

NOW YOU HAVE A TEAM, WHAT'S NEXT?

In the first of our series of articles about teams, *What Makes a Team a Team*, we discussed:

- What makes a team a team?
- How do you know if you have a team or just a bunch of people working together that call themselves a team?
- Why you should care if you've got it right?

If you have managed to create a group of individuals that support the common goals of the team over their individual goals and have established interdependence, then 'well done', you have yourself a team. So what's next?

It is widely accepted that all teams go through the phases of *forming*, *storming*, and *norming* before they start *performing*. **Taku Group's approach to building high performance teams helps accelerate the forming, storming and norming phases.**

3 Steps to Creating High Performance Teams

Teams progress naturally through relatively predictable phases of development. Although the phases of performance share common characteristics across teams, each team's experience of each phase is unique. Our intent in describing the journey is to help you understand the natural phases so that you can provide your team with a context in which to view its experience. **When team members understand that what they are experiencing is a natural phase in their team's unfolding, they find it easier to weather inevitable storms and setbacks by focusing the team's effort on incorporating high impact team competencies and practices to accelerate its progress toward high performance.**

We have created High Performance Team concepts designed to produce highly functional and effective teams. There are three steps in the process:

Step 1: Chartering the Team

High performance teams cannot be summoned forth. Superior performance arises from individual and collective choices, where excitement is generated, and curiosity and creativity are engaged.

The investment in team chartering lays the foundation for superior team performance. The ground can be prepared, elements put in place, and conditions created that shape the possibility for high performance.

The chartering process is not a "feel good" exercise. It is the time when the team establishes its:

- Definition
- Purpose and expectations
- Roles and responsibilities
- Conflict and risk mitigation methodology

The lack of a defined purpose and clear expectations are the top reasons groups do not become high performance teams. From our experience working with teams, we know that **a team does not develop without a significant performance challenge that is meaningful to all involved.**

Additional problems in team performance can also be traced back to initial issues such as unresolved conflict, role confusion, inadequate time for team communication, and other factors that could and should be discussed and resolved in the chartering process.



Step 2: Developing the Team

Once the team has been properly chartered, you need to turn your attention to the quality of the implementation of the team's work. This is the time to work on developing skills in:

- Decision-making
- Problem-solving
- Process improvement
- Interpersonal behaviors, especially those that relate to building and nurturing trust

Due to the global nature of many companies, the complexity of organizations and the teams within them has increased. As complexity increases in an enterprise or a team, cooperation and trust tend to decrease unless a conscious choice is made to counteract that tendency. A decrease in trust and cooperation is followed by a significant decrease in productivity.

The skills and competencies required of team members to work cooperatively are at the core of a high performance team. At the end of this stage a team can:

- Make decisions fairly and in alignment with the team charter
- Identify and resolve problems that might arise from the deliverables required of the team or from the team itself
- Eliminate inconsistencies, redundancies, and other flaws that are likely to surface as a process gets translated to real-work activities
- Establish a process improvement methodology as part of the on-going work of the team
- Address any team member behavior that does not add to the synergy of the team

Step 3: Sustaining the Team

The difference between teams that perform adequately and those that ultimately achieve high performance status is based on the team's ability to:

- Recognize when it is not performing well
- Analyze the situation without blame
- Take corrective action

High performance teams are skilled at self-diagnosis, evaluating causes, giving feedback in a nonjudgmental way and taking appropriate corrective action even when it is painful. They know that this will ultimately create a better result for the team, its customers, and the organization as a whole.

Taku Group's approach to developing high performance teams is to coach teams through each of these three steps. By investing the time to go through this process, teams start performing sooner, and the level of performance is typically much higher than that of teams that do not have a formalized system for team development.

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