



TEAM Journey

Guidance for team builders



**TEAMBUILDER
SCHOOL**

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A. Introduction.

Great teams are built. This book provides guidance for team builders.

Why? Because **T**ogether **E**veryone **A**chieves **M**ore when you are a T.E.A.M. It really is that simple. Everyone wins. When team members instead choose to put themselves before the team, everyone loses. Self interest limits potential. It's a short term suboptimal game that tends to shrink the pie. Make the pie larger with teamwork and everyone gains more - including you.

Why this guide book? We seem to have lost our understanding of teams. The dominant leadership model has become transactional numbers driven. Leaders act like accountants. It has become a numbers game. But it doesn't

work. People aren't numbers. They disengage and then the pie shrinks. In a numbers culture, people only give the minimum required to maintain the transaction. And then they get sick or leave or become dysfunctional - because it doesn't fulfill you to try to act like a number. Besides that being a number is no fun, it's also wasting the potential of people.

We therefore need to remember how to be a team. Not transactional, but relational. Not numbers driven but mission driven, with meaning and purpose.

Great teams are built. Come a team builder. *Team Journey* is a simple and fun approach to becoming a team. That doesn't mean it will be easy, but it will be worthwhile.

B. Team Journey.

So how do you build a team?

Think of your team as going on a mission or trip. What do you do first? You decide where you are going. Once everyone agrees on the destination, you figure out how to get there. While on your way, you track where you are at (if you don't want to get lost). Meanwhile, it's only worth the trip if you are having fun. Simple! Know where to go, how to get there, where you are at and have fun along the way.

You then get and keep it moving. You overcome roadblocks, take care of blisters, carry the load and encourage your teammates to get to the destination. One is taking care of the directions, one makes the food, others set up the tents and

yet another gets wood and makes fire. At some point the harmony can feel as being one and everyone is ready to take a bullet for anyone on the team. You simply love your team. This coordinated effort can feel like *flow*. There is momentum. It's working. The team is making progress. It's going very smoothly. Everyone knows the destination, what to do to get there and fulfills their role autonomously.

Your team trip can also feel like a *drag*. You keep changing the destination, everyone is arguing about the directions, you get lost and you don't know how to get there. People aren't pulling their weight, fall off the wagon, don't know what they are supposed to do next, and when the first bear comes on the road, everyone runs. There is little love, trust and joy in this team. Someone needs to bring the team to clarity.

C. 4 Roles of a team builder.

The difference between those two team experiences - flow versus drag - is alignment. Alignment is when everyone is on the same wavelength. The team builder's number one job is to align everyone through clarity. Alignment happens when the *story* clicks. It's clear. Everyone understands and wants to go on this trip. To achieve and maintain alignment, the team builder takes 4 roles: the storyteller, the flowmaker, the learner and the teacher.

1. Storyteller.

It's not always easy to accomplish agreement across a team. We tend to avoid this muddy challenge. People can be opinionated. Everyone

comes with a story already. The team builder knows how to weave these stories together to make it one shared story everyone buys into.

A story needs to be put together. Where are we going? Why? Who? What? When? How will we get there? Where are we starting from? Why is it all worth it?

If the destination is unattractive or unclear to the participants, what motivation do you expect? If the road to it seems unrealistic or unattractive, why expect people to jump on the bus? If there is no visible progress toward the destination, what level of confidence and excitement do you expect? If nobody is having any fun, why is it still worth it and what persistence can you expect?

Your team needs a story. Learn to write and tell one, together with your team. A great story engages every one. It is how we relate to a purpose and find meaning in what we do. It also guides us in what to do to help unfold the story. And it helps us understand where we stand in relation to the story we want to tell.

2. Flowmaker.

Once the story is clear, the team is aligned. Now you want to get moving. The team builder becomes the flowmaker. Making the team move is not about list making. Keeping score and crunching numbers won't move a single foot. Flow making does.

If the story is solid, flow happens naturally. The story gives such guidance that each team

member starts to move and contribute autonomously. This is called aligned autonomy. The flow maker reminds the team of the story continuously, discussing how it applies to each situation the team runs into. The flowmaker ensures that the coordination of tasks and roles is seamless: it's always clear what's next. The flowmaker then encourages, motivates, supports and helps solve challenges. Progress at this point is apparent. Everyone can see and feel the movement and momentum. Minimal progress reporting and follow-ups are needed. There is trust. Everyone wants to get to the finish line.

3. Student.

The team builder now wants to be a student of the road and the team. What are you running into? Is the story still sound? How is the story unfolding? Do you need to make any

adjustments? How are team members doing? Are they in the right roles? Where do they shine most? How is the chemistry between team members? Are they still aligned?

4. Teacher.

What is learned in one place, needs to be thought across the team. What the team builder learns, he/she teaches. He/she tells the stories of what was experienced on the road by parts of the team. He/she relates those stories to the main team story to illustrate examples of alignment and misalignment, and also to show how the story is evolving - so that everyone stays connected and informed.

D. 4 Steps of a team journey.

Following the 4 roles, the steps for building a team are:

- Story
- Flow
- Learn
- Teach

This is a continuous cycle. What is learned is thought, which evolves the story and directs the flow.

A common mistake is to think this all needs to be very detailed. It is better to say it needs to be very clear and engaging. Aim for Big Picture Clarity in

a very well understood and easy to remember storyline. It has to be logical and emotional.

Don't become an accountant or administrator. Be a leader, builder, motivator and way shower. Be a storyteller, flowmaker, student and teacher.

Ideally, the story already aligns with the stories each team member already carries inside.

1. Story.

Your story should answer 4 simple questions:

- Where are we going?
- How do we get there?
- Where are we?
- Are we having fun?

Once everyone on the team knows, loves and *trusts* the answers to these 4 questions, you have achieved alignment.

Here people tend to underestimate simplicity. Just four questions? It can not be that simple! It is and it may not be.

The questions are simple. Get these clarified in your team and you *will* see movement. Getting

agreement may not be as simple depending on what stories already live in your team. The power of these four questions is that it will bring to the surface whatever the stories are.

You should not think lightly of these four questions. Asking them to your team may give you surprising answers. A brave team builder will understand that if those answers are inconsistent, it will need to be addressed. If half the team has set course to Paris, one to Tokyo and yet another to Amsterdam, while the original destination was London, the team isn't going to arrive in London.

And if everyone is aiming for London, if the team does not trust the road taken to get there, you'll likely experience drag instead of flow. Why don't they trust the road chosen? Do they know

something you all should know? Or is something not clear about it?

The way to ask these questions is to reveal the understanding of the story *and* the confidence in the story. Understanding alone is not enough. There will need to be trust and ideally you want people to truly love the story.

- How confident are you about where we are going? (rate on a scale of 1-7)
- How confident are you about how to get there?
- How confident are you about where we stand today?
- Are you having fun?

Low confidence will be an honest starting point of the conversation. If people do not believe in

the story, you want to understand what they think the story is and why they don't trust it. If the score is high, you still want to validate the story is consistent to make sure everyone will arrive in London.

Brave and serious team builders will want to know the answers to these four simple questions in the minds of the team. Then the work can start to craft a team story that answers these questions consistently and agreeably across the team.

This story should fit on a small piece of paper.
Who's going to remember an entire book?

See section E for story guidelines, and section F for story examples.

2. Flow.

We have become conditioned that (project)management is about making a list, and then keeping track of it. A list is dead. It doesn't move. It's necessary, but it doesn't make flow.

Where does it flow? In a restaurant kitchen. Why? It *has* to. The customer walks in. Places an order. The cooks start cooking. If it takes 4 hours to serve the customer, the restaurant will die. It's obvious and in everyone's face. It is not the list of orders that makes flow. It is the *wanting* of *success*. It is the *servicing* of the *who*. It is the *knowing* of what is *expected*. It is the instant *seeing* (*feedback*) on what is *happening*. Then it is the organization of roles. Then it is the coordination (or distribution) of incoming work. Now you have basic flow.

A few examples:

Uber. A customer is requesting a ride. How long is he/she willing to wait to be picked up? Uber knows this is at the heart of its business. It will start giving bonuses to drivers when waiting time is taking too long.

School. The student *knows* what is *expected*. If you do not know the subject of a course, you will fail the exam. If the student doesn't want success, he/she may not do the homework. If he/she does, doing homework becomes self-regulating.

In many areas of work, the flow drivers aren't as visible as in a restaurant kitchen. The expectation, who is being served or what is happening isn't clear. In a kitchen, you see if the fish is in the pan or not. You see the customer

who is being served. You see it when the customer is waiting too long.

Flowmakers find ways to make the invisible visible, so that flow is natural: what's success, who to serve, what is expected, what is happening, how it is organized and coordinated.

And of course, the flowmaker continues to be the storyteller too. Notice that nothing needs to be forced. For instance, knowing what is expected is simply relating to what is one's own standard. Few will want to wait 2 hours in a restaurant to be served. We all find this normal, logical and as expected. Similarly, someone should not need to wait 45 minutes on the phone to get customer support. Everyone knows this is not a good service. Relate to common sense.

3. Learn.

Perhaps *Learn* should be step 1. Learn about the untold stories in your team, your customers and the world. We seldom start with listening. Instead we are quick to tell our own version of the story. Sometimes, that story is all you need. Often, there is plenty of room for and value in the blending of stories.

Listening is not just hearing what is said. It's understanding what is meant. Some don't listen at all. Some listen to control. Some listen to understand. Understanding is the result of learning. Now you have learned something. That's the type of listening meant here.

It's through this learning that you find the hidden stories, the alignments and misalignments.

Perhaps the story needs to evolve or you learn the story is in perfect harmony. Keep listening, asking and studying. Want to know what wants to be known.

4. Teach.

Spreading the knowledge across the team is making the pie larger. Keeping it hidden or isolated is shrinking the pie. When knowledge travels freely, it grows. Others will add their knowledge too and everyone gets smarter that way. This shared knowledge also forms the glue of trust. The shared language and understanding. It cements the story of concrete bits and pieces.

As a teacher, share the stories across the team. The travel experiences are valuable lessons for everyone. Make it a point to seek out these lessons (Learn) and then make time to tell them. Start a meeting by sharing stories and experiences (instead of jumping right into the status report).

Teaching doesn't have to be a one way street. A good question can often teach more than a monologue. Even better, teach through experience. Give team members new challenges and ask them to invent, explore, solve and discover. Experience is the best teacher. Create an environment where people feel safe to experiment, test, try, fail and triumph. Then give them the podium to share their experiences and findings.

E. 7P's of a team story.

The short version is this:

- Where are we going?
- How do we get there?
- Where are we?
- Are we having fun?

To add more color, fill in the 7 P's.

Passion: What excites us?

Passion is what gives you the energy to do what it takes to get where you want to go. It's what you love about your work - what makes work fun.

What excites and interests you and your team?

Inventing technology? Helping people, animals or nature? Providing an outstanding service?

Making something special? Is your personal

passion aligned with the team and company
passion?

Potential: What potential do we see?

Someone wants what you want - in this step you define who that is and what the need is.

What potential can you unlock in your world?
What can be done better, different and new in or outside your organization? What's missing that you will address? What would unlock the potential you see? What is our outward perspective? What do you see that you want to do your way? What is your unique point of view? What insight or recipe do you have? Who's need does it fulfill?

Purpose: Where are we going?

In this step you define your concrete destination: it's what you aim to make happen.

What is it you want to create and accomplish together? What will unlock the potential you are passionate about? What is the milestone you aim to get to?

Plan: How do we get there?

In this step you outline your plan together.

How do you make it happen? Which approach do you use? What works? What does not? What needs to be done, how, by whom, when? What structure, process, tools, resources, knowledge and methods do you need?

Progress: Where are we?

In this step you define what would help you stay on track and learn.

What is a meaningful and motivating way to keep track of the progress? The intent is not to control but to be informed as a way to gain feedback on the plan. Is the plan working? Do we need to improve or adjust? What do we need to learn next?

Pulse: Are we having fun?

Fun is the result of making progress, seeing the plan work for a cause you are passionate about. No fun means something is not right, such as no progress, purpose or passion. In this step you discuss how to check in with your team to ensure everyone is still enjoying the ride.

People: Who's on the team?

With all this clear, go out guns blazing. In other words: you are all in - full force and with lots of energy. Is everyone on board? What role do you play on your team and what role does each team member play? Is the role you play helping the team or not? Is the role another team member plays helping the team or not? Why? What are the obstacles and bottlenecks? How do you overcome them together? In this step your commitment to the team is solidified.

G. Story examples.

Example: Language School

We want to make it easy for people to learn our language when they arrive in our country. It will really help them integrate here. We want to constantly find better and faster ways to learn our language.

To accomplish this we need:

- Excellent Teachers
- Creative teaching methods
- An effective channel to reach new students

Example: Car racing rental

We love racing. We also know it's expensive. Most people can't afford to build a race car and

maintain it. We want to make racing more accessible to more people. We are constantly looking for ways to create fun and affordable racing experiences.

To accomplish this, we need:

- Have racing cars that people can rent
- Organize races
- Create awareness for rental racing

Example: Yoga center

We know the benefits of Yoga. It has helped people improve their health and live a balanced life. We also know that not everyone makes the time and discipline for healthy exercise or Yoga. For instance, for single moms it is difficult to find the time. We are making it our mission to find ways to help those people find the time and develop the discipline to do daily Yoga.

To accomplish this, we need:

- A very flexible, simple and fun Yoga system that is easy to do and can be done anywhere, any time
- A motivational device, such as an app, with tracking, social interaction and teacher connection.

Example: Customer support department

We want to help customers better and faster. We know it is not fun to wait long for an answer. The customer needs our help to solve something or get an answer. It feels great to quickly help a customer. It shows we are organized and know our business. We are constantly looking for faster and better ways to support our customers.

To accomplish this, we need:

- Treat every customer request as an opportunity to help someone quickly
- Everyone to know our business inside out
- Give a variety of channel options to get answers and solutions

H. Flow making.

If looking for some flow making tips, here are a few P's to make flow. This is never about quantity and always about quality. Find your edge in the flow making art, your spark to fire up the team engine, your lever to create momentum. You are playing with motivation. Use it wisely and in service to others. Use it for your own gain and it will likely backfire.

Purpose: why is this meaningful?

Want to succeed.

Personal: who am I doing this for?

Serve the who.

Promise: what do you promise to do by when?

Know what is expected.

People: who has what role?

Organize roles.

Priority: how long are you willing to wait?

Coordinate the work queue.

Pace: at what speed is work getting done?

See what is happening.

Perk: what makes the work rewarding?

Meet expectations of fairness.

Provide unexpected rewards and recognition.

Prompt: what triggers movement?

Suitable interventions that create momentum.

Preference: what are your work preferences?

Know your team.

I. Gamify work.

Why wouldn't work be as fun as a game? We love games, just like we love stories. Any work can be turned into a game-like experience. All it takes is understanding of what makes a game a great game, and then some creativity. Here are some pointers of what research says about the elements of a great game.

Autonomy / pride / ownership.

It is the reward of free will and choice. Nobody likes to be a slave.

Achievement.

Mastery of skill. Too challenging isn't fun. No challenge isn't fun. Challenge significantly enough.

Flow.

Yes, flow itself is a gaming addictive trait. You lose the sense of time. You are fully emerged. It requires no interruption in the sequence of events.

Social.

Games are better together. We also like to be friendly competitive.

Purpose.

Anything mission driven excites us if we believe in the greatness of the mission.

Feedback/reward loop.

Not knowing how you are doing, kills motivation. We want to see our progress.

Fit

Use my talents well.

Natural urgency.

If the house is on fire, you will move. The clock is ticking. Expectations are rising. Pressure is mounting. Tension can be fun when timely released again.