

# HPT: What Makes a Successful Team



This module will focus on what makes a successful team and introduce participants to key characteristics, behaviours, and best practices required to cultivate a successful or high-performing team. Learners will be able to discuss the importance of setting shared expectations and a vision of success using tools such as a “Team Charter”. The module will explore how team members can align focus, purpose, and priorities by working towards shared goals rather than serving one’s own personal goals.

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- ≡ **Tools for Evaluating HPT Success**
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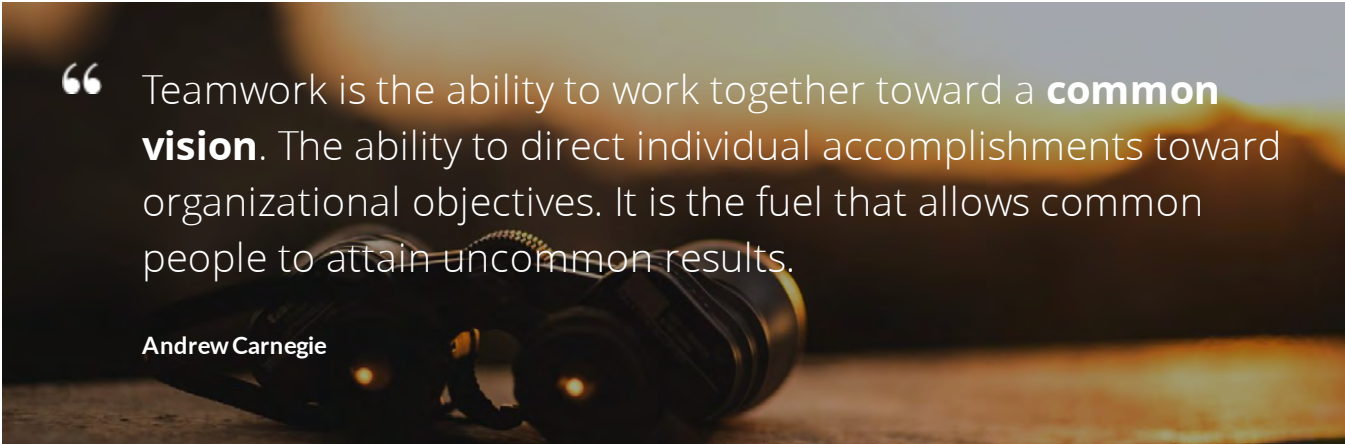
☰ References & Resources

QUESTION BANKS

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# Module Objectives

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“ Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a **common vision**. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.

Andrew Carnegie

**By the end of this module, you will be equipped with the knowledge to:**

- 1 Identify and describe the necessary foundations of a high-performance team
- 2 Identify the five contributing factors for success in high-performance teams
- 3 Describe and evaluate the tools, behaviours, and practices of a high-performance team
- 4 Evaluate findings from a 360° type teamwork skills assessment, and conduct a gap analysis of your teamwork skills and practices

**CONTINUE**

# Introduction

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Large flames of a fire.

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Human development has always been associated with technological change. Think about the discovery of fire, the invention of the wheel, of bronze, of iron...and of microchips. The existence of change has been constant, but the pace of change has steadily accelerated. This has created a highly complex and interconnected world. Specialists and generalists of all types are needed to effectively function in this complex environment, and they must function cooperatively. Deep expertise is needed to continue to

move us forward, but no one person can possess all of the expertise needed take on a challenge of any significance. Consequently, the importance of effective teamwork—people with differing skills and experiences working toward a common goal—has never been greater.

In this series of modules, we will discover and apply the knowledge, skills, and techniques that high-performance teams must have in order to meet the needs of modern society. In this first module we will discover and apply the most fundamental attributes and practices of high-performance teams.



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# The Essential Foundations of an HPT

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A busy team work station.

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While there are many factors that can contribute to the formation and success of an HPT, there is only

one necessary factor...

All team members must have a **commonly held** definition, understanding, and **vision** of success.

In the 1950s, an experiment was conducted in Robber's Cave, Oklahoma. This experiment has been studied extensively since. While considered controversial by today's standards of experimental ethics, it remains a compelling case of a fundamental element of effective teamwork. This was one of the hypotheses tested in the Robber's Cave Experiment: "When individuals who don't know each other are brought together to interact in group activities in order to achieve common goals, they will produce a group structure with hierarchical statuses and roles within it."



The campers in front of tents.



The campers before Arkansas limits.



The boys playing tug-of-war.

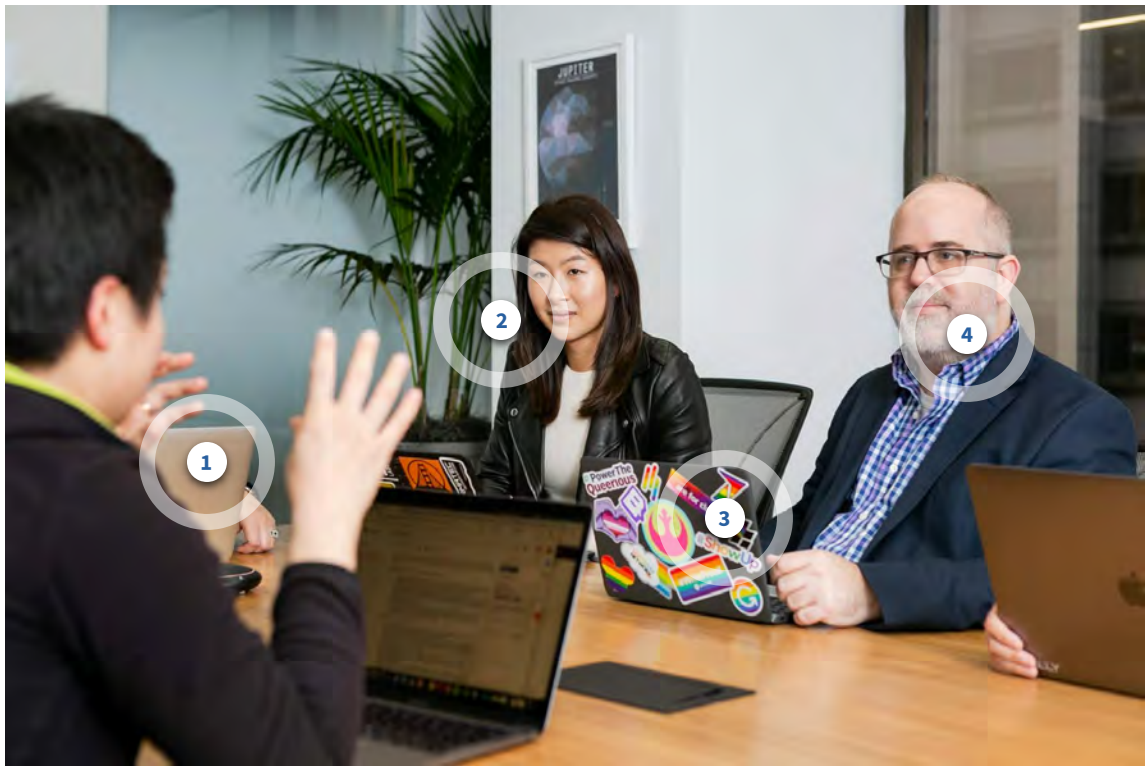
The researchers thus concluded that uniting to achieve a commonly held, superordinate goal was the most effective way for diverse teams to overcome biases, prejudices, and conflict. And, to constructively mobilize the hierarchies within a team.



Having trouble accessing the video or interactive transcript? Watch online at this link: <https://stream.queensu.ca/Watch/k9R6Zsg4>

For greater understanding of this hypothesis, consider a team wherein certain members hold a different vision/definition of success. The team's work can only produce one end state, and it is therefore impossible to satisfy all members, and to instill in them a feeling of success when *at least one of them* does not agree that the end state meets their definition of success.







In certain cases one member's elements or "tests" of success could be a subset of another's. It seems as if an end state could exist that would satisfy both of them, despite their differences.



But, even in this case one member could be left feeling that either their definition was only partially met, or that the team did more work (and consumed more resources) than was necessary to meet their definition.



The latter could only be acceptable if that team member willingly expands their definition of success to include the missing elements held by others, so as not to be resentful.



And so, it is important that team members are willing to either expand, condense, or even fundamentally change their definition of success to allow the team to reach complete consensus.



How does YOUR team define success?

## Step 1

### Mutual Understanding



Teams should start their journey together by first coming to a mutual understanding of the definition of success for the team.

## Step 2

### Focus on Outcomes

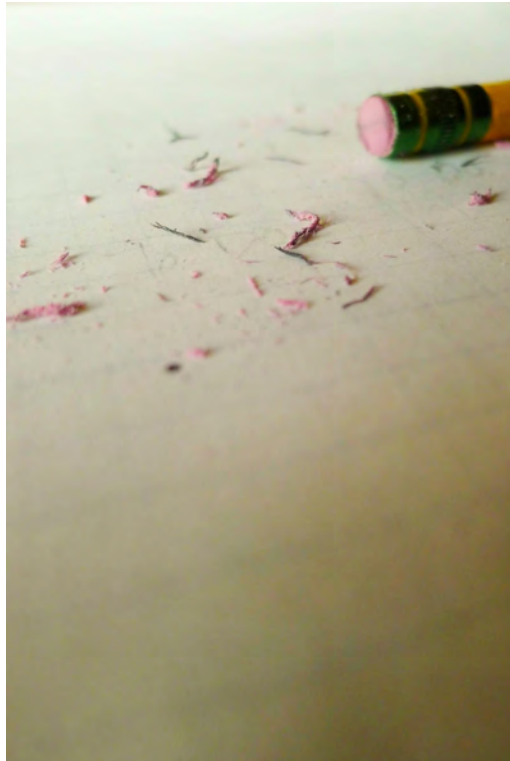


It is important to define success in terms of **outcomes**, as opposed to activities or milestones. This allows the team to acknowledge that the activities (and therefore milestones) may have to be redefined in order to achieve the desired outcomes.



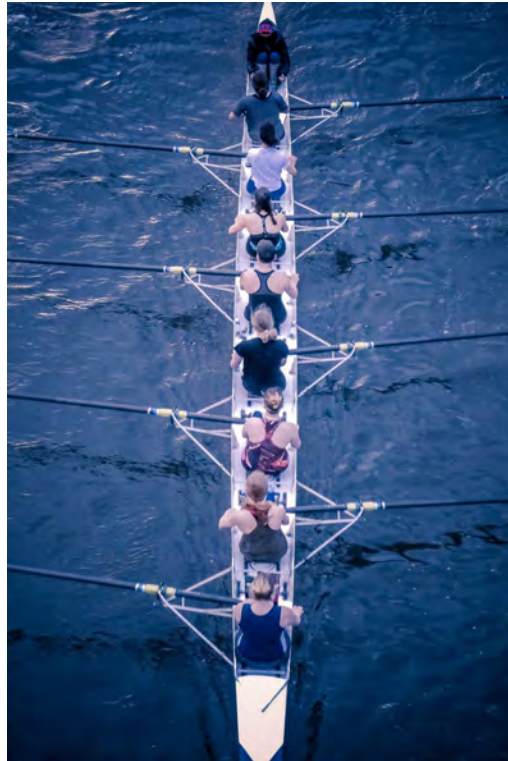
### Step 3

## Review and Revise



As reality sets in, teams can find themselves wanting or needing to change this definition. This should not be done without the understanding and consent of the entire team. When such consent cannot be obtained, it should be understood that this may necessitate the re-composition of the team. At the very least the dissenting teammates must agree to subordinate their vision to that of the rest of the team, but it is easy to understand that such a state is not naturally indicative of a team that will perform at its highest potential

## Understand Motivations



It is NOT necessary for all team mates to hold identical reasons or motivations for their definition of success. But, as discussed later, it is very beneficial for all team members to understand their fellow teammates' motivations.

In summary, high-performance teams must primarily have a consensual and commonly held definition and vision of success for the team. Teammates must understand and empathize with their teammates' motivations for success; however, while these motivations can be shared, they usually are not commonly held among **all** teammates.



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# Additional Factors that Contribute to the Success of a HPT

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What is the one necessary factor to the formation and success of an HPT?



A strong leader

- A commonly held definition, understanding, and vision of success
- A productive work environment
- A highly skilled team

SUBMIT

While there is only one **essential** factor to HPT success, there are many highly desirable factors and behaviours that can lead to HPT success—so much so, that it is unlikely for a team to perform at its highest level without demonstrating most of these behaviours.

MOTIVATIONS

AGENDAS

TRUST

DIVERSITY

Every team member should understand what motivates each of their teammates to want the team to be successful.

While helpful, it is not necessary or even normal for all, or any, team members to share a common motivation. In fact, motivations for success can be highly differentiated, despite having a common vision of success. They can include a desire for recognition and promotion, intellectual curiosity, professional pride, monetary gain, religious or civic duty, and more.

Understanding what motivates your teammates will make you more empathetic; help you understand their behaviour or decisions (especially when they depart from your own expectations and preferences); and enable you to discover ways for the work of the team to optimize the outcomes for all members.

**Scenario:**

Two team members are equally skilled at presentations. One is motivated for success by *financial gain*. The other is motivated by *recognition*.

Which one should the team choose to present the team's progress to the boss?



MOTIVATIONS

AGENDAS

TRUST

DIVERSITY

Members subordinate their personal goals and objectives to those of the team and its achievement of its definition of success, and trust that others will do the same.

Because motivations can differ, but the vision of success is commonly held, it is normal for an individual's desired outcomes to come into conflict with that of the team from time to time.

These situations can clearly be very destructive to the team's performance, unless **all members can trust that everyone will set aside their personal agendas** in favour of fully executing on the team's agenda.

If not, resources can be misdirected, trust can become eroded, resentments can form, and often, team members will invest inordinate amounts of time in checking up on each other and questioning each other's actions.

**Scenario:**

Recall those two team members with differing motivations (one for success by financial gain, the other for recognition). Which one should the team choose to present the team's success to the boss, if one of them is a *more skilled presenter*?



MOTIVATIONS

AGENDAS

TRUST

DIVERSITY

Teammates should trust one another. This is so important that it is sometimes thought of as a **second necessary condition**.

However, the Robber's Cave experiment teaches us that teams that lack trust can achieve success when they apply themselves to a **common vision** thereof.



That being said, it is clear that trusting teams function much more efficiently and create a much more enjoyable and less stressful environment.

In contrast, teams that have high levels of mistrust consume a great deal of resources monitoring and measuring each other, and verifying the truthfulness of information that it presented by their teammates.



MOTIVATIONS

AGENDAS

TRUST

DIVERSITY

**Diversity comes in countless forms**, and we must consider more than the obvious (ethnicity, gender, age). Indeed, socioeconomic status, lived experience, education, career experience, level of management authority, and special skillsets can all be relevant, important forms of diversity that individuals bring to the team. In contrast, some of these dimensions might be less relevant, depending on the challenges the team faces.

Recall Abraham Maslow, who said, *"I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail."*



Indeed, teams with significant diversity of a **relevant** kind are able to understand problems and opportunities in different ways, and can deploy a variety of tools to advance the team's agenda.

Alternatively, non-diverse teams can drift towards group think: a tendency to always arrive at a **commonly agreed** solution, an **obliviousness** to other (possibly better) solutions, an **insufficient skillset** to execute on a complex task, and an inability to constructively **challenge** the team's decisions.



MOTIVATIONS	AGENDAS	TRUST	DIVERSITY
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Establish a clear leadership (and "followship") structure in addition to a dispute-resolution protocol.

There is no one leadership structure or style of leadership that is optimal for every team. This is discussed in another HPT module. The choice of leadership style is not as important as the need to clearly communicate it to the team, and to have them accept it.

In most circumstances, an HPT will work in such a way that an outsider might not be able to determine whether the team has a formal leader, or who they are.

When a dispute arises to an extent that the team is not able to resolve it, the leader must conduct a dispute resolution, using the mechanism(s) that the team has agreed to use.



**More on Trust and Diversity...**

## **Building Trust**

Trust is difficult to build, and easy to damage or destroy. Teammates must consistently exhibit the following behaviours to maintain trust...

Step 1

## Be Truthful



“the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth”

## Step 2

### Be Accountable



Hold yourself accountable to the team and acknowledge when you have (inevitably) let the team down.

### Step 3

## Follow Through



Commit fully to the team's success and be reliable and communicative—say what you are going to do, and do what you say. When you fail to do so, inform the team before they discover it themselves.

## Step 4

### Be Supportive



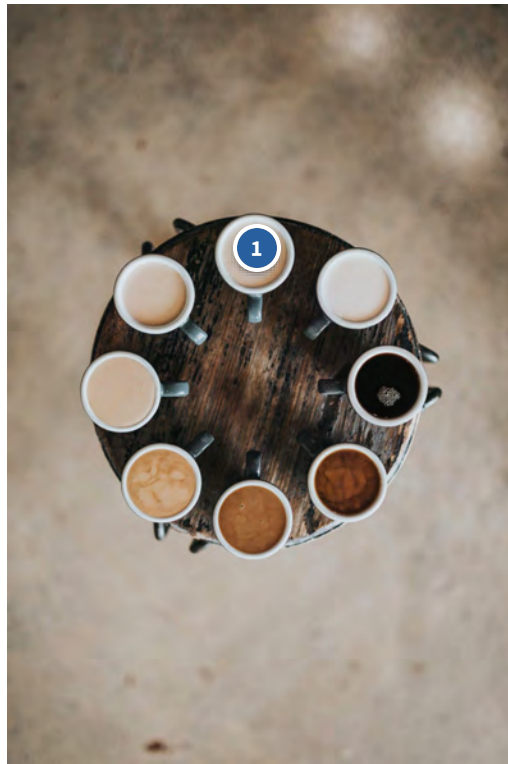
Be constructive, forward-looking and supportive when a teammate confesses their failure to you.

## How to Support Diversity on your Team

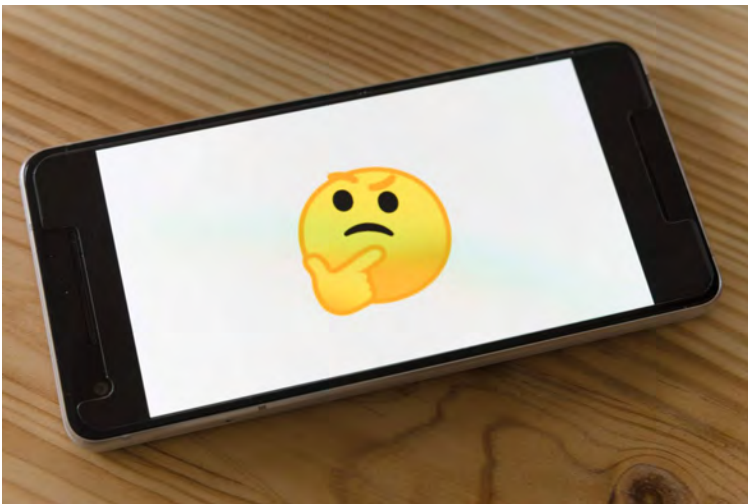




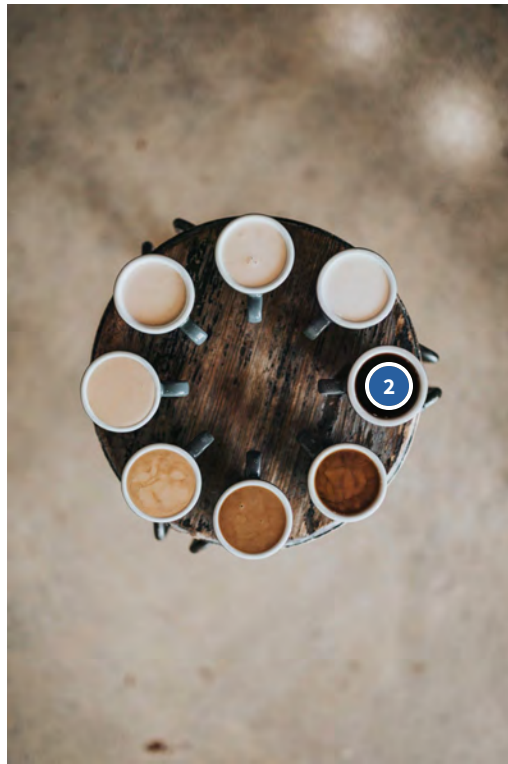




## Understand



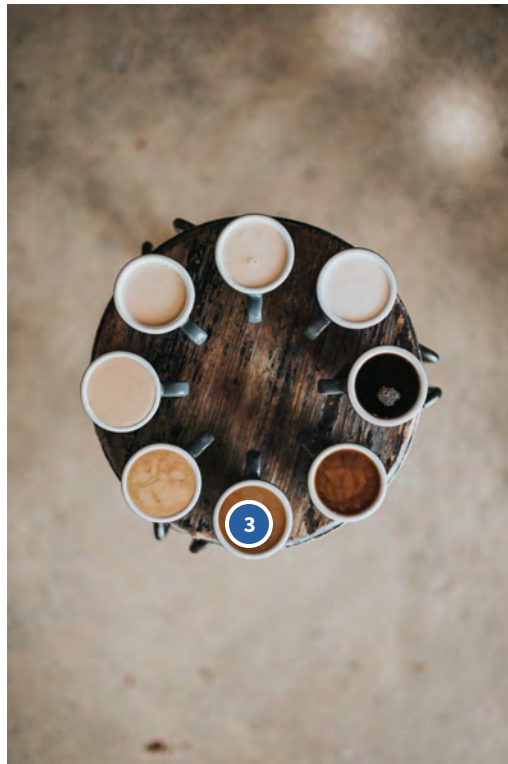
Make an effort to understand and acknowledge the diversity, in all of its forms, that exists on your team.



## Stories



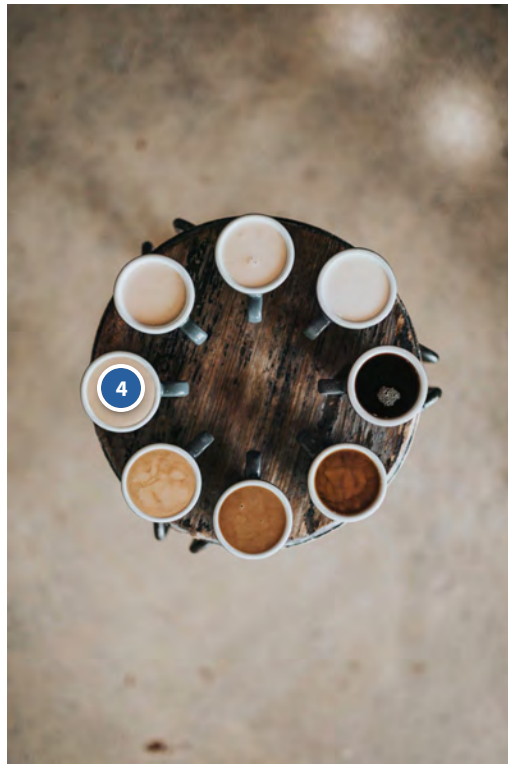
Take the time to tell your stories and to listen to your teammates' stories, however irrelevant they may seem.



### Strengths/Weaknesses



They will give everyone a deeper understanding of the fullness of the team's skillset and mindset, its prejudices and weaknesses, and its preferences and strengths.



## Tools

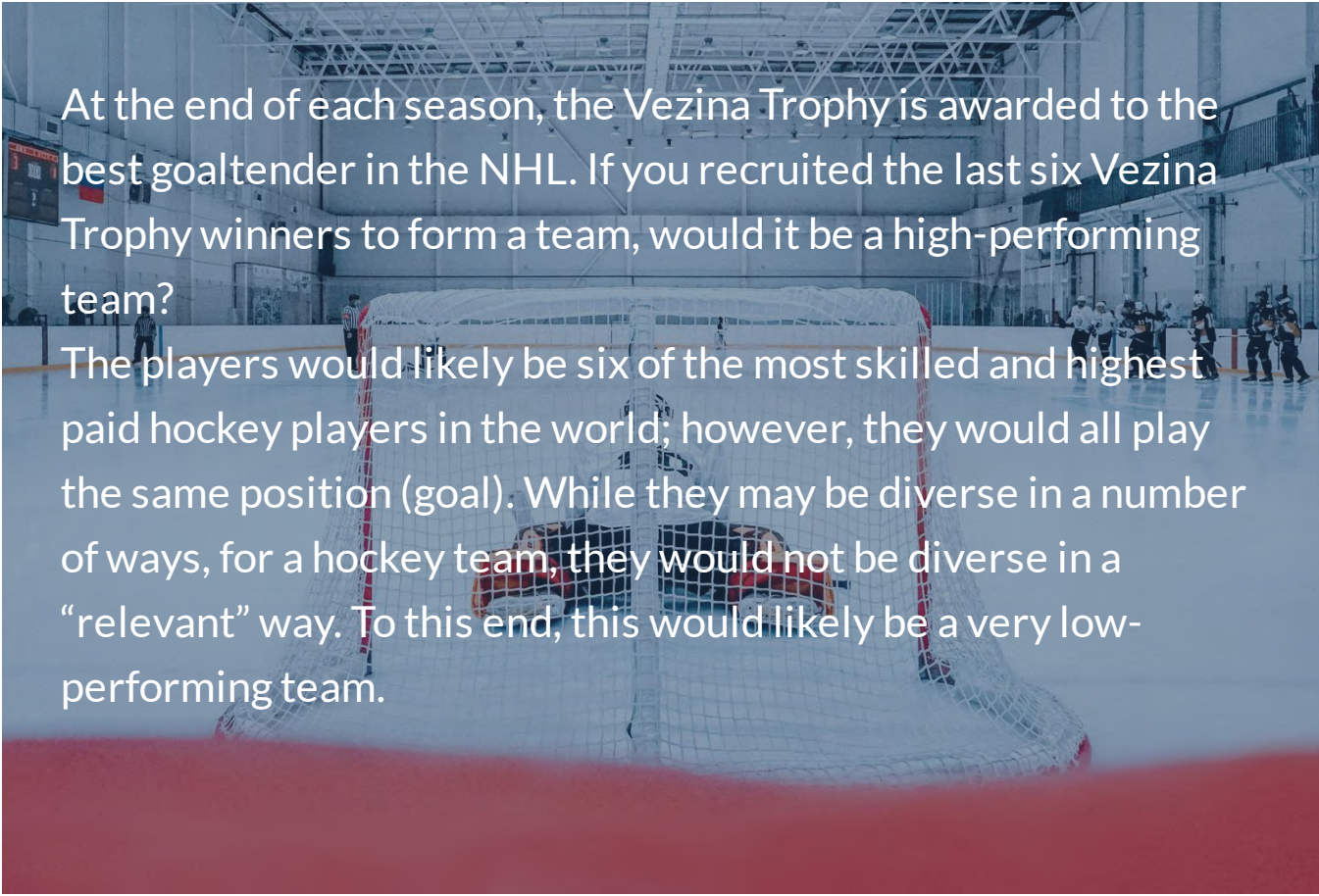


Use formal tools, such as the HBDI (discussed in another HPT module), to evaluate your teammates' unique qualities.

## Relevant Diversity







At the end of each season, the Vezina Trophy is awarded to the best goaltender in the NHL. If you recruited the last six Vezina Trophy winners to form a team, would it be a high-performing team?

The players would likely be six of the most skilled and highest paid hockey players in the world; however, they would all play the same position (goal). While they may be diverse in a number of ways, for a hockey team, they would not be diverse in a “relevant” way. To this end, this would likely be a very low-performing team.

In summary, in addition to the importance of a shared vision, multiple factors allow teams to perform to their maximum potential. Teams are unlikely to be successful without an understanding of individual motivations, trust, diversity, subordination of personal agendas, a clear structure for leadership, and a process for dispute resolution.

Next, we discuss particular tools that HPT commonly use to achieve their goals.

# Tools for Evaluating HPT Success



“The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don’t play together, the club won’t be worth a dime.”

Babe Ruth

**There are a number of tools that can support the success of an HPT:**

## TRACKING TOOL

## AGILE WORK PLAN

## TEAM CHARTER

## 360 FEEDBACK

A highly effective **tracking tool** can be used to record milestones, tasks, due dates, and to evaluate progress. Examples of tracking tools include meeting minutes, PERT or GANTT charts, spreadsheets, and specialized software (e.g., Basecamp, Teams). The choice of tool(s) is less important than the end goal—to make team members’ accountabilities, achievements, or setbacks **visible** to each other. The intention should not be to shame or punish, but rather, to give everyone the information they need to develop trust in each other, to gain a vision of how their work impacts the work of others, and to signal when a team member may need additional support.

**GANTT charts** are commonly used to provide a visual representation of all of the team's tasks. These charts show task assignment duration. At a glance, teams can see which tasks will be completed in parallel (tasks that are being worked on at the same time) and in series (tasks that are being worked on one after the other). All of this information helps the team to gain an understanding of the bigger picture, especially their teammates’ responsibilities, commitments, and workload. An example is shown in the image below.

**PERT (Project Evaluation and Review Technique) charts** are represent tasks as arrows, and completion milestones as nodes at the beginning and end of the arrows. The expected duration of each

task is shown on an arrow, and the arrows are arranged to show the order of the tasks, serial and parallel tasks, and the key milestones. PERT charts are particularly useful for identifying the “Critical Path”—the longest sequence of serial tasks, which defines the overall duration of the project. PERT charts are less commonly used in teams today.

**Basecamp™** is one of many software programs for project management. It allows users to create and track “to-do” lists, track schedules, share files, and manage deadlines and milestones.

**Microsoft Teams™** is a Microsoft Office application that serves as both a communications tool (video conference, chat) and a file sharing platform. Teams can use this app to share and collaborate on documents, schedule and conduct meetings, and track team progress.



TRACKING TOOL

AGILE WORK PLAN

TEAM CHARTER

360 FEEDBACK

Agile project management is a formal process wherein a team’s work is completed in phases. The team convenes after the completion of their work in each phase to set the work plan for the subsequent phase, which is informed by the work that was done in the completed previous phase. As such, the project progresses in an iterative fashion, facilitating changes of the plan as necessary. You can read more about Agile Project Management [HERE](#).

## AGILE PROJECT PLAN TEMPLATE

PROJECT INFORMATION				OVERALL PROGRESS	PROJECT DELIVERABLE	
PROJECT NAME	PROJECT MANAGER	START DATE	END DATE	OVERALL PROGRESS	PROJECT DELIVERABLE	
Product Release	Alex B.	2-Sep	10-Oct	20%	SCOPE STATEMENT	

AT RISK	TASK NAME	FEATURE TYPE	RESPONSIBLE	STORY POINTS	START	FINISH	DURATION (DAYS)	STATUS	COMMENTS
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sprint 1		Alex B.		9/3/22	9/13/22	10	Complete	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Feature 1		Frank C.		9/3/22	9/17/22	4	Complete	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Feature 2		Jacob S.		9/17/22	9/12/22	5	Complete	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Feature 3		Jacob S.		9/9/22	9/13/22	4	Overdue	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sprint 2		Jacob S.		9/16/22	9/24/22	8	In progress	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Feature 4		Alex B.		9/16/22	9/17/22	1	In progress	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Feature 5		Frank C.		9/17/22	9/21/22	4	Not started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Feature 6		Shari W.		9/22/22	9/24/22	2	Not started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sprint 3		Shari W.		9/25/22	10/5/22	10	Not started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Feature 7		Alex B.		9/25/22	9/29/22	4	Not started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Feature 8		Kennedy K.		9/24/22	10/2/22	8	Not started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Feature 9		Jacob S.		10/2/22	10/5/22	3	Not started	

TRACKING TOOL

AGILE WORK PLAN

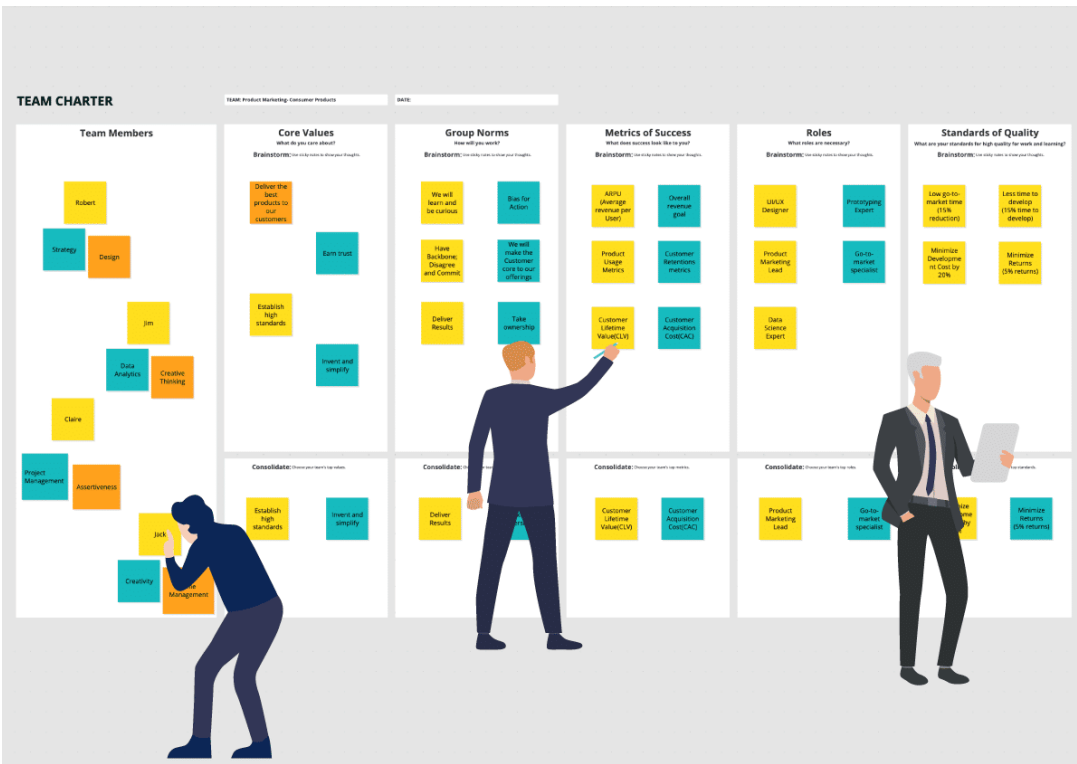
TEAM CHARTER

360 FEEDBACK

A [Team Charter](#) is a summary document which all team members must agree upon. It defines the fundamental aspects of the team's work, and includes the following:

- The definition or vision of success
- The primary role and responsibilities of each team member
- Attendance and hours of work
- Priorities and time conflicts
- Conflict resolution
- Methods and norms of communication
- Task tracking and communication tools





TRACKING TOOL

AGILE WORK PLAN

TEAM CHARTER

360 FEEDBACK

The goal of **360 degree feedback** is for team members to obtain well rounded feedback. In this model, team members receive feedback from those above and below them in their organization's hierarchy, which they can then compare to their own self-assessment. This allows individuals to review gaps between how they view their own performance and behaviour against those at various levels around them. In other words, feedback is coming from all directions, hence the term '360 degrees.'

Feedback is usually gathered via carefully crafted questionnaires. Once feedback is collected, a **gap analysis** is usually done to quantify the differences in how a person's performance and behaviour is perceived between themselves, their peers, their superiors, and their subordinates.




# HPT 360° Evaluation

## Instructions

For this 360 degree-type activity, you will be evaluating your own teamwork related skills, and soliciting and collecting your teammate's evaluations of your teamwork skills. This should help you to identify any gaps between your perceptions of your own teamwork-related skills, and the perceptions that your teammates have of your teamwork skills. After this activity, you should have a good foundation to start thinking about a personal improvement plan for your teamwork skill development.

## STEP 1: Self-Evaluation

Download the PDF below and evaluate your own teamwork-related skills on the 11 items using a Likert-type scale.

**HPT Self-Evaluation.pdf**  
110.4 KB↓

## STEP 2: Teammate Evaluation

Give the questionnaire below to your teammates, and ask a third party to collect them, de-identify them (ensure there are no identifiers in the file names, perhaps save results as PDF to remove authorship information), and send them all back to you once they have all been completed.



HPT Teammate Evaluation.pdf

107.4 KB



### STEP 3: Reflection

Now that you've reviewed your teammates' feedback, how does the feedback that you received compare to your self-assessment? Are there areas where your teammates' evaluations align with your own? Are there areas where your teammates' evaluations were quite discrepant from your self-assessment? Can you provide some explanations for these discrepancies? What would you consider to be your strengths regarding teamwork related skills, and what are some areas that you could benefit from further development? What are some goals that you are setting for yourself, in order to improve, or further expand, your teamwork skillset?

Use this feedback to create a **Personal Improvement Plan**.

CONTINUE

# Scenario

You will now be presented with this module's version of the shared HPT scenario.

Please read through the following scenario slowly, allowing each sentence to "sink in".

After the scenario, you will be asked a number of questions about your thoughts and intentions for managing the issue at hand, as it relates to this module (applying your knowledge of this module's content).



**High-Performance  
Teams Scenario**

# Team's Scenario

## Scenario Questions

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**This team is comprised of individuals from different backgrounds, and different motivations and definitions of success. How would you manage these issues?**

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**In this module, you learned about the essential foundations of a HPT. What is the key foundational feature of a HPT and what would you do to ensure that your team meets this criteria?**

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**How could the Team Lead work to repair the lost trust in the organization and its ability to manufacture effective products?**



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**What tools would you recommend that the Team Lead use for this task? Are some more appropriate than others, given the circumstances? Why or why not?**

# References & Resources

## Studies

- University of Oklahoma., & Sherif, M. (1961). *Intergroup conflict and cooperation: The Robbers Cave experiment*. Norman: University Book Exchange.

END OF MODULE