



THE TEAM LEADERS GUIDE TO INSTANT 10X TEAM PRODUCTIVITY



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INTRODUCTION

As the volume of information available to us continues to grow exponentially, we are faced with the conundrum of having too much to do, too little time to think about the best approach and little time actually deliver our assigned tasks. As a team leader, you may have developed skills in planning, prioritising and streamlining your team’s work workflow.

Question is, how can you effectively transfer these same skills to your team members? Is setting the tools and processes your team adopt the most effective path forward? How can you train your team to keep delivering while not taking on too much causing them to either drop the ball or risk from burnout?

CULTIVATE GOOD TEAM HABITS



One of the keys to developing adaptive, high-performance teams is to encourage them to cultivate good habits. Successful teams are often simply those with savvy habits, good internal discipline and adaptive skills to cope with ambiguity and complexity.

So, your team's future success lies in nurturing sound productivity habits within your team. Once you nurture the right habits within your team, your team will set up to succeed by collaborating and minimizing internal turbulence and friction.

OK, what exactly are these good habits and why should you emphasise them to your team?

Even if your team hasn't mastered good work habits as yet, you can help them build new, more productive behaviours. Remember changing an established habit can take anywhere from 60 days to seven or eight months before the desired new habit, is ingrained, depending on how complex their desired new habits are.



5 SAVVY CHANGE MANAGEMENT TIPS

Remember, too to proceed with sensitivity. After all, change is always threatening, no matter how small the change is. Humans are always resistant to change. Here are some useful tips to help you help your team develop sound team habits.



1 LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Team members always model their behaviour on that of their team leader. So do as I say not as I do is a non-starter if you really want to inculcate good behaviours in your team. Define the habit you want your team to practice, then be that role model. Practice the habit yourself and your team will inevitably follow your lead when they see the benefits of this habit to your daily productivity.

2 SHARE THE POWER TO CHANGE

Seek support from your advocates! These are those enthusiastic team members who can quickly adopt new behaviours and will help to reduce the fear of change within the team, helping the new habits to ripple through the rest of the team. It's a great example of the power of positive peer pressure. It works!

3 LEVERAGE SMALL WINS TO ENCOURAGE LARGER VICTORIES

By splitting up the new habits you are targeting into small, step-by-step phases you reduce the level of change resistance and make the team more comfortable with the new habits, making them more open to the next round of changes. Small wins can motivate the team to push through the change process, no matter how scary the changes may seem at first.



4 MOTIVATE YOUR TEAM

The power of rational logic and intellectual alone is rarely sufficient to pave the way for a successful adoption of new work habits. Humans respond emotionally to change, so your change strategy needs to incorporate an emotional element. Look to make the new habit fun. Get creative, game it and try giving your team small incentives to practice their new habit.



5 BLEND THE NEW WITH THE OLD

It's always easier to transition to a new work habit when you build on older, existing behaviours. This melded approach makes the new habit feel more familiar, resisting the fear threshold and paving the way for a smoother transition.

EMBRACING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

As organizations become increasingly globalised, they're taking on greater numbers of remote workers who collaborate across greater distances from often-scattered geographic locations. As a result, there is a premium being placed on cultural intelligence.

Cultural intelligence is simply the ability to embrace different mindsets in contexts challenged by ambiguity and complexity. This skill is becoming increasingly critical to an organisation's success.

In order to lead a multi-cultural or geographically distributed team to achieve collective team success, leaders must be capable of bridging cultural differences with sensitivity and sincerity. Here are some tips on leading a team in this environment:

LEARN ABOUT ONE ANOTHER

Ask your teammates about the various facets that bring their culture to life, be it their customs, main holidays or famous entertainers and personalities. Showing an interest is a great way to facilitate cross-cultural engagement.





EMBRACE DIFFERENT STYLES OF LEARNING AND COMMUNICATION

Some people need to actually do in order to learn, others prefer to read a written description of a new concept, while others prefer discussing it. When looking to forge connections with your team, remember to allow for these different learning styles. Learn to spot them in individual team members and check in with them to ensure they “get” your new concept.

Some cultures value in-your-face confrontation, while others much prefer to remain in the background and not ask public questions until asked directly for their opinions. Get to know each team member’s preferences so you can engage with them as effectively without confronting or embarrassing them.

RECAP KEY MAIN MEETING POINTS

Ensure everyone in the team is on the same page by recapping the main points out of a meeting. Remember to clarify who is responsible for what from the meeting and ensure the next steps are clear in the minds of each team member.

INVOLVE THE QUIET THINKERS

People have an extraordinarily diverse range of personal preferences. Look for ways to solicit feedback from everyone, not just the extroverts or the self-confident that tend to volunteer their views. While some team members may prefer to keep their own counsel, sound teamwork depends on everyone being represented.





BASE ACTIONS ON ASKING QUESTIONS

The common themes on building team productivity are respect and knowledge. Respect the different team personalities and individual preferences. If you don't know something, ask a question or probe further to better understand where your team members are coming from, both literally and figuratively.

In today's increasingly complex and collaborative workplaces, the critical challenge is managing your team's collective workload as well as your own. Helping your team manage its time effectively is a critical factor in unlocking the next level of productivity and responsiveness.

As a manager, you have dual roles. Firstly, to set the team's strategic vision and secondly to serve as the buffer against unreasonable expectations from within your organization. Here are some additional tips to help ensure your team works productively and achieves its potential.

SET CLEAR GOALS

The path to productivity often rests with understanding how team members should be spending their time. Take some time out review your team's performance and think strategically about what exactly you want your team to be focused on. Outline your key goals; analyze your team's capacity to execute your goals and look to close any gaps that emerge between them.

This will help you identify what your team members should be working on and just as importantly what they shouldn't focus on, enabling them to accomplish more by committing to less. It's every team leader's responsibility to set boundaries.

CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS

Meet regularly with your team members one-on-one to clearly communicate your team priorities and the expectations of senior management. Identify the top three areas where you want them to focus.

Similarly, be explicit about how much time you expect team members to devote to recurring tasks. Clarify the quality of the work you expect but avoid the temptation to micromanage.

Describe your desired outcomes and allow them to determine the most effective path forward.





NURTURE OPEN CONSTRUCTIVE COMMUNICATION

Constructive conversations with team members about task and time management need to be an ongoing feature of how the team collaborates. Look to encourage honest two-way dialogue and feedback.

Ask team members about the challenges they face, how you as their team leader can help them allocate their time more effectively and whether they need more resources, either short or long-term.

When people don't communicate the fact they are overstretched and then don't follow through at the critical moment problems and ultimately failure quickly emerge.

Quarterly team discussions about priorities and how they impact on delivering against objectives can transform a team's productivity. Encourage team members to ask, "Are we on the right track? Are these objectives still relevant? Has anything changed that will affect where we focus our time?"

Try to uncover the root of the problem. Is it the workload? Is it the way the role is structured or resourced? Is it the person? Peel back the facts to better understand the underlying situation.

RETHINK MEETINGS

Meetings can be a black hole for team energy and enthusiasm. Yes, they are necessary to share information, solicit feedback and ideas and arrive at collective decisions.

You can't eliminate meetings but you certainly make the ones you hold more efficient and effective in terms of sharing information and ensuring the team is on the same page. The Meeting Golden Rule is to ensure you have a clearly defined purpose and agenda for each meeting.

Where possible, distribute meeting materials beforehand as that fast-tracks the meeting by taking the reading aspect out of the meeting. This frees up more time for collaboration.

Similarly, look for other ways to keep team members continuously in the loop that don't involve meetings. This helps keep the team on track and ensures everyone is aligned.





SEEK SUPPORT

Staying on top of a team's bulging task list and their perennially overflowing schedule is a challenge even the most efficient team leaders find daunting. Strategically, inserting an external resource at a critical moment in the change journey can often prove to be the difference between successfully unlocking your team's productivity and having your team struggle.

KEY PRINCIPLES

✓ DO

- ✓ Make smart use of shared calendars by blocking off hours for team development work and downtime
- ✓ Update your direct reports regularly on the team's progress, how effectively it is meeting its objectives and key milestones. This good habit keeps people accountable while ensuring information flows transparently around the team
- ✓ Communicate when you expect your reports to put in extra hours and just as critically when you don't. Failure to recognize variation in workflow volumes breeds resentment and resistance.

✗ DON'T

- ✗ **Micromanage:**
Ask your reports about their challenges and roadblocks and seek to understand how you can help them allocate their time and resources more effectively
- ✗ **Over -Commit:**
Your team has finite capacity. Continually over-committing them risks burn out and prompt them to disengage emotionally. Look to be a safe buffer between the team and your organisation's unreasonable expectations
- ✗ **Discount the idea of enlisting the help of an experienced management coach to assist you to bring your team along with you on their change journey.**



PROCEED WITH SENSITIVITY

Caution, change ahead! When team members react to change, the reaction pattern mimics the five stages of the grief cycle. Your team will spiral from denial through to anger, confusion, depression, and crisis, before finally settling into acceptance, and emerging with renewed confidence.

So if you're looking to nurture new team habits, those new behaviours will take time to set down roots and the team's reactions to the proposed changes will be varied. Smart, successful team leaders always proceed with sensitivity in mind, while still looking to motivate their team to adopt more effective, more productive, and more sustainable behavioural patterns.



HUNGARIAN GAMES
ESCAPE ROOMS IN DUBAI

📍 Address: Warehouse no.35 Al Quoz Ind.

area 1, Dubai, PO BOX: 215686, UAE.

☎ +971 43 21 4843 | +971 54 446 7008

📘 hungariangamesdxb

📷 hungariangamesdxb

WWW.HUNGARIANGAMES.COM