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## COLUMNIST

# 3 Steps To Create A High-functioning Team

A team that makes the most of the talent around the table creates better results.



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Every leader wants a high-functioning team. On a high-functioning team, the members are highly engaged. They distribute tasks to build on each other's strengths, generate ideas and find creative solutions in a spirit of collaboration, synergy, and a conviction that "all of us is better than one of us." Together, they achieve the common goal.

The belief is that a team that makes the most of the talent around the table creates better results.

It's energizing, it's inspiring, and it's efficient. It's also good for business. Good teamwork is credited for a host of positive outcomes, among them productivity, performance, client satisfaction, and strategic alignment.

But how does one get such a team?

If you look around your own team and see a loose collection of individuals, heads down in their offices, focused on their personal agendas, you're not alone. A high-functioning team is not easy to build. But it can be done - and the following three steps are a great start.

Ask the right questions. Have each member of your team answer three questions:

1. What are the strengths you can build on to improve your leadership?
2. Where are your opportunities for improvement?
3. What goal do you want to set now?

Have everyone take the time, individually, to provide thoughtful answers.

Build an action plan. The resulting action plan from the data above will give each leader a focus for ongoing support to drive the team toward growth in the areas that matters most to them and their team, and where the payoff for improvement would affect them personally and contribute to the success of the organization.

Sample action plans include:

- Being more strategic and less tactical in day-to-day work,
- improving employee engagement,
- changing up management styles, or
- delegating more effectively to focus on strategic priorities.

Each team member's action plan will be unique and tailored to his or her specific goals.

Make time for group leadership development. Group leadership development meetings can occur one-on-one or in a group, perhaps once a month. In your first meeting, put together four to six topics in the areas of leadership and management that could shore up the team's capacity as individuals and more importantly, that would strengthen their leadership capacity as a group. Then spend the coming months tackling those topics together in the service of your goals.

To be truly effective, a high-functioning team should have clear, agreed-upon goals. The ultimate goal of these meetings is for the team to design their future. Fresh ideas will emerge, each member will contribute, and, more importantly, the team will be able to achieve all of this on their own - which, after all, may be the hallmark of a true, high-functioning team.

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