

Using the Design and Process Checklists to Strengthen Your Team

1. Schedule a team meeting specifically to conduct a “diagnosis” of your team. Decide how long you want to spend on the activity, and pace yourselves so you can get through the two checklists in the available time. Select a meeting location where there is privacy and a newsprint pad or blackboard available.
2. At the beginning of the meeting, select one team member to facilitate the discussion (including keeping an eye on the clock), and another to record the conclusions the team reaches.
3. It generally is better to do the Group Design Checklist first, and then the Group Process Checklist. This is because the reasons for any process problems the team may be having often are rooted in a flawed design.
4. For each checklist, consider following this process:
 - a. Each member records his or her individual “grades” on the checklist, with discussion limited to questions about the meaning of any of the items.
 - b. The “grades” are then reported and written on the blackboard or newsprint pad. Any large differences in members’ “grades” are discussed. Try to reach consensus among members about the team’s special strengths and areas where improvements may be needed.
 - c. Identify those items on the checklist for which the team scores relatively low. For each of those items, return to the “Possible Actions” column of the checklist, and list on the blackboard or newsprint the possibilities that members came up with individually.
 - d. Then assess each of the possible actions on (i) feasibility (“Could we actually *do* this?”) and (ii) likely potency (“If we did, would it make a real difference?”). Consider moving forward with those that score high on *both* in feasibility and potency.
 - e. If you do choose to take concrete actions to strengthen your team, be specific about who is to do what, and by what date.
5. Set a date and time for a subsequent meeting, which can be brief, to review what in the team’s design or process has improved, what may have deteriorated, and what new issues have come up in the interim.

Note: For more information on the design features and processes that foster team effectiveness, see the book “Leading Teams: Setting the Stage for Great Performances,” by J. Richard Hackman (HBS Press, 2002).

GROUP DESIGN CHECKLIST

How well-structured is our team?

A B C D F
 excellent so-so flunk

What actions might we take
to improve our structure?

Real Team

Overall

REAL TEAM

- Bounded: Clear membership
- Interdependent for common purpose
- Stable membership

Possible actions . . .

Direction

Overall

COMPELLING DIRECTION

- Challenging
- Clear and well understood
- Consequential

Possible actions . . .

Structure

Overall

ENABLING STRUCTURE

- Task: A whole piece of work with autonomy and built-in feedback
- Norms: Clarity about "must always do" and "must never do" behaviors
- Comoposition: Small size, good mix of task-relevant skills, heterogeneous membership

Possible actions . . .

Context

Overall

SUPPORTIVE CONTEXT

- Rewards: Favorable consequences for good team performance
- Information: Data needed for the work are available to the team
- Education: Any training or technical consultation needed are available to the team
- Resources: Material resources needed for the work are available to the team

Possible actions . . .

GROUP PROCESS CHECKLIST

How are our team processes?

A B C D F
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What actions might we take to improve our team processes?

Effort

 Overall

EFFORT AND COMMITMENT

Avoiding process losses:

No "social loafing" by team members

Building synergy:

Team builds high shared commitment to the team and its work

Possible actions . . .

Strategy

 Overall

TEAM PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

Avoiding process losses:

No mindless reliance on habitual performance routines

Building synergy:

Active invention of innovative and task-appropriate ways of proceeding

Possible actions . . .

Talent

 Overall

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Avoiding process losses:

No inappropriate "weighting" of member contributions

Building synergy:

Active teaching and learning among group members

Possible actions . . .