



BRITE

Broad-based Roots Influencing Team Effectiveness

Strategic Facilitation Guide

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INTRODUCTION

Teams are complex and dynamic energy systems. When there is a high level of energy and synergism among team members, there is almost nothing a team cannot accomplish. In effective teams, members leverage each other's skills and knowledge to create new ideas and insights, and they produce results more efficiently than would be possible when working alone.

However, just as the potential of individuals may be unrealized, teams may also fail to live up to their full potential. When the dynamic forces that can lead to success go awry, teams may drag down productivity and waste resources at greater rates than individuals. Without creative energy to ignite their potential, teams can quickly succumb to groupthink, polarization, and many other draining forces that diminish their ability to achieve outstanding results.

“Winning teams harness their members’ talents and energy in order to experience synergistic effects. Putting in other words, when a team is working well, the total is far greater than the sum of its parts.”

(Kumari, 2017)

The key to ensuring the effectiveness of teams is a realistic picture of the team's energy flow and a deep understanding of what is generating or disrupting the current level of energy. If it can be measured, it can be managed. BRITE was designed to measure and explain the extent to which a team synergistically unleashes creative energy and shines—or fails to fully integrate and implodes.

The BRITE assessment and its underlying theoretical model were developed over a two-year period. During that time, we reviewed hundreds of research studies conducted with more than 26,000 teams from around the world. We also collected data from teams we have directly worked with and from the lead consultants and coaches who facilitate those teams. We identified the factors that predict (with high reliability) team effectiveness, as measured by business outcomes, innovations, goal achievement, and added value to the organization.

As a result, BRITE encapsulates what makes teams work best and where teams could go wrong. It examines five critical elements that are known to have a direct influence on team effectiveness. Within each of these elements, we measure the generative and disruptive factors that affect the flow of energy in the team. BRITE uses proven criteria for determining specific strengths and challenges and pinpoints the areas for development that will have the greatest impact in increasing team alignment and team success.

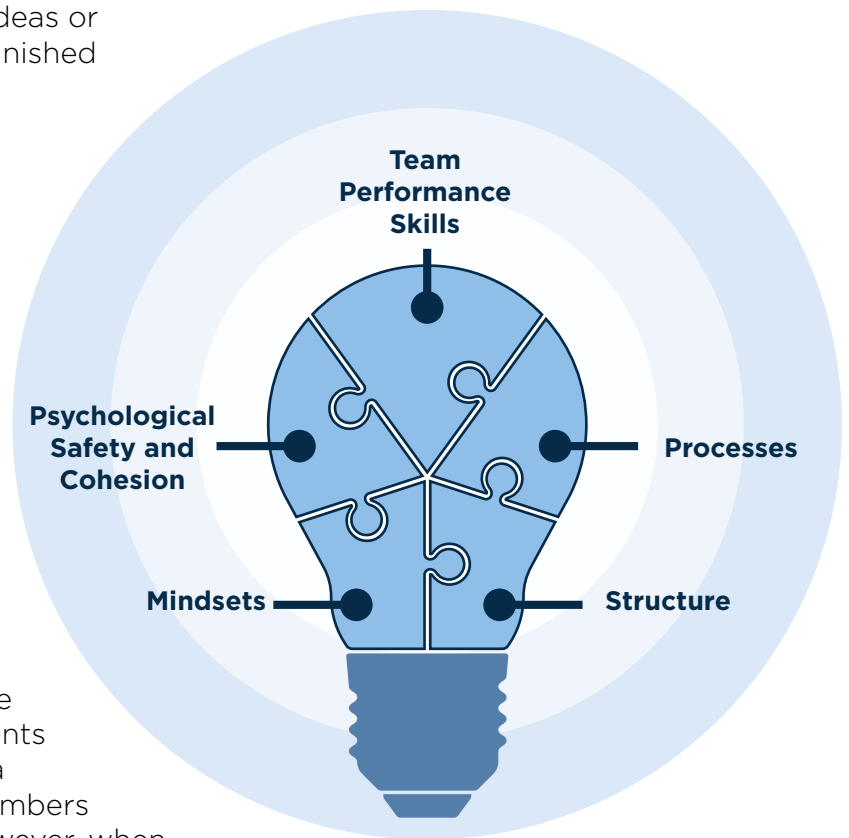
This guide was developed to help the team in using the results of the BRITE assessment to understand where team energy is being suppressed and what thought processes, attitudes, and behaviors may need adjusting to create a better flow of energy among team members.

The Lightbulb Metaphor

We selected a lightbulb to represent the five critical elements of BRITE because, like teams, a lightbulb is also a dynamic energy system. The lightbulb filament either produces good energy flow leading to illumination, or if there is some type of deficiency, energy is reduced and dims the output. In the same way, the dynamic interaction of team members can either unleash creative

energy leading to bright and innovative ideas or disrupt team functioning resulting in diminished performance.

The five elements of BRITE are **Mindsets, Structure, Psychological Safety and Cohesion, Processes, and Team Performance Skills**. These elements are depicted as interlinked jigsaw pieces within the lightbulb, representing the interdependent nature of teamwork. The flow of energy within one element affects the flow of energy in other elements. Further, the interplay between elements is not static, evolving over time as the team works together, and thus will affect team performance across the lifespan of the team.



This complexity is at the heart of both the magic and peril of teams. When all elements are fully functioning, the team becomes a dynamo of creative energy, and team members find it fun and exciting to participate. However, when even one element has diminished capacity, it is likely to influence other interdependent systems, and the dynamics within the team become increasingly challenging, draining, or, in extreme cases, are abandoned altogether. We designed our assessment to measure this interdependence as well as the current state of energy flow within each element.

Finally, teams can and do focus on different elements (either consciously or unconsciously) at different times during the lifecycle of the team, and not all teams begin teamwork with the same element or evolve in the same way. Although these various patterns may work for different teams, our research has shown that there is an ideal order for unleashing creative energy that builds upon itself as it spreads to other elements. Subsequently, we have situated the elements within the lightbulb to indicate this ideal order. Those elements that are more foundational to energy flow are located closest to the base of the lightbulb (i.e., Mindsets and Structure) and those elements that benefit from the compounding spread of energy are represented further away (i.e., Team Performance Skills).

Interestingly, Team Performance Skills (e.g., decision-making, problem-solving, execution of strategic plans) is often where teams focus their attention and evaluate how well they are doing. This aspect of teamwork may be the most noticeable, just as the light appears to emanate from the end of the lightbulb. However, a focus on this element without the groundswell of energy from the preceding elements makes it highly unlikely that the team will excel within this area. Furthermore, putting a lot of time and effort into performing better on these skills may not pay off as well as increasing energy flow from the base source associated with Mindsets.

We present further details about the elements and strategies for improving energy flow within the elements according to the order in the lightbulb. Throughout this guide, we also reference the key interactions with other elements.

Using a Developmental Approach to Team Effectiveness

Just as team interactions evolve over time, so does team effectiveness. Although BRITE provides a snapshot of current team effectiveness, it does not mean that a team will remain at that level. Given the dynamic nature of teams, it is much more likely that a team's energy will be different six months or a year from now. Whether the energy increases or decreases during that time depends greatly on the awareness of the team and the commitment to improve.

Team effectiveness is a practice that requires focus and ongoing effort. Highly effective teams don't just happen, they are the product of soliciting and applying feedback. BRITE results can be used to raise the awareness of existing strengths and challenges and to identify areas in which development work has the greatest potential for unleashing creative energy. It is then up to the team to actively nurture and reinforce this learning. Applying the strategies contained within this guide will help you strengthen the bonds within your team and improve its overall performance.

Team effectiveness is all about unleashing the creative energy needed for the team to work together in an integrated and fulfilling manner.

A Universal Model

BRITE was designed to provide useful feedback to any type of team. In developing the underlying conceptual model, we conducted and reviewed research with all types of teams, including teams:

- with different purposes and compositions (e.g., senior leadership teams, project teams, design teams, production teams, service teams, research and development teams, medical teams, academic teams, sports teams, IT teams, HR teams, consulting teams, local teams, global teams, interdisciplinary/cross-functional teams, and change management teams).
- from different industries (e.g., banking, manufacturing, communications, hotel, retail, advertising, recreation, sales, finance, construction, government, education, shipping, pharmaceuticals, entertainment, health care, athletics, military, automotive, and nonprofit).
- not only in the U.S. but in most other regions of the world (e.g., Argentina, Canada, China, Denmark, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Jordan, Malaysia, Netherlands, Norway, Philippines, Portugal, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, and Taiwan).

Our results, like past research (Schaubroeck, Lam, & Cha, 2007), revealed that there are more similarities than differences across teams. We built our model on those factors that contributed to leadership effectiveness for all teams. And our assessment results emphasize findings related to those factors.

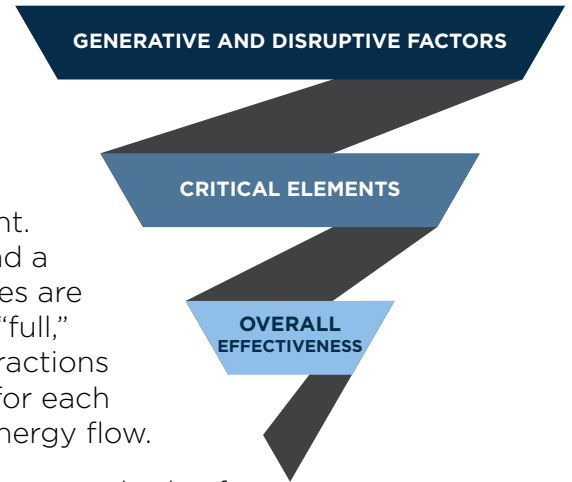
However, we acknowledge that some factors may play a more significant role than others depending on the type of team and whether the team is collocated and regularly meets in person or is dispersed and often meets virtually through remote technology access. We highlight the differing emphases within the strategies section and offer recommendations for creating better energy flow based on these specific contexts.

KEY PATTERNS WITHIN RESULTS

BRITE results are presented and meant to be explored much like peeling back the layers of an onion. This section of key performance patterns is organized using this approach.

The Big Picture

Your team’s overall effectiveness is based on the energy flow within and between BRITE elements. We begin by analyzing the answers your team gave to items that measure specific generative and disruptive factors associated with each element. Individual scores are averaged from across team members, and a mean score for each factor is generated. Next, the factor scores are aggregated into an element score reflecting whether there is “full,” “partial,” or “insufficient” creative energy for the dynamic interactions associated with each of the five critical elements. The scores for each element are then combined into a profile of interdependent energy flow.



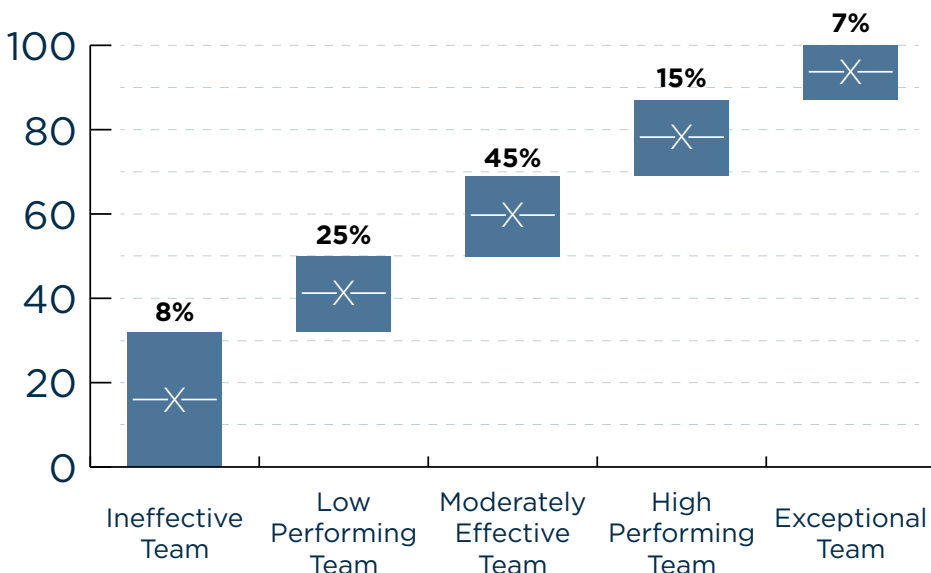
The overall performance profile of the team is compared against standards of team effectiveness. The resulting score allows the team to understand its overall level of performance and how much work is required to progress to the next level on the pathway to becoming an exceptional team—one that achieves its goals, creates innovative solutions, and adds significant value to the organization.

The Team Effectiveness performance levels are depicted in the graph below. There is a narrower range of scores in the performance at the top and bottom levels of effectiveness indicating extreme energy values. Further, very few teams (fewer than 10%) are completely ineffective, but also equally few teams are exceptional. Most teams have some strengths but also one or more significant

challenges that reduce the flow of creative energy. The most frequent outcome for teams is the Moderately Effective level. Additional descriptions of each level of effectiveness are provided on page 9 of the BRITE report.

As you read the description for the category that your team falls into, think about how well that result lines up with how you expected the team to score. Discussing any discrepancy between expectations and results is a good starting point to begin processing your report.

Team Effectiveness Levels
and the Frequency of Teams Scoring at each Level





To help teams better understand what is contributing to their overall score, we provide the lightbulb with shaded elements, as depicted on page 8 of the BRITE report. The shading reflects the flow of energy within each element. Bright white shading indicates full flow of energy produced by a strong presence of generative factors and relatively few, if any disruptors. Gray shading indicates only partial energy flow caused by a lower presence of generative factors and/or an increased presence of disruptors. Dark shading indicates insufficient levels of energy created by a lack of generative factors or a strong presence of disruptors.

Exceptional teams show up well on all elements of team effectiveness. In terms of the BRITE model, this would be a lightbulb with all elements shining brightly, as depicted on the left side of the example below. However, most teams have one or more elements shaded gray or black, as depicted on the right side of the example below.



Take a look at the shading in the lightbulb on page 8 of your report. Are there any surprises? Where is your team doing really well and where does your team have significant issues?

The next section of this guide provides further insights about high-energy and low-energy performance patterns within each element. Consider those that may be relevant to your team.

Patterns Within Each Element

The results pictured on pages 10, 14, 18, 22, and 26 of the BRITE report provide additional insights about how your team is scoring on each element of team energy. For each element, you will see a lightbulb with the specific puzzle piece corresponding to that element shaded in white, gray, or black. (All other sections of the lightbulb will be blue.) The shading of that element will be consistent with what you have already observed in the overall results and provides an indication of the energy level of your team with respect to that element (Full, Partial, or Insufficient Energy). The *Energy Score* more precisely locates your performance on a scale of one to 100 and provides an indication of how much energy may be required to move to the next level or to maximize your team's performance.

Further descriptions of each element and references to the research that supports the importance of that element in influencing team effectiveness are provided below. The relevant characteristics often observed in teams with high and low energy, and the ways in which the energy from one element integrates with and affects the energy of other elements, also are presented.



Understanding Team Scores in Mindsets

Mindsets reflect the underlying beliefs and value systems that each individual member holds concerning the team. Mindsets influence how team members think, feel, and interact with each other and with the rest of the organization.

The extent to which team members share an understanding of who the team is and what they are trying to accomplish affects their ability to harness energy in one direction. The increased focus of energy toward a single (or limited) task/strategy allows the team to accomplish more than would be possible if team members were working from different agendas. Therefore, teams who start out with shared mindsets will be more effective and progress more quickly than teams that do not have shared understandings or that rely on mindsets naturally emerging over time (Smith-Jentsch, Cannon-Bowers, Tannenbaum & Salas, 2008; Ellis, 2006; Lewis, 2003; Wageman, Nunes, Burruss & Hackman, 2008).

Characteristics of Teams With High Energy

Teams that are in unity around their values and mission unleash powerful creative energy to pursue their vision (Katzenbach & Smith, 2005; Mathieu & Rapp, 2009; Misra, 2011).

- Have a clear team identity and a shared sense of purpose—agree on what they are about and what they will pursue.
- Work on common goals that are clearly defined and aligned to purpose.
- Accomplish what matters most—because energy is focused on what is most important.
- Are aligned on strategic priorities/specific tasks.
- Understand what is in and out of scope to accomplish.
- Share the belief that the team as a whole is capable of achieving its goals.
- Comprise team members who are committed and motivated to pursue challenging goals and persist even when success is not immediately forthcoming.
- Understand that the team is part of a larger, interdependent whole and that work must integrate with the goals and processes of other teams, the organization, and the larger community.
- Encourage broader collaborations and coordination across the organization.
- Value growth and learning.

Characteristics of Teams With Low Energy

Without a clear and compelling purpose that helps drive unity, team members tend to resort to their own interests and agendas, thereby decreasing energy for achieving collective goals (Haas and Mortenson, 2016; Bang & Midelfart, 2017; Gardner & Mortensen, 2015).

- Work in silos and/or pursue competitive goals.
- Pursue too many objectives because of lack of alignment on strategic priorities.
- Focus on why things cannot work rather than how to make things work.
- Focus on individual performance (or lack thereof) rather than team performance.

- Lack commitment or are pessimistic about team potential.
- Avoid challenging goals.
- View mistakes as unacceptable or blameworthy, rather than as an opportunity for learning and growth.
- Develop an “Us vs. Them” mentality in which other teams and external stakeholders are seen as the outgroup or in competition with the team.

Key Interaction With Other Elements

Energy flowing through Mindsets is not only crucial for establishing the identity and purpose of the team but also influences the energy available to all the other elements of team effectiveness. That is why it is at the foundational base of the lightbulb. When members of a team share common values, beliefs, and goals, they:

- more easily integrate differing viewpoints taking full advantage of a diverse team structure (Homan, van Knippenberg, Van Kleef & de Dreu, 2007).
- are more motivated to work together and support each other fostering team cohesion, trust, and satisfaction (Haas and Mortenson, 2016; Kozlowski, 2015; Druskat & Wolff, 2001; Ficapal-Cusí, Enache-Zegheru & Torrent-Sellens, 2021; Reis & Puente-Palacios, 2018).
- are more attentive to one another and communicate more openly with one another, which, in turn, increases collaborative processes (Tanghe, Wisse & Van Der Flier, 2010; Aaron, McDowell & Herdman, 2014; Van der Vegt & Bunderson, 2005).
- engage in more efficient decision making and are more resilient in problem-solving leading to more innovative solutions to issues (Bateman, Wilson & Bingham, 2002; Vogel, et al., 2014, Peralta, et al., 2014).



Understanding Team Scores in Structure

The structure of the team refers to the way it is organized, including who is on the team, the roles and responsibilities of its members, and where decision authority resides. Team structures can vary widely depending on the type of organization, the purpose of the team (e.g., leadership teams, functional teams, cross-functional teams, matrixed teams, or project teams), and the role of the team leader (if the team is structured to have a leader).

When a team structure aligns with its purpose and comprises the right mix of people, has clearly laid-out roles and responsibilities, and employs transformational leadership, it creates a thriving, agile, and energy-filled climate that assists teams in reaching their full potential. When one or more aspects of team structure are missing, unclear, or dysfunctional, the resulting structure almost ensures that the capability of the team will not be realized (Omar & Ahmad, 2014; De Jong, Dirks



& Gillespie, 2016; Mathieu, Tannenbaum, Donsbach & Alliger, 2014; Fouse et al., 2011; Gorman and Cooke, 2011; Nicolaidis, et al., 2014; Haas and Mortenson, 2016).

Characteristics of Teams With High Energy

Teams that have capable team members with the right mix of skills and psychological traits and an effective team leader multiply the energy available within a team (Haas & Mortenson, 2016; Resick, et al., 2010; Bunderson, 2003; Woolley, et al., 2008; Wageman & Gordon, 2005; Lvina, Johns & Vandenberghe, 2015; Downes, Gonzalez-Mulé, Seong, & Park, 2021; Prewett, et al., 2009; Bell, 2007). These teams:

- Have team members with the technical skills and functional (subject matter) expertise needed for achieving goals without creating redundancies.
- Acknowledge and leverage the unique strengths and skills of each team member.
- Have good diversity in terms of team members' backgrounds, ethnicity, nationality, gender, and life experiences (e.g., global vs. local).
- Comprise complementary personalities and psychological traits/orientations.
- Are just the right size for getting the work done allowing the team to make agile responses.
- Have a team leader who sets the tone for effective teamwork, exemplifying the behaviors and attitudes the team should engage in.
- Have a team leader who shares leadership with the team and encourages members to co-create strategy and actively participate in decision-making.
- Have a team leader who focuses on developing team members and building relationships that will allow team members to effectively work together.
- Have clearly defined and integrated roles and responsibilities that are tied to collective accountability.

Characteristics of Teams With Low Energy

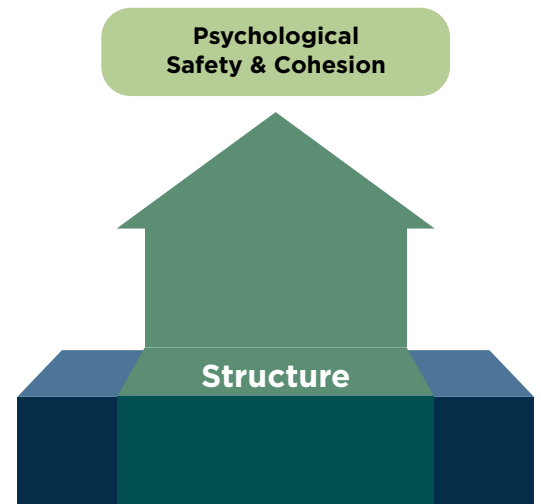
Teams on which one or more team member roles do not support the purpose of the team or team members do not fully participate on the team disrupts the flow of energy and impedes productivity (Felps, Mitchell & Byington, 2006; Kim, 2022; Wang, Waldman, and Zhang, 2014; Stewart, 2006; Ye & Chen, 2021; Brandt & Edinger, 2015; Carson, Tesluk & Marrone; 2007; Vogelsmeier, 2008; Edmondson, Bohmer & Pisano, 2001). These teams:

- Are missing one or more critical roles.
- Do not have adequate diversity, limiting the perspectives that are available.
- Have one or more team members who are unreliable—actively derail team processes and/or do not follow through on commitments.
- Have one or more team members who are confused about their roles and may not take responsibility for achieving team goals.
- Have a team leader who takes authority for all strategic decisions.
- Have a team leader who exclusively focuses on performance management (rewarding and punishing goal achievement or lack thereof).

- Have too many members, slowing processing, limiting collaboration, and increasing social loafing.

Key Interaction With Other Elements

Energy flowing through Structure lays the foundation upon which a trusting and cohesive environment can be built. Having the right mix of team members and a team leader who supports and models transparent and vulnerable interactions helps establish the conditions for creating psychological safety (Resick, et al., 2010; Wageman & Gordon, 2005; Edmondson, Dillon & Roloff, 2007; Ye & Chen, 2021; Stashevsky & Koslowsky, 2006).



Understanding Team Scores in Psychological Safety and Cohesion

The single biggest influence on team dynamics, and one of the most researched areas of team effectiveness, concerns the environment in which the team functions. A psychologically safe environment is one in which team members feel safe to take personal risks and are confident that others will not embarrass, reject out of hand, or punish someone for speaking up, and where they can trust each other's intentions (Edmondson, 2003; Lencioni; 2002; Bell, Kozlowski & Blawath, 2012; Edmondson and Nembhard, 2009; Kim, Lee & Connerton, 2020; Edmondson, Bohmer, and Pisano, 2001; Nembhard and Edmondson, 2006).

Psychological safety fosters interconnectedness and a “we-ness” attitude that signifies a strong bond among team members. Individuals see themselves as part of a collective whole that transcends the perspective of “Me and what I bring to the table.” Note that we-ness is closely connected to Mindsets and is both influenced by beliefs and values and influences team identity.

Characteristics of Teams With High Energy

Effective teams create a psychologically safe environment where team members are willing to openly share their ideas. Creative energy builds as all team members actively contribute in courageously authentic interactions (Hall et al., 2012; Druskat & Wolff, 2001; Rosendaal & Bijlsma-Frankema, 2009; De Jong & Elfring, 2010; Salman & Hassan, 2016). These teams:

- Have high levels of interpersonal trust between members and between members and the team leader.
- Demonstrate the willingness of individuals to vulnerably and courageously share with other team members.
- Have created a judgment-free zone, where all thoughts and opinions are encouraged and respected.
- Have members who understand and agree on how they should interact with one another.
- Have members who read and meet the emotional needs of other members.
- Promote positivity and a strong sense of unity.
- Have team members who get along well with each other.

- Have team members who demonstrate increased commitment to and confidence in the team.

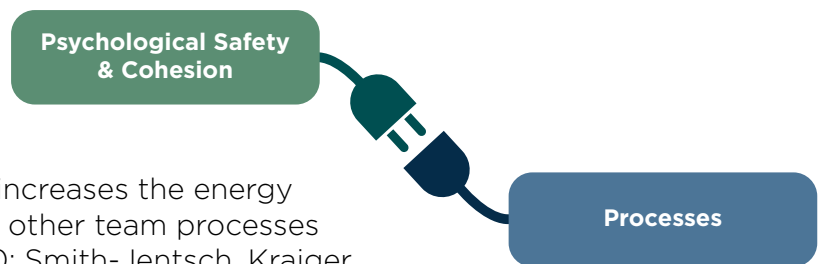
Characteristics of Teams With Low Energy

Ineffective teams foster a “me first” attitude and do not value diversity and inclusion of other viewpoints. These teams are unlikely to gel as a team and their performance will, at best, be limited to what individuals can achieve working on their own rather than utilizing the full energy of the team. At worst, the energy drain is so disruptive that it negatively impacts the performance of team members, and the resulting outcomes are less productive than what any individual could achieve. (Bang & Midelfart, 2017; Sunstein & Hastie, 2014; Lencioni, 2002). These teams:

- Experience relational conflicts.
- Demonstrate competition among team members.
- Host emotionally draining meetings.
- Experience distrust of the intentions of others and fear of being vulnerable.
- Have team members who withhold information and only contribute when it is politically advantageous or will be pleasing to the team leader or others on the team.
- Experience some team members who feel contempt for other team members.
- See “in” and “out” subgroups form with the ideas of the “in group” being favored over others’ ideas.
- Have team members who pursue individualistic vs. collective goals.
- Have more discussions occur outside rather than inside of team meetings.
- Experience a perception of unfairness and significant dissatisfaction.

Key Interaction With Other Elements

As team cohesion grows, team members’ abilities to effectively collaborate also increases. High levels of energy within the Psychological Safety and Cohesion element increases the energy available for open information exchange and other team processes (Cooke, Salas, Cannon-Bowers & Stout, 2000; Smith-Jentsch, Kraiger, Cannon-Bowers & Salas, 2009).



Understanding Team Scores in Processes

Processes refer to the way the team operates and the quality of team members’ interactions. It includes the level of communication and collaboration between team members and the usefulness of knowledge that emerges. It also encompasses the extent to which the team monitors and regulates its process and how it manages conflict.

Highly effective teams willingly and openly share information, provide constructive criticism, and work together to coordinate and integrate ideas. The insights and meaning making that emerges surpasses what would have been generated by any individual member and evolves more quickly and with greater wisdom than on teams with low energy (Sabri & Abu-Atiah, 2020; Salman &



Hassan, 2016; Cooke et al., 2013; Moreland & Myaskovsky, 2000; Rentsch et al., 2010, 2014; Landry & Erwin, 2013; Mathieu, Gilson & Ruddy, 2006; Pritchard, Harrell, DiazGranados & Guzman, 2008).

Characteristics of Teams With High Energy

Strong collaboration, vigilant monitoring of interactions, and good conflict management allow teams to effectively handle even the most challenging situations, including those that require integrating disparate points of view (Lubatkin, Simsek, Ling & Veiga, 2006; Wageman, Nunes, Burruss & Hackman, 2008; Edmondson, Dillon & Roloff, 2007). These teams have members who:

- Openly share information.
- Have productive and engaging meetings.
- Actively monitor their processes and make course-corrections when they see that their interactions are taking them off course.
- Embrace conflict as an opportunity for generating innovative solutions.
- Courageously challenge each other's ideas to bring out the best in thinking.
- Generate enough discussion to fully understand the issues without spending an inordinate amount of time rehashing ideas.
- Create new knowledge.
- Have good situational awareness.
- Collaborate/network with others both inside and outside the team.
- Regularly check in and debrief after each formal meeting.

Characteristics of Teams With Low Energy

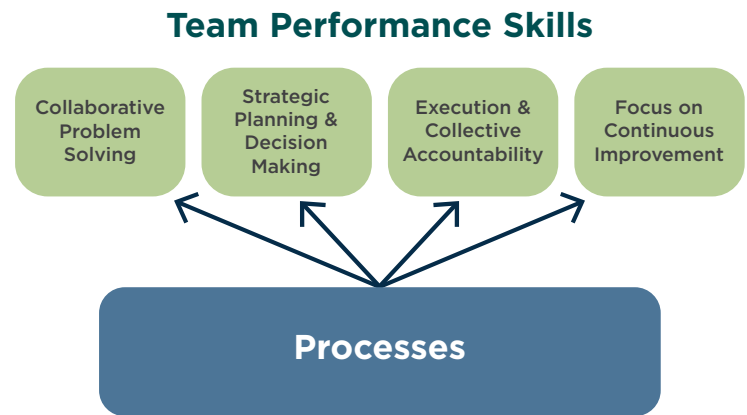
Ineffective teams have very limited communication and even miscommunications that limit the progress of the team and foster conflict. This conflict often goes unmanaged, exacerbating dysfunctions and resulting in team members disengaging (Bang & Midelfart, 2010; Hoogeboom & Wilderom, 2019; Sunstein & Hastie, 2014). On these teams:

- Only some team members contribute to team conversations.
- Team members only speak up with they have relevant expertise, or it concerns their specific areas of the business.
- Team members spend meetings digressing on topics with low productivity.
- Team members entertain only a narrow view of the issue.
- Team members acquiesce to the first ideas presented or to the opinions of the expert in the group.
- Team members become polarized in their viewpoints.
- Team members focus on common knowledge and don't actively solicit unique points of view.
- Team members have unproductive meetings.
- Team members avoid conflict.

- Team members fail to learn.

Key Interaction With Other Elements

Energized team processes are necessary requirements to effectively use team performance skills. The more energy a team pours into processing information, the better the outcome when team members apply their skills to that information. For example, open and inclusive communication can help a team capitalize on its diversity to engage in better, more innovative problem-solving. Teams that are willing to discuss complex issues from diverse (or even adverse) perspectives are more likely to arrive at a workable solution (Bang & Midelfart, 2010; de Dreu & Weingart, 2003; de Wit et al., 2012).



Another example comes from studies conducted with top leadership teams. Those that are more collaborative make better strategic decisions leading to better human resource utilization, economic performance, and responsiveness to shifts in the market (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2006; Carmeli, 2008; Fouse et al., 2011; Ye & Chen, 2021).

Understanding Team Scores in Team Performance Skills

Team performance skills refer to the cognitive skills and abilities that directly produce outcomes and achieve team goals. They include problem-solving, strategic planning, decision-making, implementation, evaluation, and continuous improvement. They are what most people think of when discussing team competencies because they directly result in the obvious output of teamwork (and is why they are located at the top of the lightbulb).

Although team performance skills build upon individual capabilities, through the dynamic interaction of the team the execution of these skills can be enhanced beyond what a specific individual might be capable of doing. However, without good energy flow from all the other elements, it becomes unlikely that these skills will be applied with any efficiency or efficacy (Hagemann & Kluge, 2017; Fiore, et al., 2010).

Characteristics of Teams With High Energy

Effective teams share accountability for seeing that plans to achieve goals are generated, implemented, measured, and revised as needed (Haas & Mortensen, 2016; Katzenbach & Smith, 2005; Salman & Hassan, 2016). These teams:

- Engage in collaborative problem-solving and generation of innovative solutions to complex problems.
- Show resilience in the face of obstacles.
- Clearly define strategy and make decisions aligned with that strategy.
- Utilize resources effectively.
- Deliver results on key initiatives/objectives.

- Regularly solicit feedback and change direction as needed based on responses.
- Create clear implementation plans and evaluate the execution of those plans.
- Make decisions in a timely manner and meet the needs of the team and organization.
- Have members who hold one another accountable for collective goal achievement.
- Effectively use technology.
- Celebrate successes.
- Periodically review and adapt the team’s objectives, strategies, and processes to improve functioning.
- Promote personal and professional development of both their team members and those who may eventually become part of the team to ensure the sustainable productivity of the team.

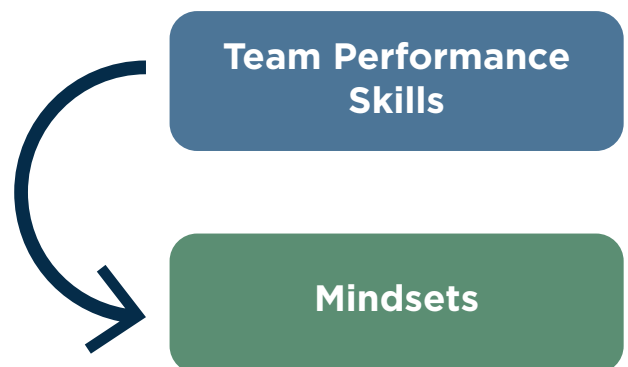
Characteristics of Teams With Low Energy

Ineffective teams tend to “pass the buck” avoiding the tough decisions, ignoring feedback from the system, missing deadlines, and producing less-than-stellar results (Kim, 2022; Grenny, 2014; Levi, 2011; Sunstein & Hastie, 2014; Emmerling & Rooders, 2020). These teams:

- Resign themselves to defeat because members cannot find a solution that works.
- Generate overly simplified solutions that maintain the status quo.
- Get locked into the same old ways of thinking.
- Are more susceptible to groupthink—simply conforming to the first ideas generated.
- Overextend resources.
- Do not follow through on plans.
- Have members who lack agreement on or even undermine decisions that are made.
- Engage in reactive rather than proactive decision-making.
- Rarely measure goal achievement.
- Hold only some members accountable for results.
- Do not focus on long-term goals or the future of the team.

Key Interaction With Other Elements

There is an interactive energy that flows from Team Performance Skills back into Mindsets. Creating strategic imperatives, monitoring performance on these initiatives, and making decisions on how team objectives and strategy should be revised directly influences the ability of the team to unify around priorities and increases team members’ shared understanding of what is most important to pursue. Further, when teams measure and celebrate their successes, it builds belief in the potency of the team



and what it can achieve. (Letsky, Warner, Fiore & Smith, 2008; LePine, et al., 2008; Parayitam, Olson & Bao, 2012; Wu, Rivas & Liao, 2017; Bell et al., 2012; Edmondson, et al., 2007; Schippers, Den Hartog & Koopman, 2007).

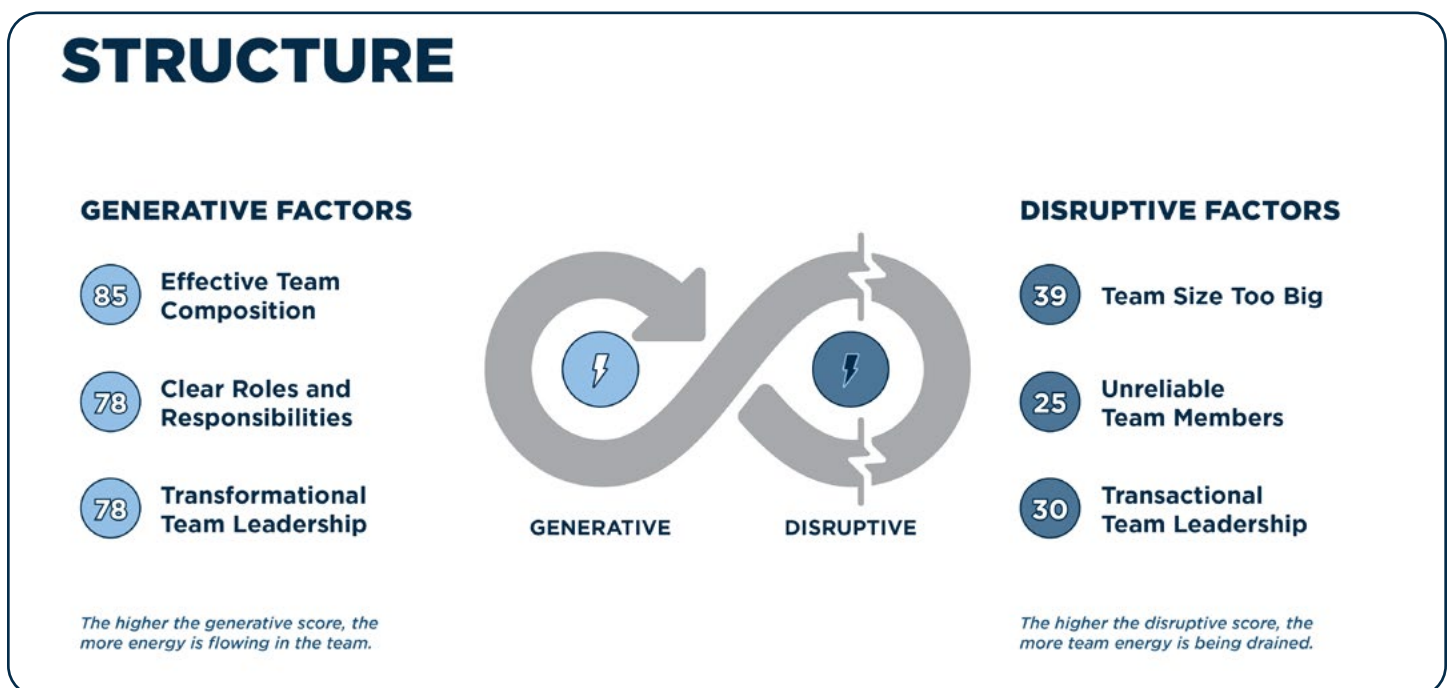
Pinpointing Strengths and Challenges - Generative and Disruptive Factor Scores

Continuing to look at patterns within the BRITE report, it is possible to go a level deeper in the results to determine the specific generative and disruptive factors that are influencing the team's energy within each element. The visualization of this layer is provided on pages 11, 15, 19, 23, and 27 in the BRITE report. Note that the page following each of these pages in the report provides the description of the factors and can be used to leverage development work.

An example of a report page showing the factors associated with Structure is provided below. (Note: Your specific team scores may or may not look similar to this page.) When analyzing this page, it is important to keep in mind that the higher the Generative Factor scores, the more energy is available for team functioning associated with that element. On the other hand, the higher the Disruptive Factor scores, the more energy is being drained or redirected into unproductive and potentially dysfunctional channels.

In general, the higher the generative scores, the lower the disruptive scores and vice versa, as evidenced in our example. Of more importance is noting where there is room for improvement on the generative side and which disruptors, if any, should be immediately addressed to improve the overall flow of energy.

To help make these decisions, we recommend following the **80/40 rule**. Any generative factor where the score falls below 80 suggests potential energy is not being tapped. When reading the definition for that factor, pay attention to what behaviors, attitudes, or beliefs may not yet be present during team functioning. Any disruptive factor where the score rises above 40 suggests





that a significant portion of available energy is being drained or reduced. When reading the definition for that factor, pay attention to what behaviors, attitudes, or beliefs are present and should be addressed and/or eliminated.

In our example, there are not any significant disruptive factors at play, but there are a couple of generative behaviors that could be improved by more clearly defining roles and responsibilities and developing a more transformational approach to team leadership. Specific strategies for how to develop better performance in these and other areas are provided in the *Strategies for Improving Energy Flow* section of this guide.

With the most effective teams, the focus should be on generating more energy. With much less effective teams, the focus should be on addressing disruptors as a way of recovering energy that was misfocused. With moderately performing teams, where there is often a combination of some generative factors that are low and some disruptive factors that are high, we recommend focusing on the disruptive factors first. Because of the tension and emotional distress caused by disruptors, removing these will often have a more profound and immediate impact on the team than simply focusing on the addition of new team skills.

Where To Begin Development Work

Once you have reviewed your team assessment results, the next step is to determine where to focus your development efforts. In general, we recommend that you begin with any BRITE element that is darkly shaded in the lightbulb on page 8 of the report. This indicates that a team is significantly underperforming, and the low levels of energy are likely to continue to derail the team without concerted effort to change team dynamics.

If your team results do not include any darkly shaded elements, select a gray-shaded element. These elements suggest that the team is having some successful interactions but there is still an opportunity to further improve dynamics. You will want to look at the underlying generative and disruptive factors to see where energy is being lost or could be added.

If your team has multiple elements shaded at the same level, and one of these elements is Mindsets, we recommend starting development work with that element, because of the interdependence with all other elements. Unleashing creative energy in Mindsets often makes the transition to higher performance in other areas easier.

If your team has multiple elements shaded at the same level, but none of these elements is Mindsets, we recommend looking at the alignment scores attached to the element to determine where there is the greatest discrepancy in the experiences of team members (discussed further below). When a team is not in alignment, it is often because disruptors are influencing individual member performance, and addressing these disruptors will be important for generating energy among team members.

Finally, if your team is performing well on all BRITE elements (there is light emanating from all domains), teamwork should shift from development to maintaining the creative energy that is flowing within the team. Look specifically for any generative factor that falls close to or below 80 and regularly check in on the strategies for the corresponding element that contains that factor to ensure that performance does not drift.

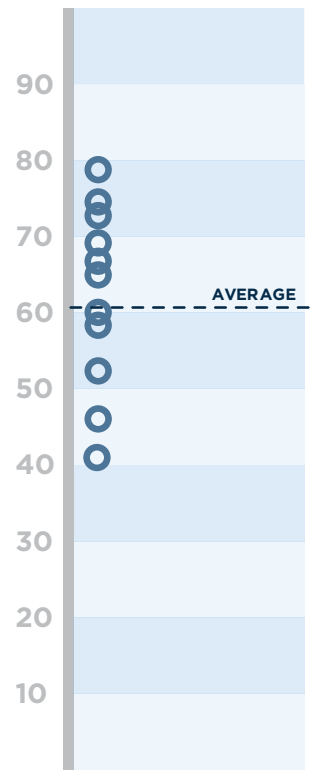
Team Alignment

On the right-hand side of each element energy score page of the BRITE report (pages 10, 14, 18, 22, and 26), you will find a scatterplot graphic, consistent with the attached illustration. This graphic indicates how each member rated the team on that element. Each bubble within the graph represents a team member.

The more dispersion among the bubbles, the more likely that team members are not having the same experiences with the team, creating an imbalance in energy flow. This suggests that the team is not aligned or equally contributing to the dynamics associated with that element.

The level of team alignment is measured by a statistic known as a standard deviation (SD) and indicates how spread out scores are from the average. The larger the SD, the more spread out the scores and the greater the disparity among team members. In our example, the team is not well aligned. Rather than the bubbles all clustering around the average, team member ratings are spread out with some having considerably higher ratings and some considerably lower ratings. This lack of alignment is indicated by SD = 13 at the bottom of the graph. Any SD greater than 10 suggests that the potential energy of the team may not be realized for all team members.

Working together as a group on strategies for developing an element with an SD greater than 10 will help to bring team members into alignment and improve the flow of energy within the team.



TEAM ALIGNMENT
SD = 13

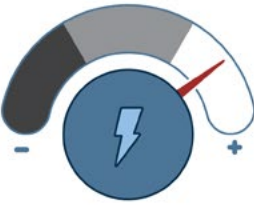
Generative Boosters

A final consideration in determining what to focus on during development work are the generative booster scores provided on page 30 of the BRITE report and illustrated in the example below. There are four combinations of factors that we have found significantly accelerate team effectiveness, provided performance is high on both factors. (Note a description of each combination is provided on page 31 of the report.)

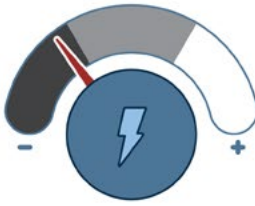
GENERATIVE BOOSTERS

Team Accelerators


Although all elements and factors interact to some extent, there are four critical combinations of factors that have an additive effect and boost the energy available to a team. A high presence of these boosters can accelerate a team's movement toward more effectiveness.




DIVERSITY + UNITY OF PURPOSE AND GOALS



TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP + LENGTH OF TIME AS A TEAM



CONDUCTIVE STRUCTURE + ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT



TEAM STABILITY + TIME FOR CONNECTION



When the needle moves into the white shaded area of the energy dial, it indicates that the team is maximizing the energy available for that combination of factors. The performance of the team will be boosted, surpassing the performance of other teams that score similarly on overall leadership effectiveness but do not have this combination of generative factors in play. As one might imagine, only exceptional teams tend to show this accelerated pattern across all four boosters, and it is no doubt partly why they are exceptional.

Most teams' boosters indicate adequate but no accelerated energy, with the needle showing up in the gray area across most dials. Moving the needle on the factors associated with the "average" level performance can help a team make marked progress toward greater team effectiveness.

Any generative booster in which the needle falls into the darkly shaded region of the energy dial suggests there are disruptors to one or both underlying factors. Immediate attention to addressing these disruptors can significantly accelerate a team toward more effectiveness.

Special consideration: Sometimes energy is suppressed because of factors outside of the control of the team. For example, the length of time as a team and the amount of organizational support are not directly under the influence of the team. However, there may be opportunities to influence these factors that will help move the needle to at least the adequate level. For example, organizational support can be addressed by inviting leaders from other teams in the organization to team meetings and discussing goals, support needs, and opportunities for sharing resources.

In the next section of this report, we identify those strategies that will be most useful with each of the generative boosters.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING ENERGY FLOW

We have designed a set of strategies that are meant to jump-start your team's conversation around promoting greater energy flow. As you read through these, reflect on any areas that you might not have explored or can modify to suit your team. It is our hope that in applying these strategies, your team's effectiveness will truly shine!

The strategies are organized by BRITE element and are ordered by those that address disruptive factors, followed by those that increase generative energy. As recommended earlier, we suggest focusing on eliminating disruptors first, but a focus on all strategies within an element can significantly increase team effectiveness.

In addition, if you are looking to accelerate team performance by focusing on the factors associated with generative boosters, we specifically recommend the following strategies:

Diversity + Unity of Purpose and Goals

- Mindset Strategy #4
- Structure Strategy #6

Transformational Leadership + Length of Time as a Team

- Structure Strategy #2
- Psychological Safety Strategy #7



Conducive Structure + Organizational Support

- Process Strategy #6
- Performance Skill Strategy #6

Team Stability + Time for Connection

- Structure Strategy #3
- Psychological Safety Strategy #7

Any strategy becomes more powerful in unleashing energy when every team member embraces and applies it. However, this development requires time and effort and evolves gradually. Teams should fight the impulse to demand immediate change from all team members and instead focus on how to support and facilitate the participation of every team member.

Furthermore, some strategies may carry more weight for certain teams, and there may be specific approaches to implementing a strategy based on the type of team. We have included sections on implications and considerations for various types of teams. Teams should be attentive to these cues and explore how to adapt each strategy to enhance the flow of energy within their specific team.

Developing Shared Mindsets

The key to developing shared mindsets lies in open discussion of what everyone thinks and believes. So often, teams fall into the trap of believing that perception is reality. In our experience, most teams perceive that they have a high level of consensus regarding their purpose, values, goals, and capability, but when we talk with individual members about their understanding and beliefs, we often find that there are significant discrepancies.

Mindset Strategy #1: Look for misalignments.

Don't assume that everyone on the team is aligned. Actively discuss and periodically review the team's purpose, goals, and priorities. It may be beneficial to start meetings by having all team members record these and even rate their confidence in pursuing each. Then hold a discussion of where there are discrepancies in understanding or confidence. A good place to begin this discussion is to look at the feedback provided on page 13 of the BRITE report. Examine the degree to which there was agreement on the strategic priorities being pursued. Why does the same list not emerge for everyone? How might pursuing disjointed or competitive initiatives influence team functioning?

Watch out for the "we all have different strengths and responsibilities so there is no way we can be focused on the same things" mindset. Sometimes teams focus on the specific responsibilities and outcomes of various functions or roles and simply include them all as opposed to creating the collective goal that incorporates and integrates the work.

Implication for Leadership Teams: The lack of a unified strategic outlook that integrates the perspectives from all areas of the organization is often the single biggest disruptor of team energy for leadership teams, and particularly the top management team.

Mindset Strategy #2: Shift focus from what isn't working to what can be done.

When a team is unified in focus on the future and what is possible, it recaptures energy that would otherwise be spent on discovering whom or what to blame for past or current results. Energy



can be redirected to understanding how to build on elements that are working well and finding new approaches that offer potential breakthroughs for better results. The shift from blaming to a focus on the opportunity for learning, adapting, and creating innovative solutions fosters a growth mindset.

A growth mindset is the belief that abilities and skills can be developed and improved through dedication and effort. A growth mindset provides the energy that allows a team to persist in the face of challenges and to be resilient in the face of setbacks or failures.

The shift to a growth mindset should be accompanied by shifts in language among team members. Be vigilant for the use of terms like “We can’t ...” which limits energy. Start employing terms like “What if we...?” which unleashes energy.

Consideration for Newly Formed Teams: During the early stages of teaming, work can seem overwhelming, and it can be easy to focus on the daunting complexity of issues and circumstances in play. The team leader and more experienced team members can help redirect focus on the inherent opportunities for growth and model a positive, optimistic attitude about the ability of the team to meet the challenges.

Mindset Strategy #3: Uncover the source of negativity on a team.

When one or more team members are pessimistic about the potential of the team, or do not buy into team strategies or approaches, it significantly diminishes energy for pursuing collective team goals. We have discovered that negative attitudes usually arise from one of four sources, and we recommend that the team hold open discussions to determine which of these sources may be contributing. Turning the negativity around may require other strategies discussed later in this guide. We briefly describe each source of negativity and how these might be addressed below.

1. Lack of understanding about what the team is pursuing and how goals relate specifically to a team member’s roles and skills can increase feelings of uncertainty and frustration. Applying Mindset Strategy #5 and Structure Strategy #7 will help address this source of negativity.
2. Cynical personality type. Some individuals have a naturally cynical outlook and are prone to negative thinking. Cynicism can be somewhat intractable and often manifests as an unreliable team member. We recommend Structure Strategy #4 in dealing with these individuals.
3. Overworked and stressed team members are more likely to develop negative attitudes and to disengage from teamwork. Keep an eye out for signs of burnout, such as increased absenteeism or decreased productivity. Consider adjusting workloads or responsibilities for this team member and provide additional support from other team members as appropriate. Also, review strategic priorities to determine if some initiatives can be taken off the team member’s plate consistent with Mindset Strategy #6.
4. When a member feels disconnected from other team members or does not believe they are heard or valued they can either withdraw or become a voice of dissent. Focusing on psychological safety strategies will be important for countering this source of negativity, and in particular we recommend applying strategies #4, #5, #6, and #7 associated with this element.



Mindset Strategy #4: Create a compelling direction/team purpose.

Team members are more motivated to actively participate on teams when they believe the purpose of the team is important and the direction the team is headed will have a significant impact on the organization. A vivid and inspiring picture of what the team will achieve in the future inspires and unifies team members. Having a well-defined purpose will guide the team's efforts and increase the likelihood that they work together toward common goals.

Teams that co-create the purpose and/or direction of the team unleash even more creative energy. But regardless of the source, team members should feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for the purpose. There are several elements that will help the team collectively embrace its purpose and direction, including the following:

- Ensure that the purpose and direction resonate deeply with team members and ignite a sense of purpose and passion within each member. This increases commitment to the purpose.
- Use visual imagery and words to paint a picture of the future the team will create, describing it in the present tense as if it were happening now. The more richly detailed and visual the image is, the more compelling it will be, making it more real/tangible.
- Clarify the purpose in language that is easily understood by team members and leaves no room for ambiguity or confusion about what the team is striving to achieve.
- The purpose should align with the values and principles of the team and the organization. When the purpose is congruent with these values, it is more likely that team members will adopt that purpose.
- It should be challenging but achievable. It should inspire team members to stretch beyond their comfort zones and work toward ambitious goals.
- It should be inclusive, making all team members feel that they play a crucial role in its attainment.
- The purpose and direction should detail the impact that pursuit will have on other stakeholders inside and outside of the organization. Team members want to know that their contribution matters.
- A compelling purpose should allow for adaptability. It should guide the team while permitting adjustments in response to changing circumstances.

Consideration With Project and Product Teams: To clarify the purpose and direction of project and product teams, it's beneficial to create a team charter. This charter serves as a roadmap, clearly defining the team's objectives and providing an outline of the project or product's scope, constraints, available resources, and timeline. The team charter establishes a framework that can be endorsed by leadership and key stakeholders to prevent misunderstandings and scope creep. Moreover, the confirmed support and commitment of leadership and stakeholders reinforce the significance of the team and its goals.

Mindset Strategy #5: Clearly define collective team goals.

A common set of goals that have been clearly defined influences team effectiveness by emphasizing the knowledge and strategies that are most relevant to what a team wants to achieve. Clarity helps everyone align their efforts toward a common purpose.



In laying out the goals, it is important to define the specific issues that need focus and ensure that everyone understands the context and significance. Have an open discussion in which areas of disagreement are identified and common ground is established. At the same time, acknowledge differences and allow for varying perspectives. Look for how disparate viewpoints can be integrated into a higher-level objective that provides a compromise of ideas that all team members can support. Focusing on core values and shared principles provides a good starting place for creating compromises.

Write out goals in SMART format: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. Removing generalities from objectives provides directed energy needed for achieving goals. Utilize input from all team members to determine how goals will be assessed and when they should be achieved. Not only does this help align team members, it creates a sense of ownership and fosters a collaborative mindset. Team members are more likely to be committed to goals they had a hand in shaping.

Repetition is key to ensuring that goals are fully understood and remembered by team members. Reinforce the communication of goals through regular reminders, updates, or progress reports. Reiterate the goals during team meetings to reinforce their importance and keep them at the forefront of everyone's minds. Create a document that defines the goals and can be easily referenced by the team.

Finally, team impact is elevated when team goals/projects are important to and supported by the organization. Teams should look for opportunities to align their goals to that of the needs of the organization. Start by asking whom the team is there to serve and what stakeholders need and want from the team. Consider inviting stakeholders and functional leads to team meetings to share their goals and perspectives. Schedule regular meetings between teams to discuss ongoing projects, share updates, and address issues and concerns. Make sure that everyone is on the same page not only within the team but across the organization.

Implication for Leadership Teams: Holding a systemic view and formulating enterprise-level goals that include cross-functional perspectives is critical for making a holistic impact on the organization and engaging all employees. Often, management teams falter when individual members approach teamwork primarily from the context of their specific function or division within the organization, rather than working toward a broader, high-level objective that encompasses all areas. This can lead to the misallocation of resources or duplication of efforts across different divisions, resulting in wasted time and effort.

Implication for Service/Operations/Technology Teams: Teams that are created to provide support to various functions or other teams within the organization should maintain regular communication with the stakeholders they serve. This ongoing dialogue ensures that the team understands the specific needs and requirements necessary to achieve its goals. Without this vital information, essential processes may not be effectively implemented, potentially leading to inefficiencies that do not align with the organization's objectives.

Implication for Project and Product Teams: It is crucial that project and product teams create SMART goals to help unite and direct team energy, and to enable team members to make progress more quickly. We have observed multiple instances where teams missed delivery deadlines because the team was uncertain about its objectives or how to measure if they were making appropriate progress.



Mindset Strategy #6: Celebrate team successes.

Team members' belief in the ability of the team to succeed is strengthened by regular review of team accomplishments. Oftentimes, teams are so busy working to accomplish goals that they don't take time to celebrate achievements. However, when the team carves out time to share success stories and to review past wins and how the team overcame challenges, it inspires confidence, bolsters pride in the team, boosts commitment, and elevates motivation to further pursue ambitious goals.

Mindset Strategy #7: Establish a team identity.

Teams that understand who they are as a team, as opposed to a collection of individuals, compound the energy available to fulfill their purpose and achieve collective goals. The formation of a shared identity results when all team members believe in the team's mission, share the same values, and see themselves as integral parts of the whole.

Team identity is strengthened when:

- individual team members place the interests of the team above their own individual interests.
- discussions are held to identify and articulate the core values and beliefs that members share.
- team members learn more about one another's abilities and what differentiates them from other teams.
- team members create symbols or rituals that are meaningful to the group. This could include logos, mottos, traditions, or ceremonies that represent the team's identity.
- time is dedicated to sharing stories that recollect important, funny, or memorable events the team has experienced together.
- the team is open to feedback and willing to adapt as the team evolves. The shared identity may need to evolve over time to meet new circumstances and changes in organizational goals.

Implication for Virtual Teams: Because of geographic dispersion, virtual team members have limited opportunities for in-person engagements. Therefore, developing a strong team identity creates a focal point around which the team can coalesce, enhancing team cohesion and fostering a sense of belonging that might not otherwise emerge.

Developing a Thriving Structure

The key to developing a thriving structure is assembling a team with the right composition of team members whose skills, roles, and personalities complement one another. Teams will need to resist the temptation to just think about this as whom to add or whom to eliminate from the team, but also consider how to maximize and utilize the potential of current team members.

Structure Strategy #1: Ensure the team is the right size.

Strive for an optimal team size that allows for effective communication, collaboration, and performance. Too few members can create insufficient skills required to accomplish tasks, while too



many members can lead to coordination and conflict challenges.

Several studies suggest that the most effective leadership teams comprise no more than eight members. Smaller teams tend to be more efficient in decision-making and as size increases the decision process becomes more complicated and costly in terms of time and resources. However, with functional, project, production, and some service teams, there is evidence that much larger teams may be required to fully achieve all goals. In general, smaller teams are more agile and so even if the team is large, it may be beneficial to divide the team into smaller sub-teams and assign different collective goals to different subgroups.

Start by evaluating whether the team's size is truly necessary. Sometimes, teams can become too large due to historical reasons or organizational inertia. Consider whether certain tasks or responsibilities could be delegated to smaller, specialized teams. If possible, divide the large team into smaller, more manageable sub-teams or workgroups based on specific functions, projects, or expertise. If you downsize, be sure that you keep all necessary roles, and possibly cross-functional representation, to foster broader perspectives in communication and collaborations.

Continually assess the team's structure and performance. Make adjustments and reorganize as needed to ensure optimal efficiency. In some cases, it may be beneficial to bring in external consultants or experts to help streamline processes and optimize the team's structure.

Consideration With Project, Product, and Technology Teams: It's worth considering the adoption of agile or Scrum methodologies, particularly if your team is engaged in software development or project management. These approaches emphasize the use of smaller, cross-functional sub-teams and frequent iterations, which can enhance productivity and collaboration.

Structure Strategy #2: Move from transactional to transformational leadership.

Many teams operate with a leadership structure that emulates the traditional hierarchical structure of organizations in past years. The team leader provides direction and assigns tasks; team members go off and do the work and then come back and report to the team leader, who is responsible for integrating all the parts and making the decisions about next steps. This structure is known as transactional leadership, and evidence shows that it can be effective to some extent, particularly with newly formed teams, but that it does not fully engage the dynamic energy of teams.

On the other hand, when teams shift to a transformational leadership structure, all team members are involved in generating creative energy, which surpasses what the team leader alone could produce. Transformational leaders share responsibility for creating goals and making decisions with the team, and then the team engages in mutual accountability for integrating ideas and achieving collective goals. The team leader's role shifts from convincing the team to follow the direction set for them, which results in the leader dominating discussions and fostering dependence on the leader for solutions, to guiding and developing team members in collectively applying their skills and knowledge to create strategies and generate innovative solutions.

In making these moves, the team will want to identify when old habits are resurfacing. The team leader will need to be vigilant about not stepping in and taking control, particularly when it appears that the team may be floundering. Rather, the leader will want to use this as a learning opportunity and guide team members to identify strategies that will turn things around. Other behaviors and characteristics that the team will want to develop to complete the transition include:

- The team leader and team members co-create goals and strategies and jointly make decisions.



- Team members are empowered to lead discussions, take calculated risks, and own their work.
- The team focuses on people (and people development), as well as tasks (and accomplishing goals).
- The team leader vulnerably shares with team about own strengths, weaknesses, and concerns, and invites feedback from the team on how to address challenges.
- The team leader promotes growth in roles, providing the necessary support and training to help team members excel in their roles. This might include workshops, mentorship, or access to learning resources.

Implication for Leadership Teams: In top management teams, transformational team leadership is of paramount importance. It elevates team commitment and correlates with superior financial performance. Moreover, the complex and interdependent nature of leadership teamwork elevates the importance of shared leadership and team empowerment for achieving success.

Consideration With Newly Formed Teams: When teams have just formed, all members may not yet have the requisite skills, or be aware of the capabilities that exist in the team, causing stress and uncertainty. In these circumstances, a transactional leader can provide the necessary direction and assurance that helps the team better focus on what is needed. However, as teams mature, the leader needs to transition toward a more transformational leadership style to empower the team to achieve more than it has previously.

Structure Strategy #3: Manage team instability.

Shifting roles, promotions, career moves, and high turnover rates can result in changes to team membership. This instability can decrease cohesion, consistency, and reliability of the team. To ensure that the negative impact is minimized, teams will need a strategy for managing changes in team composition.

First and foremost, you will want to ensure that critical roles are filled. If your team has a succession plan, this will be rather straightforward and involves selecting new team members based on their qualifications to fill the vacant role. (Note: Performance Skills Strategy #7 provides more information on how to develop a succession plan.) If you do not have a succession plan, then consider engaging one or more of the following to fill the void:

- Reevaluate team roles and responsibilities to ensure that they align with the team's current goals and the strengths of individual team members. Determine precisely what skills are needed and whether those skills currently exist within other teams that may be able to temporarily fill roles until a more permanent team member can be found.
- Redistribute responsibilities across existing team members. Invest in training and development programs for these members to expand their capabilities and bolster their confidence in meeting new responsibilities.
- Be flexible in adjusting team goals and expectations. Consider eliminating, postponing, or downgrading the priorities of some tasks/initiatives that cannot be currently achieved.
- Increase the focus on open discussions of the current situation and how it is impacting the team's performance. Add the topic to team meetings and collaboratively identify solutions and necessary adjustments. This helps the team navigate periods of instability and emerge stronger and more cohesive.



- When new members join the team, provide extensive mentoring and coaching. Consider pairing them with experienced team members who can guide and nurture their growth so that they can more quickly take on the current challenges of the team.

It is also a good idea to conduct a postmortem when a team member leaves the team to determine if there are issues within the team that may have led to the decision to leave. Examine the relationships that exist between team members and with the team leader, and determine if there is any ambiguity about the goals and roles of the team and/or the participation structure that may lead to a feeling of disenfranchisement. If your assessment suggests there are reasons for team members leaving because of dissatisfaction or lack of connection, apply other strategies included in this guide for changing the culture of the team to increase commitment.

Structure Strategy #4: Confront unreliable team members.

If a team member cannot be relied on to fully participate and support the team, it disrupts team functioning. When the dysfunction is persistent, it leads to a significant reduction in team energy and results in lower team performance. The dysfunctional team member often behaves in ways that impede team interactions by withholding information, not following through on commitments, being cynical or negative about outcomes, and/or violating agreed upon participation norms.

It is important to intervene quickly and directly with unreliable team members to minimize the impact on the team and to create more available energy through better participation of all members. Although the team leader will play an important role in dealing with unreliable team members, the whole team should be vigilant and call out dysfunctional behaviors. Peer pressure can be a powerful motivator for improving reliability. Other specific considerations in working with unreliable team members include:

- Keep a record of instances where the unreliable team member has failed to meet commitments or deadlines. This documentation will be valuable when addressing the issue.
- Explore why the team member is not fully participating. The team leader should schedule a one-on-one meeting to discuss concerns. Approach the conversation with empathy and a focus on understanding their perspective. Give the team member an opportunity to explain any challenges or obstacles they may be facing. Active listening can uncover underlying issues that may be causing their unreliability.
- Offer specific feedback on the team member's behavior, emphasizing the impact of their unreliability on the team's success. Express concerns without assigning blame. Collaboratively explore solutions to improve reliability. Ask for the team member's input on how they can meet their commitments and suggest strategies for improvement.
- Clearly communicate the consequences of continued unreliability, such as reduced responsibilities, missed opportunities, or formal performance evaluations. Implement accountability measures, such as regular check-ins, progress reports, or peer feedback, to help the team member stay on track. Keep a close eye on the team member's progress and adherence to commitments. Offer constructive feedback and recognition for improvements.
- Determine if the unreliable team member needs additional resources, training, or support to fulfill their responsibilities effectively. Provide these resources as necessary.
- Continually document the team member's progress or lack thereof in meeting their commitments. This documentation can be useful in making informed decisions about their future with the team.



- If the team member's dysfunctional behavior continues to hinder the team, involve upper management or HR to discuss potential consequences and formal interventions. Explore the possibility of reassigning them to a role better suited to their strengths and abilities.

Structure Strategy #5: Compose a team with requisite and complementary skills.

Having the right people on the team is important and perhaps self-evident. However, identifying the membership that is best suited for team success is challenging and highly dependent on the purpose of the team. When structuring a team, it's essential to consider the nature of the work, the skills and expertise required, as well as the goals associated with team initiatives, projects, or tasks. The composition should include members with the requisite skills that support the achievement of the team's objectives without creating redundancies that would not add value or might interfere with agile responding. It is important not only to have the right mix of technical skills, but to also create a harmonious blend of personalities and psychological traits within a team, enabling members to draw inspiration from each other and offer well-rounded perspectives.

When forming teams with essential and complementary skills, it is important to consider the following factors and techniques:

- Conduct a thorough assessment of each team member's skills, competencies, traits, and experiences, considering their personalities and communication styles. Compatibility and positive team dynamics are essential for effective collaboration.
- Identify the core competencies required for each role. This includes both technical skills and soft skills, such as communication, problem-solving, and teamwork. Match team members to roles that align with their strengths and expertise.
- Include members with varying technical and soft skills to create a versatile team prepared to tackle a range of challenges. Differences in skills, orientations, preferences, and styles empower team members to leverage their differences in order to achieve a collective performance that surpasses what any one individual could accomplish. However, it is imperative that these differences are complementary to foster harmony and efficiency within team processes.
- Aim for a balance of strengths and weaknesses within the team. Each member should complement one another, filling in gaps and collectively creating a strong unit. This ensures that various aspects of an initiative, project, or task are covered effectively.
- Choose members who align with the team's core values and demonstrate unwavering commitment to the team's shared purpose. Energized team performance relies not solely on possessing the right skills, as skills can be developed, but also on having dependable team members who share and uphold the team's values.
- Avoid dysfunctional team members. The most destructive personality types that deplete team energy are the cynic and the narcissist. The cynic tends to have a limited perspective when it comes to recognizing the team's potential. They are more inclined to voice disagreement with both team members and the team leader, displaying a resistance to change based on principle, and they are generally not receptive to persuasion or being convinced. The narcissist exhibits traits such as an inflated sense of self-importance, exploitation of others, a lack of empathy, arrogance, jealousy toward others, and an inability to moderate their traits for the benefit of the collective good. Their presence can often have a detrimental impact on the team, as they tend to bring down the morale of those around



them and be resistant to personal development. If either type of personality is already part of the team, it may require extensive therapy or intervention to enable them to contribute in a more constructive and productive manner.

- Embrace flexibility and room for growth within the team composition. As the team evolves and projects shift, certain skills may need to be adjusted or expanded. Regularly conduct reviews and reassess team membership to ascertain whether changes are necessary, or if retraining can address evolving requirements.

Furthermore, possessing the necessary skills alone may not guarantee that the team will have a significant impact. Team members should also possess an acute awareness of and deep appreciation for each other's skills, enabling them to make judicious use of those capabilities. Teams face challenges in achieving their objectives when members lack knowledge of or confidence in the competencies of their colleagues, even if those competencies are present. Therefore, it is imperative to create avenues for showcasing and discussing skills, sharing information about strengths. This bolsters team members' confidence in their collective skills and contributes to the cultivation of a shared belief in team efficacy.

Consideration With Leadership Teams: It is crucial to ensure that leadership teams include members from various areas of expertise, such as marketing, finance, and engineering, to foster a systemic view. It is also important that team members have strong strategic skills and critical thinking abilities. Given the substantial influence that leadership teams, and particularly top management teams, wield in the organization, it is advisable to engage an external consulting firm that specializes in executive recruitment. The external resource can aid in selecting leaders possessing the right skills that complement the team and elevate its overall effectiveness and success.

Structure Strategy #6: Increase diversity of team membership.

Ensure that your team embodies diversity in terms of ethnicity, nationality, gender, and life experiences, and that your recruitment and promotion strategies align with this commitment to diversity. Team diversity encompasses demographic distinctions among team members that are unrelated to their skills or psychological attributes. Expanding the diversity of team membership is a pivotal step in harnessing a wider range of perspectives and fostering creativity.

Diverse teams bring a broader knowledge base to the table, which can be applied and capitalized on during collaboration and problem-solving, provided that this knowledge is focused on the same objectives. Therefore, it is imperative to establish a shared understanding of the team's purpose and collective goals to take full advantage of team diversity. (Note: Mindset Strategies #4 and #5 provide suggestion for creating shared understandings.)

When actively seeking diverse members to fill team positions, consider the following:

- Scrutinize your recruitment and hiring practices to ensure they actively promote diversity. Modify job descriptions and requirements to be more inclusive.
- Incorporate diverse interview panels consisting of individuals from various backgrounds. They can play a pivotal role in reducing unconscious biases during the hiring process.
- Extend your search beyond traditional candidate sources by tapping into diverse networks and organizations. Attend job fairs and events that target underrepresented groups.
- Utilize interview questions that assess a candidate's ability to thrive in a diverse and inclusive environment. Inquire about their experiences working with diverse teams.

- Continually assess your team's demographics, culture, and practices to ensure that diversity and inclusion initiatives are effecting a positive change.

Structure Strategy #7: Clearly define roles and responsibilities of team members.

When every team member has a clear understanding of their role and how it contributes to the team's success, it reduces confusion and enhances collaboration. The most effective teams establish well-defined roles and responsibilities, delineating who does what, who has decision authority, and the interrelationships between roles. This clarity fosters collective accountability by outlining both individual distinctions and shared responsibilities between team members and between members and the team leader. Consequently, it increases the likelihood that the team will efficiently coordinate actions, ensuring that each team member's unique knowledge is leveraged and focused on what matters most.

Each team member should have a distinct role that aligns with their expertise and directly contributes to the team's purpose and goals. Specific considerations include:

- Start by creating comprehensive job descriptions for each team member. Outline the specific tasks, duties, and responsibilities associated with each role. Ensure that these descriptions are up to date and reflect the current needs of the organization.
- Connect the dots between individual responsibilities and team objectives so that team members understand how their contributions make a difference. This alignment fosters shared commitment to achieving goals and collective accountability for team success.
- Clearly distinguish between roles to avoid redundant responsibilities. When roles are not clearly distinguished, it can lead to confusion, duplication of efforts, and potential conflicts.
- Identify how roles integrate and are interdependent. Consider rotating leadership roles and responsibilities among team members. This can help everyone appreciate the challenges and contributions of their colleagues.
- Hold meetings to discuss and clarify any ambiguity around each team member's role. This provides an opportunity for team members to ask questions, seek clarification, and ensure they have a complete understanding of their responsibilities.
- Document descriptions and make them easily accessible to all team members. Centralize this information in a shared platform or document repository for quick reference.
- Periodically review and reevaluate roles and responsibilities, especially during times of organizational change or team restructuring. This ensures that roles remain relevant and aligned with the team and business's objectives.

Consideration With Matrix-Structured Teams: The roles and responsibilities in matrixed teams can be quite complex. Team members often report to multiple leaders, and decision-making responsibilities are distributed among various stakeholders. In these situations, it is of paramount importance to integrate goals and to establish which decisions team members can make independently and which require collaboration or approval.

Implication for Project Teams: Project teams are typically transient, formed for specific projects or tasks with defined start and end dates. With these teams, the rapid establishment of clear roles and responsibilities is crucial for maintaining focus on the project's objectives and improving the chances of meeting deadlines.



Structure Strategy #8: Lead by example (for team leaders).

Team leaders play a particularly pivotal role in helping the team thrive. Their communications and actions set the tone for how the team is expected to interact. To the extent that the team leader encourages and models generative energy within each element of team effectiveness, the likelihood of creative dynamics increases. A few important behaviors and attitudes a team leader should consider include:

- Express a positive attitude. When leaders demonstrate positivity and optimism for what can be accomplished, team members are more likely to engage in the work and believe in the ability of the team to have a significant impact on the organization.
- Periodically hold strategic conversations which refocus the team on the current priorities, and evaluate whether changes are needed. Reiterate the connection between the purpose of the team and the collective goals being pursued.
- Empower team members by trusting them with responsibilities and allowing them to take the lead on projects/tasks. This shows your confidence in their abilities and increases team member motivation for taking on challenging goals.
- Take a humble and empathetic approach in supporting and recognizing team efforts. Provide constructive feedback and be open to receiving feedback, understanding that everyone has a part in team successes.
- Acknowledge and celebrate both individual and team achievements. Acknowledge and celebrate instances when team members demonstrate exhibition of new skills or successful ways of dynamically interacting. Public recognition will help reinforce these energizing behaviors among all team members.
- Provide coaching and mentorship to help team members develop their skills and reach their full potential. Regularly check in with team members to understand their challenges and provide assistance when needed.
- Communicate your expectations regularly with the team and offer your own ideas during discussions. However, be careful not to monopolize conversations, providing space and opportunities for others to contribute.
- Clarify team roles and responsibilities and hold everyone on the team accountable for collective achievement of goals.
- Demonstrate through your encouragement of other's participation how much you welcome contributions from all team members. Solicit ideas from team members who are more reticent to speak up and actively listen to their ideas and incorporate them into ongoing conversations.
- Actively monitor conflict and quickly address issues so that they do not subvert ongoing collaborative processes.
- Involve team members in decision-making and facilitate boundary spanning (looking outside the team for answers) to improve problem-solving.

We also suggest that leaders review the feedback presented on page 17 of the BRITE report to identify any additional, team-specific recommendations on how they can unleash more creative energy within the team.



Developing a Psychologically Safe and Cohesive Team Environment

It is crucial for a team to cultivate an environment where team members establish strong connections with one another, and where every individual feels appreciated, supported, and empowered to take risks and openly share their thoughts and emotions. Although such an environment is more likely to evolve over time, the team must not mistakenly assume that merely spending more time together will naturally create this atmosphere. Increasing time spent in an environment that lacks psychological safety can, at best, lead to team members coexisting without meaningful interaction or, at worst, foster animosity or hostility. As the saying goes, “familiarity (without a safe and cohesive environment) breeds contempt.”

Psychological Safety Strategy #1: Nip retaliation and critical judgment in the bud.

Few things can stifle the dynamic interactions of a team as swiftly as when team members feel threatened by their own contributions. Teams should initiate policies addressing problematic behaviors and establish mutual accountability to ensure that these policies are upheld.

Implement a “no-retaliation” policy and clearly communicate that there will be no reprisal for reporting problems or errors. It’s important to recognize that adhering to this policy is significantly easier within a team that collectively embraces a growth mindset, viewing mistakes as valuable learning opportunities (see Mindset Strategy #2).

Create a judgment-free zone where individuals feel safe, respected, and valued, allowing them to express themselves freely and share their thoughts, ideas, and experiences without fear of criticism or prejudice. Clearly articulate the purpose and guidelines of the judgment-free zone. Ensure that everyone understands that it is a space for open, honest, and non-judgmental communication. Assure team members that any information shared within the judgment-free zone will remain confidential unless otherwise agreed upon. Promote the use of positive, supportive, and non-critical language while discouraging sarcasm, ridicule, or derogatory comments. Establish a rule that prohibits interrogating team members when they are sharing their thoughts or experiences. Regularly remind participants of the judgment-free zone’s rules and principles, particularly at the beginning of meetings or discussions.

Remain vigilant for manipulative behavior. If team members attempt to engage in political maneuvering during conversations, gossip, or employ other negative tactics to achieve their goals, address these behaviors directly and hold individuals accountable for their actions.

Psychological Safety Strategy #2: Address distrust and foster interpersonal trust.

Understanding the underlying causes of distrust is essential for initiating positive change and building trust. Distrust may stem from previous conflicts, miscommunication, power struggles, or personal biases. Identifying the root causes will help the team address the issue more effectively. Create a safe and open space for team members to express their concerns and feelings, and encourage candid discussions about the reasons for distrust. Ensure that everyone actively listens to the perspectives offered before providing constructive feedback on possible solutions.

Building interpersonal trust takes time but it is also a result of everyone holding each other



accountable for adhering to agreed-upon policies (see Strategy #1) and participation structures (see Strategy #5). Occasionally, a team member may step out of line, and others on the team must be willing and comfortable pointing out the infraction.

Additionally, interpersonal trust hinges on team members' cognitive evaluation of how trustworthy their colleagues are and how emotionally safe it is to interact with each member. These evaluations are based on assessing team members' capabilities (skills and experience), motivations (the extent to which they are invested in the team or their own agenda), and integrity (the degree to which members can be relied upon to do what they say and say what they do).

Carving out time during meetings to allow team members to share their experiences and motivations can help to build trust. Team members should also strive to demonstrate trustworthiness in their interactions, including:

- being consistent and reliable—honoring commitments and meeting deadlines.
- being open and transparent when communicating.
- actively listening and giving full attention to other team members when they speak, not interrupting but letting them finish their thoughts, and acknowledging their perspectives.
- taking the time to get to know other team members on a personal level and building personal connections.
- sharing vulnerabilities, mistakes, and challenges. Sharing imperfections can humanize team members and break down barriers.
- respecting and protecting team members' privacy and confidentiality, ensuring that sensitive information is handled with care.
- sharing from own experiences and mentoring newer members, promoting their skill development and increasing their confidence in contributing.

Further, team members should practice patience and persistence in their efforts. Building trust takes time and is fragile, making it essential to continually nurture trust. Acknowledging and celebrating the small steps taken to build (or rebuild) trust is important. Recognizing progress can motivate team members to continue their efforts to improve their relationships.

Psychological Safety Strategy #3: Break up cliques and non-sanctioned subgroups.

When teams segregate into self-selected subgroups, it fosters an “ins” and “outs” culture that can impede effective collaboration and foster distrust among members. If the behavior of a clique becomes disruptive or exclusionary, it should be addressed directly, concentrating on the behavior and its consequences, rather than singling out individuals. The objective is not to eliminate social connections but to guarantee that they do not obstruct team collaboration and inclusivity.

Before taking any action, take the time to understand the nature and dynamics of the cliques. Identify who is involved, why these cliques have formed, and what impact they are having on the team. Consider the following actions to discourage or disband cliques.

- Periodically rotate team members' assignments or project groups to prevent the formation of static cliques and to encourage interactions with different colleagues.
- If cliques have formed due to misunderstandings or miscommunication, address the



misconceptions or biases that contribute to the division.

- Pair team members from different cliques as mentors and mentees. This can stimulate interactions and collaboration between individuals who might not otherwise connect.
- If a specific clique holds leadership roles, regularly rotate these roles to distribute leadership responsibilities more evenly.
- Continually monitor the team's dynamics and interactions, remaining vigilant for any signs of new cliques forming and addressing them promptly.
- Recognize and celebrate individual achievements and contributions to the overall team purpose. This can reduce the need for members to exclusively seek validation or support within cliques.

Psychological Safety Strategy #4: Focus on diversity and inclusion.

Set clear expectations for respectful and inclusive behavior within the team. Communicate the high value placed on diversity and emphasize that team members are expected to embrace the unique perspectives and backgrounds of their peers. Promote discussions that highlight these differences and identify opportunities to leverage the diverse viewpoints for more comprehensive and innovative knowledge generation.

Establish channels for team members to provide feedback on inclusivity and diversity, and to report any issues. Allocate time during team meetings for members to share their experiences, as this can aid in the early identification and resolution of problems. In addition, the team leader may conduct one-on-one discussions with concerned team members, offering individual attention to address any feelings of isolation or exclusion they may be experiencing.

Be mindful of the language used in team communications, avoiding exclusive or biased language. Promote terminology and phrases that are inclusive and respectful. This may involve bringing in a coach or other professional to train team members and raise awareness of unconscious biases and stereotypes that influence interactions.

Enforce a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment, or exclusionary behavior within the team. Ensure that individuals who engage in such behavior face appropriate consequences.

Psychological Safety Strategy #5: Develop a welcoming participation structure.

Teams often assume that members know they are welcome to participate. However, creating and disseminating formal guidelines outlining expected interactions facilitates everyone's participation and results in smoother team functioning. Structuring the ways in which the team will collaborate should encompass several key focal points.

- Norms for inclusiveness to ensure that all team members feel comfortable offering their opinions without fear of repercussions or ideas being dismissed (builds upon Strategies #1 and #4, presented above).
- The rules of communication that promote equitable speaking and listening. Clarify when individuals should and should not speak (like avoiding interrupting others), and set expectations for how respectful responses should be given.



- Openness to feedback and how to engage in “constructive criticism” that leads to creativity rather than shutting down the conversation.
- List of meeting “must- and must-not do’s,” like arriving on time to meetings and listening when someone else has the floor, as opposed to carrying on side conversations, etc.
- Procedures for how consensus and/or agreement will be achieved and how conflict will be managed.
- Description of team roles and how they are expected to integrate (building on Structure Strategy #7).
- Ground rules on what information is pertinent for discussion, how much discussion is adequate, and how decisions will be made.
- Use of measurement to identify team impact and promote change and principles for establishing collective accountability and further team development.
- Expectations for adhering to the participation structure and the consequences if any member does not comply.

The team can also refer to the feedback provided on page 21 of the BRITE report to identify important participation structures that should be incorporated and to discover any missing expectations not mentioned but that would be important to include. Well-defined processes and procedures can prevent misunderstandings that tend to disrupt team cohesion.

Implication for Virtual teams: Participation norms are particularly important for virtual team meetings, given the challenges of maintaining engagement in a remote environment. Without clear norms and mutual agreement on how team members will interact during virtual meetings, there is a risk of disorganization, with participants talking over each other, not paying full attention to the discussion (e.g., multitasking by checking email), and getting distracted by their surroundings. Establishing and adhering to guidelines can significantly improve the quality and effectiveness of virtual team interactions.

Psychological Safety Strategy #6: Develop Team EQ.

Team Emotional Intelligence (Team EQ) refers to a team’s collective ability to recognize, understand, manage, and effectively leverage emotions in a group setting. It encompasses and goes beyond individual emotional intelligence and focuses on the emotional dynamics, communication, and relationships within a team. The higher the level of Team EQ, the more positive and inclusive the team environment.

The team leader plays a pivotal role in shaping Team EQ by setting an example of emotionally intelligent behavior. This includes demonstrating self-awareness, effective emotion management, empathy, and understanding, which provides a model for the rest of the team to follow. It is equally important for all team members to enhance their self-awareness and take time for introspection regarding their emotional states, triggers, and responses.

To promote empathy within the team, encourage members to actively listen to one another, consider each other’s perspectives, and make an effort to understand others’ emotions and needs. Encourage team members to imagine themselves in each other’s shoes to gain a better understanding of their emotions. Cultivate a culture of feedback and reflection within the team, where members are comfortable sharing feedback on emotional dynamics and their experiences in managing emotions.



Formal training on Team EQ can be highly beneficial for a team. This training should focus on how to:

- recognize and label both theirs and others' emotions accurately.
- validate team members' feelings and emotions without judgment, encouraging them to express themselves authentically.
- use emotional vocabulary to express feelings more precisely, enhancing understanding and communication within the team.
- interpret nonverbal cues and body language, as these can convey a wealth of emotional information.
- employ techniques for regulating team emotions, such as deep breathing exercises, mindfulness, or taking short breaks when needed to manage emotional responses effectively.
- manage stress and maintain emotional well-being, especially during high-pressure situations.

Psychological Safety Strategy #7: Strengthen team member connections.

Creating opportunities for team members to spend time together is essential for building strong interpersonal relationships, discovering shared values, and enhancing team cohesion. Structuring these opportunities effectively maximizes their impact and contributes to the team's development. Here are some key considerations:

- If possible, design a physical workspace that facilitates interaction and collaboration. Open office layouts, common areas, and collaboration zones can help promote interconnectedness.
- Engage in activities that involve working or playing together and that promote a deeper understanding of each other. Activities that focus on shared interests and experiences can be highly effective, fun, and engaging. Such activities help team members establish rapport and gain a better appreciation of their natural connections.
- Seek out team-building exercises and role-play simulations that align with the team's purpose and objectives. Exercises emphasizing task completion through collaboration, effective communication, and the integration of ideas are especially useful in breaking down barriers and fostering dynamic interactions. Further, as teams (or sub-teams) achieve success, the shared accomplishments strengthen the bond among members.
- Ensure that all team members have the opportunity to participate in activities. Consider individual needs and preferences to make the experiences inclusive and enjoyable for everyone.
- When the team reaches milestones or experiences success, celebrate these accomplishments as a group. This reinforces the notion that achievements are the result of collective effort.
- Support team members in building professional networks both within and outside the organization. Networking can broaden perspectives and foster interconnectedness among team members and across teams.
- Establish a regular rhythm of opportunities to sustain the team's energy and reinforce the bonds that have been forged. Incorporate a variety of activities to accommodate different preferences within the team. Some team members may prefer outdoor adventures, while others may enjoy indoor social gatherings.



- Encourage team members to reflect on the experiences and insights gained during these activities. Discuss how they can apply these lessons to their work within the team.

Implication for Leadership Teams: Cohesion within leadership teams is of paramount importance, as it directly impacts their ability to influence the organization. Research has shown that highly cohesive top management teams are more effective at boundary spanning because team members are more inclined to leverage their external relationships for the collective benefit of organizational goals.

Implication for Virtual Teams: Because of the lack of in-person interactions, virtual team members often feel disconnected from one another and have less certainty about their colleagues' strengths and values, potentially undermining trust and cohesion. In this context, it is crucial for virtual teams to place a strong emphasis on building connections among members and enabling them to get to know each other better. Leveraging technology becomes an important resource in bridging the gap. Tools like chat rooms, email distribution chains, and follow-up phone conversations have proven effective in helping virtual teams maintain communication and build trust.

Implication for Newly Formed Teams: Providing frequent opportunities to build quality connections is very important for newly formed teams or teams that have experienced significant turnover. We recommend bi-weekly meetings at least for the first few weeks or until the team achieves its first goals. These initial meetings should focus on activities that help team members get to know each other better. Depending on the team's dynamics and circumstances, more intensive meetings with a strong emphasis on building interpersonal relationships may be necessary.

Implication for Matrixed Teams: Team members who are part of multiple teams should be mindful that they may have limited time available for each team. Therefore, they must make a conscious effort to maximize the quality of their limited interactions with members of each team on which they participate. This involves staying focused, building strong bonds, and maintaining an equivalent level of commitment to each team. It is essential for members in matrixed teams to manage their time effectively and ensure that their involvement contributes positively to each team's goals and objectives.

Developing Processes for Better Information Exchange and Knowledge Generation

Better information exchange and knowledge generation within a team hinges on actively considering all pertinent data, ideas, details, and experiences. As expressed by some of the teams we've worked with, this process is akin to "putting the fish on the table"—a call for transparent and forthright sharing of critical information and discussing essential matters. However, one common pitfall for teams is that these discussions can occasionally wander aimlessly, veer down unproductive paths, or fixate on a single line of reasoning. The team must be willing not only to expand the conversation but to reign itself in when discussions begin to derail team progress.

Process Strategy #1: Balance team participation and improve communication.

Balancing team participation and fostering effective communication is crucial for productive team discussions. To achieve this, consider implementing the following techniques:

- Ensure equal distribution of talking and listening among team members. Encourage everyone to stay on point, providing time for others to contribute.



- Implement a rotating speaking order for each agenda item during team meetings. This prevents the same individuals from consistently speaking first or last.
- Designate a neutral moderator or facilitator to guide discussions and ensure that every team member's voice is heard. The facilitator can intervene if someone is dominating the conversation.
- Prioritize face-to-face communications where team members directly engage with one another, using visual cues to signal information is understood and it is time to move on.
- Take designed breaks in the conversation to allow team members to work in smaller groups or go out to external groups and then bring back information to the full team.
- When noticing that someone hasn't spoken up in a while, ask them direct questions to prompt them to share their thoughts and opinions and so the team can include their input.
- Use a round-robin approach, where each team member must contribute one idea or comment before returning to those who wish to add more. This ensures that everyone has an opportunity to speak before anyone can monopolize the discussion.
- Start the discussion with a silent brainstorming session, where every team member writes down their ideas before sharing them. This method encourages diverse and independent thinking, ensuring that team members don't immediately align their thoughts with the first viewpoint presented (known as the cascade effect). By allowing multiple ideas to be generated in writing first, there is a higher likelihood that the discussion will include a broader range of perspectives and that the team won't miss out on valuable input from different members.

Consideration With Virtual Teams: Virtual teams often face limitations in communication and information exchange due to various factors. Informal opportunities to interact and share information are more restricted in virtual settings. Additionally, constrained time and limited observation during online meetings can hinder team member participation and make them more susceptible to information miscues, cascade effects, and reactive responding. To mitigate these challenges, virtual teams may need to hold more frequent meetings and potentially longer meetings compared to collocated teams. These additional meetings can help ensure the quality sharing of information and promote effective collaboration by compensating for the limitations inherent in virtual interactions.

Process Strategy #2: Slow it down to allow cognitive energy to spread.

It is important to provide enough time for new knowledge to fully emerge from discussions. Teams need time for reflection after interacting to consolidate and integrate information and make informed decisions rather than reacting impulsively to issues.

It is crucial to incorporate moments of silence to prompt additional thinking before moving on to the next topic. Moving too quickly or rushing through discussions increases the likelihood that teams will focus solely on only the most common, top-of-mind information, potentially overlooking other valuable insights that may be key for decision-making and problem-solving.

Further, without sufficient time for reflection, team members who initially disagree with an idea may become more entrenched in their own views, potentially leading to polarization where extreme or narrow positions are taken. Encouraging reflection can help prevent this polarization and promote greater diversity of perspectives within the team, increasing the likelihood of innovative insights.



Process Strategy #3: Embrace and manage conflict.

Conflict within teams is inevitable. When individuals with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and ideas come together to work on a common goal, differences in opinion and approach are bound to arise. However, conflict doesn't have to be negative. When managed effectively, it can lead to better decision-making, increased creativity, and stronger team relationships.

The key is to address conflicts immediately, constructively, and respectfully. While unresolved conflict can tear a team apart, allowing team members to voice their concerns, find common ground, and work toward solutions can help teams navigate challenges and turn conflicts into opportunities for growth and improvement.

Some effective conflict resolution strategies include:

- Face the conflict directly once it occurs and look for compromises to disagreements (common ground) while maintaining an openness to new solutions and flexibility in trying them.
- Proactively design participation structures that help guide conflict discussions, including each team member agreeing to be responsible for policing their own reactions.
- Develop a tolerance for disagreement and recast conflict as an opportunity to engage in innovative problem-solving. Build on the respect for diversity of thought and channel differences into more creative approaches to discussions.
- Use the technique of “constructive controversy” where team members structure opposing ideas so that they can evaluate the merit of each idea and look for ways to incorporate what is best in all, reaching a new set of conclusions.
- Encourage healthy debates and welcome differing viewpoints. Establish ground rules for respectful disagreement to prevent conflicts from becoming personal or divisive.

Process Strategy #4: Overcome failure to learn.

Some teams fail to extract meaningful lessons from their collaborative experiences, causing them to miss opportunities and imperil their future success. To enhance knowledge transmission and ensure that teams engage in ongoing learning, it is important to document the outcomes of team discussions. This documentation can take various forms, such as reports or recorded insights shared in formats that are easily digestible by others. This information should be systematically archived in a centralized repository, which can be realized through digital platforms or document management systems that are accessible to all team members.

It is also important to cultivate a culture of sharing best practices within the team. Recognize and reward team members who willingly share their experiences and provide valuable insights that enrich the collective knowledge of the entire team. Convene discussions to dissect lessons learned and collaboratively brainstorm solutions to common challenges. Establish feedback loops to assess the transference of knowledge and leverage this feedback to perpetually refine the process.

Process Strategy #5: Add regular check-ins.

Conduct regular team check-ins to evaluate team members' current satisfaction with team processes and feelings of inclusion. These check-ins can take place during meetings or discussions or can involve quick surveys distributed to all team members. The most effective teams conduct some form of check-in on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, especially when nearing a major goal.



Check-ins offer team members an opportunity to share updates on goal progress, discuss current challenges, assess their well-being, and maintain open communication. The feedback collected from these check-ins should be used to improve processes and approaches as needed. In particular, the team should notice any instances of exclusion, misalignment, target drift, or lack of significant progress. The identification of any of these issues indicates the need for additional meetings to address concerns, solve problems, or make necessary course-corrections.

Process Strategy #6: Expand the conversation/team boundary spanning.

To expand the diversity of perspectives and ensure that teamwork aligns with the systemic needs of the organization, the team should actively seek the insights and viewpoints of stakeholders outside the team. Just as collaboration and integration within a team enhances efficiency and productivity, effective networking with other teams broadens the team's influence and positively impacts the organization's agility and performance. This increased influence is often referred to as team boundary spanning, as it involves integrating information from outside the team's boundaries.

Further, by interacting with other teams and external partners, teams can add to their learning by sharing best practices and making use of shared resources. This collaboration can prevent redundant efforts, leading to greater efficiency and the ability to solve more complex problems.

To excel in this broader collaboration, teams need to proactively manage external relationships and explore opportunities to partner on larger enterprise goals. This requires team members to express their views authentically and speak up in situations where participation structures may not be well-defined. Scheduling regular meetings between departments or teams to discuss ongoing projects, provide updates, and address any issues or concerns ensures that everyone is aligned and working toward common objectives.

Implication for Service and Operations Teams: Due to the service-oriented nature of these teams, it is absolutely crucial that they involve external stakeholders in their meetings to ensure that the team's efforts align with and meet the needs of those they serve.

Implication for Virtual teams: Virtual team members often encounter difficulties when it comes to collaborating with others who are not part of their immediate team. This can impede the team's overall progress and its effectiveness in making a meaningful impact on the organization. Virtual team members often have limited contact with external stakeholders who are not physically located with them and may not participate in their remote calls. As a result, they may lack access to the perspectives and needs of different teams within the organization. To address these challenges, virtual teams should take the initiative to invite other stakeholders to join their virtual meetings and engage in collaborative discussions.

Implication for Matrixed Teams: Team members who participate in multiple teams can utilize a unique advantage over other teams if they share their insights and knowledge obtained from their participation in these various teams. This natural boundary spanning can be used to build team knowledge and integrate a wide range of ideas, ultimately contributing to the achievement of organizational goals. In essence, by serving as bridges between different teams, these members play a crucial role in fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange across the organization.

Process Strategy #7: Use technology to enhance information exchange and collaboration.

Technology affords teams effective ways of staying in touch, sharing ideas, and engaging in collaborative work. It promotes open and transparent communication across team members and can be used to encourage everyone's participation.



Several of the technology tools listed below allow team members to contribute without having to wait for others to engage or for someone who may be monopolizing the conversation to stop speaking, which can address common problems in communication, such as cascading, polarization, domination. Further, team members in different locations and time zones can contribute when it is most convenient for them. Using these tools, a team can build upon the conversations initiated in face-to-face meetings, used to create a common understanding of what is needed, and provide the time for everyone to go off on their own and generate ideas before evaluating the best choice and without using up precious face-to-face time.

The real-time intercourse of some tools, like Slack, allows ideas to “spark off” each other and encourage co-creating as opposed to competing and critiquing. Other types of technology, like SharePoint, can be used for follow-ups to discussions, providing places for the team to converge on important points, document meeting outcomes, track and retrieve information, and measure progress.

There are numerous technologies available for team collaboration, and the choice of tools depends on the specific needs and preferences of a team. Here are some popular technologies and categories:

- Communication, Messaging, and Conferencing Tools: Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Slack, Google Meet, Discord
- Project Management, Workflow, and Time Management Tools: Asana, Trello, Jira, Monday, Zapier, Integromat, Toggl, RescueTime
- File Sharing and Knowledge Management Tools: Google Workspace, Dropbox, Box, SharePoint, Confluence
- Whiteboarding, Diagramming, and Notetaking Tools: Miro, Lucidchart, Stormboard, Mural, InVision, Ayoa Ultimate, Evernote
- Team Survey and Feedback Tools: SurveyMonkey, Typeform, Qualtrics, Outgrow

Implication for Virtual Teams: Technology plays an indispensable role in establishing connections within virtual teams. Online meetings and collaboration tools are essential for the seamless functioning of these teams, making it nearly impossible for them to operate effectively without these technological resources.

Process Strategy #8: Energize team meetings.

Ideally, meetings should be focused, fun, and fulfilling. Nothing zaps team energy like boring, unproductive meetings. The list below provides some methods to ensure that meetings are well-managed and result in effective information exchange and knowledge generation.

- Minimize unnecessary meetings—if it doesn’t contribute to team goals or add value, eliminate it.
- Each meeting must have a clearly defined purpose and a well-structured agenda outlining the topics to be discussed. Share the agenda in advance to allow participants to adequately prepare.
- Begin the meeting with a review of the agenda and obtain agreement that these are the important issues for discussion.
- Focus the meeting on achieving two or three outcomes and drive the conversation to



resolution. Remove items from the agenda that can be effectively resolved by a small subgroup of team members in a separate meeting.

- Stay on topic and avoid drifting into unrelated discussions. If tangential topics arise, note them for potential future discussion (create parking lots) but promptly redirect the focus back to the main agenda.
- Allocate the time within the meeting in line with the following proportions:
 - 20% - *Information sharing. Consider other ways for sharing information outside of team meetings (e.g., technology). Time is better spent on clarifying questions.*
 - 40% - *Generative conversations, allowing new ideas to emerge through leveraging team members' knowledge.*
 - 20% - *Making decisions.*
 - 20% - *New business or housekeeping.*
- Set specific time limits for each agenda item to prevent any individual from monopolizing the discussion. Use a timer or clock to manage speaking time. Start and end the meeting on time to respect participants' schedules. Allocate dedicated time slots for each agenda item and stick to the schedule.
- Designate a meeting facilitator who can guide the discussion, keep the meeting on track, and manage time.
- Meetings should result in actionable decisions or next steps. Clearly assign responsibilities and deadlines for tasks that arise during the meeting. At the end of the meeting, summarize key discussion points and decisions made, and review action items, responsibilities, and deadlines.
- Send out meeting minutes or a summary to all participants after the meeting. Ensure action items are tracked and progress is reviewed in subsequent meetings.
- At the end of the meeting, conduct a final check-in to identify team member takeaways, commitment to decisions made, agreement on who owns any follow-up, and how decisions will be communicated. Leave a few minutes for reflection on what went well or not so well during the meeting.

Consult page 25 of the BRITE report to identify other ways that team members have suggested would improve team meetings.

Developing Improved Team Performance Skills

The path to enhancing performance skills lies not only in combining individual abilities but also in leveraging and expanding upon them to elevate collective strengths. Teams need to avoid the trap of settling for “good enough” when there’s considerable room for improvement and growth.

Performance Skill Strategy #1: Conduct proactive performance reviews.

It is important to regularly assess team performance to ensure that team outcomes are creating value and to be proactive in addressing any shortcomings. This ongoing feedback loop enables the team to make timely course-corrections and avoids the reactive firefighting that tends to ensue



when teams wait until they measure goal achievement to take action.

Teams that incorporate a consistent rhythm of reflection, action, reflection are quicker to recognize areas in need of improvement and to seize opportunities for development. Additionally, they can apply learnings across different projects and goals, ultimately spending less energy than teams that must resort to “heroic efforts” to rescue projects or initiatives due to neglect-induced, compounded problems.

The energy saved can be channeled into additional knowledge acquisition, staying abreast of industry trends, market shifts, and changing stakeholder needs. This knowledge equips the team to proactively respond to unexpected events and to capitalize on emerging opportunities.

Performance Skill Strategy #2: Leverage the best thinking.

Teams are often composed of highly intelligent members who possess good critical thinking skills. Nevertheless, teams don’t always leverage these skills. We have already examined a few cognitive limitations related to processing information in team meetings, such as cascading and polarization. (See Process Strategies #1 and #7 for additional details.) There are two additional thought patterns that can ensnare teams, hindering their ability to effectively make decisions and solve problems.

The first cognitive limitation is **binary thinking** or more commonly referred to as “either/or” thinking. This occurs when a team looks at situations, issues, or choices as limited to two mutually exclusive options, without considering more nuanced or intermediate possibilities. They frame decisions as, “should we do this, or should we do that?” They miss alternative options that might arise from creatively combining the available information, including elements of both choices.

A second cognitive limitation is known as **groupthink**. Groupthink happens when team members become fixated on a single perspective of a problem or issue. Sometimes, this fixation occurs unconsciously, such as when team members automatically build upon the first idea presented. Without an intentional effort to expand their thinking, the group naturally gets locked into a narrow conception of the situation. Instead of genuine consensus, it is merely conformity to the initial idea. In some cases, groupthink may result from team members consciously holding back their opinions to conform with the group or maintain group harmony. This is more likely to happen in teams with a hierarchical structure or when there is an over-reliance on expert opinions.

In both instances, the team fails to take full advantage of all available information that resides within the team. Becoming aware of these challenges and being vigilant for their display is a good first step in overcoming them. Three other strategies that may help a team to leverage everyone’s thinking and information are provided below.

- Utilize brainwriting instead of brainstorming, where team members individually write down their ideas before sharing them. This approach reduces the influence of dominant or expert voices and increases the likelihood that diverse strategies will emerge.
- Divide into two sub-teams, with each sub-team tasked with reviewing and constructively critiquing the assumptions, decisions, and solutions of the other. This can reveal blind spots and uncover potential pitfalls.
- Be attentive to nonverbal cues that may indicate dissent or disagreement. Encourage less vocal team members to express their thoughts and opposing ideas, because their perspective may be the key to unlocking the constraints of binary thinking and groupthink.



Performance Skill Strategy #3: Stay the course.

Sometimes teams give up too quickly when they face challenges or abandon a plan when it does not immediately produce results. Instead, they should persevere, analyze, adjust, and maintain a focus on long-term success. Teams must be willing to put in the necessary effort and due diligence to understand why a particular plan is not working as expected. Rather than abandoning the plan, they should focus on adjusting and tweaking it to improve its effectiveness.

It's also crucial for teams to take a long-term view, particularly in the case of leadership teams, where complex, multifaceted initiatives are involved. Such teams need to consider the broader and longer-term outcomes, as well as the intricate integration of various components. They should be prepared to invest the time and effort required to make sure all moving parts align to achieve their strategic goals.

Breaking long-term goals into a series of short-term goals is a strategy that not only provides motivation and energy throughout the journey but also ensures that any issues or obstacles encountered along the way can be addressed more readily. This incremental approach allows a team to maintain a sense of progress and momentum, making the overall goal more achievable and manageable.

Performance Skill Strategy #4: Engage collaborative problem-solving.

Collaborative problem-solving is the process of working together as a team to find solutions to challenging or intricate problems. The most successful teams encourage team members to approach the problem from diverse perspectives, offering unique insights into the problem and potential strategies for resolution. This collaborative approach helps team members overcome mental fixations or response sets that can limit the range of possible solutions, as the collective intelligence of the team surpasses what any individual team member might consider. As a result, collaborative problem-solving often leads to the generation of innovative and successful outcomes.

Effective teams can leverage the collective knowledge of individual team members to form a comprehensive understanding of the problem and fill any gaps in comprehension that might otherwise hinder both the initial problem assessment and the subsequent strategy development. However, the team will need to be cautious of groupthink (discussed in more detail in Strategy #2, above) and avoid automatically deferring to the team's expert. While team members should certainly value and utilize the insights of the expert, it's equally crucial to be deliberate about incorporating the ideas of all team members. The expert may not possess all the relevant information required to solve the problem comprehensively. The collective intelligence of the entire team often exceeds the capability of any single individual, including the expert. Therefore, fostering an environment where every team member's ideas and perspectives are considered can lead to more innovative and well-informed solutions.

Furthermore, teams can be trained to make more efficient use of each other's knowledge, leading to higher-quality solutions. Some of these techniques include those listed below.

- Clearly define the problem to be solved, including where to begin and the desired outcome. Ensure that every team member shares a common understanding of the problem.
- Allocate time for ideation. Use brainstorming sessions to generate a wide range of ideas without judgment. This encourages creative thinking and allows for the exploration of different solution possibilities.
- Establish specific timeframes and deadlines for different stages of the problem-solving process to prevent procrastination and maintain momentum.



- Develop a feedback mechanism where team members can provide input on proposed solutions. This ensures that the chosen approach is well-informed and incorporates diverse perspectives.
- After implementing a solution, evaluate the outcomes and reflect on the process. Identify what worked well and what could be improved to enhance future problem-solving efforts.

Performance Skill Strategy #5: Be strategic in planning.

Being strategic is about adopting a well-thought-out, forward-looking, and intentional approach to achieving goals. In contrast, the absence of strategic thinking often leads to impromptu, reactive, or short-term planning that may not contribute to long-term success.

Engaging in strategic planning involves mapping out the team's actions over a defined period and ensuring that these strategies are in line with the organization's strategic direction. Tasks should be prioritized based on their alignment with strategic objectives. The team should concentrate on high-impact activities that bring them closer to their goals. Furthermore, it's important to encourage team members to contemplate the long-term consequences of their decisions. Questions such as, "How will this decision impact us in the future?" can be valuable in the strategic planning process.

Being strategic involves the ability to anticipate challenges, opportunities, potential risks, and emerging trends, as well as developing plans to address these factors before they become urgent issues. It also requires the flexibility to adapt plans as conditions change while staying aligned with the overall direction and purpose of the team.

In essence, the team that is strategic designs a game plan that details how the team will accomplish its objectives and aligns those actions with the efforts of other teams and with the organization's vision for the future. Highly effective teams recognize the importance of involving key stakeholders in the planning process. This inclusive approach ensures a well-rounded perspective and enables the appropriate allocation of resources, both financial and human, necessary to support the successful realization of integrated initiatives.

Performance Skill Strategy #6: Make sound and timely decisions.

Every team, regardless of its purpose or size, faces the necessity of making decisions, ranging from routine daily choices to complex strategic determinations that can significantly influence other teams or the entire organization. The core of effective decision-making lies in employing a process that the team comprehends and can implement efficiently, avoiding excessive over-analysis and ensuring sound, timely decisions. We have identified eight steps outlined below, which have proven to be valuable for teams in making well-informed and prompt decisions.

1. Clearly outline the process for making decisions within your team. Determine who has the authority to make the final decision, when to seek input, how to gather information, and the level of consensus required.
2. Gather relevant information and prioritize data and objectives over personal preferences or politics. Rely on evidence-based reasoning to guide discussions and choices. Make informed decisions based on facts rather than assumptions.
3. Define the criteria that the decision must meet. What are the key factors that should be considered when evaluating options? Are there potential risks associated with different options, and what risk mitigation would be required to minimize negative impacts? Consider



using a decision-making framework, such as SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats), cost-benefit analysis, or decision trees, to guide the team.

4. If the decision impacts other teams or stakeholders, involve them in the process. Seek their input, listen to their concerns, and consider their perspectives.
5. Generate a range of possible options or choices. Assess each option against the decision criteria. Consider the pros and cons of each choice and prioritize the options based on their alignment with the decision criteria and the team's objectives.
6. Allow time for open and constructive debate where team members can discuss their views and concerns. Ensure that discussions remain respectful and focused on the issue at hand.
7. Once all the necessary information has been gathered and discussions have taken place, make the final decision. Ensure that the decision is communicated clearly and effectively to the entire team. Explain the rationale behind the decision and how it aligns with the criteria and goals.
8. Put the decision into action, assigning tasks and responsibilities as needed. Continually monitor the results of the decision and assess whether it is achieving the desired outcomes. Be prepared to adjust the course of action if needed. Reflect on the decision-making process and outcomes. What worked well, and what could be improved in future decisions? Use each decision as a learning opportunity for the team's growth and development.

Performance Skill Strategy #7: Develop the team and plan for member succession.

The most effective teams provide the necessary support and training to empower their team members to excel in their roles. This support can encompass various approaches, such as workshops, mentorship programs, and access to educational resources. These teams prioritize continual learning and encourage their members to stay informed and up to date within their respective fields. Additionally, they plan for team member succession to prevent the loss of critical skills when team members leave or transition out. The following are specific strategies that such teams employ for developing their members and planning for their succession.

- Foster a culture of knowledge sharing within the team. Create platforms for team members to showcase their skills or present their work to the group.
- Pair experienced team members with those who have less experience, facilitating the transfer of expertise across the team and preserving valuable skills and perspectives as team members move on to new roles.
- Assess your current team members to identify individuals with the potential to take on key roles in the future. Look for skills, experience, and leadership qualities. Work with potential successors to create individual development plans. These plans should outline the skills, knowledge, and experiences they need to acquire to be ready for the targeted roles. Provide mentorship and coaching to guide and nurture their growth.
- Promote cross-training and exposure to different aspects of the team's work. This broadens the versatility of current team members' skill sets and makes them better suited for taking on different roles in the future.
- Ensure that the career goals and aspirations of potential successors align with the roles you're grooming them for. Ensure diversity in your succession planning efforts. Consider



candidates from different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives to enrich the team's capabilities.

- Review and adjust your succession plan as circumstances change. Business needs and individual capabilities evolve, so the plan should be flexible.
- Occasionally give potential successors the opportunity to act in a key role temporarily, especially when a current team member is on vacation or taking leave. This can help assess their readiness.
- Begin succession planning well in advance to allow for the development and preparation of potential successors. Don't wait until a key team member is about to depart.
- Keep clear records of your succession plan, including the identified successors, development plans, and timelines. This documentation ensures that the plan remains transparent and accountable.
- Develop an emergency succession plan for unforeseen departures or absences of key team members. This plan should identify who will fill in temporarily.
- When a team member successfully transitions into a key role, celebrate their achievement. This can inspire others and reinforce the importance of succession planning.

Effective succession planning not only ensures continuity but also motivates team members by showing that their growth and development are valued within the organization. It can lead to a more engaged and skilled workforce, which benefits the team and the organization as a whole.

Performance Skill Strategy #8: Create collective accountability and improve execution.

Frequently, teams perform well in generating ideas, reaching decisions, and even settling on solutions, but they struggle with the execution phase. The focus tends to be more on agreement than commitment resulting in a lack of accountability. Consequently, the team functions without recognizing its inability to make significant progress toward its goals. To turn this pattern around, teams will need to establish and implement procedures that ensure execution of decisions, measure outcomes, and hold everyone on the team accountable for success. Below are some key steps to include in these procedures.

1. Start by defining who is responsible for executing the decision/solution and ensure they understand their roles and responsibilities. (Note: This may include more than one person on the team.)
2. Develop a detailed plan outlining the necessary tasks, timelines, and resources required for implementation and how progress will be monitored.
3. Regularly track the progress of implementation and hold meetings with the entire team to discuss progress, identify any obstacles, and determine what, if any, corrective actions are needed. It's important not to gloss over problems but to address them proactively.
4. During these meetings, review the team's collective goals and key performance measures and how the execution of the plan contributes to them.
5. Review key performance indicators (KPIs) associated with the execution outcomes and encourage team members to critique performance, provide constructive input, and offer solutions and guidance for improvement. This helps create a shared commitment to the outcomes.



6. Recognize and celebrate individual and team successes. Acknowledging achievements reinforces the value of collective accountability and encourages a sense of shared responsibility. Make it clear that the team's collective accountability is a journey of continual improvement. Encourage team members to seek ways to enhance their accountability processes and overall team performance.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM COMPETENCIES

There is a complex, multilevel interplay between individual and team strengths. While a team's competence can surpass the collective abilities of its members, the performance of individual members, influenced by their skills, attitudes, and behaviors, plays a pivotal role in determining the overall effectiveness. For instance, the cognitive and emotional capabilities of a team are reliant, in part, on the intellectual and emotional (EQ) skills of its members. To maximize this impact, team members must collaboratively combine their skills. However, if even one team member chooses not to actively participate, it can disrupt the team's functioning. As such, each team member has the power to either contribute creative energy or disrupt the available energy within the team.

Therefore, in addition to improving team dynamics it is also important to focus on developing each individual team member. The development of both will have a multiplier effect.

Contribution of Individual Creative and Reactive Behaviors on Team Energy

The Leadership Circle's Universal Model of Leadership provides a useful framework for understanding the interrelationships between individual and team energies. Creative Competencies comprise key behaviors and internal assumptions that lead to high fulfillment and high achievement. Individuals who have developed a high level of skills in these areas are often characterized by their adaptability, innovation, and forward-thinking orientation. They bring creative energy to the team. They make ideal team leaders and are effective participants on management teams.

Reactive Tendencies comprise the inner beliefs that limit personal effectiveness and authentic expression. Individuals with a high degree of these tendencies tend to be preoccupied with eliminating problems and self-preservation. They are often characterized as control-focused, fearful of change, defensive, rigid, quick to blame others, with low resilience. Their participation often results in a decrease in energy within the teams they join. In extreme cases, these individuals can become dysfunctional and cause substantial disruptions within the team.

The interplay between individual characteristics and team dynamics can exacerbate an already challenging situation. For instance, when a team member lacks the necessary information to feel like an integral part of the team or hasn't been encouraged to contribute their unique strengths in a more inclusive manner, it can amplify their insecurities. This increased sense of insecurity may lead them to engage from a Reactive orientation, depleting the team's energy and initiating a negative feedback loop.

Individual Development as a Pathway to Greater Team Effectiveness

Considering the substantial impact of individual characteristics on team energy, it would be advantageous for the team to gain a deeper understanding of how these characteristics influence each element of team effectiveness. Subsequently, providing individual development plans that align with team strategies can lead to enhanced performance.



For clarity, we have used **green highlighted** titles to identify the Creative Competencies that boost creative energy within the team and **red highlighted** titles to signify the Reactive Tendencies that deplete the team's energy.

Individual Skills and Tendencies Influencing Mindsets

Purposeful and Visionary

Tend to be optimistic, enthusiastic, and passionate about what is possible. Fosters a compelling vision through dialogue with team members which yields high levels of commitment and alignment.

Community Concern

Committed to making a contribution to all parts of the organization and to those stakeholders outside of the organization. Feels a responsibility to serve and preserve the larger web of relationships from which the organization takes life.

Systems Thinker

Focuses on growth-minded goals that will serve all parts of the organization and create opportunities for integrating work across departments/divisions/teams.

Ambition

Can be overly self-centered and competitive. Always comparing themselves with others and finding their shortcomings to get ahead. Is less likely to share credit or goals.

Individual Skills and Tendencies Influencing Structure

Selfless Leader

Sees relationships as opportunities to serve. Works from a position of equality and seeks mutual benefits. As a team leader, manages from a transformational leadership orientation.

Autocratic

Is forceful, aggressive, and controlling. Believes that being powerful, dominant, and invulnerable keeps them secure. As a team leader, manages from a transactional leadership orientation.



Individual Skills and Tendencies Influencing Psychological Safety and Cohesion

Interpersonal Intelligence

Has strong interpersonal skills, is a good listener, and easily builds trust and rapport. Effectively manages the feelings of others and their own feelings.

Composure

Stays composed, calm, and focused under pressure. Keeps things in perspective and handles stress well. Is a calming and cohesive influence on others.

Pleasing

Tends to be political. Seeks others' support and approval. Avoids anything controversial or unpopular and views conflict as unacceptable. Is quite sensitive to criticism or disapproval.

Individual Skills and Tendencies Influencing Processes

Collaborator

During disagreements, finds mutually beneficial compromises, develops synergy, and creates win-win solutions. Is a cooperative team player and is open to being influenced, even when has a clearly formed opinion.

Fosters Team Play

Promotes high levels of teamwork, cooperation, and interaction. Invites input from others and fosters open, honest dialogue with the team. Is inclusive and respects diversity.

Courageous Authenticity

Is willing to take tough stands and bring up issues that other team members may avoid. Communications have a high level of integrity. Gives direct and constructive feedback to others and authentically manages conflict.

Passive

Plays small and simply complies with others' views. Sits back passively during meetings rather than fully engaging. Rarely initiates conversations or offers their opinions.

Arrogance

Can come across as superior, egotistical, and self-centered. Talks a lot in meetings, taking up too much airtime. Gets upset easily when their ideas are challenged.

Individual Skills and Tendencies Influencing Team Performance Skills

Strategic Focus

Is able to translate strategic thinking into rigorous and thoroughly developed business strategies to ensure that the organization will thrive in the near and long-term.



Decisiveness

Confident in making difficult decisions, balancing data and intuition in uncertain conditions. Focuses on what's important and prefers taking reasonable risks to inaction.

Achieves Results

Is goal directed and has a track record of goal achievement and high performance. Has developed a real proficiency for achieving high-quality results on key initiatives.

Belonging

Goes along to get along. Conforms to whatever the group thinks. Is resistant to change and focuses on maintaining the status quo. Often delays action until it is clear what the team leader wants.

In addition to the review of the BRITE report, the next level of awareness for each member of the team is introspection: "Why do I act in ways that are not optimal?" "How do I recognize and manage my own Reactive Tendencies that get in the way of my impact and influence?" While the answer (and, therefore, the path forward) is different for each individual, there will be common beliefs and assumptions that the entire team can address.



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