Creating Teams That Work

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Creating the Team Foundation

Right away

Foundations need to be laid early

Assumptions

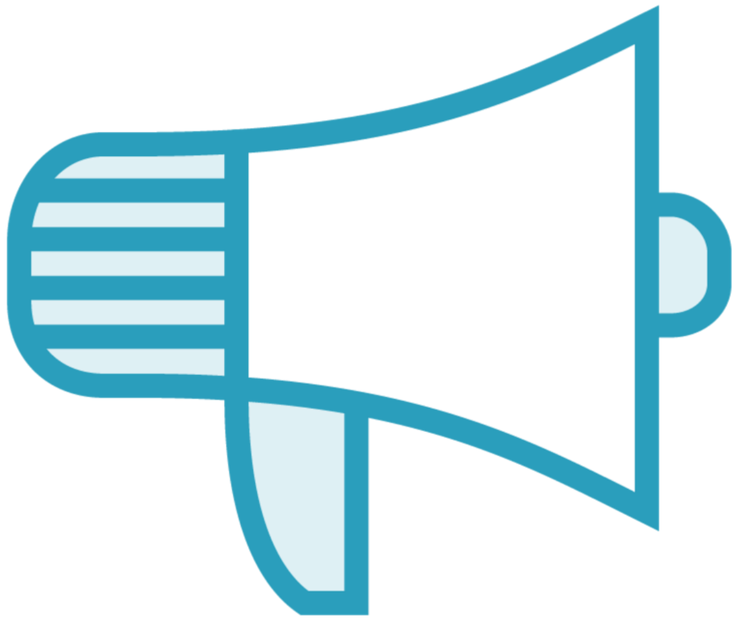
Assume your team doesn't know

Opportunity

Define and work towards your culture

Brainstorming could create buy-in.

Establish Group Norms



Norms might look like rules

They can be boundaries of how to act

Develop your own list of norms

Share your list with your team

Ask them for their input

Communicate your team's norms regularly

Team Norm Examples

Decisions

Each person can make most decisions without getting manager approval

Communication

Decisions, and justification behind decisions, should be documented

Team norms can
be empowering.

Team Norms Can Lead to Success

Norms define how your team functions as well as expectations and roles.

Establish Clear Goals

- Team leaders needs to understand goals
- Your team needs to understand goals
- Helps everyone know what success will be
- Helps know how they will be evaluated
- Communicate your expectations
- Communicate performance measurements
- Align your priorities with team goals
- Creates confidence within the team

Create the Right Environment

Help people feel comfortable

Help people feel motivated to contribute

Show appreciation when ideas are shared

Make sure the appreciation is genuine

Allow, and respect, silence in meetings

Too often we feel an urge to fill in the silence, instead of respecting it.

Our meetings were better
when we respected
and allowed silence.

Create the Right Environment

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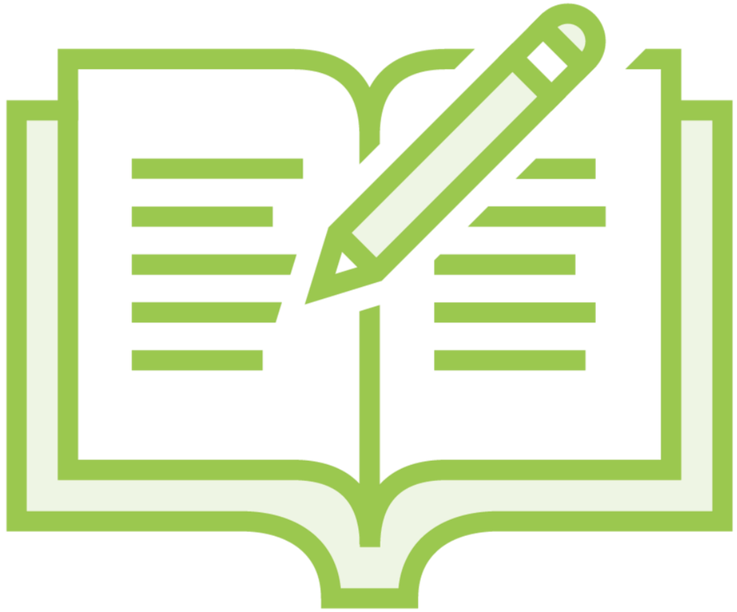
Recognize skills and talents of each person

Creating norms, establishing clear goals, and nurturing this environment will help establish a strong team foundation.

First impressions can help your team get off to a good start.

Write down Your Goals



- Your team gets along
- You create a team culture
- Each person feels valued
- Your team will succeed
- You are confident in your team
- Loyalty is important
- Failure is okay

Could be in one meeting
or over a series of meetings.

Begin with the end in mind.

Respect each
individual’s boundaries.

Rewards can have monetary value, but they don’t have to cost anything.

Plan and Communicate Reward Systems

Peer recognition

Manager recognition

Parking privileges

Extra days off

Reward System Goals

Strategic

Plan this early on instead of having it be an afterthought

Meaningful

Your team will tell you what will really motivate or reward them

Start with Something

Tweak as needed. Perhaps abandon some.
Remember to be flexible.

Plan these activities intentionally to develop a strong environment and culture.

Success Metrics

- Based on the purpose of your team
- Neglecting key metrics is indicative
- Maybe you are too busy doing other things
- Not making progress towards the objective
- Might show the objective is outdated
- Metrics should be adjusted

Three Common Measurements of Success

KPIs

Key performance indicators

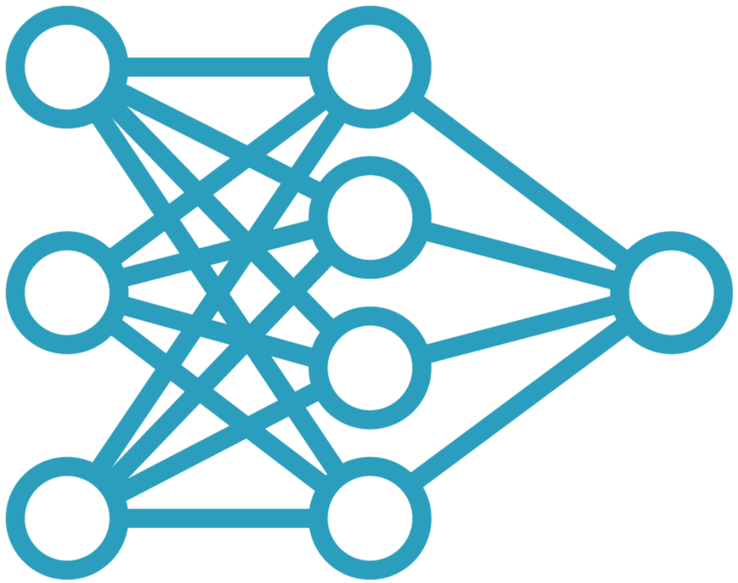
KSFs

Key success factors

OKRs

Objectives and key results

Don’t Overcomplicate Metrics



Team size doesn’t necessarily matter

Length of team doesn’t necessarily matter

Complicated metrics systems can fail

Managing IT: Metrics and Measurements

Every metric has a cost

Cost to gather, process, analyze, and consume

Complex systems have
a way of being cast aside.

Your KPIs, OKRs, and KSFs

Each have a different purpose

Study to determine what you actually need

Figure out what you should track

Figure out how you will track

Discard things you shouldn't track

Focus on the right metrics

Managing IT: Metrics and Measurements

Metrics I Keep Track Of

Web analytics

Upgrades

Abandons

Complaints

Leads

Measure what is important to you.

What Am I Measuring?

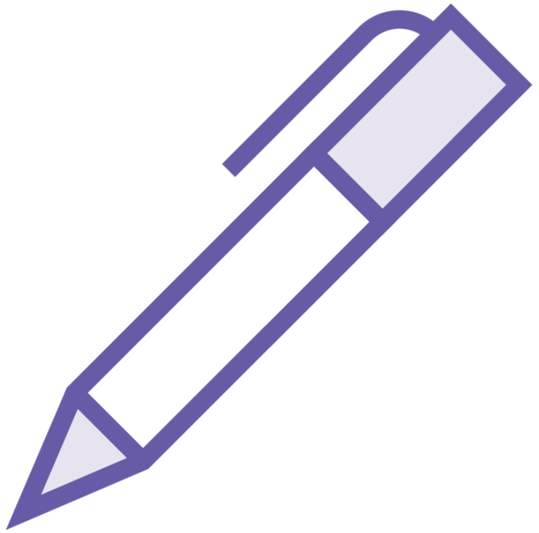
Based on my metrics you might determine I am focused on increasing profitable, sustainable revenue.

Make sure your metrics tie back to your objectives.

Constantly work towards better communication.

Repetition in Communication

What you say



What you write

Example of Not Reinforcing Communication

First meeting (honeymoon phase)

Exciting time for everyone

Then, time passes without repeating vision

Your team is stressed out

Individuals start to check out

They stop bringing their best ideas

They focus on routine without knowing why

Example of Reinforcing Communication

Even with routine tasks

Vision is continually reinforced

Vision is bigger than any task

“Help people during their job search”

Vision supersedes tedium of tasks

We think about the people we impact

We even think about individual users

Communicate the
WHY regularly.

Team mission

Team objectives

Team success

Impact of each role

Good Communication Is Reinforced with Repetition

Help everyone understand the bigger WHY.

Clarity in Your Communication

Avoid ambiguity

This helps avoid confusion

Listen for signs of miscommunication

Remove:

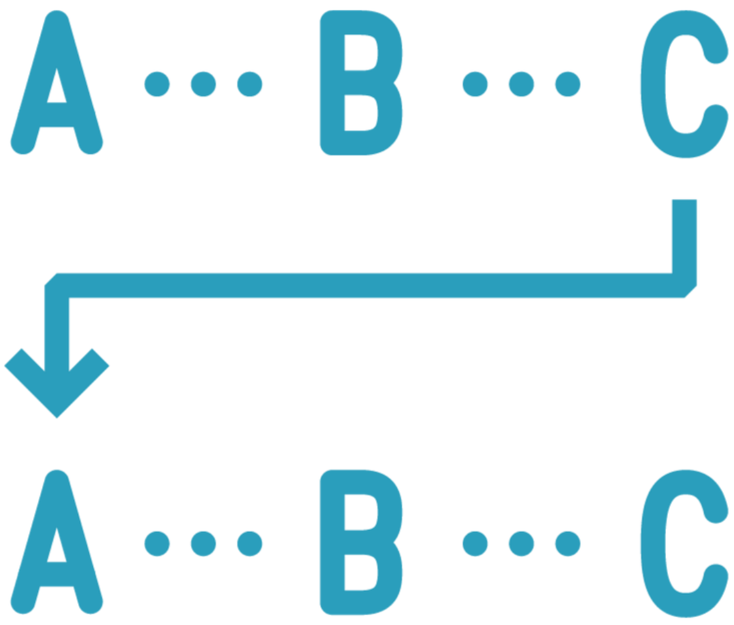
- Jargon
- Cliché
- Sarcasm
- Misleading humor

Your Words Will Be Repeated

Some words you use will be misunderstood. Make words and phrases your customers and stakeholders use normal.

The goal is better understanding.

How to Reinforce Your Messages



Post them in a central location

Refer back to those posts

Expect to repeat yourself

- In team meetings
- In group emails
- To individuals in your office

Repeating Your Message Is Okay

Helps you polish your message

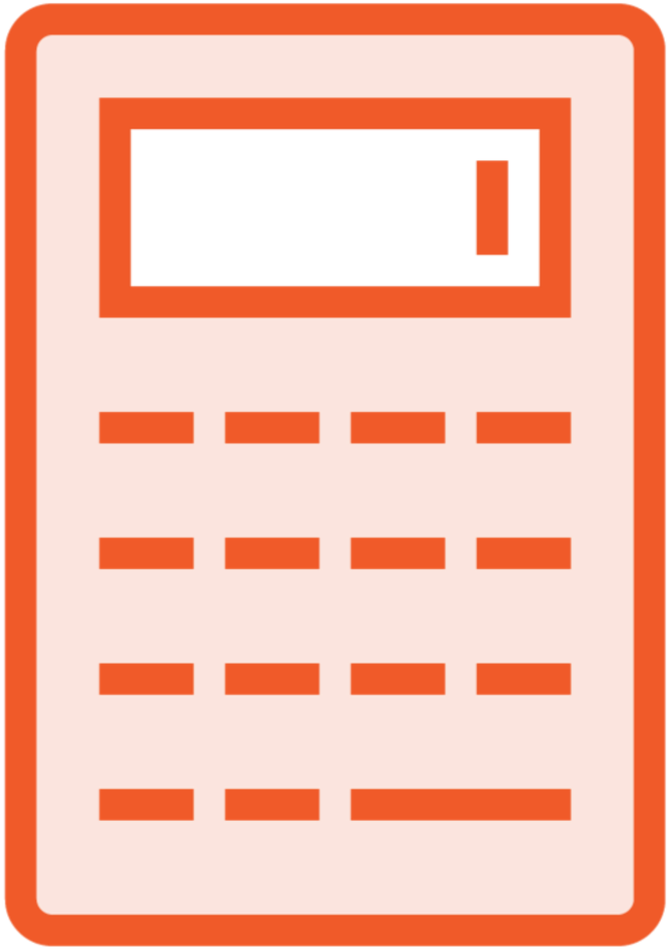
Understand how to clarify it

Helps for next communications

Reinforce your mission, vision, and the importance of each person’s contributions.

What is the right team size to meet your objectives?

Team Size Based on Hours to Completion



500 budgeted hours

2.5 weeks to deliver the project

Five people needed for this team

What if you had access to ten people?

Ten people could get it done in half the time

This simple math can be deceiving

***The Mythical Man-month* (Fred Brooks)**

Adding more people can make software projects take longer.

“What one programmer can do in one month, two programmers can do in two months.”

Fred Brooks

“Nine people can’t make a baby in one month.”

Fred Brooks

“Adding manpower to a late software project makes it later.”

Fred Brooks

Fred Brooks on Team Size

Funny

Truth and wisdom

“Hey, if we pay for two more people can you get this done faster?”

Your customer or boss

Adding More People

Adds more management complexity. Adds more personalities. Impacts the team culture.

Finding Your Right Team Size

- Leads are feeling too stressed
- Existing team could really use help
- Negotiate more people vs. changed deadline
- Distraction is abundant
- Assess your current resources
- Make or request appropriate changes

Bringing on the second developer added a lot of complexity.

Logistical Impacts of Team Growth

Release code	Quality assurance	Communication
Changes	Third parties	Roles

Growth Led to New Systems

Adding new people means creating new systems
which helps when adding additional staff.

Proposed Optimal Team Size

Three to seven

Smaller teams might form

Let this happen organically

Explicitly define sub teams

Watch how rules and processes evolve.

Deal with communication challenges immediately and effectively.

Don’t let team size get in the way of feelings of ownership.

Your team size might need to change as your project and requirements change.

Transitioning People out of Your Team

Treat people with dignity
and express appreciation.

Get the right people on the bus.

Who Is on Your Team?

Sometimes you can choose your team

Sometimes you inherit an existing team

You might get people you would not have chosen

Common in organizational mergers

Technical Competency Is Critical

- **You might not need the very best, most qualified person**
- **You usually need someone who can at least do the job**
- **The team leader must understand the technical requirements**
- **Usually bring people on who need little-to-no training in their craft**
- **Avoid excluding people who are otherwise excellent fits**

Culture Fit Is Critical

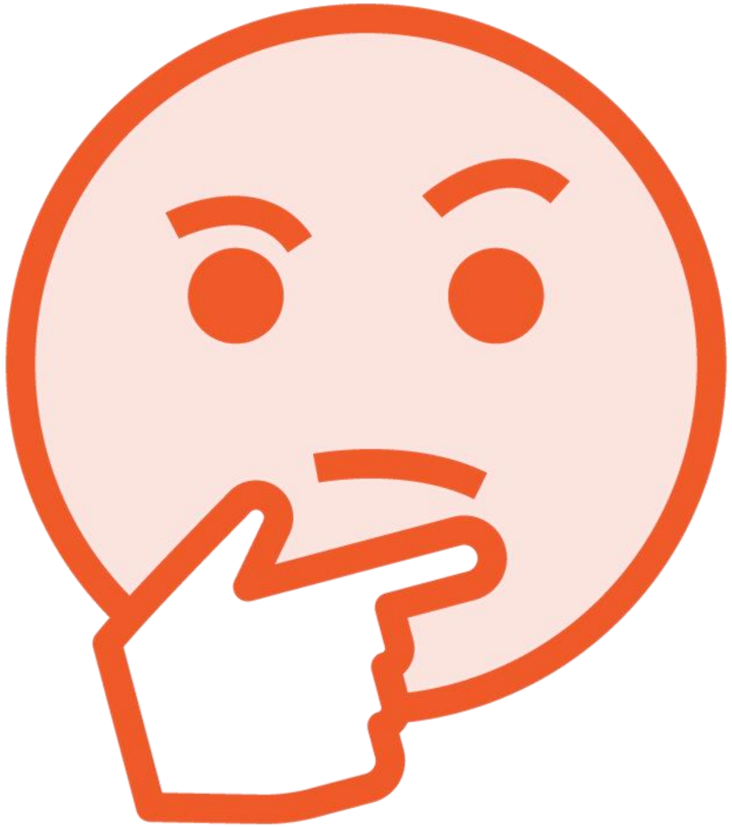
This isn't about only hiring people who are just like you

You want diversity of thinking and experience

Hiring people who you would like to work with is good

Hiring people who you would get along with is good

Assessing Proficiency and Fit



Technical competency determined early

Candidates must meet a minimum level

Compare candidates on competencies

This is done before and during interviews

Focus on understanding the person

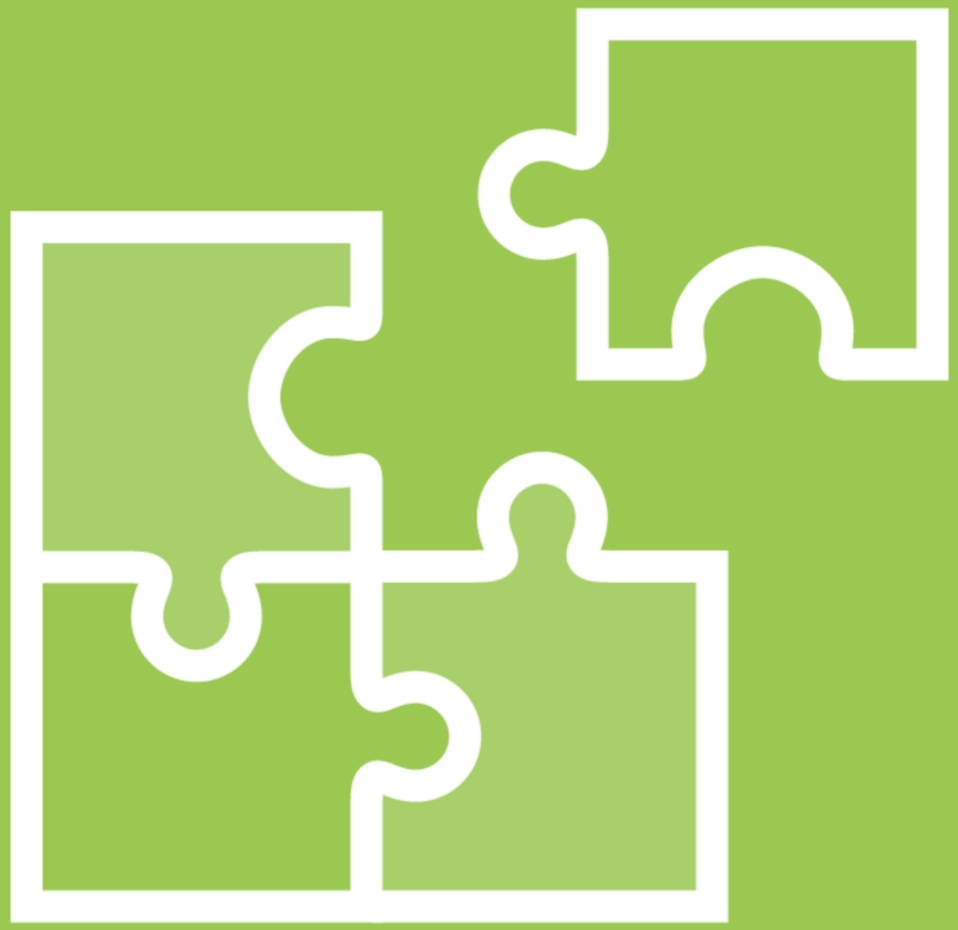
Technical proficiency is a given while culture fit might sway my decision to hire you.

Extra Values Are a Bonus

A deep understanding of the industry

Important industry connections

Excellent with needed soft skills



Culture Fit vs. Toxicity

They might not be an excellent culture fit, but as long as they aren't toxic and they meet my other needs, I'm willing to give them a chance.

Contracts are critical to help define how to terminate relationships.

We usually don’t stay in
great relationships forever.

Begin with the End in Mind

Think about the end

Stage 5: adjourning

We tend to overlook this

Be intentional about adjourning

You hesitate to read the last page because you don’t want it to end.

Change Is Hard

You may have been their best leader

They might have had the best coworkers

They finally felt their contributions mattered

They finally felt appreciated

Some might be ready for a change

Others might find it to be a real shock

Especially true if team ends too soon

Change can bring so much stress to most of us.

These are big changes that can deeply impact our lives.

WIIFM

What’s in it for me?

This is what your team is wondering

What will happen to them?

Will they need to look for a new job?

Will they want to go back to their old team?

Thinking this way will help you help them

Help Your Team Transition

Because it is the right thing to do. It will also help you create a strong professional network for years to come.

Let’s talk about what happened.

Operations

Logistics

What happened

What was said

Our team

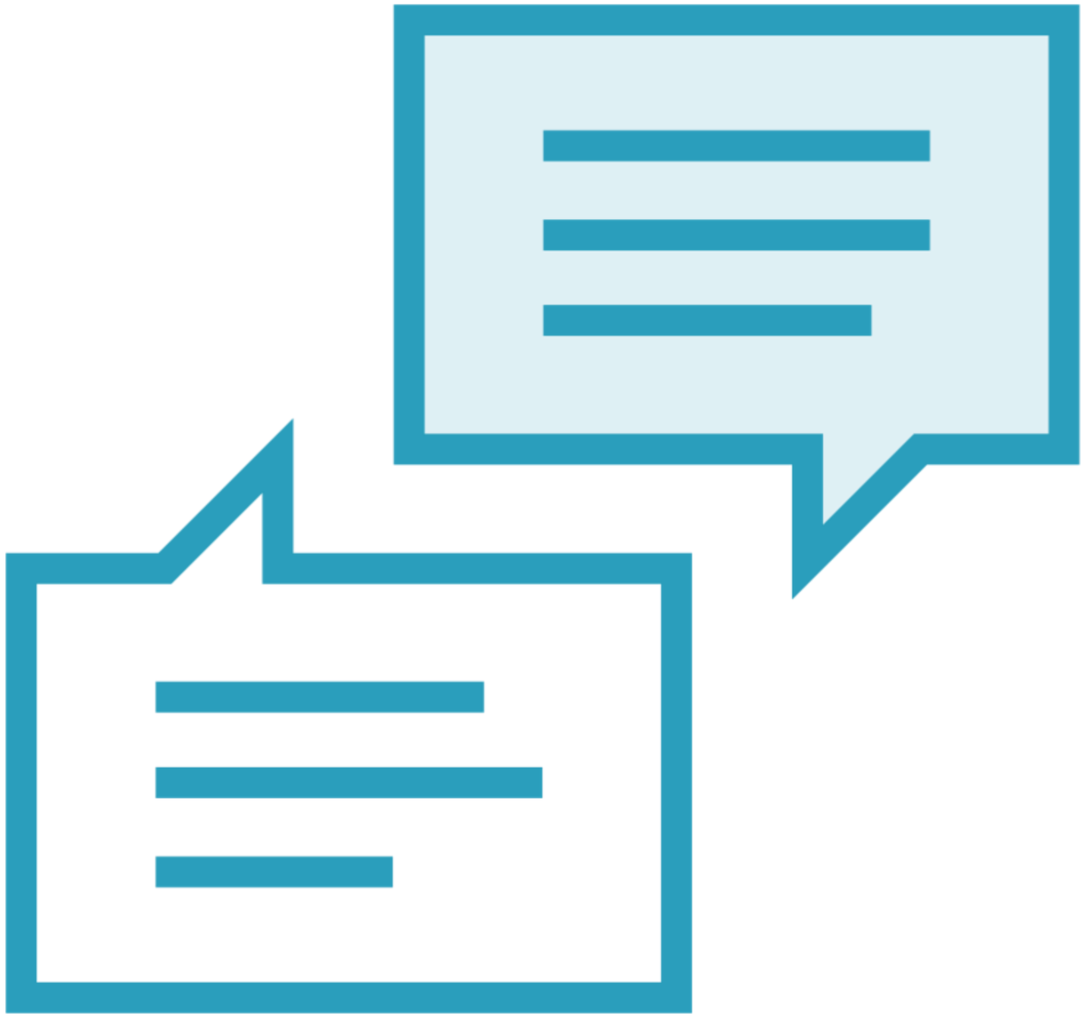
Team dynamics

What worked

What didn’t work

What we learned

Debrief for closure



Similarities and Differences

The postmortem

What went wrong? How do we do this better next time?

The debrief

Talk about what we learned but not necessarily fix anything

Simple Gestures from the Team Leader

Help them know their options

Write letters of recommendation

Write LinkedIn recommendations

Make networking introductions

Relationships don’t end when teams and projects end.

One-on-ones can be weekly meetings.

Talk About the Person

Appropriately developing individual relationships can help create a work environment people want to come to.

What to Talk About

- Personal lives, as appropriate
- Projects the person is working on
- How things are going
- Ideas, suggestions, statuses
- Professional development
- Cater to individual needs

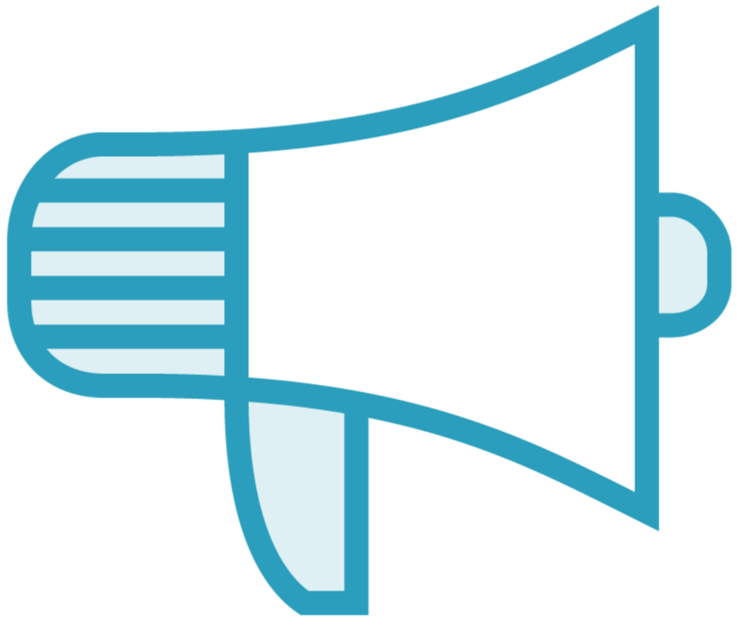
One-on-ones say: “I have time for you.”

Annual reviews can be a bit messy.

Can Focus on the Wrong Things

Usually tied to a raise or compensation adjustment. The frequency and purpose might negatively impact the effectiveness of the meeting.

Recognition Programs



- The right feedback
- At the right time
- From peers
- From managers
- Feedback and praise
- Influence behavior
- Influence performance
- Influence attitudes

Creating Culture

Listening

Communicating

Respecting

A Culture of Respect

Opens communication between everyone on the team

You can work on, and through, the issues that come up

Your team will feel you care about their successes

When people know they are on track they can perform with more confidence.

Summary

- Creating and forming your team
- Creating a team foundation
- Who to put on your team
- Thoughts on team size
- Getting off to a good start
- Success metrics
- Creating a culture of communication
- Ending your team
- Feedback mechanisms

Tactics to manage and lead a successful team.