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# Creating & Keeping Great Teams

## Paper 5. Series 6: Motivation & Communication

If you lead a group of people, however small or large, you are engaged in managing team dynamics. This can be three people working as a start-up team, operating closely together and carrying out multiple tasks. It can be multiple teams coming together as one large department in a big corporation; either way a team dynamic is at play.

On paper a team can look quite straightforward, someone will have planned who does what, when and why. Every member has a job description defining their role, duties and responsibilities. Each group of people will have targets and responsibilities for performance. Reporting and communication mechanisms will be in place, there may even have charts showing how every person connects and fits together in the business. Anyone who manages people though will know it is far from simple in everyday practice.

For instance, have you ever sat in a meeting, or looked around the team you are part of, and felt some members were not contributing fully? Perhaps you've even questioned if colleagues were working against you behind your back? Once these types of thoughts enter your mind as a business leader it shows the team dynamic is not working. Nothing overt may even be said by you or others but your thoughts, words and actions will be influenced by this mind-set. Conversely, if you are in a team and look around you and see it functioning well, with strong bonds of trust and complementary capabilities it emboldens you, it allows each of you to come together and function as a sum greater than your individual parts. As Phil Jackson, the well-known basketball coach, is often quoted:

*"The strength of the team is each member. The strength of each member is the team"*

In my early career I worked in an environment where we had to deal with individuals who could be unpredictable, highly emotional and occasionally aggressive. I know that the confidence we had as a team in supporting each other made me better at providing care to these vulnerable clients. Though we weren't quite as dramatic as Hannibal, BA, Face, Murdoch and Amy in the original A-Team series; I know I achieved more, believed more could be done and worked harder because I knew the rest of the team would do the same.



## Creating Clarity, Enabling Success



In the late 1990's two psychologists, Amy Lew and Betty Bettner, studied the behaviour of children<sup>1</sup> and their 4C's model has evolved into the four core needs of a team, to test the strength of a group of people. A great team needs members to feel the following elements are present:

- **Connected** ...belonging to the team
- **Capable** ...feeling competent
- **Count** ...feeling they matter to others
- **Courage** ...they can cope with situations

My example shared above of a great team can be summed up in this 4C's model, as all four elements were present: I felt I belonged (Connected) in the team, I felt the members were competent (Capable), that we mattered to each other (Counted) and that collectively we could cope with whatever happened (Courage).

As Know+Do, we work with about a hundred clients a year and see many teams needing to achieve more. One example is a service business I'll call *Great Stuff Ltd* (to keep their anonymity). After we worked on a group and one-to-one basis with the management team, the CEO of *Great Stuff* responded to the feedback and radically changed the team. It was clear that though there were competent people in the business the core group that managed everything in this fast growing company were not operating as an effective team. Some of the managers were supported to exit the business and it resulted in a smaller group, who worked with greater trust and communication and achieved more. Now the management team is growing again at a planned and prepared manner, performance is not suffering and *Great Stuff* are expanding.

You will have from your own experience examples of the great, and not so great teams, you have been part of. **The universal issue is that great teams are needed to run great businesses.** Whether that is with a group of volunteers in a charity, coordinating officers in a public agency or managing a supply chain of contractors in a private business. Henry Ford has many quotes attributed to him, one I often use is: *"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success"* He knew people working in a team is at the core of every business.

A manager's job is therefore in large part about creating and maintain a great team of people. Even great leaders know they need to form a great team around them. The business world is full of examples of those who've built successful companies this way. One such entrepreneur is Alison Pincus, Co-founder of One Kings Lane, she states you should: *"Surround yourself with a trusted and loyal team. It makes all the difference."*

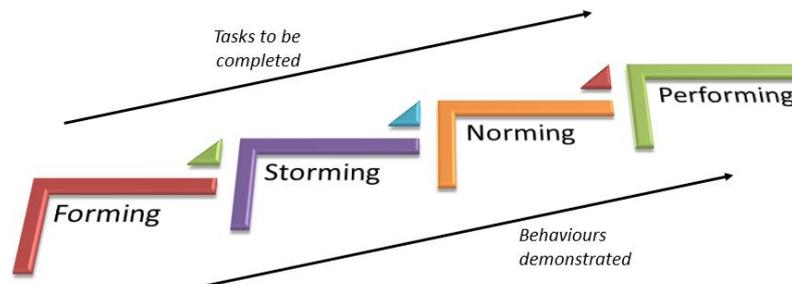
Having defined the common issue, the key for us at Know+Do is to share a solution - to summarise the knowledge available and offer a busy manager a practical response to impact their team's performance. There are many team dynamic models available, different personalities and context provide the yardstick for their relevance. You can use such models as Peter Honey or Meredith Belbin's Team Roles, the Team Climate Inventory, S.W.O.T. analysis or many more.

The over-riding model that has flexibility to be applied in many situations and depths of detail is Tuckman's Team Development Model (see the diagram below).

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<sup>1</sup> Lew, A. & Bettner, L. (1995) Responsibility in the Classroom: A Teacher's Guide to Understanding and Motivating Students

## Creating Clarity, Enabling Success



The words may be familiar – *Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing* – but what is often less familiar is recognising:

- i) How to lead a team through the stages to reach the pinnacle: a high performance team, and,
- ii) That teams constantly reform and return to progress again through these stages

The first step for a manager of a team is to assess where you think a team is 'at'. This is not an objective exercise but one that can be done internally through discussions with a team, colleagues or supervisors, as well as by drawing in external viewpoints. Assessment can be done by reflecting on the common attitudes and behaviour of the team as a whole, it provides a starting point for action by a leader.

There are no minimum time limits on when teams move through these stages. Teams are dynamic in their constitution. Being made of humans means teams do not have linear development; by nature, people progress at different rates. Operating, as we all do, in a time of constant change and external flux many teams are consistently re-starting the process of development as roles, responsibilities and personnel evolve. A great manager will be encouraging the attitudes and behaviours needed to move a team through the stages.

If you are responsible for a team it is your duty to act on your assessment and create the change you want in a team. It is all too easy to find a normality and stay at, say stage 3, getting along in what might be described as an 'okay' fashion. Planning and then targeted action is needed to move performance forward.

Using the template below (see table 1 below) you can form a priority list of what you could do for your team to create positive change.

Look at the stage the team you've assessed above is at and choose the appropriate list of questions below. Answering the questions will start you thinking about what you need to do to help your team move forward. But please note they are only starting points; you may want to add your own comments; equally you may find as you start the exercise other issues emerge in your reflection. The questions are shared as prompts, designed to place the emphasis on the leader of the team thinking about how they act, how those actions are perceived and then how the team members need to behave.

We suggest taking from your notes, at most, 3 clear actions and putting them into practice; then you can stop and reflect on your perspective and the results of your strategy.

| Actions to take with your team to move from...   |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| Forming to Storming Stage  | Storming to Norming Stage   | Norming to Performing Stage   |
| Have you agreed / renewed a clear purpose?<br>Have you shared the roles of all involved?<br>Are there short and long term goals for the whole team?<br>How have you demonstrated trust to the team?<br>What reward systems are set in place?<br>Does the team know each other well enough? | How active are you in demonstrating positive behaviours and rewarding it in the team?<br>Have you checked that roles are working in practice or have been updated from team feedback?<br>What communications systems are in place?<br>Have you requested / encouraged feedback? | Have you recognised achievements?<br>Is responsibility shared appropriately?<br>How are the team members' leadership skills being developed?<br>Are you honouring your time commitment to the team?<br>How do you find and embed new team members?<br>What new / higher goals do the team need? |
| Actions to move a team from the ..... to the ..... stage: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> </ol>   |   |   |

Table 1: A manager's checklist for developing a team

Remember, our expertise at Know+Do is in creating great teams. We support managers to not only move their teams through these stages but then to set a plan for constant improvement; the model is not static. Once a team is 'performing' well the leader's role is in maintaining development, momentum and growth. We can provide the structure to create a great team and then build a lasting great team in your business.

If you'd like to find out more about how your team could advance its collective performance contact us on 0161 280 4567 or [info@knowanddo.com](mailto:info@knowanddo.com) for ideas to inspire your team's development.

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Know+Do publish monthly [Think Papers](#) on a variety management related topics. To help managers, we offer in-house training on a range of business success and management issues. We also have expert performance coaches available to encourage organisational and leadership growth.

We welcome comments and feedback on the [Think Papers](#) - drop the author (Bernard Clarke) a line via [bernard@knowanddo.com](mailto:bernard@knowanddo.com), call (0161) 280 4567 or tweet [@berneclarke](#).