

Facilitating Teams

The Four Gates to Peak Team Performance™ model is based on my research on the brain science of teams and collaboration. What I discovered is that people are biologically wired to assess a variety of aspects, which determines their overall ability to contribute their full energy and enthusiasm to the team/project. There are four stages, or gates, the group can move through. The effects of each gate are cumulative, meaning a sufficient level must be achieved in the previous gate to open the next gate. The team's overall potential is comprised of the sum total of each member's individual experience so if enough people do not feel safe in Gate 1, then the team cannot progress through Gate 2, and so on. Leaders play a critical role in setting up teams for success or failure.

Gate 1: Safety

Members are sorting for physical safety as well as psychological safety and inclusion.

When the group is first convened and through the first few meetings, people subconsciously assess for how likely they are to experience the following from the leader and/or other members:

- Physical harm from safety issues and/or workplace violence
- Bullying and/or harassment
- Career harm via leader's assessment/review
- Rejection by or exclusion from team

As a result of early interactions, members determine that they are safe or have to be on guard in some way.

Considerations:

Consider how you can design the early meetings of the group to set them for success in Gates 1 and 2.

How can you provide as many in-person interactions as possible?

Ice-breakers, pair programming, assignment discussion

How might you construct these to facilitate them getting to know each other on a deeper level and building the groundwork for future trust?

Encourage discussion, empower each team member to take lead throughout meetings.

How can you create an environment where they feel safe, both physically and psychologically, with you and each other?

Say it out loud. Do activities like this one.

Gate 2: Purpose

Members are exploring the purpose of the group/project and how they might contribute.

Over the course of several interactions, people subconsciously assess the following:

- Clarity of the task and group's purpose
- The group's ability and/or likelihood of success based on the parameters of the project and support provided
- How likely they can contribute their individual strengths
- If the group is establishing a "sense of we"

At the end of this gate, individual members have either decided to hold back or lean in with their energy and enthusiasm.

Considerations:

How can you provide the information they need to determine the purpose of the group/project? What is the "why" behind the project?

Use the Agile mindset and methods to give team members a clear picture of the project.

How can you best articulate the parameters of the project, including milestones and deadlines?

Use group tools such as calendar, to clearly communicate this information.

How can you ensure that each member can contribute his/her strengths?

Make sure you get to know your people and what their strengths and weaknesses are. Have honest discussions with them about what they want to contribute and what you want them to contribute.

How will they determine who plays what key roles in the group's success, including:

- Gather information
- Analyze data
- Coordinate efforts
- Track progress
- Quality assurance
- Provide leadership
- Ensure cohesiveness and camaraderie
- Other:

Help the group create agreed-upon practices or ground rules for working together, including:

- Expectations for personal and interpersonal conduct
- Methods for building trust and psychological safety
- How and when we value and recognize members' efforts and contributions
- Criteria for evaluating ideas
- Process for making decisions
- Communication flow and format
- Criteria for measuring success
- Accountability via consequences
- Process for resolving inevitable conflict

Gate 3: Belonging

Members are sorting for a sufficient amount of trust and respect in order to feel a deep sense of belonging. Then they can fully commit emotionally to being part of a well-working team. Over the course of several interactions, people subconsciously assess the following:

- How respected and/or valued they feel by the leader and members
- The amount they trust each of the members and leader
- Whether they feel safe enough to take risks and make mistakes
- The ability to resolve conflict effectively

At the end of this gate, individual members are collaborating well and are primed to move into peak performance. However, they can only get there if every member feels this way. If anyone is experiencing issues with safety, purpose, or belonging, the team cannot enter the fourth gate until things are resolved.

Considerations:

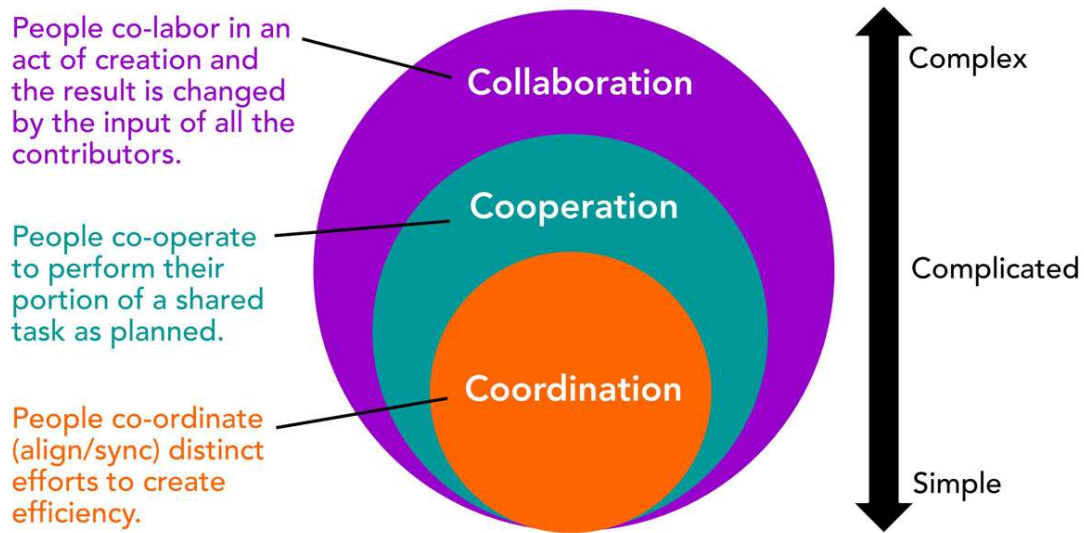
How can you provide opportunities for the group to spend time together where they can deepen their relationships and build trust?

Review each others work. Plan and develop together. Assign tasks that can only be completed by collaborating.

How can you create an environment where it is safe to take risks and make mistakes?

Encourage risk taking. Don't chastise mistakes, but instead encourage learning from them and seeing them as successes in how we learn from them.

Help the group explore the differences between coordination, cooperation, and collaboration. Discuss with them what training or support they need to move more fully into collaboration



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	Coordination	Cooperation	Collaboration
What	People co-ordinate (align/sync) distinct efforts to create efficiency.	People co-operate to perform their portion of a shared task, as planned.	People co-labor in an act of creation and the result is changed by the input of all the contributors.
Definition	The orchestrated efforts of individuals or groups to align or synchronize separate actions. They exchange relevant information and resources in support of each other's distinct goals.	The coordinated efforts of a group of two or more people to perform their assigned portion of an agreed-upon shared process or task. They are dependent on each other to execute a mutual objective.	The mutual engagement of a group of two or more in a cocreative effort that achieves a shared goal or vision. They are interdependent with each unique contribution essential to the whole.
Goal	Align/synchronize efforts.	Execute assigned portion of shared process.	Achieve shared vision through cocreation.
How	Effective communication ensures efficiency.	Smooth process drives execution. An expected task is achieved as planned.	Creative tension drives innovation. Something new is created as a result.

Gate 4: Peak Performing

Members are operating as a highly collaborative and cohesive unit. Nothing is held back as they are fully engaged in the project and completely committed to the team. They have a lot of fun together, regularly engage in innovative work, and are able to overcome challenges quickly and easily.

Considerations:

At this stage, you want to support the group in continuing as they are and protecting them from anything that might derail their peak state. Possibilities include:

- An established member leaving. Depending on that person's role and contributions, the group may or may not be able to absorb their absence.
- A new member joining. The group will need to go back to Gate 1 to fully integrate the new person.
- The team leader leaving. If the group is self-sufficient, they can probably continue on as they are, but when the new leader arrives, they will need to start back at Gate 1.
- The goal or purpose of the project changes. You'll need to revisit Gate 2 again to realign but the group may be able to quickly move through Gate 3 and get back to Gate 4.
- Some other challenge or crisis arises that impacts the group or members doing their work. If it changes the group's sense of safety, purpose, or belonging, then the group needs to go back to Gate 1, but otherwise, they may be able to resolve the challenge through their innovation and collaboration.

Given your groups and the projects they work on, identify some challenge that is likely to arise and the actions you can take to either prevent them or to help the group quickly resolve them.

Different skillsets and different EQs (resulting from different life experiences) can make it difficult for some individuals to connect. I think that one way to deal with this is by encouraging exercises which help people find what they have in common.

If you'd like to bring the Four Gates to Peak Team Performance™ to your organization, visit www.BrittAndreattaTraining.com.