

# Leadership Bites: Team Development

LEADERSHIP LEARNING IN 20 MINUTES

**NHS**

**Leadership Academy**

**South East**

## Introduction

For over 60 years teams have been the engine within an organisation, driving forward and delivering work, which means it is well worth the effort of developing a team. In this sense we can short-hand team development into the following activities: organise the people, organise the work, and speed up the work.

Although there is much literature on teams a simple definition can be thought of as a group of individuals working together to achieve a shared purpose. While development can be described as the process of learning and growth. When these two concepts come together, we have team development.



For team members and the team's leader there are several benefits to developing as a collective. Research shows positive movement in morale, satisfaction, stronger relationships and trust, and a greater feeling of team membership, that is, being a part of something special.

**If you need to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.....**

*African proverb*

## What actually works in practice

In 2012 Goggle started an ambitious project, called Aristotle, with the aim of using data and scientific analysis to investigate what makes a team effective in the workplace.

Using data from over 180 mixed teams collected over 2 years the findings were clear.

In order:

1. **Psychological safety** can be measured by the willingness of team members to share their vulnerabilities and opinions without fear of persecution. It is the climate the team creates for itself. An environment rich with acceptance, respect, and inclusion of diversity.
2. **Trust & dependability** indicate the level shared goals within the team and the need for team members to rely on their team mates to succeed and complete work.
3. **Structure & clarity** concern the importance of clear team roles, accountabilities and how the team will achieve work.
4. **Meaning of work** focuses on how much team members connect emotionally to the work they are doing. It is a measure of the passion and commitment people feel towards team objectives.
5. **Impact & results** describes the fact that people need to see the effects of their contribution, and to know why they are working hard.

1. *Psychological safety*
2. *Trust & dependability*
3. *Structure & clarity*
4. *Meaning of work*
5. *Impact & results*

If you think you are leading but no one is following, then you're just taking a walk.....

*African proverb*

## What does this mean

The reality is that team development is not done to the team by the team's leader. It is a collective and coordinated effort to increase the learning and growth of the team as a whole. In this sense the team has a responsibility to maintain its learning rate so it can face and succeed in challenging times.

To learn and develop takes energy and dedication so it is useful to understand what positively motivates a team over the long term. Again, research shows that intrinsic motivation is strongest, and we can think of this as behaviour driven by internal satisfaction, rather than external forces. It is valuable to know what motivates the team and its individual members, so it can be used to develop further.

## Give it a go

Remembering the findings from project Aristotle, consider the team you are in, or lead. Here are some simple yet effective activities to try.

- **Build strong habits** – find what works best for the team and reinforce desired habits often. Become an 'echo-chamber' for activities that support team learning and growth.

It could be as simple as celebrating an experiment, making sure the team has planned and unstructured social time together, or giving more positive praise and feedback to one another.



- **Connect the team to its purpose** – run an activity where each team member describes, draws, or creates an analogy that positively portrays the team's purpose. Then ask people to pair up and share what they value about working in the team. \*
- **Draft a team charter** – creating a social contract to bind the team around agreed behaviours and attitudes nicely consolidates mutual expectations of each other and allows the team to gently hold itself to account when that contract is broken or stretched.
- **Do a SWOT analysis of your team** – by using framework such as SWOT [strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats] a team can rationally review how it is, and how it would like to be. The analysis can also provide the basis for a team development plan.

## Suggested Reading

**Culture Code** by Daniel Coyle, 2019

**Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us** by Dan Pink, 2018

**Virtual Leadership** by Penny Pullen, 2016

*\*[this also works very well in a virtual or remote team by using the breakout room function MS Teams or Zoom]*

### Further learning ...

For further information and learning, as well as suggested activities, feel free to visit the [People.NHS.uk](https://www.people.nhs.uk) website or our [South East Leadership Academy site](#).



# Time to reflect...

Take some time to note down your thoughts on what you have learned.

What resonated?

What has made you curious?

What small changes could you make to start having an impact differently and quickly?

What might you need to share with your team, and commit to 'testing and learning' together?

