

Make It Stick

*Activity Pack*

Building Team Synergy

 **Helping lessons learned through training become part of *how we work*.**

**To the Learner Leader…**

This suite of activities has been designed to reinforce the key learning from the **Building Team Synergy** course. They have been designed to be led by team leaders or designated trainers and do not require training experience, though for best results we recommend that whoever is leading the activities understands the principles of adult learning and has some experience in leading learning activities.

The suite of activities will provide you with up to six months of learning reinforcement. We recommend that an activity is run each month following the Building Team Synergy course.

When running each activity:

* Ask the group to reflect back on the original course they attended:
  + What takeaways did they have?
  + What have they tried to implement?
  + When revisiting some of these activities for a second time, ask them what additional ideas or thoughts they have in applying the concepts and tools in the activities to their job.

Each activity will take 10-15 minutes to run depending on the size of the group.

There is one activity to a page. Each activity has a brief introduction followed by instructions for the learner leader.

We suggest the following to optimise your learning experience:

* Have the group meet away from their normal workspace
* Make sure mobile devices are switched off so that everyone fully engages
* Make the environment ‘safe’ and encourage everyone to contribute
* Run these activities with everyone standing – try running them outdoors in the fresh air
* Have other team members take the lead and run an activity – this will build confidence and leadership skills
* Don’t be afraid to improvise – the learning needs to be about you and your group so make it meaningful
* When debriefing an activity, get the group to reflect on what the activity means for them and what they will do differently or continue to do that underscores the learning points from the activity

**Activities in this pack**

1. Potential for synergy
2. Creating an environment for synergy
3. Building trust with my team
4. The strengths of my team
5. Rating my team’s performance
6. Creating a team charter

**Activity 1: Potential for synergy**

**Introduction**

Synergy in teams occurs when team members function so well together that their output significantly exceeds what the same individuals would have achieved working on a task non-collaboratively. A team’s belief in itself and associated behaviours are pre-conditions for synergy.

**Instructions**

Ask each member of the group to complete the following for their respective team. They are to rate their team on each of the following statements from 1 to 5, answering as honestly as possible.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| An individual team member's interests take priority over interests of fellow team members | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | The focus is on shared interests and goals |
| Team members compete for reward, recognition and status | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Team members share recognition |
| Team members do not surrender their need to "be in control" | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Leadership and accountability are shared. The skills and contributions of others are honoured |
| There is a feeling of needing to "cover one's backside" or "look over one's shoulder" | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | There is an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding |
| There is a focus on assessing blame and credit | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Assessing blame and credit are not considered important |
| Other team members are tolerated as being necessary | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | All team members feel respected and included |
| Team members ask "What is my assigned role?" | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Members ask "How can I best contribute to the team?" |
| Diversity is looked upon with fear and suspicion | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Diversity is accepted and seen as an important resource |

Total the scores. Indicative ratings:

32-40 – high potential for synergy; 20-31 – moderate potential for synergy; 8-19 – low potential for synergy.

Ask participants to volunteer their lowest scored items. Then ask the rest of the group what that team could do to turn things around and create more synergy. Ask them to share their experiences and what they have done to:

* Promote common goals
* Recognise the team over the individual
* Generate mutual trust
* Promote respect and inclusiveness
* Maximise the potential using the diversity of the team

**Activity 2: Creating an environment for synergy**

**Introduction**

There are five people factors that differentiate great teams and create synergy:

Trust—team members must know they can count on each other to get the job correctly done, and if challenges crop up, they’ll have each other’s’ backs

Respect—team members must have self-respect, as well as mutual respect for other team members’ abilities

Communication—team members must have both the skills and format to communicate openly and honestly with each other

Passion—each team member must be driven to accomplish the team’s mutual goals

Commitment—all team members must have the same values, values that dictate doing what it takes to complete projects at the highest level of execution

**Instructions**

Depending on the size of the group split into pairs and allocate one of the above factors to each pair and ask them to brainstorm for five minutes on how they can build their factor in a team. After five minutes regroup and have the pair present their ideas for the rest of the group. Some ideas to explore are listed below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Trust | Lead by example; communicate openly; know each other personally; don’t play the blame game; discourage cliques; discuss trust issues |
| Respect | Be positive; be available; show that you care; give feedback regularly; invite feedback regularly; be transparent about your motives; praise in public, correct in private; invite your team to co-create the future |
| Open and honest communication | Make it safe to communicate; criticise constructively; reward honest and open dialogue; ask for input; genuinely listen to the team’s questions and suggestions; engage in reflective listening; recognise the team’s contribution; hear and respect opinions |
| Passion | Clearly articulate ‘why’; create opportunities for professional intimacy (e.g., team huddle); show appreciation for team efforts immediately; passion starts with the team leader; understand what motivates your team; provide unconditional support; create time for relaxation |
| Commitment | Ensure team members feel valued; communicate clear roles and responsibilities; set challenging goals; give people permission to fail; encourage creativity and innovation; give praise when praise is due; create a group identity |

**Activity 3: Building trust with my team**

**Introduction**

Trust is the most important element for team synergy. It is the foundation upon which team members decide what effort and commitment they will give to the team and the extent to which they will put the team’s needs ahead of their own.

**Instructions**

Ask each of the group to rate (from 1 low to 5 high) the current level of trust between themself and their team, both from their perspective and their team’s perspective and describe how they and their team demonstrate this.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Behaviours | How would I rate my capacity and how do I demonstrate this? | How would I rate the team’s capacity and how do they demonstrate this? |
| To manage expectations |  |  |
| To establish boundaries |  |  |
| To delegate appropriately |  |  |
| To keep agreements |  |  |
| To be consistent |  |  |
| To acknowledge people's abilities and skills |  |  |
| To allow people to make decisions |  |  |
| To help people learn skills |  |  |
| To share information |  |  |
| To tell the truth |  |  |
| To admit mistakes |  |  |
| To give and receive constructive feedback |  |  |
| To maintain confidentiality |  |  |

Split the group into pairs. Ask each person to pick the three behaviours with the lowest rating for their team. Discuss with their partner what they could do to improve this.

Come together as a one group and share the ideas people came up with.

**Activity 4: The strengths of my team**

**Introduction**

The secret to team synergy is recognising the unique contribution that each person makes to the team and then using that contribution to best effect.

**Instructions**

First, ask each person if they are aware of the strengths of each of their team members. Discuss the following clues for spotting strengths in others and how they can be used.

* A sense of urgency and engagement
* Losing a sense of time because they are so engrossed and engaged in the activity
* Very rapidly learning new information or activities
* A repeated pattern of successful performance
* Exemplary levels of performance
* Prioritising tasks that use the strength over other tasks
* Having a yearning to use the strength
* Being drawn to things that play to the strength

Now ask each participant to reflect on the strengths of their team members and complete the information in the following table.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name (so that you can identify them) | What are their key strengths? | How are they currently using their strengths? | How could the team make better use of their strengths? |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

Get each participant to share their ideas for making better use of the strengths of their team members.

**Activity 5: Rating my team’s performance**

**Introduction**

For synergy to occur, the team needs to have the right mix of enabling conditions. There are four enabling conditions for high performing teams:

1. Compelling Direction
2. Strong Structure
3. Supportive Context
4. Shared Mindset

**Instructions**

Ask the group individually to reflect on whether they have the right mix of enabling conditions for their team to be a high performing team. Ask them to rate the following team performance from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Team Performance** | **Rate 1 to 5** |
| **Output**  Are our customers happy with the team’s output: quality, quantity and delivery? |  |
| **Collaborative ability**  Do our team’s dynamics help us to work well together? |  |
| **Individual development**  Are individual team members improving their knowledge, skills and abilities? |  |

Now ask the group to rate their team on its enabling conditions.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Enabling Conditions** | **Rate 1 to 5** |
| **Compelling direction**  Do we have a common goal that is clear, challenging (but not impossible), and consequential? |  |
| **Strong structure**  Do we have the right number and mix of members?  Are people responsible for tasks from beginning to end?  Do we have clear norms for acceptable conduct? |  |
| **Supportive context**  Do we have the resources, information, and training we need?  Are there appropriate rewards for success? |  |
| **Shared Mindset**  Do the team members have a strong common identity?  Do we readily share information with one another and understand one another's constraints and context? |  |

Is there a connection between the lowest scored Team Performance item and the lowest scored Enabling Conditions item?

Ask what they need to do to fix this? Get input from the group on things to try.

**Activity 6: Creating a Team Charter**

**Introduction**

A charter is a document that grants authority or rights to others. A Team Charter is a great first step for establishing trust as it establishes the ground rules for how the team will operate, what expectations the team has of its members, how the members will collaborate and how they will resolve differences.

**Instructions**

Team Charters need to be created with the team so that the team has input into and ownership of the charter. Team leaders can reflect on what sorts of elements the charter should have.

Ask the group to work together to establish how team members should behave towards each other. They can brainstorm ideas in pairs or small groups then come together as one. Appoint someone to write the charter on a large piece of flip chart paper or record it electronically so that it can be distributed amongst the group.

Some behaviours to consider include:

* What values should the team members reflect?
* How will team members have input?
* How will the team make decisions?
* How will the team share information?
* How will the team raise concerns and resolve conflict?
* How will the team show respect towards each other?
* What expectations does the team have of each other when communicating?
* What expectations does the team have of each other in keeping commitments?

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Hold a discussion with the group on their experience in working under a Team Charter. Discuss the following:

* What worked well?
* What didn’t work well?
* What were the challenges?
* How do team members hold each other to account?
* Are there situations in which a team charter is not possible or would not work?