The 7 Elements of High Performing Teams

How to radically improve team dynamics and thrive.
It’s Universal

Highly successful teams are those that create a routine around high standards, positivity and progress. It comes down to bad habits vs. good. So how do we make a habit of being better?

In 30+ years of research, testing and training, we’ve been able to identify the key elements and universal truths that most affect team performance.

Our Team Fitness Tool is built to provide you and your team a complete system for team assessment, increasing performance and fixing what isn’t working.

It all starts with these seven elements—the foundation of our method and the reason why the system has been so effective and reliable.
Empower a culture of positivity.

ELEMENT #1:
Climate
Climate refers to how members feel about the way the team functions, including their level of comfort with team norms of behavior. It truly is the foundation of a healthy, high performing team. And there’s research to suggest that a healthy work climate leads to higher job satisfaction, a healthier workforce (both physically and mentally), lower turnover, higher customer satisfaction and an improved bottom line.

For example, in the healthcare industry, creating a healthier climate has been key in their efforts to combat high turnover and a current nursing shortage. But the same is true for the tech industry and many others; people want their value at work to be respected and appreciated. When that happens, not only will performance improve but you will be able to keep good people longer.

At the end of the day, what the working world needs are greater trust and respect. By actively strengthening your climate, teams will see better communication, less conflict, and more employee engagement and accountability.

The exercises in our Team Fitness Tool specifically address climate by helping teams:

- Clarify expectations of each other
- Build trust and respect
- Identify behaviors essential to a healthy climate
- Enable members’ feedback
- Uncover unproductive assumptions
- Resolve issues that have previously been ignored
- Create awareness of climate and take personal ownership of it
Pull together and be allies at work.

ELEMENT #2:

Cohesiveness
If the team is not cohesive and the positive values that drive teams forward are not present, negative attitudes and unproductive behaviors will create cracks and take over. Inevitably, the result is a customer or client experience that falls below the capability, intent and desire of all of the team members.

It’s vital that a team is working toward a common goal, developing clear and respected roles and responsibilities, and most importantly, living by the core values essential to the well-being of the team.

When a team strengthens its cohesiveness, the team achieves better results with less struggle because team members pull together in the same direction.

The exercises in our Team Fitness Tool specifically address cohesiveness by helping teams:
- Identify where they are going and how they will get there
- Connect to their unique strengths
- Take ownership of the customer experience
- Build greater accountability for their mission and vision
- Understand the big picture and how the team contributes to the company’s vision
- Respect interprofessional roles and responsibilities
- Increase productivity and efficiency
Element #3: Change Compatibility

Be prepared to stir things up.
Positive change is only possible if people are prepared and motivated to do it. Productively engaging the team to change should be the No. 1 priority on a leader’s change management plan. And the degree to which a team can evolve and thrive during change is what we call change compatibility.

Ultimately, change compatibility is about being flexible. Flexibility requires that members be adaptable and open to other ways of doing things.

Teams that strengthen their change compatibility demonstrate a greater openness and responsiveness to change. They shift their approach and attitude to make changes work for the sake of the team and the business, even if they don’t agree with it all.

The exercises in our Team Fitness Tool specifically address change compatibility by helping teams:

- Recognize the impact teams’ attitudes can have on progress
- Learn how to replace negative thoughts with more productive ones
- Improve the ability to let go of old attitudes or old ideas that impact change
- Understand change management best practices
- Experience less stress and resistance to change
- Approach issues from a solution-oriented perspective
- Understand differences in how people experience and respond to change
ELEMENT #4:

Shared Leadership

Listen to and empower your team.
When teams strengthen shared leadership, they increase staff engagement and participation and make team members more empowered to make decisions. A high performing team is one that makes members feel fully valued and that their input is equally considered in the decision-making process.

When the team focuses on shared leadership, leaders see a difference in their staff’s willingness to address issues on their own before bringing things to the leader. Staff see a willingness from their leader to empower team members to be involved in decision-making, which leads to greater support for decisions made.

When shared leadership is strong, the leader lets go and team members step up.

**The exercises in our Team Fitness Tool specifically address shared leadership by helping teams:**

- Identify the degree of influence team members feel they have
- Determine how a greater equalization of voices can be achieved
- Create greater participation in decision-making
- Identify and commit to practices that strengthen shared leadership
- Shorten leaders’ time spent solving interpersonal issues
- Promote self-reliance in teams and confidence in leaders
Move forward as one team.

ELEMENT #5:

Group Work Skills
A team’s ability to work effectively in a collaborative meeting setting is critical to the team’s effectiveness outside of the meeting. If strong and collaborative decisions are not made and true consensus isn’t achieved, a team cannot function at its best. The group work skills element is key to measuring these skills and their effect on quality decision-making and facilitation.

This element is directly affected by the success of our other six elements. For example, if a team of individuals isn’t able to collaborate and make confident decisions, they likely have issues with other elements, like team climate and cohesiveness. And vice versa: If these elements need work, there’s a good chance group work skills will be close behind.

When the group work skills element isn’t a strength, teams display a lack of critical problem-solving and team consensus reaching, plus poor meeting management. It’s vital for team members to have the ability to work together and collaborate in order to reach organization or department goals.

**The exercises in our Team Fitness Tool specifically address group work skills by helping teams:**

- Organize and run team meetings in the most effective way possible
- Make the group sessions and team meetings a priority for members
- Leave team meetings with a better sense of accomplishment and alignment
- Develop effective communication in a meeting setting
- Improve the ability of the team to reach a consensus together
- Hone their ability to collaborate and problem-solve effectively
ELEMENT #6:

Innovative Thinking

Take on the status quo.
High performance requires that team members actively search for new and better ways of doing things. Innovative thinking skills require people to listen openly to ideas with which they may not initially agree, challenge one another’s thinking and make an effort to think differently.

Thinking critically and creatively is what gives a high performance team its edge. Innovative thinkers are able to better listen to other team members’ ideas, challenge each other to do the same, and help develop each other’s innovations and ideas. Making an effort across the team to think innovatively and question the way things have always been done is an important factor in the future success of the organizations.

When innovative thinking isn’t a strength, teams typically have a lack of ownership in their work, a lack of flexibility, knee-jerk reactions and a reliance on the status quo. Team members need to be able to think creatively and should be encouraged to speak up and share their ideas in a comfortable setting with management they trust.

The exercises in our Team Fitness Tool specifically address innovative thinking by helping teams:

- Listen to each other’s approaches and different ways of thinking
- Question and challenge the status quo of the past
- Build a better environment for idea sharing and creativity
- Encourage a greater amount of risk-taking
- Listen to, consider and vet new ideas or proposals
- Implement changes based on the innovative ideas of the team
Fuse personal goals with team goals.

Element #7:

Team Members’ Contribution
Fully contributing team members not only have clinical skills and knowledge but recognize that they share responsibility for ensuring the team achieves its goals. Team members’ contribution measures the degree to which team members individually contribute to the team’s overall effectiveness by fulfilling their own responsibilities.

A team with strong team members’ contribution is one where team members appreciate and support their colleagues and can focus on what’s best for the team.

When team members’ contribution isn’t a strength, you typically see a lack of personal responsibility for interpersonal relations and communication. That’s why it’s so important to build the skills that allow team members to take initiative, solve issues on their own and look for opportunities to help others.

The exercises in our Team Fitness Tool specifically address team members’ contribution by helping teams:

- Reflect on their style and strengthen their personal contributions
- Improve the level of support members provide each other
- Increase responsibility for improving client experience
- Take the initiative to do what needs to be done without being asked
- Take ownership for solving issues
- Keep each other informed and effectively share the load
- Embrace opportunities to learn and grow
It’s time to thrive.

Let’s eliminate the team development struggle in the workplace and determine which elements are holding your team back. Our Team Fitness Tool is the simple, yet powerful way to assess, take action and grow. With these seven elements as a foundation, our system provides you a reliable assessment and generates a personalized plan to address your team’s specific areas of need and increase team performance.

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