- Show a willingness and ability to help others learn.
- Have strong presentation skills.

Team communications can be improved through:

- Completing team self assessments / diagnostics – bringing issues out into the open.
- Increasing mass communications, e.g. bulletins, notice boards, group voicemail, group emails.
- More effective cascading, i.e. using leaders to deliver a face-to-face message and seeking feedback.
- Getting to know individuals better and using this information to ensure more effective communication.
- More formal communication planning.
- Reviewing the workplace layout to remove physical communication barriers.
- An agreed purpose, team direction and values to facilitate aligned communications.

12. STEWARDSHIP

This building block describes the level of cohesion and sense of stewardship within a team; the degree to which it cares about the impact its actions and decisions have on others.

Stewardship is strong in a team in which:

- When decisions are made, they are seen as team decisions and the team stands united behind them when challenged.
- There is the right power balance within and outside of the team.
- The purpose and culture of the team is aligned and focussed on the wider organisation.
- The company comes before the team and before the individual.
- Behaviours are congruent with values, purpose and what is promised.
- Decisions are made and actions taken with the understanding that each action affects other individuals, teams and the larger organisation, and with a view to seeking lasting and useful outcomes wherever possible.

When stewardship is poor, the team members' don't (or don't all) feel a sense of ownership for the team as a whole; they operate more as individuals who happen to work with a number of other individuals, but with no sense of shared purpose or value; who, as a result, can undermine the efforts trying to be made by the team.

A sense of stewardship requires some degree of leadership on the part of each of the members; an understanding that actions and behaviours have an impact on others and other areas of the organisation; a sense of vision and pride at being able to make a positive difference.

Cohesion and stewardship in a team can be developed through:

- Members clearly understanding the team's purpose and objectives.
- Members buying in to the team's purpose and objectives and, where there is some resistance to this, discussing and resolving the issues in the most appropriate way.
- Free and open communication.

- Opportunities for team members to get to know each other, to build trust and a sense of belonging.
- Ensuring that members understand how and where the team fits in to the larger organisation.

13. CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

This building block describes the degree to which a team displays creativity and innovation.

A creative and innovative team is one in which:

- People freely express their emotions, opinions and ideas.
- Achievements are celebrated.
- There is time allocated to explore ideas and develop blue sky projects.
- Creativity is encouraged and everyone's creative talent is utilised.
- There is time allocated for reflection.
- There is a belief that it can achieve the unimaginable and create what has never existed before.
- Diversity is valued and differing opinions provide 'creative spark' rather than negative conflict.

When creativity or innovation is low this can indicate that a team is a) not adequately utilising the creative resources at its disposal, i.e. its team members, and/or b) that individuals don't believe they are creative and therefore have something new and useful to contribute. Teams that get stuck in system, procedure and routine can often be lacklustre in their performance, and members can easily become bored and withdraw their input to greater or lesser degrees.

Every individual is capable of engaging in the creative process. Many people believe they are either creative or they aren't; however, many studies into creativity have shown that pretty much everyone is born a genius, but that creative intelligence is dampened dramatically for most people through the processes of schooling and socialisation. By the time they get to adulthood, many people have forgotten that they were once creative. There are many techniques that individuals who have an urge to be creative can utilise and, through practice, instil new creative habits of thinking and behaving. Essentially they are about exercising the brain in ways that are different to the routine, creating a disruption in the normal associations already mapped in the mind. The techniques include visioning, imagining, challenging assumptions and negative thinking, looking at things from different perspectives, listening to instinct and the inner voice, being open minded, being present

and attentive. Teams can also effectively tap the pool of both latent and overt creativity of their members through various group creativity techniques.

Ways in which a team can enhance its creativity and innovation:

- Brainstorming exercises to come up with unique solutions to a problem.
- Role playing.
- Looking at metaphors and models from nature, and working out how these might be adapted to the business/product context.
- Visiting other teams/organisations for inspiration and ideas.
- Imagining different approaches to common problems.
- Mind mapping.

Creativity/innovation needs to be held as an important value for the team, and this needs to be mirrored in behaviour. People need to know that their contributions are valued; they must feel motivated to put in more than just the requisite aspects of 'the job' (hence the need for a binding sense of purpose); and they need to understand what the team/organisation's vision for the future is, so they can be actively involved in working out ways to achieve it. Team leaders also need to be familiar with the creative process, in order to guide it usefully. There are six components of creativity to consider:

- **Preparation:** This is about creating the conditions for creativity, including aspects of culture and the responsibility of leaders to facilitate their own and their team's ability to be creative.
- **Innovation opportunity:** This is about recognising, looking for and creating sources of new opportunity for the team/business. Careful attention must be paid to customers and the feedback they give. Research and development needs to become more interactive from the outset – utilising the ideas and thoughts of a diversity of people in the process.
- **Divergence:** This is part of the creative process in which new ideas are generated. This is the time for group creativity techniques such as those listed above. Common to all of these is the critical role of the facilitator. As well as encouraging the generation of options, the facilitator must be able to prevent the team from going for one solution too quickly. The facilitator needs to be aware of their own assumptions,

preferences and biases, as well as being aware (as much as possible) of those of team members, to ensure team dynamics are conducive to 'creative abrasion' (where sometimes conflicting opinions, ideas, feelings, thoughts are facilitated to create useful outcomes) and not conflict.

- **Incubation:** This is about letting the subconscious mind do its work. Taking a break from the active process of divergence (relaxing, paying attention to dreams, indeed any time away from the task) gives the brain some space to process. Often it is in this phase that ideas are refined, new associations made and obstacles cleared.
- **Convergence:** This is about selecting from the options generated – evaluating, refining and finally choosing an idea to implement. Again, there are a number of techniques to aid convergent thinking, and again the facilitator's role is crucial – to keep the process on track, stepping down to a conclusion while at the same time being open to exploring alternatives as they come up.
- **Expression/communication of ideas:** This is essentially the action phase of the process. It's fine to have creative ideas in your head or out on the storyboard wall, but they're not much good if nothing is done with them. Prototyping is perhaps the most effective way of demonstrating and piloting a creative idea. It provides a concrete example for people to look at, test and evaluate. This is also the phase where communication becomes particularly critical, to ensure that those responsible for decision making and implementation are involved, and/or brought on board at the right time.