

# HOW TO BUILD HIGH PERFORMING TEAMS WITH **TRUST AND ALIGNMENT**



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# TEAMWORK IS GOOD WORK: EXERCISES TO BUILD HIGH PERFORMING TEAMS

Thomas Edison and the inventions coming out of Menlo Park were famous and drawing talent from all over the world. Edison and four others English machinist Charles Batcheldor, Swiss clockmaker John Kruesi, German glassblower Ludwig Boehm, and American mathematician Francis Upton worked together to invent the first light bulb.

"He was never the lone inventor," a curator at the Henry Ford Museum stated for a Forbes article.

As we like to say at Agile Velocity, nobody works alone. This team of inventors, like all great teams, accomplished more together than what they could have done individually.

Solid teamwork improves....

**Health:** Teams that work together well (teams in the top 25%) incur lower healthcare costs. (Gallup)

**Success:** Almost 100% of executives believe that lack of collaboration and ineffective communication leads to failures. (Salesforce)

**Efficiency:** More than half of the work week is spent looking for information and internal collaboration. (McKinsey)

This guide includes exercises and practices to help you build trust and alignment within your team.

# TEAM CHARTERING

Shared office space does not make a team. A team is a group of people working together to accomplish a common goal. In order to improve performance within an organization, it is necessary to focus on bettering teams, starting from the very beginning.

## Team Chartering Workshop

### 1. Creating purpose, vision, and mission

All three are similar and should fit together to tell the story of the team during their set time together. The purpose is an inspirational statement for what the team is hoping to accomplish with the product (beginning). Mission describes what the team is building (middle). The vision is what the future looks like once the product is complete and is being used by the market (end).

**Purpose:** We're here to bring teams together.

**Mission:** Through this white paper, we provide teams with the tools and practices to allow for improved teamwork.

**Vision:** To bring people together, allowing teams to work in a healthy and happy environment where they can confidently and efficiently reach their goals.

### 2. Team Working Agreements

It's hard to hold yourself or others accountable when you don't have clear expectations for the team defined.

Lead a discussion around work habits, how to address and resolve conflict, core hours, standup time, your Definition of Ready, and your Definition of Done. Once everyone on the team understands and agrees with these statements, write them down. Make sure your agreements are documented in a succinct manner and displayed in team work area so that it is visible to everyone on the team.

### 3. Context Mapping

Teams do not operate in a vacuum. Survey the ecosystem and how its members interact with the team. It does not need to be fancy; a hand-drawn diagram works just as well.

# ALIGNMENT

In a relay, participants run a part of the total distance to one finish line. What would happen if runners of each leg went to a different finish line? That is an absurd mental image and would never happen on the track differing or even lack of goals is common in the corporate world.

For example, when teams are beginning an Agile transformation, we advise that leadership come together to state desired business outcomes post Agile adoption. These goals are then communicated to the team to complete alignment between levels. The goals are also accessible to everyone for future reference to solidify alignment.

**Align** – The goal for the transformation cannot be to do Agile.

Understanding and communicating the business objectives that will be achieved with the transformation is a critical first step.

**Learn** – Through Agile training and guided practice via coaching, teams and leadership are equipped with new techniques and an understanding of how Agile works. Ownership of processes are transferred to an empowered team and a culture of continuous improvement is put in place.

**Predict** – Teams harden these newly learned practices and become more disciplined in order to deliver working product in a predictable and iterative manner.

**Accelerate** – Once the teams become disciplined and predictable, we can focus on team and organizational improvements to optimize across the full delivery cycle and shorten time to market.

**Adapt** – Agile will begin to permeate throughout the organization and executive leadership, enabling empowered teams and adaptive leadership to respond to ever-changing market demands as they have transformed to an organization with true Agility.

If a team has accepted the challenge of becoming Agile, the “Align” stage is the first to accomplish.

## 5 Practices & Exercises for Creating Alignment

Alignment is critical to setting the team up for success, a common sense tip that seems easy to implement. However, people continue to struggle. Again using Agile transformation as an example, I asked 64 people at a conference if their organization had a clear goal for adopting Agile. Almost half of the group (43%) lacked clear objectives with 21% saying no goals were given. Use the following exercises and practices to create alignment.

### 1. Team Chartering Workshop

You can find more information in Liftoff: Launching Agile Teams & Projects by Diana Larsen and Ainsley Niles.

### 2. Market of Skills

The purpose of this exercise is to discover skill level and professional goals of team members in order to facilitate cross training. This also further aligns team members with regard to motivation (bartering system) and personal interests (what can my team members teach me?).

1. Each team member answers the following questions on a sheet of paper:
  - What motivates them at work
  - Main skills the team can use
  - Secondary skills
  - Desired skills
2. Each team member “sells” their professional skills by presenting the poster.
3. As they are presenting if a team member notices a skill missing that the presenter brings to the table then they add it. Also, if they identify a skill they can help the presenter improve then they note it.

### 3. Constellation Exercise

By Lyssa Adkins, this is a great, active exercise that can be used during chartering or Sprint retrospectives. You need a large space to complete this exercise.

1. The facilitator creates 10 – 12 statements around a theme on which they would like feedback from each team member. For example, if this exercise is being used to create working agreements, include statements like...

- a. I need alone time
  - b. When under stress, I like to be told what to do
  - c. I feel comfortable providing feedback
2. An inanimate object (hat, chair, etc.) is placed in the center of the space. This is the center of the universe.
3. The facilitator reads each statement pausing after each one to let team members decide if they agree or disagree with the statement. If they agree, they move closer to the center; disagree, move further away. The distance traveled towards or away from the object indicates how strongly they agree or disagree.
4. Let team members note where the rest of the team is before moving on and encourage discussion on the topic to seek further understanding
5. Continue with the rest of the statements.
6. Facilitator should ask the team members to write their own statements. (3 – 5 min) and then repeat the process with those.

#### **4. Create an environment conducive to collaboration**

Teams sit together. Companies with remote workers need to invest in video as body language conveys more meaning than verbal communication.

#### **5. Moving Motivators Exercise**

What truly motivates our team members? Jurgen Appelo studied research by Daniel Pink, Steven Reiss, and Edward Deci/Richard Ryan and created a card game that visualizes how organizational change affects the 10 intrinsic desires (the CHAMPFROGS model). This is a useful exercise to help determine how change is affecting the team, learn more about team members, or before making a big decision.

## 5. Moving Motivators Exercise (cont.)

**C**uriosity      *The need to think I have plenty of things to investigate and to think about.*

**H**onor      *I feel proud that my personal values are reflected in how I work.*

**A**cceptance      *The people around me approve of what I do and who I am.*

**M**astery      *My work challenges my competence but it is still within my abilities.*

**P**ower      *There's enough room for me to influence what happens around me.*

**F**reedom      *I am independent of others with my work and my responsibilities.*

**R**elatedness      *I have good social contacts with the people in my work.*

**O**rder      *There are enough rules and policies for a stable environment.*

**G**oal      *My purpose in life is reflected in the work that I do.*

**S**tatus      *My position is good, and recognized by the people who work with me.*



Image courtesy of PlaysinBusiness.com

1. Each person should have a set of Moving Motivators cards
2. One player at a time, order the cards in terms of importance in one row, with the left side being least importance and right side the most important. (10 min)
3. As the player is moving a card they should be encouraged to talk aloud and explain why they are moving the card.
4. (Optional) Determine how a change affects their motivators. Positive impacts make cards go up while negative impacts bring them down. Good changes make cards on the right go up and cards on the left go down while negative changes do the opposite.

# TRUST

Lack of trust in leadership and among team members can result in decreased productivity, halfhearted attempts at innovation, and a hostile workplace. A survey of 500+ US workers for Interaction Associate's annual workplace trust report found several correlations between trust in the workplace and the bottom line. Trust leaders are 2 1/2 times more likely to be revenue generators than trust stragglers. In addition, organizations reporting high workplace trust are more likely to meet their business objectives. From steadfast Fortune 100 companies to scaling startups, evidence shows that investing yields a positive return.

## 7 Practices & Exercises for Building Trust

### 1. Journey Line

This exercise plots events on an X and Y axis which allows the creator to indicate whether each point on the line was positive or negative. The exercise can be used during Team chartering, retrospectives, or interviews. Journey Line is another exercise by Lyssa Adkins and Michael Spayd.

1. Give each participant a flip chart or another large sheet of paper.
2. Draw the X and Y axis creating two big quadrants. The Y axis represents positive and negative experiences and X axis is time.
3. Participants plot their experiences on the Journey Line (15 min). The context could be a person's life or career.
4. Each person presents their account (15 – 20 min).

### 2. Speed Networking

This is another for Team Chartering but can be modified for retrospectives as well.

1. Gather the team and allot a certain amount of time to discuss a particular topic or meet each other.
2. When the bell rings, find a new partner.

### **3. Pack Up Your Troubles**

This is a good way to work together as a team and address problems at the office.

1. Each person writes down challenges they are having at the office (5 minutes)
2. Divide the team in groups (or pairs depending on size)
3. Distribute the pieces of paper to each group. Take turns reading problems aloud and brainstorming solutions. (15 min)
4. Come back together as a group and discuss the problems and solutions (10 min)

Bonus: Before discussing together, use affinity problem to discover commonalities between each group. There is a good chance that team members are experiencing the same issues.

### **4. Create Common Memories**

Great teams spend time together inside and outside the office and it doesn't have to be a ropes course either.

### **5. Demonstrate Open & Honest Communication**

### **6. Use Transparency For Good**

Transparency is used as a powerful and effective tool in an environment of mutual respect and trust. As mentioned previously, letting the team approach and solve an issue on their own creates a lot of trust. It is not that management should not help. However, think hard about changing your mindset from directing to serving. "How can I help?" is a great question to ask a team. We have seen this mindset boost team confidence, make the team more willing to take risks, and greatly quicken the learning curve.

### **7. Become a Servant Leader**

Bad managers are costly. A Gallup study found disengaged managers cost the U.S. economy \$77 - \$96 billion a year.

- 50% of US adults have left their job to get away from their manager (Gallup)
- 80% of those dissatisfied with their managers are also disengaged from their employers (Dale Carnegie)

Support, whether accommodating employees during stressful personal situations or providing opportunities for professional development, goes a long way towards building trust in leadership. According to the survey, this is the third most effective way to build trust, coming in at 27 percent. Setting your team up for success shows that you are serious about working with them to meet set objectives. Make a consistent effort to discover team needs through regular 1-on-1 meetings and create plans to fix issues. Most importantly, execute on the plan.

# CONCLUSION

Transforming to a team-based culture is a long process but case studies, statistics, and history have shown that it is a fruitful endeavor: employees are more productive and happier. The first steps towards team are goal setting and trust building. Without alignment, there is no team. Without trust performance, performance decreases.

# RESOURCES

For more information on the topics in this white paper, please see our sources here:

- <http://www.plays-in-business.com/moving-motivators/>
- <http://www.coachingagileteams.com/2009/08/30/agile/agile-team-start-up/attachment/constellation-exercise/>
- <https://management30.com/product/moving-motivators/workplace-trust-report>
- <http://www.unice.fr/crookall-cours/teams/docs/team%20Successful%20teamwork.pdf>
- <http://blog.accessperks.com/what-millennials-want-in-the-workplace-friendships-and-teamwork>
- [http://archive.fortune.com/2006/05/31/magazines/fortune/sixteams\\_greatteams\\_fortune\\_061206/index.htm](http://archive.fortune.com/2006/05/31/magazines/fortune/sixteams_greatteams_fortune_061206/index.htm)

## ABOUT AGILE VELOCITY

We're a full-service transformation partner offering whole organization coaching, leadership and team coaching, and Agile training. By leveraging our proprietary Path to Agility® transformation approach, we advise clients on the best way to avoid failure and reach desired business outcomes as quickly as possible.

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## OUR SERVICES

### Agile Transformation

Using our Path to Agility® Transformation framework, we help organizations build the capabilities needed to achieve desired business goals with confidence.

### Agile Assessment

Identify gaps, establish a baseline for the transformation moving forward, and determine key next steps for achieving your goals.

### Agility Tune-up

Target the most pressing challenges that are keeping your team from achieving desired outcomes.

### Agile Training

We utilize hands-on training techniques, demonstrations, and simulations to create an engaging, outcome-focused learning experience.



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