

7 qualities of high-performing teams

Whether the group in question is a neighborhood Little League squad or a collection of Ivy League graduates at a Fortune 500 company, every leader knows that building a high-performing team is no easy task. Sometimes, the team looks good on paper. (“We have a 5’5” fifth-grader who can hit for power and a new kid who throws a nasty curve!” “Three employees on the marketing team graduated Phi Beta Kappa!”) But, when it comes to actual performance, the desired final score or business results just aren’t there.

Unfortunately, no magic formula exists that guarantees a high-performing team. Examine the best teams, however, and you are likely to find a variety of underlying traits, actions, and behaviors that distinguish them from poorer-performing counterparts.

Let’s take a look at seven of these frequently demonstrated characteristics of high-performing teams:

1. They value teamwork

Great teams see the benefit of operating as a unit. Team members are not simply individuals doing their work side by side. Rather, they thrive on being a part of something larger than their own efforts. They know that multiple viewpoints and competencies enrich decision-making and performance. In tough times, they appreciate their teammates' assistance and kind words. On celebratory occasions, achievements feel even sweeter because they share the victory together.

“When team associates have an ‘every person for themselves’ psyche, they may serve well as individuals, but they will struggle to discover success as a team,” says Amar Vig, managing director at [London FS](#). “Working as a team is a real multiplier. High-performing teams enjoy teamwork, coordination, and originality. They see the result of their work as being a group endeavor — one that is better than could perhaps come from any single individual.”

2. They understand individual responsibilities

Effective teams share a commitment to common goals. Both a catcher and a second baseman, for instance, want to play their best and win. But, they cannot each cover the entire field. Each player must cover his own turf.

Teams thrive when each member has a sense of purpose and realizes he or she plays a distinct, valuable part in meeting larger objectives. Failure to complete one’s tasks in an effective, timely manner jeopardizes success for the whole group of people. Individuals on effective teams know what specific actions they must perform. They take ownership of their part of the whole, and pride in their unique contributions.

“As a CEO, I believe that clear roles and duties enable teams to operate more efficiently and with less conflict,” says Jamie Opalchuk, founder of [HostPapa](#). “High-performing teams succeed because everyone contributes to the group's success. By clearly defining each team member's job and duties, misunderstanding about who should be working on which aspects of a project is eliminated. Additionally, this prevents conflict from erupting and lowering morale.”

3. They know how to deal with conflict

Smart teams do not try to purposely ruffle each other's feathers or step on toes. However, they also realize the unlikelihood that group members will always see eye to eye. People sometimes disagree — that is a fact of life. Through clear communication and professional behavior, though, they resolve their differences. This faith in the team's ability to work through problems enables them to confront issues large and small while remaining on good terms with one another.

“Conflict is inevitable, but high-performing teams know how to handle it in a healthy manner — straightforward and respectful — that doesn't add to the problem,” says Joanne King, company director at [ICMP](#). “Conflict happens when communication breaks down, and performance decreases as a result. High-performing teams establish clear communication expectations and channels so that everyone understands when and where to interact as well as who they need to connect with.”



4. They excel at communicating

Frequent, open communication does more than playing a large role in limiting conflict. It serves as a central component of team effectiveness. Keeping everyone up-to-date and on the same page promotes better project management and fewer missed deadlines. Mistakes or things slipping through the cracks occur less often because people have the information they need or know how to obtain it. Continuous communication also improves the team's ability to “read” one another, leading to better team dynamics and working relationships.

A team's ability to communicate effectively takes on even more significance with the increase in remote and hybrid work brought on by the pandemic. Bridging the distance through consistent communication ensures tasks get done and team goals remain clear to all.

“High-performing teams have a communication strategy in place that is designed to streamline and optimize communication,” says Mark Valderrama, CEO and founder of [Aquarium Store Depot](#). “They know when to phone, when to email, when to Slack, when to (and when not to) jump on Zoom, and when to simply pop into each other's offices if they work together in an office. Additionally, they use technology to stay organized and track progress by collaborating on documents using project management software or Google Docs.”

5. They know how to manage time

In part, because they communicate so well, members of high-performing teams make better decisions on how to use their time than lower-performing ones. With clear goals in mind, they understand what the team needs done and figure out how to best accomplish priorities within specified timeframes. In turn, teams performing at

the highest level consistently deliver what they say they will on time every time, which makes for satisfied, repeat clients.

“High-performing teams concentrate on the most important issues and allocate their time accordingly,” says Sara Johansson, customer success manager at [Onsiter](#). “They recognize that not all work is of equal importance or urgency, and they prioritize and manage projects based on the tasks that have the most impact. This guarantees that work is aligned with corporate goals and that everyone is focused on growth-oriented tasks.”

6. They receive proper organizational support

Teams aspiring to achieve at the highest level benefit from leadership committed to addressing their needs. In many cases, support means allocating resources. Building a championship Little League squad becomes difficult if the players lack gloves, bats, balls, and a field on which to play. Similarly, business project teams require what is necessary to carry out their tasks. Depending on the circumstances, this could involve anything from good security software installed on every computer and sufficient Internet bandwidth both on-site and remotely to an adequate advertising budget and enough manpower assigned to a project to cover all responsibilities.

But support goes beyond the material level. Team members put forth their best work when they know leadership is committed to their endeavors. They know where to turn for assistance in problem-solving or getting new ideas off the ground. Regular check-ins convey the message that you aren't forgotten or operating alone. Rather, consistent interaction where leaders provide constructive feedback and ask how they can help motivates the troops.

“Teams perform optimally when their leadership provides unwavering support,” says Kenny Kline, president and financial lead at [BarBend](#). “An engaged leader guides employees toward achievement by direction, not micromanagement. Successful leaders develop a healthy work atmosphere and ensure the continued existence of communication, trust, and respect. They provide clearly defined objectives and detail the methods necessary to accomplish them.”

7. They operate in an environment of trust and mutual respect

Lastly, high-performing teams create an atmosphere where members feel welcome and accepted. They value each other's skillsets and unique contributions to team goals. They understand that diversity can promote creativity, broader perspectives, innovation, and better decisions. Thus, their primary concerns when it comes to team composition are abilities and attitude, not factors such as race, age, or gender.

In such an environment, people feel safe to express ideas and opinions without fear of ridicule. This ability to be one's authentic self boosts morale and job satisfaction. People also feel a greater sense of security because they know others have their back and can be depended on to act as teammates rather than rivals.

As [Novorésumé](#) co-founder and CCO Andrei Kurtuy summarizes, “In high-performing teams, trust and respect are essential qualities. To put it another way, the group has a strong sense of unity. Because of this, colleagues are able to express themselves and take risks without fear of repercussions. Even if they fail, they are certain that the team will still respect them and learn from their mistakes. Ultimately, this ongoing learning is what sets them apart. A psychologically secure work environment encourages team members to be more invested in their job and less prone to falter in their productivity.”