Title: *What Google Learned From Its Quest to Build The Perfect Team*
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Purposes of the Article

Teamwork matters. Almost all modern workplaces rely heavily on teamwork rather than solo work. Google, a data-driven company with interdisciplinary teams, wanted to figure out what makes some teams more effective than others. Charles Duhigg in his article, *What Google Learned From Its Quest to Build the Perfect Team*, challenges traditional assumptions about teamwork, explains Google's discovery that successful teams rely less on summed individual talent and more on psychological safety, and demonstrates how emotional openness is essential to making a successful team.

Challenging Traditional Assumptions

Google once believed that "the best people create the best teams." That is, a team is a sum of everyone's best individual talents, and because it brings the best individual qualities from everyone, that is the de facto best team. Well, there is a reason that it was only "once believed." In a study where they gathered team members' data: personality, background, education, extroversion/introversion, friendships. Google discovered that none of these factors predicted a team's performance. In fact, Rozovsky's Yale teams demonstrated exactly the opposite. The first team was great on paper, a group of highly intelligent, competitive, and similar experienced members. However, meetings quickly turned competitive and felt like an ego-war. No trust. No shared empathy. The second team, a group of individuals with different backgrounds, varied personalities, and diverse interests, found much higher success. Meetings began with jokes and laughter, and members built off of each other's ideas rather than shutting them down. Rozovsky describes it as feeling energized, safe, and creative.

Google's Discovery

Google's researchers also noticed this on a much higher scale. Project Aristotle began analyzing data in terms of behaviors, not traits. They stopped judging teams from the perspective of individual qualities, but rather on the interactions that occurred between team members. The researchers noticed these seemingly invisible patterns that shaped how successful teams behaved, called group norms. A key finding that Google adopted came from CMU/MIT. They found that

successful teams largely depended on two specific norms: conversational turn-talking and higher average social sensitivity.

Psychological Safety

In successful teams, everyone speaks the same amount. Taking turns in a conversational manner, no one dominates the voice. Everyone contributes equally, even if just briefly. This norm creates balance, fairness, and most importantly a safe space to share new ideas and opinions. The second norm they discovered was higher average social sensitivity (EQ). Members in successful groups were able to read and adapt to each other's body language and emotional cues like tone. They notice when someone is feeling uncomfortable, and most importantly provide empathy rather than judgement. These two norms combined together bring psychological safety, defined by Harvard researcher Amy Edmondson as "a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking." This means that team members can openly share mistakes and bring new ideas without fear of embarrassment or judgement.

Personal Reflection

As an unavoidably lifelong member of many teams (like most), I have also realized this pattern playing out in my teams, although with less research evidence and more of a vibe-check. It's very rare to find a successful team that is dominated by one person's voice alone. Just as it is rare to find an unsuccessful team built up with the qualities that Google found; I guess that may depend on what your definition of success is though. Personally, reading this article has left me with a great understanding of what makes good teams great, and what I can do to make my teams better. The most important takeaway is keeping these ideas of norms and psychological safety in mind as I collaborate with others in the future.