Team effectiveness conditions

HANDOUT

The Team Effectiveness Conditions framework identifies the 6 Conditions that best predict performance in real-world teams. These conditions can be deliberately designed and actioned to create an environment where great teamwork will emerge and where significant accomplishment will be attained. The Framework comes from decades of research by Harvard University scholars Richard Hackman and Ruth Wageman.

The three essential conditions: the fundamental building blocks of great teams.

1. **Right People**
   - A team with the right people has the range of perspectives needed to do the work, and the skills - including teamwork, facilitation, and management skills - to bring those perspectives to the work.
2. **Real Team**
   - To have a great team, you have to create a real team: one that is bounded so that members know who is on the team (and who is not), they need to work together to accomplish their work, and they are stable in membership long enough to accomplish something meaningful together.
3. **Compelling Purpose**
   - Teams need a purpose that engages their commitment and orients them in a shared direction.

The three enabling conditions: accelerate a team's development into a brilliant collaboration.

1. **Sound Structure**
   - Every team benefits from a few elements of healthy structure: keeping the team small enough, tackling tasks together that make sense to be done as a team, and identifying a handful of explicit norms about what they should and should not do when they work together.
2. **Team Coaching**
   - Well-designed teams benefit from coaches who can help the team make excellent use of its resources.
3. **Supportive Context**
   - Every team operates in a larger context, and the structures and systems in that context (such as rewards and information) can either promote great teamwork, or create obstacles to excellent collaboration.

Use the following pages to practice diagnosing your teams and plan next steps for creating the team effectiveness conditions.

Ready - Condition	Set - Diagnosis questions to ask	Go! - Steps to take
Real team		
Clear boundary	If you were to ask each individual in your team to name the number of people that they think are on the team, do you think each person would be in agreement? What about your team might lead to confusion about who is on it? What about your team helps to make it clear who is a member and who isn't? Do you have different numbers of people showing up at your meetings and why?	Talk about who is in the core team. Who makes the decisions together on behalf of this team? That's the core. List the various categories and publish, orient new people to levels of input/activity. One way to be sure boundaries stay clear is always for core members introduce themselves as members, and new folks as guests Boundaries should be reestablished and discussed whenever there are membership changes.
Interdependence	Do your team members do most of their work separately or take advantage of each other's ability to contribute together? How much work gets done by a single person on your team? What are all the tasks that require more than one person to do them – that can't happen without team involvement? Here are some things that leadership teams should do together: learn, decide, create, plan, mobilise, allocate resources, and prepare a team member to represent the team. How much time is your team spending on these kinds of tasks versus hearing reports on individual work?	Look at the balance of time each team member spends on individual v team tasks. Define a task to accomplish together as a team, with everyone participating. Make sure that your team's agenda is dominated not by individual reports and activities, but by collective work. If time is spent in mostly individual activities, combine activities, define team tasks that require people to work together, drop some individual responsibilities.

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Stable over time	Does your team experience high turn-over around election periods, as a result of burn-out or changing personal conditions? Do you have a group of people who have some experience and comfort working together, that have faced challenges, are able to make decisions and then implement them? Does your team always having to bring people up to speed? Do you spend a lot of time revisiting decisions?	Make your team a place where people want to stay (through compelling purpose, constructive norms, and engaging tasks). Be sure to require meeting attendance of all members. Make a long-term commitment (at least a year) part of the requirements of membership. Manage instability so that it doesn't hurt your committee: have a planned "orientation" process to socialise new members
Right People		
Skills and perspectives	Is your team too small to take on the work that you have to do? Is your team too large to make decisions effectively? Do you have the right people on the team to do the work that you believe is the most important? For instance, if you think that the most important thing your team can do is management and oversight of staff and campaign plans, do you have anyone who is talented in these areas?	Identify the skills this team needs Recruit for specific skills Give people training Sit down with potential new leaders and explain to them the work that they are committing to and the time commitments, etc. Allow them to see clearly what you are asking of them. Allow them to self-select.

Ready - Condition	Set - Diagnosis questions to ask	Go! - Steps to take
Compelling Purpose and Direction		
Challenging	Do you feel as though the work that you are doing is a stretch of your capabilities and those on the team? Does it feel as though you are doing a short walk or a big climb? Does it feel as though it is the right fit given the capacity of your team?	Set a tougher goal for the team (not individuals) Strategise together about a campaign to take on
Consequential	In your view, what is the main purpose of the team, what does it exist to accomplish? Do you think that others on your team share your opinion? Do you think that others on your team would be able to articulate a common purpose that is the same as others?	Talk about the challenge you have chosen to face together Tell a Story of Us List the tasks you do as a team to serve your constituents or meet the challenge you face Weave these together into a statement of who you are, what you do, and why
Clear	Does the work of the team make a difference? Does it connect to personal values? Do you walk away from a meeting with a knowledge that you have really made a difference or do you feel as you are performing required or habitual functions? If your team were to stop meeting, what would be different or wouldn't happen as a result?	Talk about whom you serve Identify the connections between your individual values and your team purpose. If they are very vague, redefine a purpose that is better connected to your values

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Sound structure		
Norms	Does your team have shared expectations about what behaviors are acceptable and unacceptable? For instance, do you have a set of ground rules for how you conduct meetings? Do you a common understanding of how you will hold each other accountable for doing tasks?	Put a special section in your next meeting focused on what members of this team always do, never do, and how you will self-correct. Conduct midcourse reviews—what's working for us and not? How will we change?
Motivating team task	Does your team have a whole, meaningful piece of work to do and the autonomy to make decisions about how to do it? Does the work involve the use of multiple skills? Does the team have metrics in place or ways of knowing when the work that they have done is a success? (Especially for tasks that may have long timelines)	Review the theory of task design. Connect directly to your constituents (to improve meaningfulness), create metrics (to improve knowledge of results). Connect with head, heart, and hands. Ensure there are opportunities for regular feedback

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Supportive context		
Rewards for the team	Do people only receive awards and recognition for individual efforts? Is there collective effort for which only one person is getting recognition? Do rewards as currently structured cause competition amongst those who are on the team? Are there ways that teams could be rewarded as well as individuals?	Celebrate things together - bring treats to a meeting and toast your successes. Invite someone who was helped by your team's work to come talk to the team and thank you.
Information	Are people operating in ways that leave some people in the dark about what is going on? Have there been times when two people are working on the same thing and don't know it? How do people in the team receive information – how do they provide it to others? What is most important information needed to achieve your committee's purpose? Does everyone have that information?	Actively discuss what the team needs to know to do its tasks effectively. Deputise a person to be information-gatherer and communicator for specific tasks

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Team coaching		
Training	Does everyone have the skills and knowledge they need to achieve the purpose of the team? Are there areas where people need to improve or learn new skills? In particular, does everyone have training in working together collectively as a team?	Facilitate training on particular skills and knowledge Think creatively about who outside the team knows the things you don't and invite them in to support as a coach or trainer Send a member to training on behalf of the team who can report back and share what they learned
Material resources	Is this team able to get resources to do the job? What is needed to get access to more resources?	Exercise influence upwards and outwards in the organisation to get what you need Do some creative strategising about how you and another group could pool or exchange resources
Coaching	• **Motivational:** Do leaders and others offer each other support and guidance at the start of a team task? Is effort made to inspire and indicate that there is hope of achieving an outcome, overcoming a challenge? • **Consultative:** Do leaders and others offer each other support and guidance in making, implementing and evaluating strategy? At a midpoint in a team task, does someone offer to take the team through a reflection on work up to that point? What happens if something isn't working – how does the team get help in finding a new course? • **Educational:** Do leaders and others sit down and provide orientation and training to each other on how to do the work of the team?	Conduct your own midcourse reviews and debriefs to harvest lessons from your own work. Invite people in to observe and provide feedback to the group Identify people in your team with special talent for observing and coaching the team. Ask them at specific times to play that role for the team. Rotate the role.