

Discussing and Improving Team Performance

➤ The Importance of Assessing Your Team's Performance

Studies show that employees themselves should assess the performance of their own teams because they have first-hand experience with how their team is performing and are well positioned to suggest improvements.

Being on a team that performs well benefits you personally because it increases your own performance.

➤ Discussing Team Performance

Discussions of team performance should be informal and include all team members. They are most effective when performed on a regular basis, such as once each quarter.

➤ Discuss Your Team's Performance

It's important that teams get together regularly to evaluate and discuss the performance of the team as a whole. Meet at least once each quarter to have an informal discussion about how the team is doing and to identify areas upon which the team needs to improve. Identify one person to facilitate the discussion and another to take notes, and rotate these roles each time the team meets to discuss its performance. All team members should participate every time.

There are five critical areas the team should discuss to ensure it is performing well, including:

1. Understanding the team's goals
2. Working together
3. Respect
4. Communication
5. Knowledge and Resources

Use the guide on the next page to discuss each area in detail. Discussions should be limited to the performance of the overall team rather than singling out specific members of the team. These group discussions are not appropriate for discussing and identifying challenges with specific individuals.

➤ Prioritize Areas for Improvement

After discussing the team's performance, the team should determine which areas to focus on moving forward. Select a few specific areas that are of greatest importance rather than selecting every possible opportunity to improve the performance of your team. Consider the following when prioritizing areas for improvement:

- * Which areas are weaknesses that the team needs to improve?
- * Which areas are strengths that the team should consider building upon further?
- * For which areas did the team disagree on its performance? (i.e., some team members felt the team performed well, but others felt the team performed poorly.)

➤ Build Team Action Plan

Lastly, develop an action plan indicating how the team will improve in each of the identified areas using the guide and template on pages 3 and 4. In particular, indicate the goal, specific action steps for achieving the goal, owners for each step, and timelines.

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➤ Conversation Guide for Discussing Team Performance

Discuss the questions below as a group to gauge the team's performance.

I. Understanding the Team's Goals

- * Discuss the top three priorities of the team. Does everyone on the team agree on these? How would each member of the team describe the priorities and how the team is working to achieve them?
- * Does the team have a clear plan for achieving its top three priorities? Does each individual member of the team know their specific role to help achieve the top priorities? Where is there disagreement or confusion?

II. Working Together

- * How well are the responsibilities of each team member defined? How well are problem-solving and decision-making processes defined? Where is there lack of clarity about responsibilities and processes?
- * How effective is the team at managing conflict or disagreement? How is conflict typically resolved?
- * How well do team members support one another? Do group members proactively help one another? Do group members proactively reach out to one another to get their feedback?

III. Respect

- * Do team members treat one another with fairness and respect? How well does the team listen to ideas and opinions of others?
- * How do team members recognize one another for a job well done?

IV. Communication

- * What communication barriers prevent the team from working well together?
- * Conversely, in what ways does the team communicate effectively?

V. Knowledge and Resources

- * Does the team have the resources needed to be successful? What additional support might help the team achieve its work goals?
- * Does the team as a whole have the right knowledge, skills, and experience to be successful? If the team identifies any gaps, how can it go about obtaining the necessary knowledge, skills, and experience? How can team members teach one another so all team members have the right knowledge, skills, and experience?

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➤ Guide for Completing Team Action Plan

Use the following guidance to complete each section of the team action plan template on the next page.

Goal	Priority Level	Action Steps	Potential Barriers	Key Resources Needed to Achieve Goal	Owner and Participants	Timeline	Status (Complete, In Progress, Delayed)
What does the team ultimately plan to achieve? Why are we focused here?	How important is this particular category to the success of the team? How close is the team to successfully achieving this category.	What are all of the actions the team must take to achieve the goal? List out each step in order.	What are potential barriers the team might face when working on this goal? Identify the most likely barriers as well as possible solutions.	Identify the key resources needed to achieve the identified goal (e.g., technology, knowledge, employees in other functions)	Identify the primary person responsible for achieving the goal and executing the action plan. Also identify other participants and their responsibilities for executing the action plan.	Identify timelines for completing the goal; include the final timeline and any interim timelines.	Indicate the current status of the action plan.

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➤ Team Action Plan Template

For each of the five categories, work as a team to identify goals and associated action steps using the template below. The first row has been filled in with an example.

	Goal	Priority Level (Low, Medium, High)	Action Steps	Potential Barriers	Key Resources Needed to Achieve Goal	Owner and Participants	Timeline	Status (Complete, In Progress, Delayed)
I. Understanding the Team's Goals	Develop project plan for each team priority, including timelines and the role of each employee	High	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss team priorities with manager for clarity 2. Interview each team member to understand how they are contributing to each priority 3. Develop draft project plans 4. Discuss project with manager 5. Finalize project plans 6. Discuss finalized project plan with team 	<p>Barrier 1: May be difficult to schedule time to speak with every team member</p> <p>Solution 1: Consider joining existing team meetings or existing one-on-one check-ins</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager Input • Team member input • Project plan template 	<p>Owner: Jennifer Chu, Project Manager</p> <p>Participants: John S. and Indira R (to help conduct interviews with team members.</p>	<p>Draft Project plans due Feb 1</p> <p>Final project plans due Feb 20</p>	In Progress
II. Working Together								
III. Respect								
IV. Communication								
V. Knowledge and Resources								



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