

Six Essential Teamwork Skills

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As more and more organizations adopt a team framework it is important to consider what are the skills that make up great teamwork? Here are six skill areas for team leaders and team members to consider further developing.

For effective team work to occur there needs to be a **foundation** of a clear vision and purpose of the team. Teams will want to consider these questions: What is the purpose of the team? Why do we exist? Why is it important to operate as a team, rather than individual contributors? What is our vision for where we are going? Is this vision this aligned, and shared by all? Does every team member know how their role and work impacts this vision and purpose or mission?

1. **Communication** - Communication is critical for effective teamwork. Communication consists of several factors - listening as well as our words, body language and pace. A reminder that communication is not only what we say. In fact, in face to face communication, body language contributes to almost 55% of the message, followed by words at 7% and tone, pace and pitch at 38%. These figures shift when we switch to telephone based calls where we lose the cues of body language. In email, the balance shifts again given that tone is lost. Via email our words carry the weight.

On a team, communication is not only what is said, it is also what is not said on a team. What is the team not speaking about? What difficult conversations may need to be had?

Linked to communication is listening. What is the quality of listening on the team? Are team members really paying attention to what others are saying as well as paying attention to the other non-verbal cues which exist? In contrast, are team members so eager to “get a word in” that they are not really listening to what the other person is saying, rather focusing on what they want to say.

What are your team’s strengths in the areas of communication? Where is there opportunity to develop these further?

2. **Adaptability** - Against the business context of doing more with less, and ongoing change, adaptability has never been more important. The ability to change course regularly, think critically and be resilient is critical for teams who want to be at the top of their game.

How adaptable is your team overall? The members of your team? How important is adaptability in your context?

3. **Appreciation of differences** - There can be tremendous diversity that exists in any team. From different working styles, to professional backgrounds, priorities and even generations, effective teams appreciate differences. Part of this appreciation requires a look at how team members are similar, and how they are different. Finding out more about each team members preferences and styles can create understanding rather than lead to conflict. For example, one team member may be very detail oriented, whereas another team member is a “broad strokes” thinker. Knowledge of our individual preferences and styles allow us to be more sensitive to our biases and how we need to adapt our approaches in interaction with each other. This topic goes hand in hand with the emotional intelligence of the team.

How does your team appreciate and work across differences? What are the differences, synergies and strengths which exist on your team?

4. **Trust and Respect:** Trust and respect is a critical requirement for any team. If each team member does not have the

other's back, then members of the team operate within their own silos. Likewise, getting things done is highly dependent on the team trusting each other, and sharing the resources and information required to get tasks accomplished.

What is the level of trust and respect in your team?

5. Emotional Intelligence - Emotional Intelligence, or EI, is increasingly getting more attention from leaders these days. Emotional intelligence is “The capacity for recognizing our own feelings, and those of others, for motivating ourselves, for managing emotions well in ourselves and our relationships.” (Daniel Goleman, Harvard Business Review). Individuals and teams who are strong in emotional intelligence possess self-awareness (awareness about one's self), social awareness (awareness about others), relationship management (ability to develop strong relationships) as well as self-management (the ability to control emotion).

6. Commitment, Accountability and Follow-through - Teams exist to produce results. Commitment to the goals (shared and individual) required to achieve the results are critical. Accountability and follow-through is often lacking in many teams. What are you as a team collectively, and individually, committed to doing or undertaking to move the team forward? How are you creating this accountability and checking in? Is there a touch point for circling back to check in on progress around action steps or is it assumed that everyone has followed through. High performing teams come to agreement around how actions will be tracked, and put a focus on this consistently.

What is your team committed to? What supports the team in terms of accountability and follow-through?

About the Author- Jennifer Britton

Jennifer J. Britton is the founder of Potentials Realized, a Canadian-based performance improvement company. An award winning program designer, she works with groups, teams and organizations in the areas of leadership, teamwork and performance. Jennifer is the author of *Effective Group Coaching* (Wiley, 2009), the first book to be published on group coaching globally. Her second book, *From One to Many: Best Practices for Team and Group Coaching* was released last summer, and widens the lens to team coaching, as well as organizational capacity building.

Drawing on more than two decades of experience as an experiential educator and former manager with the United Nations and other international organizations, her global clients span government, corporate and non-profit sectors, from financial services to education and healthcare. She has spoken and trained on the topic of group coaching and coaching skills for groups as diverse as staff teams from UNICEF West and Central Africa, numerous chapters of the International Coach Federation, to national consulting and insurance firms, to international health care organizations.

Since early 2006, her Group Coaching Essentials™ teleseminar training program has supported hundreds of coaches in the creation and implementation of their own group coaching programs. Jennifer offers a range of group coaching programs and retreats for the general public in addition to the coaching and training services she offers to organizations. In addition to being a thought leader in the field of group and team coaching, she also is a practitioner herself. Her main areas of interest include leadership development, particularly for team leaders, teamwork and organizational capacity development. She also provides support as a mentor coach.

Credentialed by the International Coaching Federation, Britton was originally trained and certified by the Coaches Training Institute. She has also completed advanced coaching training in the areas of ORSC and Shadow Coaching. A Certified Performance Technologist (CPT), Britton holds a Masters of Environmental Studies (York University) and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology (McGill). Connect online at: www.potentialsrealized.com, [@jennbritton](https://twitter.com/jennbritton) (Twitter), [EffectiveGroupCoaching](https://www.facebook.com/EffectiveGroupCoaching) (Facebook) and <http://groupcoaching.blogspot.com> (Blog). Email: info@potentialsrealized.com Phone: (416)996-8326