

TOOL

Plan for Team Building



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Purpose

This tool supports leaders in intentionally developing a team over time by reflecting on purpose, trust, dynamics, and leadership moves. It helps you think strategically about how to build a strong, effective, and aligned team.

When to Use

Use this tool when launching a new team or when reflecting on and strengthening an existing team. It is especially useful at key transition points or when you want to be more intentional about how your team develops.

How to Use It

Work through the reflection questions, either for leading a new team or continuing with an existing one, and capture your thinking in writing. Use your responses to identify patterns, clarify priorities, and determine concrete action steps. Then translate those actions into a timeline to guide your team-building efforts over time. Revisit this tool periodically to reflect on progress and refine your approach.

For Leading a New Team

1. How do you feel about working with the team? How much choice did you have over who is in the team? What is your history (if any) with them?
2. What do you anticipate will be challenging about working with this team? What strengths or assets do you suspect team members have?
3. What is your understanding of the team's purpose? What direction have you been given on why it exists and what it's supposed to do?
4. What do you think this team needs to do? What has informed your opinion?
5. What might you need to learn to help determine the team's purpose? Who might you talk to? What data might you need to gather?
6. What do you feel accountable to in your leadership of this team?
7. How might the work this team engages in have a positive impact on children?
8. How can you ensure that your team will have the time it needs to develop norms and make agreements about the team's purpose?
9. How will you introduce yourself to the team? What will you say, exactly, to communicate what your role with the team is and your vision for how the team will work together? Write this out.
10. What kinds of trust-building steps will you take, and when will you take them?
11. How will your approach to trust building be informed by current organizational conditions for effective teams?
12. What kinds of power dynamics do you think will be present in this team that you'll need to be aware of? How might your role and position impact power dynamics?
13. What kinds of decisions do you anticipate this team will need to make?
14. How and when will you discuss healthy communication with your team? How will you introduce that discussion?
15. How can you cultivate the group's emotional intelligence from the very first meeting? Which strategies can you employ right away? Which will you use on a regular basis?
16. When you prepare for meetings, what do you think might be most important for you to keep in mind, given your previous leadership experiences and what this team needs to do?
17. How can you ensure that the work this team does is aligned to work that other teams in the school are engaging in? How can you share your team's work?
18. Who else in your school or organization could be a thinking partner for you as this team develops? Who could troubleshoot with you or provide a listening ear if things get challenging?
19. What are your greatest and wildest dreams for this team? What do you really hope will happen?
20. Who do you want to be for this team? What do you want team members to say about you and your leadership 5 years after you finish working together?

Now, list out the action steps you'll take to develop your team and plot them on a weekly timeline.

Appendix G: Plan for Team Building © Elena Aguilar, *The Art of Coaching Teams: Building Resilient Communities that Transform Schools*. Jossey-Bass, 2016.

When Continuing to Lead a Team and Identifying Next Steps

1. How do you feel about working with the team? How much choice did you have over who is in the team? What was your history (if any) with them?
2. What has been challenging about working with this team?
3. What strengths or assets do team members have?
4. What is the team's purpose? What do you think this team needs to do? What has informed your opinion?
5. What data have you used to understand or communicate the team's purpose?
6. How bought into the purpose are team members? How much say (if any) did they have in why the team exists or what it is supposed to do?
7. What are the team's norms or community agreements? How are these upheld? Are they effective at helping the group engage in meaningful work together?
8. What do you feel accountable to in your leadership of this team?
9. How does the work this team engages in have a positive impact on children? What evidence do you have that this team's work has a meaningful impact on children?
10. Does your team have the time it needs? What do you think your team needs more time to do? How could you create the time for that to happen?
11. What stage of development would you say the team is at? What might you do that could push the team into the next stage of development?
12. How much do you trust the members of your team?
13. Which specific trust-building steps could you take with the team?
14. How is your approach to trust building informed by current organizational conditions for effective teams?
15. What kinds of power dynamics do you think are present in this team? How does your role and position impact power dynamics?
16. What kinds of decisions has this team made? What processes have you used for decision-making? If decision-making has been contentious, what needs to happen to improve the process?
17. What are communication patterns like in the group? Do you think it would benefit the team to explore healthy communication?
18. How would you assess group's levels of emotional intelligence? What could you do to increase it?
19. What is your process for preparing for meetings? How could you refine your meeting planning processes?
20. How often do you ask your team for feedback? How do they give you feedback? What do you do with the feedback?
21. How is the work this team does aligned to what other teams in the school are doing? How do you share your team's work?
22. How can you build leadership capacity in other members of the team?
23. Who supports you as a leader? Where can you go when you face leadership and team development challenges? How could you advocate for your own support as a leader?
24. What are your greatest and wildest dreams for this team? What do you really hope will happen?
25. Who do you want to be for this team? What do you want team members to say about you and your leadership 5 years after you finish working together?

Now, list out the action steps you'll take to develop your team and plot them on a weekly timeline.

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