One of the biggest questions is how to build the perfect team and in fact about four years ago Google invited me to come spend some time with them. Because they were in the middle of a big project called Project Aristotle. A huge data study to try and figure out how to build the perfect team. At Google initially their hypothesis was that the best teams are teams where you put people together who like each other. And maybe you need a good mix of extroverts and introverts. Maybe you need people who are friends away from the conference room and so they looked at the data and they did experiments. And they found that who was on a team actually didn't matter at all. They couldn't find any correlations between team membership and team success. So, then they started looking at how a team interacts. And this is where suddenly everything became clear. Because what they found is that the people who are on a team met are much much less than how those people interact. That you could have enemies on a team together or you could have strangers or friends or people who don't get along or all introverts are all extroverts. And as long as they treat each other a certain way as long as there's a certain culture then that team will gel. So, as they started looking at these behaviors what they found was that there were two in particular that mattered more than anything else.

The first was called equality in conversational turn taken during a meeting or a set of meetings if everyone speaks at roughly the same amount then that team is much more likely to succeed. But just speaking isn't actually enough the second characteristic that teams need in order to do well is called ostentatious listening. That basically in addition to encouraging you to talk more. I as a team leader or team member have to show you that I'm listening by is doing things like repeating what you just told me or closing my computer. so, I can make eye contact with you. If you have these two characteristics conversational turn-taking an ostentatious listening it creates what psychologists refer to as psychological safety. And psychological safety is shown as the single greatest correlate with a group's success when a group feels like they are psychologically safe with each other. You unlock their best ideas, their ability to work together, their innovative capacity. This Google's fundamental belief as is true for many other companies is that it's only when a team comes together that you actually get the best ideas out of each person and the best work at getting that is done.

Technology companies encourage their employees to work together because studies show the teams tend to innovate faster, achieve higher productivity, see mistakes more quickly and find better solutions to problems. Yet not every team is successful. So, how do you build a highly effective team that is capable of delivering expected results?

A study run by Google will shed some light on this question and help us identify trades that all successful Google teams shared.

Several years ago, Google launch an internal project Aristotle which was a huge data study focused on the teamwork. The tech giant spent millions of dollars tracking 180 separate teams for three years. The goal of the project was simple yet ambitious- to find out what are the traits of the highest performing teams. In other words, the company wanted to know why some teams stumbled while others sort initially the researcher’s. Hypothesis was that maybe best teams had members who liked each other a lot or there was a healthy mix of personality types or the team members were friends outside of work. Yet none of these seemed to matter. The researchers could not find any meaningful patterns in the data. Basically, there was no evidence that a mix of specific personality types or skills or backgrounds made any difference. The whole part of the equation(ɪˈkweɪʒn̩) didn't seem to matter. As the researchers continued to study the group's they noticed two behaviors that all of the best teams shared. First is that the team members spoke in roughly the same proportion. A phenomenon the researchers call **inequality in distribution of conversational turn-taking**. On some teams everyone spoke during each task while on others leadership shifted among teammates from assignment to assignment. But in each case at the end of the day everyone had spoken roughly the same amount. In other words, as long as everyone got a chance to talk the team did well. But if only one person or a small group spoke all the time the collective intelligence declined.

Second.

The good teams all had high average social sensitivity. A fancy way of saying they were skilled at reading how others felt based on their tone of voice, their expressions in other nonverbal cues. One of the easiest way to determine social sensitivity is to show someone photos of a person's eyes and ask to describe what that person is feeling. An exam known as reading the mind in the eyes. People on successful teams scored about average on this test. They seemed to know when someone was feeling upset or left out.

People on less effective teams in contrast scored below average. They seemed to be less sensitive towards their colleagues. By the end of the project researchers came to conclusion that it didn't matter who was on the team. What mattered was how team members treated each other. Teams were everybody talked and everybody showed respect by listening and paying attention created psychologically safe atmosphere inside the team. And psychological safety of each member in the group had a positive effect on the team's ability to succeed.