

BUILD a STRONG TEAM

The Strong (and Well-Rounded) Team

How to create a dynamic and well-rounded
team to do risk-based work in the modern
economy

Strong (and Well-Rounded) Team

Presented by the team and advisory board at Project: Risk Leader

Project: Risk Leader is a special project of OCEG, a global nonprofit think tank that helps organizations reliably achieve objectives, address uncertainty and act with integrity.

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Introduction: The Strong (and Well-Rounded) Team

Teamwork. It's a word that makes some people smile and others cringe. It might conjure up being forced to work in groups in college, or it might be part of a great experience in a particular job setting. No matter how it makes people feel, though, it's important to understand the value that a good team can provide to any company.

For over forty years, business leaders have worked to create a team model that accurately describes the characteristics of the most successful teams.

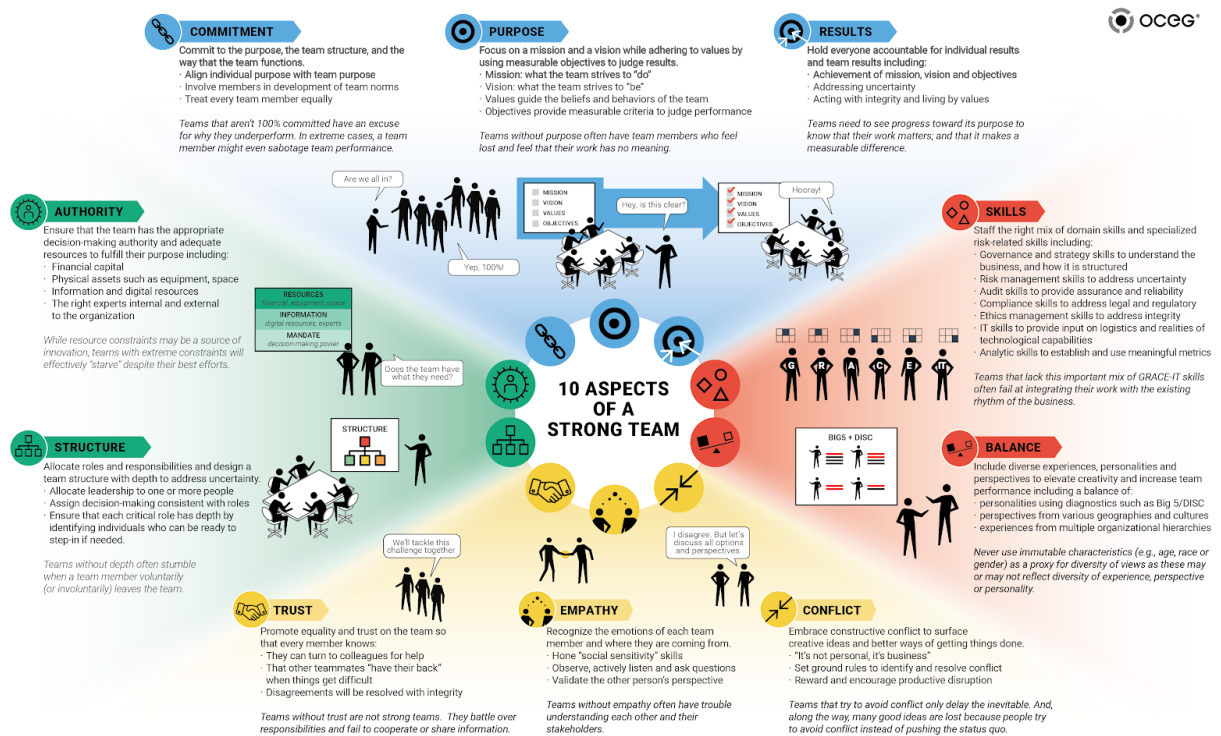
Despite the value of these models, risk-based work requires a unique outlook.

To answer the needs of those doing risk-based work in compliance, internal audit, operational risk-based, and information security, we created the 10 Aspects of a Strong Team Model. This model was developed from and based on seven other evidence-based models while also including aspects based on OCEG research.

This model will give you the tool you need to succeed with your risk-based team.

What makes a team effective?

Based on our research and the compilation of past team success models, we identified ten key aspects that are evident on all strong risk teams and compiled them in the 10 Aspects Team Model. Teams that show these aspects demonstrate a stronger ability to efficiently and effectively complete their projects and drive principled performance in their organization.



As an overview, strong teams have these 10 key aspects:

1. Purpose,
2. Commitment,
3. Results,
4. Skills,
5. Balance,
6. Trust,
7. Empathy,
8. Conflict,
9. Structure, and
10. Authority.

Does your team have all of those? Are they practicing them the right way? If the answer is no, or if you aren't sure, we can help.

The 10 aspects aren't just buzzwords. They're much more than that and they go deeper than you might expect.

A better understanding of them is important to help your team in any areas where they're having problems.

So let's dig into the aspects a bit more.

1. Purpose

Your team members need a purpose that the team can work on together.

They should consider:

- what they want to do - their mission
- what they want to be - their vision
- what they want to accomplish - their objectives
- how they will conduct themselves - their values

You want to have a team that can navigate unexpected obstacles and understands the value of the work they do. When people do not understand their purpose, they feel lost and unengaged. If challenges arise, the team members cannot ask themselves “do my actions align with our central purpose?” because they lack that collective intelligence about that purpose.

This makes it hard for them to adapt to new situations.

So keep that in mind when you're focused on building a team. You want people to feel a sense of purpose when they go about their tasks. Team leaders should figure out what motivates people, nurture open communication with the group members, and set out to figure out what exactly the purpose of the group will be before they get started on anything else.

2. Commitment

Team members need to commit to the team, and that's a given. But there's more to the equation than just staying committed to what the team's trying to accomplish. They also need to be committed to the team as an overall entity.

You can have people who agree with the purpose of the group but only do the minimum that is required. A strong risk-based team will have people firmly committed and engaged.

- How does our team function?
- What are our team “norms” and ways that we “do things around here?”
- What does it require of us?

If they don't know the answers to those questions, it's time they started asking (it's time YOU started asking).

Teams that lack commitment will miss opportunities and lack confidence.

There will always be an excuse for failure. Eliminate that excuse and build a stronger commitment through better communication and trust.

Team members also need to remember that they're equal and should be treated that way. Yes, there might be a team leader or other designated roles. But don't forget, the entire team is there for a common goal and a

common purpose. Nothing will destroy commitment more quickly than treating team members unequally.

3. Results

Good teams get results and see progress toward these results. After all, the team is there to accomplish something.

A team needs to see and judge its progress toward individual and collective objectives.

When it comes to results you can describe teams in 3 ways:

- **Weak** teams that do not hold team members accountable
- **Mediocre** teams where accountability is driven solely by the boss
- **Strong** teams, where team members feel comfortable being accountable and able to give feedback to each other

To properly measure your results, you want to use objective assessments that let you see how well the individuals and the team as a whole met their objectives.

Seeing the regular progression towards goals helps team members grasp their real achievements and accomplishments. It becomes easier to

understand how an individual's work matters to the wider group, which in turn helps them feel appreciated and valued by the team.

Team members can discuss progress and results with objective standards to guide them, reducing hurt feelings and arguments and leading to more productive conversations. Since people will know that their work will be judged according to a specific (high) standard, they will be sure to put their best foot forward, leading to greater team intelligence.

Each person on the team is both individually accountable, and accountable as part of the group when it comes to the team outcome. In short, each contribution matters and makes an impact on team performance as a whole.

Strong teams build cohesion by holding individuals and the group accountable for results. If team members know what's expected of them, it provides them with:

- Clarity
- Accountability
- Goals
- Strength
- Empowerment
- Mutual respect

All of those things help them be better team members and better teammates for the other people they work with. When that team effort is done, they'll also be better at working on teams in the future. They've learned a valuable skill.

4. Skills

Risk-based related teams require a careful mix of different skills and specializations. Consider the various areas that risk-based must address. You want to include professionals on teams with skill in:

- **Governance and strategy** skills to understand the business model;
- **Risk and performance** skills to address uncertainty and decision-making;
- **Audit and assurance** skills to provide assurance and reliability;
- **Compliance and quality** skills to address mandated and voluntary requirements;
- **Ethics and culture** skills to address integrity;
- **IT skills** to address the reality of the digital economy;
- **Analysis skills** to understand and develop meaningful information.

A team achieves balance when it brings together people with skills and talents from these different, critical specialties.

Teams that do not incorporate this important mix may lack insight into important parts of the business that may hinder progress. Too many people specializing in the same area can lead to unneeded competition.

A risk-based team that lacks one or more vital skill sets isn't a strong team, and will likely fail to give your business what it needs.

5. Balance

Not only will a strong team include members with a variety of the necessary skills and specializations, but you also want to create a balance of personalities, experiences, and perspectives within the team.

This balance, this diversity, will drive creativity and help to boost the performance of the group.

Balancing a team requires more than looking at external and immutable characteristics, such as race or age. This is an error that many teams make and one that is illegal in many jurisdictions.

Instead, you want to cultivate a diversity of views. To do this, consider the lived experiences, cultures and communities that people come from. This impacts how they view problems and potential solutions.

You also want to consider the personalities of the team members. Assessments such as the Big 5¹ or DISC can offer excellent insight into the personalities of the potential team members, empowering you to create balanced teams that represent a variety of aspects.

You should also ensure that multiple levels of experience and multiple levels of the organization are involved in the team. Having everyone with similar experience will reduce the range of views and perspectives on the team.

6. Trust

I bet you've done that exercise where you fall backward and someone catches you. It's in just about every college class or career training seminar where they're trying to get you to trust people you work with. Trust is a critical part of human nature-- we want to feel connected to others. When this element lives in a team, amazing things occur!

Each person must believe that they can rely on the other members to 'have their back' and not 'throw them under the bus' if problems arise on the project.

To build trust, promoting equal footing among the team members will be essential. Align the goals and values of the group and ensure that you select

¹ BIG 5 is the most widely used, evidence-based personality model trusted by researchers in social and cognitive psychology.

people you can trust to do their jobs well. Allow people to share their thoughts on the team culture and find excuses to celebrate each other.

As the group establishes its norms, you should also include a process for resolving disagreements. Promoting healthy resolution encourages people to feel comfortable broaching difficult topics.

Teams that lack trust will find their team members feeling defensive of their own roles, responsibilities, and accomplishments. People will be unable to ask questions or provide and receive constructive feedback. They will function more as several people trying to accomplish a task instead of a cohesive team.

When we consider the idea of having a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts, it becomes clear why this lack of cohesion will hurt the potential of the group.

7. Empathy

What is empathy? It's not the same as sympathy, which is basically feeling bad for someone else or their situation. True empathy is deeper than that. It's much more focused on feeling what the other person feels.

Because teams also need constructive conflict and trust to grow, it is the empathy of the group members that will allow these things to happen. Empathy helps team members detect conflict -- and to truly understand the other person which helps resolution.

Some researchers use the phrase "social sensitivity" to specify this part of empathy. People who have high levels of social sensitivity are able to detect the emotions and feelings of other people.

Team members can nurture empathy by improving communication among team members and practicing active listening. Encouraging team members to be self-aware and leading by example can help team leaders build this trait within the group.

Teams that do not have empathy will have trouble understanding each other and their stakeholders. This will make it difficult for the benefits of having a fully balanced team to manifest themselves. The inability of team members to fully express their thoughts for fear of 'losing face' will lead to lost opportunities.

You need people who understand, and who will continue to try to understand even when they're struggling with their own issues or something doesn't make sense to them.

8. Conflict

You may think it's great that your team members never disagree with one another. They all seem to get along. That's great, right? Well, maybe not.

Constructive conflict is a thing.

It refers to a free sharing of ideas in an environment where people feel comfortable fully expressing themselves, disagreeing with each other, and arriving at decisions that reflect these discussions.

When people do not have constructive conflict, we see explosions in office politics, a lack of creativity, and a rise of destructive disagreements.

You want people to address disputes head-on in a respectful atmosphere, not allowing grudges to fester under the surface.

People don't always get along. And that's okay.

You don't want your team members to agree on all the things, all the time. If they do, they really aren't sorting anything out. They're just sitting around the table, nodding in bovine agreement with the last thing the last person said.

You won't get anywhere productive when the team acts like that.

When conflict arises constructively, it can actually inspire creativity and innovation.

To ensure that your conflict follows this constructive path, you need to establish ground rules in the beginning, at the formation of your team. These rules should help the team identify conflicts that arise and then set up guidelines for resolving them constructively.

Team members who express potentially disruptive ideas and succeed in driving innovation for the group should be rewarded. Members should not feel nervous to express their opinions.

Teams that make the mistake of avoiding any possible conflict can inadvertently make people shy away from expressing their ideas. Remind people that it is not personal, it's just business to help everyone feel comfortable with feedback and open discussion.

9. Structure

Team members should have no confusion over the roles they will play on the team.

Confusion leads to bickering, redundancy, and unhealthy (as opposed to healthy) competition. Teams begin to lose sight of their purpose and goals get missed.

Once you have your group roles assigned, then leadership should be allocated to one or more people, while maintaining a sense of equality among team members.

Ensure that the decision-making roles align with the responsibilities and jobs that people have to prevent inefficiencies.

Importantly, your structure should encourage depth. All critical roles should have people ready to step in if needed. You may achieve depth by having internal staff ready to fill critical roles or by establishing relationships with outside advisors or staffing companies.

If team members cannot perform their duties, someone should be able to seamlessly step into the role to avoid unnecessary disruptions and slow-downs. Without this important depth, teams can find themselves seriously struggling if someone leaves the team for any reason.

Also, don't be afraid to step in and re-assign people who need it. Mature people understand that's sometimes required. They'll move into the new role, and the team will be better for it.

When teams are truly effective and strong, there's no time for drama. It's not about who got picked to be a leader, or anything else. It's about the good of the team and the good of the organization.

- How can each person help?

- What role do they fit into?

Those are the kinds of questions you should be asking, and the kinds of questions the team members should be asking themselves and one another, as well. That allows for true effectiveness, not just something that looks good on the surface.

10. Authority

Problems arise when a team lacks the authority they need to get the job done. Teams get slowed down by members constantly seeking permission to complete even mundane parts of their responsibilities.

Give them the authority they need. Or, if you are the team leader, GET the authority that you and your team need to be effective.

Teams should understand exactly what they can and can't do right from the beginning. That removes the guesswork and reduces problems.

If there are certain things your team isn't authorized to do, that's fine. But give them enough authority to actually make decisions and act on them. Otherwise, they'll spend the majority of their time waiting for someone else's permission instead of getting things accomplished. That's not a good situation.

If you're trusting them to be a team and you picked them because you value their skills and their insight, make sure you show them by letting them have authority over the project the team handles.

This authority will include ensuring that the team has the resources needed to fulfill their purpose. This includes the necessary budget and other forms of resources.

- The team will need physical resources, such as the necessary equipment and space to perform their risk-based work.
- They will also need information and digital resources. Teams may need access to computer systems or other forms of digital information that will play a role in a risk-based analysis.
- A well-equipped team will have access to the ideal internal and external experts and resources. For a risk-based team to perform their job correctly, they must have all the data that might impact the outcome.

Some businesses might point out that resource constraints can drive creativity.

While this might be true with mild resource shortages, chronic or extreme deprivation of what the team needs tend to slow down their creative processes and will result in poorer results.

How does the “10 Aspects Team Model” map to other team models?

The 10 Aspects Team Model was developed through careful consideration of seven other evidence-based models that have emerged throughout the decades. As you examine how our model maps out according to these past ideas, it becomes clear how our model has emerged to uniquely fit the needs of those in risk-based work.

Rubin, Plovnick, and Fry’s GRPI model (1977)

This 1977 model was one of the first to emerge as businesses sought to understand what made some teams work well while others struggled. The GRPI stands for Goals, Roles, Processes, and Interpersonal Relationships.

This model aligns moderately well with the 10 Aspects Team Model. The Goals portion can be likened to the ‘purpose’, ‘commitment’, and ‘results’ stages in the Core Aspect ideas, and the Roles with ‘structure’ and ‘skills’. Processes then fit with the ‘conflict’ category found in the 10 Aspects Team Model. Finally, the Interpersonal Relationships component fits with the ‘trust’ and ‘empathy’.

As this was one of the earliest models created, the insight offered here establishes a strong foundation for building the rest of our model. The 10 Aspects Team Model, however, offers a higher degree of precision in several

of the components and adds additional aspects that become important in risk-based work.

Katzenbach and Smith's Team Basics Model (1993)

Just over 15 years after the birth of the GRPI model, Katzenbach and Smith offered the business world their own unique approach with the Team Basics model. Katzenbach and Smith were authors who studied teams across a number of companies and looked at how they navigated challenges. This model focused on the need for commitment, skills, and accountability in teams, and how these features could lead to the desired results of collective work products, personal growth, and performance results.

Like the earlier model, this model saw moderate alignment with our 10 Aspect Model, with about half of our aspects being found throughout the Team Basics ideas. The Commitment component of the authors' work covers the 'purpose' and 'commitment' found in the 10 Aspects Team Model. Skills align with 'skills' and 'conflict' in our model. Accountability aligns with 'results'.

Lombardo and Eichinger T7 Model (1995)

Just two short years after the birth of Katzenbach and Smith's model, Michael Lombardo and Robert Eichinger put forth their own ideas about team success, an arrangement known as the T7 model.

This model looked at seven different factors, five of them being internal and two that were external. The model emphasized the importance of the five internal factors success but noted that regardless of the fit of the internal factors, without team leader fit and team support from the organization, the team will not be as effective as they might have otherwise been.

This arrangement also saw moderate alignment. The Trust factor in the T7 can be paired with the 'purpose', 'trust', 'empathy', and 'skills' categories of 10 Aspects Team Model, with 'structure' and 'authority' also accounted for within the T7 categories.

The insight and research that went into creating this model were very valuable in the development of the 10 Aspects Team Model, but it did require considerable refinement so that it would apply directly to those working in risk-based.

LaFasto and Larson's Five Dynamics of Teamwork and Collaboration (2001)

A few years after Lombardo and Eichinger came Frank LaFasto and Carl Larson, two new authors. They also spent time gathering information from teams across a number of industries. They wanted to be able to describe the characteristics of an effective team.

From the information they gathered, they put together a list of five layers that increase the odds of team success. This model similarly aligns well with 10 Aspects Team Model, hitting the majority of the points, though not all.

Team Leadership can be paired with 'purpose' in the 10 Aspects Team Model, with the Organization Environment layer of the Five Dynamics aligning with the 'commitment' and 'authority' pieces in our 10 aspects. Other layers align with the 'skills', 'balance', 'trust', 'conflict', and 'empathy' aspects.

Interestingly, this is the only other model that aligns with the Balance portion of the 10 Aspects Team Model. The Five Dynamics portion notes the importance of selecting the right people and balancing their viewpoints with diverse views, personalities, and expertise of other members of the group. The 10 Aspects Team Model also encourages teams to bring together diverse points of view to maximize results.

Hackman's Team Effectiveness Model (2002)

In 2002, J. Richard Hackman proposed five conditions that increased the likelihood of a team achieving success in their endeavors. To confirm whether or not the five conditions he outlined actually promoted team effectiveness, Hackman studied analytic teams within the U.S. intelligence community.

This model maps moderately well with our 10 aspects, with about half of the characteristics pairing off. The Real Team and Expert Coaching align with the 'purpose' category, while Compelling Direction can be paired with both 'purpose' and 'commitment'. The Enabling Structure condition can be paired with 'skills' and 'structure', while the Supportive Context fits with 'authority'. Other important aspects that apply to risk-based, including balance, trust, and conflict, do not seem well-represented in this model.

Lencioni's Five Dysfunctions of a Team Model (2005)

Patrick Lencioni developed his Five Dysfunctions of a Team Model in 2005. This model looks at the primary sources of dysfunction and conflicts within groups. Working from the opposite starting point of most other models, Lencioni described the five categories that teams need to avoid if they want to be effective. He organized the five dysfunctions as a pyramid, claiming that teams need to focus on healing the potential sources of dysfunction found at the bottom, and then working your way to the top.

This model aligns moderately well, with the importance of Commitment Focus in the Lencioni model aligning with the 'commitment' portion of the 10 Aspects Team Model, and the results, trust, empathy, and conflict also finding pairs as well.

Curphy and Hogan's Rocket Model (2010)

Curphy and Hogan developed their own model for team performance, known as the Rocket Model. The Rocket Model borrows from the research and insight offered by all those who had developed the earlier methods. This model also maps well to 10 Aspects Team Model, with a number of components lining up.

The Rocket model contains features that align with the 'purpose', 'commitment', 'results', 'skills', 'structure', 'trust', 'conflict', and 'empathy'. Since this framework does cover many important aspects of teamwork and team building, the 10 Aspects Team Model was strengthened by looking at the components that matter the most to those in risk-based departments.

Effective Teams Provide Value

In short, effective teams make for effective organizations. Strong teams get things done. Whether you're dealing with 5 dysfunctions of a team (there are infinitely more problems than that) the time to fix that problem is now.

Any issue can be corrected. It's just about timing and effort. Talk to your team. Find out what they need. Then, focus on the 10 Aspects of a Strong Team.

Building a successful team requires looking carefully at these important aspects and building a team of professionals that incorporates these ideas.

As you prepare to build new project teams, consider how you can incorporate these aspects into the team members you select. See how focusing on these areas can help your risk-based team take projects further, building a more efficient and effective team.

We understand that some teams are simply going to work better than others. That's just a part of life and a part of working with people who are different from one another. But good, effective teams are possible in any organization.

If you don't have strong teams, it's time to re-think the way your teams are created, managed and led using this 10 Aspects Team Model.

You'll be glad you did.

Aspect 1 - Purpose

To build a strong team, nurturing engagement among the members is critical - and engagement requires that every member understands the purpose.

Studies show that highly engaged employees are 10 percent more likely to exceed their expected performance. That number jumps to an incredible 50 percent when those same engaged employees also are enabled by those around them to do their jobs well. Despite the clear benefit of building teams that feel engaged, dedicated, and empowered by their organization, only 68 percent of employees say that they experience that crucial engagement.

What does it mean to have employees who feel engaged?

Well, this same research says that engagement is the result of having an understanding of the overall PURPOSE of the organization and team.

So get your Purpose sorted out.

When your risk-based team feels connected, they understand how they contribute to the 'big picture', regardless of how large or small their actual role may be. When people feel they are a part of something bigger than

themselves, they feel more interested and inspired by the topic and the team mission.

Engaging people requires understanding what helps the team members thrive; finding that hidden piece that will drive their work ethic and their performance. Uncovering this critical team purpose, therefore, requires careful consideration by the group and organizational leaders.

The purpose requires deeper thought than, “we are the best” and it requires a clearer mission than, “we need to solve this problem.”

Here is what you and your risk-based team need to know about successfully defining a purpose for your next risk-based project and the benefits this simple step can offer.

Defining a purpose for your team

To establish and define your team’s purpose, you need to identify four key components. These components come together to engage and inspire your team so that they can challenge themselves and achieve their goals by finding their purpose.

1. Establish your mission

Your mission describes what the team strives to do. This needs to be something real and definitive. “We want to be the best,” says very little and

offers little substance to inspire excitement or encourage other team members. The mission should challenge people and generate enthusiasm.

2. Clarifying your vision

The vision of the team describes who the group strives to be. It impacts how people will work together, their work ethic, and how the members will behave. Let people see how their role impacts outcomes and how the culture of the group influences broader goals.

3. Defining your values

The values of your team articulate the beliefs and behaviors expected of the team members.

Do not confuse team values with a poster on the wall.

The true values of the team can be found in the actions of the members and the behaviors and expectations they have internalized. To build a team that reflects the desired values, you need to define the expectations in the beginning and then hold people accountable for how they embody values.

4. Outlining your objectives

To keep the team on track, you also want to define measurable objectives. Determine the KPIs related to these objectives that will provide valuable

insight when gauging the performance of the team as a whole, as well as the individuals.

These objective measurements make it easier for the team members to have frank conversations about performance and areas for improvement.

By using measurable objectives, by definition, less subjective impressions can be used, resulting in fewer arguments and making it easier to find a path to success. They will keep team members on target and moving forward towards the predefined purpose of the group.

What happens when teams do not have purpose?

While you may now understand the importance that a clearly defined purpose has on a team, it is also valuable to look at how easily teams can be disrupted when they lack this essential ingredient.

When team members do not fully internalize the purpose of the group, they begin to feel lost. They do not understand the value of the tasks they complete. This makes it hard for them to remain engaged and focused on their responsibilities. Employees in these environments will often lose their motivation to remain on task and to meet their deadlines.

When a team lacks purpose and does not have a clear picture of their mission, values, and objectives, they are forced to rely on a rule book or a predetermined script that determines who does what. If someone takes away that script, such as when unforeseen problems arise, suddenly the team begins to flounder. Without purpose, group members cannot ask themselves, “do my actions here align with our central purpose?”, which makes it difficult for them to find their way.

Teams that do not have a clear sense of purpose are not adaptable. They become hindered and unable to reach their goals by unexpected situations.

How to give your employees a strong sense of purpose

Step 1. Use a kickoff meeting to outline a definite team mission.

When the team first forms, bring together the members for a meeting dedicated to determining the mission of the group. Keep in mind that this should differ from just the job assigned to the team.

Consider the example set forth by Linda Hill and Kent Lineback at the Harvard Business Review. A team has been put together following a disastrous response to one of their brand’s products. The task before them is to ‘fix’ the negative public response and get the brand back on the right

track. “Fix the problem” however, does not work as a team mission. It does not inspire or give the group a firm idea of what they need to accomplish. If their ‘rule book’ was taken away, as discussed previously, the team will have little idea about where to go next.

When the team, however, decides to go amend their purpose and realizes that their true mission is to, “restore the company’s reputation for quality”, however, they become reinvigorated and inspired.

Step 2. Let the employees know how they have positively impacted stakeholders.

Employees are often kept in the dark regarding how their work has directly impacted stakeholders. They might complete their particular aspect of a project and submit it by their deadline, but how that effort ended up impacting clients and the success of the team and the broader organization does not get filtered back to them.

Make an effort to share with employees directly how their efforts impacted the rest of the team, the organization, and stakeholders.

Provide insight into how their work effort powered bigger projects that helped drive other successes.

Help them see the value of their role within the bigger picture of the organization.

Step 3. Train managers to understand motivations.

Quality managers will understand how to align individual motivations and drivers with the group goals and mission.

To begin this process, leaders will need to better understand the personalities of the members of the team. Personality inventories, like the ones referenced in the Aspect: Balance (read more about this in our piece on team personalities), can be very helpful in this process. You will gain a better understanding of what motivates particular people and what helps them remain on task.

Strong managers will then be able to use this information to link the individual motivating factors of the members of the team with the broader goals of the group. Connect these motivating factors with the mission and team purpose.

Step 4. Take advantage of employee surveys.

Employee surveys can provide valuable insight regarding employee's perceptions of the team and its level of productivity.

Many offices will use surveys only once or twice a year to learn more about people's points of view, but they can actually be more effective when used regularly. This allows you to get a better idea of how the day-to-day operations in the office and the impressions of your employees.

Use these surveys as an opportunity to learn more about how employees feel about their level of engagement with the team as well as their understanding of the mission of the group.

Gauge their ability to describe the purpose of the team, including the mission, vision, values, and objectives. If your members can not regularly identify these key components, or their answers otherwise indicate a strong likelihood that the team has not been brought together by a common purpose, the time has come to reconvene and discuss the group's goals.

Aspect 2 - Commitment

A successful team requires members who fully commit to the team. It will be difficult to achieve success if people do not fully embrace the purpose and other aspects of the team.

True buy-in comes when you have members that are both fully committed to the group and engaged in the team's activities and goals. It is possible to have people who agree completely with the objectives and goals of the organization but are not completely engaged. These people might not devote themselves fully to their responsibilities and only do the minimum of what the team requires. You need a culture that encourages engagement and commitment to a team.

When teams successfully cultivate strong levels of commitment from their members, it increases their likelihood of engaging in behavior that helps the team. It also improves the satisfaction people feel about their jobs, boosting loyalty across the board.

Building a team that demonstrates these aspects, however, can be a challenge. Here is what your risk-based team needs to know about building a fully-committed group.

Understanding true commitment and its importance

Commitment does not mean consensus.

For groups to achieve genuine commitment from the members of the team, they do not have to achieve complete agreement on all their decisions. In fact, this often is counterproductive. Attempting to get everyone to agree on all decisions the group makes becomes inefficient and can hinder the ability of the group to engage in productive conflict. To learn more about the value of healthy conflict in teams, you can read our other piece about this important cornerstone trait in groups.

Desiring consensus can be strong for many teams. If everyone is on board with a particular idea, then it will help to defuse blame if something goes wrong. This way of looking at team buy-in and commitment, however, just slows down the group.

To cultivate a genuine commitment to a team, you want to remove potential assumptions or misunderstandings within the group.

Cultivate support among team members by helping them know that their thoughts and concerns are heard, considered, and responded to. This will

align the personal, individual purpose of the member with the greater purpose of the team.

Teams that build strong commitment within their organizations have people take their jobs and their responsibilities seriously. They understand the value and importance of helping others within their group succeed. This leads to greater trust among team members, strengthening the group across multiple directions.

What a group looks like when it lacks commitment

Teams that lack strong commitment will experience various symptoms of dysfunction and inefficiency. You will often see problems such as:

- **Feelings of ambiguity among team members.** They feel unsure about what they need to accomplish and how they will achieve it. Since team discussions will be centered around trying to make sure everyone agrees on each decision, little will be accomplished and the vision of the team will start to become muddled.
- **Missed opportunities.** With the delays that come from prolonged discussions about each decision and the propensity for the group to revisit discussions and past decisions repeatedly, many opportunities will be missed. Team members will feel encouraged to second guess

themselves, as the fear of errors or failure will be extremely high. This will hinder their ability to seize potential opportunities to accomplish new goals. Creative solutions and 'thinking outside of the box' will be discouraged, even if it happens inadvertently.

- **A lack of confidence.** People will become very nervous about potential failure, which leads to them to second guess themselves and the leaders of the group. This will erode the trust among the team members, make it hard for people to be effective team leaders, and result in fewer people willingly engaging in constructive conflict.
- **Excuses for failure.** Teams that do not have a commitment from their members will always have an excuse about why they underperform. In extreme cases, you might even end up with a team member who purposely sabotaged the work of the group because of feelings of resentment or other negative connections to the team.

How to nurture commitment in your team

Step 1. Improve communication from the leader to the rest of the team.

People will feel more confident in the decisions of the group when they know they have had the opportunity to understand and discuss the ideas with the team. Leaders should particularly focus on communicating the results of the team projects to encourage conversation about these topics and allow people the opportunity to voice their opinions.

Step 2. Remember the value of healthy conflict.

Quality leaders and teams cannot be afraid of group discussion and people potential challenging ideas of others provided it is done in a healthy way. This will help stretch the minds of the group members to help everyone find the optimal decision.

It will also help ensure that every member of the group knows that their opinion will be valued and listened to. Take people's input into account when making decisions. When people know that their thoughts and ideas are considered by others, it influences people's view of the fairness of the discussion. Studies have shown that when team members feel as though decisions have been made fairly, it will positively impact the level of

commitment they feel towards the decision and the group, as well as the level of trust they have in the leader.

Step 3. Remember not to strive for complete consensus.

Trying to get everyone to absolutely agree on every decision will slow down the group and hinder success. Instead, work to ensure that everyone feels heard and has a chance to influence the discussion, but keep moving the group forward.

As you listen to the opinions of the team members, make sure that each member receives equal, respectful treatment from the other members. This will increase their ability to comfortably speak up and express their ideas.

Step 4. Set deadlines for decisions.

It can be very easy to get lost in the discussions for different decisions, and simple steps can end up wasting days, or even weeks. Set reasonable timelines for your project, determining when key decisions will need to be made. This will keep everyone on track, which will, in turn, encourage people to make decisions. Group members will feel confident in the direction and goals of the group because they know what to expect.

Step 5. Set the authority for making decisions as low as possible.

Consider the cost analysis for various decisions that need to be made. For example, if you require a consensus from the company executives before running an experiment with the team, calculate the hourly cost of having all those executives on the phone for the 60 to 90 minutes that it would take to make the proposal and come to a consensus. Chances are, for many small decisions, it would be more of a waste of the company's time and money to come to an agreement than to simply run the experiment, even if it was a total failure.

Teams should focus on keeping this level of authority as low as possible to maximize efficiency.

Hire smart, trusted people with the skills needed to thrive on the risk-based team, as discussed in the other cornerstones. This will allow you to feel confident in their decision-making skills so that decisions can be made as quickly as possible, without worrying about absolute consensus from those higher in the organization.

Step 6. Explore worst-case scenarios and create contingency plans.

To help everyone feel more confident in the idea of making decisions without complete consensus, explore as a group the worst-case scenario and

develop a plan for dealing with it. People tend to feel more confident if they know what will happen if everything that possibly could go wrong, does. It helps them feel more confident moving forward with their decisions and takes away some of their fear of failure.

Step 7. Leaders must help team members feel comfortable with the idea of mistakes.

Fear of mistakes can be a big driving force in the push for absolute consensus. Leaders must be ok making a mistake in decisions and demonstrate to the others on the team that they hold this outlook.

Leaders can further cultivate this culture by not punishing or reprimanding people for failure, but instead focusing negative consequences on those who are wasteful or show the poor allocation of resources.

Building a team that has complete buy-in from the team members is a critical part of successful risk-based groups. Cultivating this level of commitment among team members will drive teams forward, encouraging people to fully engage with the work of the organization and helping the group reach new heights. Consider how to implement some of these principles into your own risk-based team to see greater success moving forward.

Aspect 3 - Results

Defining and committing to the purpose isn't enough. A team needs to see and judge its progress toward individual and collective objectives.

According to the Harvard Business Review, a key component of the most successful teams is accountability for results. The research reported by HBR found three main types of teams:

- Weak teams, where there was little to no accountability among the team members
- Mediocre teams, where the boss takes over the role as the main source of accountability
- High-performing teams, where members of the team feel comfortable approaching each other and offering accountability.

Understanding the importance of accountability in team dynamics and building a culture where people accept this responsibility can be a challenge. When teams learn how to tap into it, however, it can result in tremendously positive return.

What happens to teams that lack accountability

When teams lack accountability, it can result in a number of challenges for the group. Here are just a few that you will likely see materialize:

- **Team members will become resentful.** People who work hard and achieve, or even exceed, their personal objectives, will become resentful of those who do not put in their fair share of effort. When team members are held to different standards based upon personal work ethics rather than objective standards, people naturally become annoyed with those who do not appear to do their parts of the project. This leads to disunity within the team and makes it harder for them to get things done.
- **People fall towards mediocrity when they do not have an objective standard to reach.** When people have the same experience with the team regardless of the amount of effort they put forth, they become far more likely to do a mediocre job on their tasks. They lose their results-oriented approach as well as their drive to succeed and excel because they do not receive personal or team benefits for their effort, nor do they receive any consequences for not meeting standards. This results in a group of people doing a mediocre job on the team, thus

hindering the group's ability to strive for success.

- **Team members begin to miss deadlines.** It becomes harder to keep people on track to meet various deadlines or to turn in important deliverables on time when there are no objective standards in place. Without accountability, it becomes very easy for people to slip on their responsibilities, and the lack of accountability will make it difficult to determine precisely who had let their job slide so that the deadline could not be met. This can easily set the entire project behind and hinder progress.
- **The leader becomes forced to be the main source of discipline.** Teams work best when the members feel as though they can trust each other and clearly know their roles and responsibilities. When there is no accountability, or when there are no objective means of evaluating the progress of members or the team as a whole, the leader of the team becomes the only person who can effectively keep the project on task. They become the sole person trying to keep the team moving forward, which disrupts many of the critical components of a strong team. Since discipline measures will be taken without objective standards, trust may begin to erode within the group. There may also be a breakdown among the roles that team members were supposed to focus on, as the roles and responsibilities will not be clear-cut.

What teams look like when they have strong accountability

A team that has effective accountability will find it easier to function and will drive results. Team members will feel more comfortable being open with each other about each other's progress and work ethic, as they will be able to evaluate progress and success against objective metrics. This makes it possible to bring attention to the potential shortcomings of others, offer encouragement, and work together to find solutions without eroding trust or making people feel targeted. This will nurture relationships between the team members.

The objective metrics that are used both for the team members and the group will also make it easier for the team to identify any potential problems that arise. Since progress is monitored against clear standards, failure to meet these standards will immediately signal a need for an evaluation.

Failing to have standards might make it easier for problems to hide for long.

Thanks to the metrics, the problems can be rooted out easier, discussed, and solutions can be found with fewer arguments. This will help the team perform more effectively and efficiently.

As teams progress with their projects, it also becomes important for them to evaluate their strategies. Accountability and metrics will empower the group

to see how well these various strategies measure up, rather than relying on gut feelings or impressions. When the project goes well, the team will be able to clearly see the reasons for their success. If deadlines are not being met, however, the metrics can also be used to root out problems and find an improved path forward.

Finally, the team members will all know that they are each held to a high standard that encourages them to put forth their best work. Mediocrity will be eliminated, as people who do not perform and meet their standards will be easily rooted out. Those who continually meet and exceed their standards, however, will also be easily discovered, contributing to their motivation to succeed.

As team members know that their work is needed and that their teammates are putting forth equal levels of effort, their respect for each other will grow. This will improve the trust and communication between the teammates, setting them up for further success.

The team collectively will be able to see their progress towards the team objectives. This will increase their engagement and prevent discouragement. They will know that their work matters and makes a difference for the group.

How to build a culture of accountability on your risk-based team

Step 1. Determine the objective assessment metrics that you will use to evaluate the members of the team.

This metric should allow you to easily understand if the targeted goals have been met and how well the different members of the team perform. When the team first begins to meet, lead a discussion about the metrics that will be used. Let the team members know what the metric will reveal, why these metrics have been chosen, and the type of action that can be taken based upon the metric. For example, if repeated failures to meet the standards can result in dismissal from the team, let people know up front.

This helps to preserve trust and communication within the group. The metrics should measure the ability of the team member and the team altogether to work towards the objectives of the group.

Step 2. Create objective standards that the team members will need to abide by.

These standards will help to establish the work ethic and culture of the team. They will encourage people to behave ethically and ensure that the project aligns with the core values of the organization. People should know how the

standards fit with the larger picture: meaning how the standards that they reach will help the group as a whole attain their objectives.

Step 3. Give regular progress reports.

People perform better when they feel as though someone is paying attention.

Receiving a progress report will allow the team member to see how well their behavior and activities align with the objective metrics and standards that have been established for the team. They will have the chance to discuss their contributions to the team with a group leader and how they can help the group collectively accomplish more. If a team member learns that they have not been meeting their objectives during the project, they can use this information to improve their performance and maintain the high group standard.

Step 4. Encourage your team leader to lead by example.

When people see their classmates accomplishing great things, it can encourage them to do the same. Give them opportunities to see the leaders engaging in productive activities.

Step 5. Reward success.

People feel motivated to work if they know that the others around them value them and their accomplishments. Rewards can help to accomplish these messages. Reward the team when they do manage to meet or exceed the expectations originally laid out for them.

This will help keep the team unified, rather than splitting up team members and creating an environment where they fight for themselves. Rewarding group success, however, keeps the team together, but still lets the members know that their efforts have not gone unnoticed.

Step 6. Let people know directly that you expect them to hold each other accountable.

Tell them about examples of the need for accountability, or even about a time when you were held accountable. Creating an environment based on accountability can help your risk-based team succeed. Your members will know precisely what is expected of them and of their teammates. This open communication of expectations and objective means of measuring success will make it obvious how well team members perform, encouraging everyone to give their all to the project. The benefits for your team will be numerous as you take these critical steps to prepare for your new risk-based project.

Aspect 4: Skills

When doing risk-based work, you need to have the right mix of disciplines to get work done. This is true whether you are addressing some domain specific issue (like financial crimes) or some cross-cutting capability (like third-party management). Lacking in any one of these disciplines will sink the entire team.

Think about an emergency room for a moment. We count on the people in these high-pressure situations to manage the whirlwind of activities that occur during an emergency.

To accomplish this, professionals in the hospital rely on a careful division of labor.

They do not have countless medical professionals in the room who all focus on triage. Instead, they have a mix of nurses, medical assistance, triage doctors, surgeons, and countless other specialties on call. This division ensures that the patient's needs are met with the utmost care.

Notice also that these different roles also work in unison.

Rather than keeping the different disciplines segregated, they work together to successfully manage the task that arises.

Within a risk-based team, the tasks at hand might not be as urgent as they are in an emergency room, but they do require a mix of skills and talents.

Bringing together members that have different specialties ensure that the team can perform to the highest ability (and in many cases are required to get work done at all).

Identifying the GRACE-IT roles and understanding their importance

As a team, you will tackle various challenges. You have a “PURPOSE” and that purpose encompasses a certain scope of responsibility. Your team might:

- Be an ongoing department or function (e.g., compliance, audit, risk, internal controls, infosec)
- Be a temporary initiative or project
- Address a specific topical area (e.g., financial crimes)
- Address a cross-cutting shared process (e.g., training or policy management)

Regardless of what your scope is, you need a well-rounded mix of skills on your team to ensure you deliver creative solutions and high-performance. We use the acronym GRACE-IT to remember the key skill areas.

Governance and strategy

Governance and strategy professionals bring skills that help to understand the business and operating environment. They understand the organization, its mission/vision/values and how the overall business is designed to achieve objectives.

These skills are used to “draw lines” from business strategy to tactics, programs, and initiatives. This is a critical part of any team because you need to understand how the team’s work impacts the organization as a whole.

Some of the important skills that comprise governance and strategy include:

- Defining mission, vision and values and business objectives
- Understanding industry forces that impact the organization
- Designing a business model to achieve objectives
- Designing governance and management activities to ensure the proper indirect and direct control of the organization

Make sure that you have these skills on your team to ensure that any solutions that the team proposes are linked to things that REALLY matter to the business.

For example, if your scope is “third party management” the governance and strategy skills on the team will:

- Understand the relative and economic importance of third-party relationships to the business model
- Draw lines to demonstrate how “third party management” helps the organization realize and secure revenue in growing economies
- Understand how the team’s work reduces costs and cycle time to forge valuable relationships in new markets

Without these skills, you might find your team saying something like, “We are doing third party management because we have to.”

You might think this is hyperbole. However, I assure you it is not. The number of teams doing third-party management who understand precisely how they support business objectives might surprise you -- in a bad way!

Risk and performance

By definition, “risk-based work” deals with “risk.” And, modern conceptions of risk and risk-based make the point that addressing risk is really about making better decisions under uncertainty.

Of interest is that modern conceptions of performance management make the point that addressing performance is really about making better decisions under uncertainty.

So, in some ways, these disciplines have converged. Their difference is really in emphasis rather than kind. For example, risk-based work tends to focus more on the negative effects that uncertainty has on objectives, and performance management work tends to focus more on the positive effects.

To be fair to both disciplines, we should recognize that both risk-based and performance management, when done properly, address both the positive and the negative effects -- but for most people, risk is associated with the negative and performance is associated with the positive.

Risk and performance management skills help the team:

- identify opportunities and threats for achieving objectives;
- analyze things that might happen (and determine when to use more or less sophisticated modeling to understand these things);

- implement governance and management actions to indirectly and directly control the organization; and
- monitor the effectiveness of management decisions.

Continuing with the example of third-party management, the risk and performance management skills will help the team model the current economic spend and performance of the existing third-party management program. Then as the team considers new options for tackling this area, risk and performance management skills will help the team (and the business) identify things that might happen to 1) get in the way of successful third-party management; and 2) facilitate successful third-party management.

While not exhaustive, this list of techniques helps you understand the kind of quantitative and qualitative capabilities that your team needs:

- Design thinking
- Scenario planning
- Sensitivity analysis
- Dependency analysis
- Simulation modeling (deterministic and non-deterministic)
- Causal inference modeling
- And more!

These are the kinds of hard-core analytical skills that drive effective decisions to manage risk and performance.

Audit and assurance

Audit skills help the team understand, in advance, the areas where management will want (or should want) assurance that what management BELIEVES is happening actually IS happening; and that it is ENOUGH given the organization's objectives.

Not every aspect of the organization requires high levels of assurance. And, not every assurance activity requires absolute objectivity. However, it is important to define areas where risk-based work should undergo periodic or real-time assurance activities.

Audit professionals often have skills such as:

- Requirements analysis
- Sampling and statistical analysis
- Forensic analysis
- Data analysis
- Investigations
- And more

Using the third-party management example, audit skills will help to either “build in” assurance activities or make the third-party management solution more “auditable” in the right ways.

Perhaps this entails developing a real-time report that notifies the board of any time a third-party receives a notice from a government entity. Perhaps this entails an annual forensic analysis of vendor financial. Perhaps this entails an annual audit to ensure that 100% of vendors have complied with code of conduct compliance and training.

Some risk-based teams don’t have a specific mandate to define their own assurance activities. Regardless, it is important (and smart) to have these skills on your team so that you can build in the right “hooks” to make the assurance work defined and done by others more effective and efficient.

Compliance and quality

There are both mandated and voluntary requirements that an organization must meet. You might think of these as the “boundaries” between which an organization must operate.

Mandated boundaries include laws, rules, and regulations dictated by the government. Voluntary boundaries include provisions in contracts or internal policies (it is important to remember that violating a voluntary boundary can result in even more damage to an organization than violating a mandated

boundary). Quality management often specifies voluntary boundaries via specifications and targets for performance.

Your team needs to understand these boundaries and the requirements that must be addressed along the way. The way you address voluntary boundaries is more open. However, the way that you address mandatory boundaries is often regulated or, at a minimum, “highly recommended” by regulators.

Compliance professionals often mix management, legal, quality and HR skills including:

- Requirements analysis
- Risk analysis
- Policy management
- Training management
- Corporate communications
- Crisis management
- Investigations
- Attention to details
- And more

Using the third-party management example, compliance skills might uncover a range of legal requirements in the way you vet vendors (information that you can / cannot ask for). Compliance skills will define the various legal requirements for which your organization is still accountable even though

you've outsourced to vendors (thus you must be certain that the vendors are doing a good job in those areas). Compliance skills will ensure that you meet the minimum legal standards; and then to go beyond these standards where the minimum isn't enough to address the real risk.

As a final note, in the modern business environment, virtually every business process has some compliance aspect that must be considered. Having these skills on your team, even when you think that your team isn't "doing compliance" directly, is critical to getting out in front of this reality.

Ethics and culture

Various professions focus on "ethics and culture" of an organization. Many compliance professionals consider "ethics" to be an important aspect of their job. Most HR professionals would consider "culture" to be an important part of their job. In fact, some chief executive officers might say that ethics and culture is their primary responsibility or even everyone's responsibility.

To be sure, and in a broad sense, ethics and culture truly is everyone's responsibility. For those individuals charged with the responsibility of implementing and managing programs that are primarily designed to impact ethics and culture, there are a range of common skills:

- Organization design and development
- Industrial and social psychology
- Training and development

- Leadership development
- And More

Adding these skills to your risk-based work is important because many times human behavior and culture are at the root of the challenge you hope to address.

For example, addressing an issue such as harassment is really about building a culture of respect. Addressing an issue about discrimination is really about building a culture of equality. Addressing an issue about corruption is about building a culture of honesty and transparency.

Using the third-party management example, you can imagine building various assessment tools to vet supplier culture; or education to influence supplier culture; or surveys to measure supplier perceptions, or their employee perceptions about risk.

You get the idea.

In fact, sometimes, the best “controls” that your team can and should develop will involve building strong culture instead of processes or IT systems.

And, ethics and culture also have a measurable impact on how teams, themselves, perform and behave. They help to create a particular

atmosphere, influencing how people interact with each other and how they view their role within the organization and the the greater society.

IT - Information Technology

Information Technology (IT) is not only unavoidable in the modern organization; but it is also a critical component of business objectives. Your team will either build or modify IT systems as part of almost any solution. Having these skills on your team can be helpful.

That said, “IT skills” can mean a lot of things including:

- Enterprise architecture
- Application architecture
- Software design / development / testing
- Infrastructure design / development / testing
- Software as a Service / cloud
- Internet of things (IoT)
- And more

There is also a growing field of specific IT professionals and skills focused on risk-based work including:

- Cybersecurity
- Information security
- Privacy

- Access control
- And more

Using the third-party management example, you will be a better team if someone is able to, first-hand and without standing in some “procurement queue,” assess the kinds of third-party management software that might be available in the marketplace. What does this software do? Are there new ways of looking at third-parties because of new technology in the marketplace? And so on.

What happens where there is no mix?

If your team lacks this critical mix (the Critical 6) of skills, you will see a few problems arise.

Without governance and strategy skills your team will lack the ability to understand how the business really works. Your team will struggle to align their solutions with the rhythm of the business. And, your team might even hinder the progress of business operators without even knowing / noticing.

Without risk and performance skills, your team will lack the ability to address uncertainty using sophisticated thinking, modeling and decision-making tools. Your team will struggle to address the most important threats and opportunities and reduce the organization's ability to balance risk/reward.

Without audit and assurance skills, your team will lack the ability to think (ahead of time) about how various solutions might need to be evaluated by internal or external assurance bodies. Your team will struggle to design solutions that are “auditable” and drastically increase the work required by colleagues charged with that responsibility.

Without compliance and quality skills, your team will lack the ability to understand and address boundaries. Mandated and voluntary boundaries will be poorly understood or maybe even ignored. And, when external fear-mongers come in spreading gloom and doom around the latest regulatory fire-drill (how many cliches is that?), your team won't know how to calmly assess the reality.

Without ethics and culture skills, your team will lack the ability to address the human factors at the root of so many issues. They will underestimate how to transform the organization and shape enduring changes for the better.

Without IT skills, your team will be a prisoner to external vendors peddling the latest and greatest innovation (which may or may not work). Or, your team might be a prisoner to corporate IT, standing in line behind other “priorities” because of your inability to articulate the critical role IT plays in your solutions. Perhaps the worst consequence of not having IT skills on the team is not knowing what you are missing. There are so many opportunities to address risk-based work using new innovations ... and you need to know about them!

Aspect 5: Balance

“The worst kind of team for an organization that wants to be innovative and creative is one in which everyone is alike and gets along too well” Marguerite Rigoglioso

Having a balance of diverse personalities, experiences and perspectives will enrich and positively influence team performance.

Immutable and surface characteristics like age, race and biological sex² will not significantly influence team performance. Using surface characteristics such as these is (by definition) shallow, unethical, and often illegal when deciding employment status. I wouldn't use them when making decisions about your team either.

Don't be fooled by articles that read “research that suggests” and “x is correlated with y” when it comes to these things. Why? Because there are things more important BEHIND these surface characteristics. **And these are the things that matter most.**

² NOTE: Recent research by Anita Woolley suggests that increasing individuals with a skill called “social sensitivity” will help team performance; and people born biologically female typically rate “higher” on social sensitivity without training. However, social sensitivity is a skill that can be learned. So, even using research that appears to say something about biology, the fact remains that immutable characteristics, by themselves, are terrible ways to evaluate diversity in an effort to balance your team.

Rather than using surface characteristics, you should think about what might be behind them. Sometimes, but never always, there are differences in:

- Personality (the combination of characteristics or qualities that form an individual's distinctive character),
- Experience (practical contact with and observation of facts or events), and
- Perspective (a person's point of view or general attitude to life).

Personality is generally stable across time periods. Experience is something that cannot be changed retroactively as people either “live” or don’t live an experience. Perspectives often depend on personality and experiences (nature and nurture) and, while they can change, are the kind of thing that require evidence and persuasion to change in a meaningful way.

In other words, all three of these things are powerful drivers for how people interact with the world and each other on a team.

Personality

Personality is somewhat stable over time, though changes can occur. You might consider personality to be the “nature” of an individual.

While the right combination of personalities can drive a team higher and help them achieve more, the wrong combination can lower productivity and fall far short of the expectations you had in the beginning.

Evaluating the personalities of your team can help you determine which people will work best together and how you can create a healthy environment where cooperation excels.

While several different types of personality inventories exist, the Big Five Inventory and DISC work very well for this goal.

Big Five Inventory

The Big Five Inventory is the most well-researched model to explain personality. It examines five main dimensions of personality through a self-report. Some use the acronym OCEAN to remember the dimensions:

- **Openness**, meaning how creative and imaginative a person is versus how conventional their points of view tend to be.
- **Conscientiousness**, which looks at whether the person takes care to be punctual or regularly shows up late and their level of carelessness or precision with their work.
- **Extroversion**, such as whether the person will likely be a loner or a joiner, quiet or talkative.

- **Agreeableness**, including whether the person will be critical or lenient, easily irritated or generally get along with everyone.
- **Neuroticism**, including whether the person will likely be calm or easily become worried and nervous. It also looks at whether the person easily becomes self-conscious or if they generally feel comfortable with themselves.

DISC

The DISC is also a widely used and available diagnostic. It examines four central aspects via self-reporting:

- Levels of dominance, describing how blunt and straightforward the person is when they communicate and how they view the world.
- Levels of influence, meaning how enthusiastic the person is and how likely they are to collaborate easily.
- Levels of steadiness, looking at how centered and supportive the person would be for teammates.
- Levels of conscientiousness, including the person's objectivity and attention to details.

Either of these reports will give teams a good idea about team members' personalities so they can create a balanced team that will maximize productivity.

Generally, you will want to have a balance of personalities that range on each of these dimensions.

For example, having some people who are very open to new ideas should be balanced with team members who are more inclined to trust prior decisions and not rehash everything.

People high on conscientiousness tend to be self-disciplined, think before they act, are goal-directed and follow socially prescribed rules and norms. People who are low in conscientiousness tend to be more spontaneous and impulsive, undisciplined, disorderly and non-conforming, yet may also be more creative as they do not feel as bound by convention. You need both.

Extroverts tend to drive results, especially in groups that require guidance. But introverts excel with groups with more proactive, self-starting people. Research summarized by Francesca Gino noted "extroverted leadership was linked to significantly higher store profits when employees were passive but significantly lower store profits when employees were proactive. In stores with passive employees, those led by extroverts achieved 16% higher profits than those led by introverts. However, in stores with proactive employees, those led by extroverts achieved 14% lower profits. As expected, extroverted

leadership was an advantage with passive groups, but a disadvantage with proactive groups.”

Like the other attributes, agreeableness has always been a double-edge sword. People who are agreeable are more inclined to get work done without complaining. It’s great to have everyone heads down working. However, agreeableness also means that people don’t question assumptions and don’t engage in constructive conflict when they see problems -- which isn’t good.

What on earth could be positive about neuroticism? Neuroticism characterizes people who experience frustration, anxiety and depression -- all are usually associated with negative performance outcomes. However, these individuals also have an increased sensitivity to negative events that the team wants to avoid. These are the people who see the cost overrun well before others on the team. These are the people who see the potential for change management resistance when others don’t. Oh, and these are the people who actually feel shame when something goes wrong -- kind of important.

Experience

A person’s lived experience, when they are young, is a consequence of chance. Location, socioeconomics, family and other things are luck of the

draw. Over time, some adults, though not all adults, are able to make choices about their experiences including:

- Location (choices around country, region, neighborhood)
- Interests (choices about hobbies and other interests)
- Education (choices about education)
- Personal (choices about family, friends, fitness, etc.)
- Work (choices about industries, roles and professions)

All of these realities impact how a person experiences the world.

Growing up in one country isn't the same as growing up in another country (this can even be true WITHIN a country). Growing up in a family that economically struggled is different than growing up in a family that had emotional struggles. Choosing to live in a large city will give a person a different experience than living in a rural area. People who spend their leisure time hiking outdoors might see things differently than people who prefer chess.

Experience also comes from working in an industry or an organization. Having various levels of experience on your team will help to balance the intuitions of industry experts with the new perspectives of those who might not have the same level of experience.

The key is to understand and appreciate that people have a wide variety of lived experiences. Balancing a diversity of these experiences will increase the likelihood that your team will produce creative solutions.

Perspectives

Perspectives are often a consequence of lived experience and personality (nurture and nature is an approximation here). A lifetime of experience combined with the way a person processes these experiences will generally drive perspectives around:

- Organizing principles that are centralizing versus localizing
- Degrees of freedom versus compelled policy
- Balance between the individual versus the collective
- Hierarchy versus the value of flatness
- Creative and new ideas versus optimizing what's there
- Being risk seeking versus risk-averse
- Ideas versus tangible things
- And so on...

All of these have implications for how a team member interacts with others, how they create and how they operate.

How to build a balanced team

Creating a strong, balanced team requires examining potential team members from a few different angles and making careful selections. Follow these steps.

Step 1. Remember not to focus on immutable characteristics. As we discussed, the race, age and biological sex of the members of the team do not have nearly the same impact on team dynamics as personality, experiences and perspectives. And, making decisions based on these attributes is considered by many to be unethical ... and may even violate certain laws.

Step 2. Use diagnostics to better understand the personalities of those in your company. Remember that the wrong combination of personalities can hinder teams, but bringing people together who can motivate each other can drive the team forward and help them accomplish even more.

Step 3. Make it easy and comfortable for people to open up about their lived experiences and how it shapes the way that they think. Look for different perspectives. Consider incorporating diversity in geography and cultures into your team to provide some fresh ways of looking at any problems that arise. However, and we can't stress this enough, dig into the details to know what realities are behind these facts.

Step 4. Remember also that diversity can come from industry and company experience. For example, people who have been at the company for a while will have different way of tackling a project than new hires. Bring in people from different parts and places in the hierarchy within the organization.

Step 5. Review with team members the other aspects of strong teams including trust, empathy and conflict resolution.

This is critical!

Having differences, especially when these differences are unspoken and deeply rooted in the ways that we interact with the world and each other, can also be the source of conflict.

Team members who are committed to developing trust, empathy and constructive conflict resolution will reap the benefits of diversity and reduce any negatives. A group that practices active listening and empathy will create a positive work environment where new opinions and fresh thinking can flourish.

Cultivating balance within a team can have a tremendously positive impact on the success of the team. To capitalize on this aspect, follow the above steps to create teams that can reach new heights.

Aspect 6: Trust

Trust is part of human nature. As humans we want to feel connected to others. As a part of this relationship, we want them to trust us, and we want to trust them. These mutual relationships help us feel valued by those around us.

Not only does this help us form better relationships, but it also makes it easier to get things done!

Think about what humans have accomplished through trust. We have build incredible feats of engineering, made it to space, and invented the internet. If people did not trust each other, none of these accomplishments would be possible.

Even in the workplace, trust corresponds with economic success.

People who work in a high-trust environment [report](#):

- Having 106 percent more energy while doing their job
- Being 76 percent more engaged
- Feeling 74 percent less stress
- Taking 13 percent fewer sick days

On risk-based teams, members have to know that they can depend on each other.

Trust has been shown to boost team performance, and the more interdependent a team is, the more trust matters. Interestingly, trust BETWEEN team members correlates with performance, even when researchers consider potential influencing factors such as “trust in the team leader” and even when “trust in the team leader” is lower than desired.



To build an ideal risk-based team, therefore, you need to work to cultivate trust between the members of the team. Here is what you need to know and how to nurture this valuable characteristic.

Why trust is so critical

Trust can build stronger relationships among team members, and it plays a critical role in creating a healthy atmosphere. When you successfully build trust between team members, it impacts nearly all of the tasks that the team tackles.

Here are just a few of the reasons why trust remains so important to a successful team:

- **Team members need to feel comfortable asking questions and making proposals in front of the others in the group.** Speaking up in this way makes people vulnerable to a degree. When a group lacks trust, the members do not feel as comfortable putting themselves, and their ideas, out in front of the group for critique.
- **People need to be able to provide constructive feedback to each other.** People tend to not feel comfortable providing feedback if they worry about what the other people will think or wonder if they might inadvertently make someone feel uncomfortable or insulted.

- **Similarly, team members also need to be able to accept feedback.**

Teams will not be able to reach their full potential if they cannot help each other grow and improve. Team members must be able to trust that the feedback provided is helpful. They must accept this feedback and evaluate it objectively instead of becoming defensive.

When teams lack this valuable trust, you will see a variety of harmful aspects arise. This includes high turnover rates, a rise in damaging office politics, and competition between teams and team members instead of collaboration.

Nurturing trust within the group helps to convince the different members to work together and view each other positively, creating an improve work environment.

What we see when trust flourishes

When trust flourishes on a risk-based team, members improve their ability to collaborate and work together. We see:

- **Team members turning to each other for help.** They do not feel concerned about losing potential standing within the group if they need to ask for help. In a trusting environment, they feel as though they can let down their guards more, thus leading to improved collaboration.

- **Team members know they can trust each other not to throw each other under the proverbial bus.** They view each other as being on the same side. This means that if something goes wrong on a project, they will work together to find a solution, rather than constantly trying to outpace each other.
- **Disagreements are also solved with integrity.** Since they can trust the intentions of each other, it becomes easier to work towards a resolution for the disagreement. This encourages even more collaboration and allows constructive conflict to flourish.
- **When team members know that they can trust each other to work together, they also tend to be more equal in their division of responsibilities and the sharing of information.** Team members will not have to worry about anyone trying to rid themselves of the less enjoyable aspects of the project, and nor will anyone try to hoard all the most visible pieces for themselves. They understand that the project reflects on each of them.
- **The team members will also focus on the group, rather than just their own interests.** They will look towards the success of the team,

rather than trying to advance themselves within the organization.



How to nurture trust

Teams that want to nurture trust can follow a few suggestions.

Step 1. Select people that you can trust will do their jobs well.

While this might sound obvious, some businesses will make team selection decisions based on politics. Focus on making decisions based on your knowledge of work ethic and skills. Team members will find it easier to trust

each other when they know that the other members will complete their tasks well.

Step 2. Align goals and values.

A mismatched team where some people have no problem working late, while others leave at five promptly, will result in feelings of mistrust. Make sure all the team members are on the same page with their work values so that the team can work well together.

Step 3. Ensure that all the team members receive equal treatment.

Team members need to know that their opinions and ideas will receive equal consideration. Create an environment where people feel free to share their ideas. While a team leader will help keep everyone on task, all members should be viewed as equally important contributors.

Step 4. Give people space to share their thoughts on the team culture.

To create a healthy environment, ask team members for feedback about how they view the team culture. By giving people freedom to express their feelings, you let them know that they do have the power to influence their team culture. To help people feel comfortable with this system, you may

have to give a specific time slot during the initial meetings to discuss team culture.

Step 5. Celebrate accomplishments and do not harp on mistakes.

Mistakes happen, even for the most seasoned risk-based professional. Remember the value of team members who can trust that the rest of their team will not, “throw them under the bus”. Work together as a team to solve errors, without focusing on how the mistake lies with a specific team member.

At the same time, celebrate accomplishments and victories. This will build a pleasant team atmosphere, which will be more conducive towards trust.

This does not mean, however, that a routinely poorly performing team member cannot be removed from the team. Someone who regularly makes errors that cost the team should likely be removed to avoid resentment from team members. Just remember to have the primary focus lie on building a positive, trusting team atmosphere.

Step 6. Value team members as people.

Team members know when leaders and managers view them as little more than pawns or dollar signs. Set policies that make it clear the value each employee has as a person. While some overtime or weekend work might be unavoidable, discuss it with your team to determine a schedule that fits

everyone. Listen to their ideas. Treat them as invaluable members of a group.

Step 7. Engage everyone in planning exercises and meetings for the team.

Team leaders who regularly meet privately and then just give instructions or 'to-do' lists to the other members of the group will not earn the trust of the rest of the team. Instead, involve everyone in the planning process and keep them engaged about the project.

Step 8. Have a system in place to resolve disagreements.

Disagreements will arise when you have a group of people working together on a project. Different personalities, different experiences, and different perspectives can all lead to conflict.

Having a system in place to help team members navigate these disagreements can help maintain an environment of trust. People will talk out potential problems and uncover resolutions that work best for all involved. Since they resolve the dispute themselves, there will be fewer opportunities for hard feelings or ideas about favoritism to arise.

Trust is a critical component of successful risk-based teams. Groups that learn how to nurture this trait will build stronger teams, ready to tackle their next project. Consider how you can begin to build more trust on your team.

Aspect 7: Empathy

“Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care” Theodore Roosevelt

Consider for a moment that the Harvard Business Review reports that the time managers and employees spend on collaborative tasks has increased by 50 percent or more. Businesses understand that when people collaborate well, they can increase their profits.

Empathy has been found to be a critical component for collaboration, which makes it one of the cornerstones.

To some people the word empathy sounds like a ‘soft’ word. A word that describes people too caught up in emotions to think rationally.

To be clear, empathy is not the same thing as sympathy.

Sympathy is about, knowing how another person feels. Empathy is about feeling how another person feels. Sympathy is about judging another person's feelings. Empathy doesn't judge. Sympathy often results in unasked advice. Empathy is about just listening. Sympathy is understanding from your own perspective. Empathy is about putting yourself in another person's

shoes. Sympathy is about "poor you." Empathy is about "I can understand how it feels. It must be really hard."

What empathy means for a team is the ability to put yourself in the position of a coworker, understand their feelings and needs, and use this to build a more positive experience for yourself and the others on the team. Team members, and team leaders, who can use empathy in their engagements demonstrate true strength. They are able to compromise, consider the points of view of others, and work together for an improved outcome.

Google, a global leader and innovator, has a lot invested in creating an atmosphere where employees can collaborate well. The company has to rely on this cooperation to continue to innovate and trail blaze in the technology space.

To better understand their teams, Google began to study what made some teams succeed while others failed. Fascinatingly, they found that one of the most consistent characteristics of successful teams was social sensitivity -- an aspect of empathy.

In other words, when groups were comprised of members who could easily understand how others felt, they had greater success.

These socially sensitive members could read tones of voice and expressions of their fellow team members and then act in a way that demonstrated to others that they cared.



People who score more successfully on tests that examine their ability to read expressions in eyes tend to demonstrate this important trait more. The more people who exhibit empathy on a team, the easier it is for the team to connect, engage, and reach their full potential.

Here is what you need to know about the importance of empathy on your team.

Why does empathy benefit teams so much?

People who are a part of empathetic teams find it easier to work together. Remember some of the other important aspects found in an ideal risk-based team, including trust and constructive conflict. Neither of these aspects would be possible without empathy.

With empathy, it becomes easier for team members to trust each other. They feel more comfortable expressing their ideas. Since they trust their teammates to demonstrate empathy towards them, they do not worry about experiencing ridicule or 'losing face' in front of their teammates. This can make it significantly easier for the team to solicit opinions and new ideas, as people will not be afraid to speak their minds.

Similarly, if conflict does arise, people know that they can trust their team members to demonstrate empathy towards them, which includes giving them the benefit of the doubt and trying to see their point of view. Conflicts, therefore, can remain focused on the business ideas and the source of the disagreement, rather than becoming involved with petty arguments or personal attacks.

With empathy, team members also know that the others in their group will try to understand where they are coming from when they make a mistake. The others can put themselves in the place of the person who has made the

error, and thus make a conscious effort to treat them the way they would like to be treated.

If you make a mistake, isn't this how you would want your team to treat you?

When you have that level of empathy in the group, people will become more likely to take risks. Appropriate risk taking can spur innovation and encourage people to try new things, which can help boost group performance.

Empathetic leaders also demonstrate better skill when it comes to solving problems. They will find it easier to get to the root of what causes particular issues within the team. This allows them to take steps to correct the situation.

The team collectively will also find it easier to relate to their stakeholders. They will be better equipped to understand their needs, which will in turn help them align their projects and develop stronger relationships.

The groups that master this important trait of empathy demonstrate higher productivity. If you want to build this characteristic on your team, here is what you need to do.

Building an empathetic environment on your risk-based team

Step 1. Respectful communication.

Limit competition within conversations by creating an expectation that everyone allows their team members to finish their thought. Interrupting or speaking over each other will not be allowed. This makes it easier for everyone to express their opinions and know that their thoughts will be heard with the same degree of respect as everyone else's.

Step 2. Active listening.

When people engage in active listening, they make a point to truly listen to what other people say, rather than just trying to come up with what they will say next. By slowing down and processing what the other person says, it becomes easier to show them the respect they deserve, understand their point of view, and thus develop your empathy for their position, even if you do not agree with it.



Step 3. Lead by example.

A good leader will help to set the tone and atmosphere of the group. Encourage the team leader to show others the way through their example. Have them demonstrate their appreciation for each member of the group, ask people for opinions, and build an atmosphere where people openly communicate and share their ideas with one another.

Step 4. Solicit Input.

Ask the team members for feedback regarding the team culture and the direction that the work has begun to take. This lets people know that you genuinely care about their impressions and experiences. Look for areas to

improve. To encourage people to offer their opinions, you will likely need to specifically ask. This will be particularly true in the early days of the new team to help them feel more comfortable making statements about their experiences.

Step 5. Respectful feedback.

If someone does make a mistake or suggests a poor course of action, empathy reminds people to put themselves in the place of their teammate. Anyone who has made a mistake at work or suggested a poor course of action knows it can be awkward. The team members should remember to put themselves in the position of the person making the suggestion. Even if they do not agree with the suggestion, they should focus on understanding why the person made it and find a respectful way to explain why it will not work.

Step 6. Read the room.

Like other social skills, some people will be better at displaying empathy than others. If you know that you struggle with seeing other people's points of view, make a note of this for yourself. Be self-aware. Since you know you have a problem with this skill, make a conscious effort to watch your words and behaviors to avoid unnecessary conflict. Look for ways to improve your understanding of empathy as well. Think about how your particular words and actions will impact others and allow that to guide reactions.

When it comes to teamwork, empathy can play a large role in the success a group experiences. It has the ability to impact productivity. It also influences the effort put forth by the team members to get along and helps them achieve their maximum potential.

Aspect 8: Conflict

“It’s the lack of conflict that’s a problem. Harmony itself is good, if it comes as a result of working through issues constantly and cycling through conflict. But if it comes only as a result of people holding back their opinions and honest concerns, then it’s a bad thing” Lencioni

Conflict. It sounds like a big, bad word that leads to hurt feelings and poor productivity, but that does not have to be the case.

Constructive conflict can be immensely beneficial for teams. Successful risk-based teams do not shy away from potential disagreements. They view them as opportunities to share their true thoughts and ideas. It leads to a larger, genuine discussion with other members of the team. This raw exchange of ideas spurs innovation and encourages creativity.

In risk-based work, teams often need to think outside the box. They need to see potential problems from all angles. They need to discover possible solutions to these risks and present them to clients and others in the company.

Conflict will help these teams turn over some metaphorical rocks to find new reas and avenues to explore, making the team more effective.

What happens when teams do not engage in productive, constructive conflict?

When teams avoid conflict at all costs, on the surface everything can look peaceful, but underneath problems will simmer. Among teams that try to avoid conflict, instead of embracing it in a constructive atmosphere, we see the following:

An explosion in office politics.

Since people become uncomfortable expressing their genuine ideas, they do not tell people directly their thoughts about team plans. This leads to gossip as people try to gain the upper hand in subversive ways. Ever heard someone walk out of a meeting grumbling about a 'stupid' plan?

Meetings become boring

Guess what? Meetings do not have to have an atmosphere of people just nodding along to what the leader says. It can actually be an exciting time to exchange ideas and determine fresh directions. If everyone avoids upsetting anyone else, meetings will become boring wastes of time. Few ideas will be

exchanged and the productivity that the group could have experienced will be lost.

Decisions and directions will not reflect the ideas of all the team members

People will be hesitant to speak out and contradict ideas put forth by others. This means that the direction the team takes will not adequately represent what the group thinks and what they might have otherwise been able to achieve.

The group will spend too much time trying to make everyone happy

Instead of focusing on the project at hand, the team will instead spend time playing politics and trying to communicate with each other effectively without upsetting anyone else. Time that could have been saved by being direct will be lost.

Destructive arguments will erupt

Teams comprise of people from various backgrounds and with different personalities. This means occasional misunderstandings or disagreements are inevitable. Failing to address them constructively upfront can lead to festering resentment and eruptions of destructive arguments.



What does a productive conflict look like?

Occasionally, teams decide to take steps towards embracing productive conflict, but they face one key problem: they do not know what a constructive argument would look like.

When people argue in a controlled, helpful manner, they do not fall into name calling or attacking people instead of ideas. Instead, they follow predetermined guidelines that were established particularly to help team members resolve conflicts and find common ground.

During the disagreement, the parties will be free to express their new ideas. Others will be able to agree and disagree, expressing their points of view and what makes a particular side a better option than the other.

In this environment, team members feel supported in suggesting ideas that might fall outside the normal scope. This might mean trying a new direction or strategy for the team. They know that they will not be mocked for the idea or shut out from future group discussions because the team members have all realized the value of constructive conflict.

The group will collectively evaluate the different options, with the group leader ensuring that people remain on topic and moving forward within the disagreement. This boosts collaboration, as people will find that they can truly work together. They are not afraid of saying “the wrong thing” and upsetting others. They also know that the team has made decisions after evaluating the ideas and input from all the members.

The team will then be able to make a decision after evaluating all the possibilities. They will have more confidence in their decisions because they were not blindly made based on the input of one or two people. Nor were they based on simply “how things have always been done”.

How do I encourage constructive conflict on my risk-based team?

Step 1. Before projects begin, create a set of guidelines governing how disputes will be handled.

You want to make sure your team has a concrete framework to follow for navigating these disputes so that they can arrive at a successful resolution. This framework should include how people present their ideas, ensuring that everyone uses respectful, helpful language. They should use words that point to the present, rather than the past, and should focus on facts and specific statements. This framework will give everyone a common document to refer back to when disagreements arise.

Step 2. Reward those who offer unique thinking and ideas.

Remember that many teams actively discourage disagreements, so learning how to have constructive conflict may require a change in paradigm for many team members. Encourage people to express their ideas by rewarding those who present unique thinking and ideas, particularly if they end up being adopted by the group. This will let others in the group know that the

team really does appreciate fresh ideas, even if they conflict with the opinions of others.

Step 3. Encourage people to remember 'it is not personal, it's business'.

One of the biggest obstacles to embracing conflict is people who give lip service to the potential value of disagreements, but still take people contradicting them personally. Personal slights like this can lead to hurt feelings and disrupt team unity. Encourage people to remember that it is not personal, it's business. They were selected to be on the team because they have the experience and knowledge to contribute, but that does not mean that others will never disagree with some of their opinions. Encouraging this mature, professional attitude will create an improved team atmosphere.

Step 4. Offer people permission 'in the moment' to offer new ideas.

Until people get in the habit of offering new ideas, you will want to give them direct permission 'in the moment' to express potentially controversial ideas. For example, during team meetings, leave time for people to offer new thoughts. Remind people that they should not be afraid to voice new ideas. Discuss the value that conflict can bring to the group when done correctly.

Step 5. Do not let side disagreements fester.

Sometimes disagreements or misunderstandings can arise between members of the team. Rather than face them directly, they may try to avoid the person with whom they have a disagreement. This will make it harder for the team to effectively collaborate.

If anyone on the team notices an argument bubbling under the surface, they should bring it to light. Direct the people to follow the guidelines to resolve the disagreement. They can do so personally or with the rest of the team, depending upon the nature of the conflict and its potential implications for the group. This will help encourage positive, open relationships among team members. It also prevents side grievances from permeating group discussions and taking constructive conflict to a destructive place.



Step 6. Consider the personalities of team members

People all have different personalities, which then come with different strengths and weaknesses regarding their interpersonal relationships. When you build a team, you likely already took into account the different personalities of the members. Use your insight about their personalities to offer them individualized insights about voicing their opinions and having constructive conflicts. There are a variety of personality evaluation tools that can be used to also give you a more objective outlook and individualized advice.

When conflicts arise, it does not have to be a detriment to the group. In fact, when disagreements are channeled correctly, they can inspire new ideas and innovation. To tap into the power of these productive group conflicts, you need to create an atmosphere where people feel welcome to express their ideas. If you want to work towards an ideal risk-based group, consider how you can include some of these ideas in your team development. Drive your team forward with the ideas and creativity encouraged by productive conflict.

Aspect 9: Structure

“Individual commitment to a group effort: That is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.” Vince Lombardi

Quick: what do you think matters more for the success of a team:

- How clearly roles are defined
- How precisely the path to success has been outlined.

According to research by the Harvard Business Review, clearly defining people's roles and responsibilities matters more when determining a team's success than outlining the precise path the team will take.

In other words, team members perform better when they know exactly what they will be responsible for versus having a specific set of predefined steps to complete.

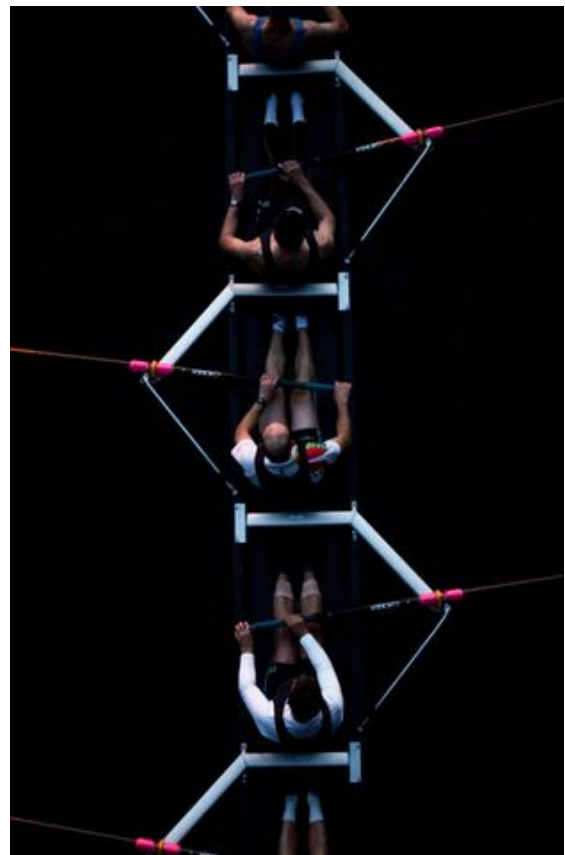
Does that surprise you?

For the study, the researchers looked at multiple news agencies. These agencies had to quickly report on breaking news, which meant that they did not always know what their goals or path would be ahead of time. On the

other hand, the most successful groups were the ones who had clearly defined roles within the group. There were no questions about who would handle the cameras, who would handle the reporting, sound equipment, or write the stories. Everyone knew what their jobs were, so once a story rolled out-- they were able to take care of it with ease.

This same principle applies to risk-based teams.

The groups that are the most successful are the ones where everyone knows exactly what their jobs will be. You may have team members responsible for understanding the business model and processes, and others responsible for decision-making models, and still others responsible for designing activities to address opportunities and threats -- but when they all know what will be expected of them, they arrive at their team meetings ready to perform.



Here is what you need to know about the importance of roles within a risk-based team.

Why do roles matter so much to a team?

Ensuring that every member of the team understands what their roles and responsibilities will be produces a more cooperative and efficient team.

1. **It reduces bickering among team members.** No confusion exists about who will take care of various aspects of the project. Without this chaos, misunderstandings about responsibilities do not arise and members will not battle each other over who will take care of different tasks. This improves the relationships between members and minimizes distractions.
2. **It will reduce, or even eliminate, redundancy.** You will not have to worry about multiple people taking care of the same task by accident. Everyone will know where their role lies within the greater picture. No longer worry about arriving at a meeting and learning that three people read document A, but that no one read document B.

NOTE: An important note we want to make about redundancy. You do not want to waste resources having multiple people completing the same tasks. At the same time, however, you do want people with an overlap in skills so that they can cover the tasks of other team members. This depth helps to provide security for the team in case a member needs to leave early, before its completion. The second

person would be able to step into to continue the tasks until a replacement can be found.

3. **You will not need to waste time sorting out who will take care of which aspects of the project.** Since everyone knows their jobs, they can jump in easily after introductory meetings. This will improve efficiency and keep everyone on task from the beginning.
4. **There will be less unhealthy competition between the team members.** Since people will not battle each other over who will take on certain prized jobs within the group, they will be able to better nurture positive relationships between the team members and reduce competition.
5. **Minimize the risk of potentially losing sight of particular aspects of the project.** When disorder arises while assigning various people their jobs on the team, it can be easy for particular aspects of the project to get overlooked or completely forgotten. This can cause further delays later on in the project. With concrete, understood team roles, it will be clear that every important task has been assigned.

How do teams determine who will do what?

To ensure that everyone on the team knows their roles and responsibilities, taking the time to carefully determine what these will entail remains essential.

Remember that roles and responsibilities are more than just the job description. The term 'analyst' for example, tells you the position, but it does not tell you the precise job of the person: what they will analyze, what they will be responsible for, and how their job relates to the rest of the group.

You want to begin by defining the tasks and functions that the team needs to perform and who within the group will be expected to do what. This includes the results that you want to see from each of your team members.

As you begin to construct these definitions, you also want to consider who the person will report to on the team and who reports to them. Keep in mind that the reporting hierarchy should align well with the responsibilities of the team members. This improves efficiency and effectiveness.

You want to have a clear idea of where each member of the team falls as well as their level of authority. How much can they do on their own? What types of tasks do they need extra permission to pursue? You can review our

piece on authority within teams to review further the importance of correct authority within the team.

How you should create strong roles and responsibilities on your team

Step 1. Make sure everyone is clear about the roles and responsibilities they will have on the team.

Match people with their ideal positions by asking yourself questions such as: “How can this person help? What roles do they fit into? Use your answers to these questions to clearly define the responsibilities of each team member.

Then, make sure these expectations have been precisely communicated. Write them down as well, so that people can reference them and look back when they need to. Each team member will know what they need to accomplish and how their accomplishments will be evaluated.



Step 2. Allocate leadership.

Make sure everyone on the team knows who they report to and who the team leaders will be. While the opinions of the team members should all be respected, and an equal footing should be promoted between the team members during the exchange of ideas, there should also be a definite leader who can help ensure everyone remains on task. This person, or small group of people, will help direct the group.

Step 3. Assign decision-making responsibilities consistent with the roles they play.

Remember that within the team you want to encourage efficiency and reduce unnecessary wait times. Ensuring that the authority and decision-making responsibilities of the team members align well with their roles will help keep everything moving forward.

Step 4. Remember the value of depth.

Within the team, verify that you have different people who can cover one another's responsibilities should something happen: the talent of your team should run deep.

If one team member has to leave-- either voluntarily or involuntarily-- before the project has been completed, someone else must be able to step in and cover their job until another replacement team member can join. This will help prevent unnecessary slow-downs.

For example, if a risk-based team has two analysts that work on different aspects of the project, they will periodically review each other's work. This way, if one of them leaves, the other understands their work and can cover the responsibilities until another team member is brought onboard.

Another way to build depth on your team is to have relationships with outside advisors or staffing firms. Develop these relationships BEFORE you need their services so that if (when) you need them, their organization is

already up to speed on your organization -- and that you have things like Master Services Agreements and other formalities worked out.

Step 5. Reassign people if the need arises.

You may realize after the project has begun that one particular person is not the best fit for the team. It could be a personality conflict or a skills match error. Regardless of the reason, the leaders of the organization need to look at the big picture. This means not being afraid to make necessary changes.

Mature people understand that different projects require particular personalities or skills. If they do not have the needed requirements, a reassignment will help ensure that everyone on the team can produce the desired results within the required timetable.

For members of a team, knowing exactly what they need to do and how their role impacts the rest of the group affects their ability to complete their tasks.

Aspect 10: Authority

Imagine for a moment a lifeguard, sitting high on his chair watching a summer pool filled with children.

One child, eager to catch up with her friends, darts out and begins running across the pool deck. The lifeguard quickly blows his whistle and administers the common pool reprimand of, “walk!”.

The child skids to a halt and then begins to walk as quickly as they can to their destination.

It is a scene that has played out across thousands of pools, multiple times a day, every year.

Now imagine that same scenario, but instead of the lifeguard being able to blow his whistle, he knows that he has to receive permission before making corrections on the pool deck. He quickly pulls out a walkie-talkie and speaks to the manager in the office. The manager immediately gives the go-ahead, but before he can blow his whistle and remind the child of the safety rules, she has jumped back in the water alongside her friends.



This might sound a bit absurd. After all, lifeguards have been through training and patrons and managers generally trust them to keep a safe pool and handle any emergencies that arise.

In the workplace, however, this scenario is not that absurd.

Risk-based teams have the training and knowledge needed to perform their duties, but all too often, they are not given the authority to succeed.

What happens when a team lacks authority and resources?

When teams do not have the proper authority, tasks get bogged down in bureaucracy. Just like we can all tell it is absurd to expect a lifeguard to ask permission before blowing a whistle at a running child, we should also see it as absurd for team leaders to require permission and approval before completing regular tasks necessary for their success.

Note that this does not mean there should be no boundaries.

Instead, teams need to evaluate the types of decisions that will need to be made and determine those that can be made independently. The team should have the ability to make many of the day-to-day decisions by themselves. Failure to delegate these tasks can result in:

- massive slowdowns of progress
- a lack of confidence from the team leaders, who can tell that their bosses do not trust them and their judgement
- A lack of autonomy, which reduces efficiency
- Reduced success

Note that in the lifeguard example, the manager responded immediately to the request. It was the simple act of having to ask permission that resulted

in the lost opportunity. Teams need the authority to complete the task that they were selected to do.

Similarly, they also need the resources.

While some mild resource deprivation can encourage creativity, teams that regularly have to 'make do' without critical resources will be starved and unable to complete their projects with the skill needed. Before the team begins, a careful evaluation of what the team will need to do their job well should be completed.

What does a team with the right authority and resources look like?

A team with the right authority and the resources will be able to work independently and complete their work well.



Note that different types of risk-based teams will have different project end-goals. Some teams might work towards the creation of recommendations or similar assets. Other teams might make purchases or decisions that impact the entire company.

These different scenarios impact the type of resources that the team will need, and thus should be carefully evaluated.

The resources for the team should include:

- **Financial capital:** the group must have access to the financial resources that they need to move forward.

- **Physical assets:** this includes the equipment and technology needed to complete the risk-based project. They will likely need space for meetings, but also perhaps to store project materials and assets.
- **Information and digital resources:** A risk-based team may also need access to a variety of types of company information and digital resources. This could include computer files, client information, data on product development or other internal projects, for example.
- **Experts:** The team will also need to have access to the internal and external experts who can answer any questions or problems that might arise. Consider, for example, a risk-based group performing a risk analysis. In addition to the information they have, they may also need to have meetings and interviews with people in the company who can answer any questions about products or finances.

If you are a team leader, you must fight -- forcefully -- to ensure that your team has the right resources.

Once you have provided the team with the resources they need, you then need to trust them to allocate the resources well. It is time to step back and delegate the responsibilities, knowing that you have selected people who are right for the position. Giving them this trust will encourage their independence and efficiency, empowering them to get the job done.

How to make sure you give your team the authority they need

Step 1. Outline the purpose of the team

As we mentioned before, in risk-based, different teams will have various roles. Some teams will form with the expressed goal of taking definitive action: such as buying something or making a business change. Others, however, will form to put together information and develop recommendations.

You have to know the purpose of the team before you can give them the authority they need. Outline what the goals of the group will be and what their accomplishments will include.

Step 2. Select team members that have proven they can be trusted

Giving the team the authority and resources they need also means having the strength to take a step back and trust their decision making. To do that, you have to know that you can trust the individual team members, particularly the team leaders

As you select team members, therefore, you need to look at a few different factors. Of course, you want to review their past accomplishments and credentials.

You also want to look at how they handled decision making and reporting on past projects.

- Did they play it fast and loose with the rules?
- Did they fudge numbers to get what they wanted?
- Did they demonstrate that they made sound decisions?

These questions will help you select members that you know you can trust on your risk-based team.

Step 3. Work with team leaders to determine what resources will be needed

Resources, as we discussed, come in many forms. Speak with the team leaders about a variety of forms of resources including budget, physical space, tools and technology, and experts both internal and external to the organization.

Use the input you get from the team leaders to create a resource list that everyone can agree on. Remember, once you have agreed on the resource list, you need to trust them to use the resources wisely.

Step 4. Determine what they will have the authority to do.

Nearly everyone who has been in the workforce for more than a few years knows what it is like to have a manager who likes to control every move of their subordinates. You do not want to fall into this trap. As detailed above, it will hinder progress and make it difficult for people to get their jobs done.

Instead, discuss with the team leaders what they will have the authority to do and what they need special permission for. As an example, you should generally trust them to productively use the resources they were allotted. You should also have confidence in their ability to allocate team roles. You will likely have other tasks that you want more oversight on, however, such as an increase in budget or a new hire.

Regardless of where your line is, know what it is, communicate it clearly to the team so they know their authority, and then stick to it. Letting people know where the boundaries of their authority lie from the beginning also eliminates a lot of guesswork, helping everyone improve productivity.

The purpose of building a successful risk-based team lies in your trust that they will do the job well- otherwise you would have just done it yourself. Since you have already acknowledged that you need the team, it becomes important to give them what they need to get the job done. This means carefully evaluating the resources they need and discussing their authority over the project. By placing this trust in the teams, you will boost the

efficiency of the work and take a big step towards creating an ideal risk-based team.

Illustration

