

TEAM UP

How to reach and maintain peak performance
in your team

John Carter's

Good Manager Guide





Overview



Peak Performance teams



The journey to Peak Performance



The Change Curve



'Forming' the team



Reaching Peak Performance and staying there



Troublesome traits



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OVERVIEW

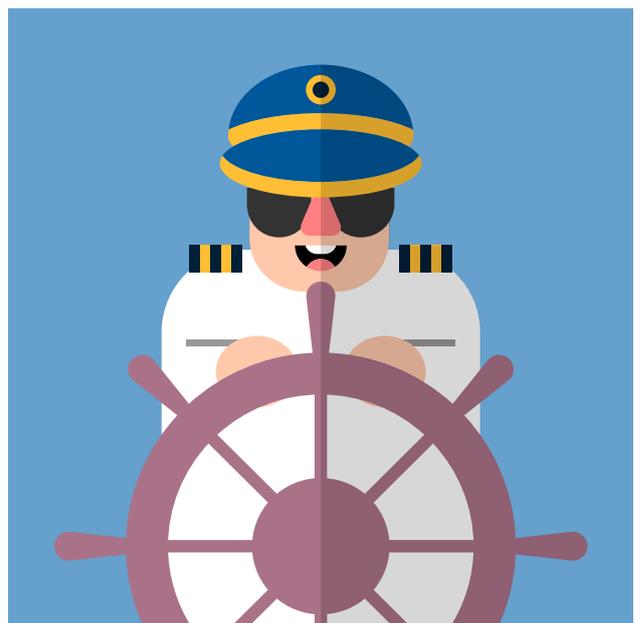
Ahoy there! Imagine you're the captain of a ship, climbing aboard to meet your new crew of ship mates. You are about to set sail – with you at the helm – to a destination that you know is always sunny, where the people are friendly and the air is filled with the sweet smell of excellence, success and happiness. Heavenly!

However, you know that along the way you will need to navigate some rocky shores and stormy seas. If you fail to captain the ship well or your crew fail to perform then you may never make it! And even if you make you won't necessarily be able to stay for long.

Perhaps it's an overly colourful analogy to describe the voyage that a new team makes from formation through to achieving peak performance, but there's no doubt that in the world of business your role as the manager (the captain of the ship) is critical during this journey.

Manage the team well and it is likely to gel and display the kind of teamwork that makes the whole bigger than the sum of its parts.

In this guidebook, we look at how you can steer your ship past the obstacles and dangers to reach calmer waters and the promised land.



PEAK PERFORMANCE TEAMS

Let's start at the end and the traits of a team performing at the peak of its powers. Of course, there have been lots of painstaking studies and research on the subject and this overview takes into account the work of organisations such as Google, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, TMI International as well as our own input:

10 traits of a peak performance team

The team members:

- 1** Share a **common purpose** and **vision** – The team all know clearly what they are trying to achieve and how they contribute.
- 2** Create a **culture of achievement** - They build an impressive track record of hitting their targets and achieving outstanding results. They become used to success.
- 3** Are **professionally competent** - They are highly accomplished in their individual roles. Expectations and targets are met, quality and customer service is never compromised.
- 4** Are **committed** and **hardworking** –They are whole-heartedly committed to the team and what it is trying to achieve; loyal, driven, motivated, always trying their best. The work has personal significance to each member and because they feel emotionally attached to the team they feel at least partially responsible for its success.
- 5** Display **personal resilience** – In the face of the 3 Cs¹ (change, conflict and calamities) they bounce back. They don't play the blame game or look for scapegoats. They take responsibility and get it right next time.
- 6** Feel **psychologically safe**² – Everyone feels safe to take risks, voice their opinions and ask judgement-free questions. They can be open and honest with each other. Disagreements may occur but they are constructively resolved within the team. They consistently demonstrate that they respect and trust each other.

¹Refer the 'Mind Management' guidebook

²Google Spent 2 Years Studying 180 Teams, collected endless amounts of data, and spent millions trying to better understand its people. Somewhat unexpectedly, 'psychological safety' was one of five traits they identified for high-performing teams

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Collaborate – They also respect what colleagues bring to the team, unselfishly supporting and covering for each other and putting the team first.

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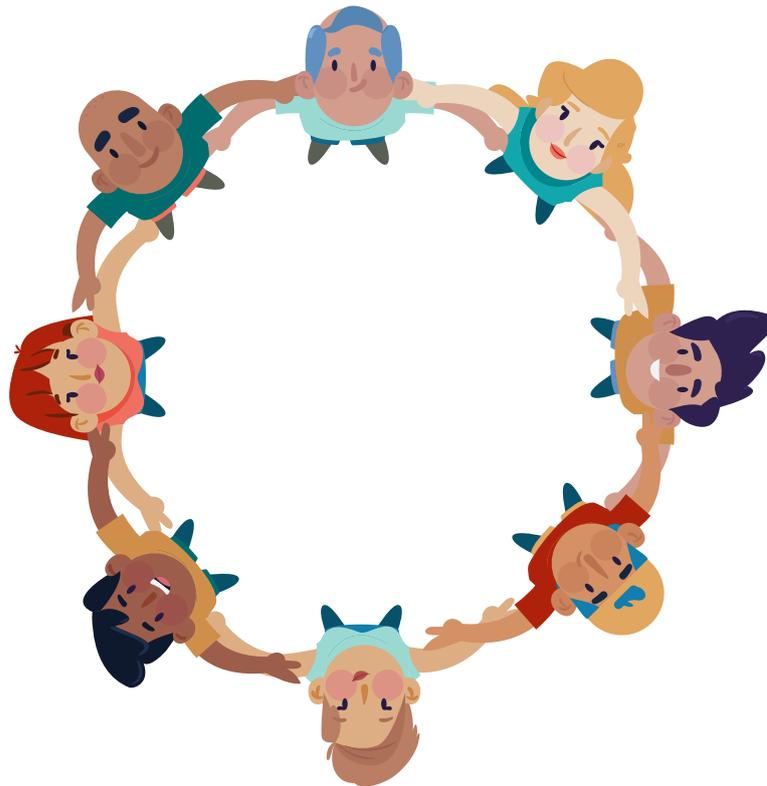
Possess a **growth mind-set** – They take the initiative to develop themselves and the team. They are never complacent and want to keep getting better, improving their performance, skills and knowledge.

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Create a **feel-good factor** – There is a sense of fun and enjoyment and a positive, upbeat vibe. There is energy and enthusiasm, humour and laughter. People enjoy working here.

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Are **diverse** – The team members may be different genders, ages, nationalities etc. and they bring different ideas, skills, knowledge and experience - but they share the nine positive traits that we've just outlined. Recruitment of new team members maintains this diversity.



“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, American writer and lecturer.

THE JOURNEY TO PEAK PERFORMANCE

If your team displays these traits then success will probably follow, but it doesn't happen by chance or luck. It needs time, hard work and a gradual progression. Indeed Dr. Bruce Tuckman published a model – Forming > Storming > Norming > Performing > Adjourning - in 1965 which suggested that a team needs to negotiate various stages before it reaches the Promised Land.

We've already seen what 'performing' looks like but he suggested that the stages that before then tend to involve the following:

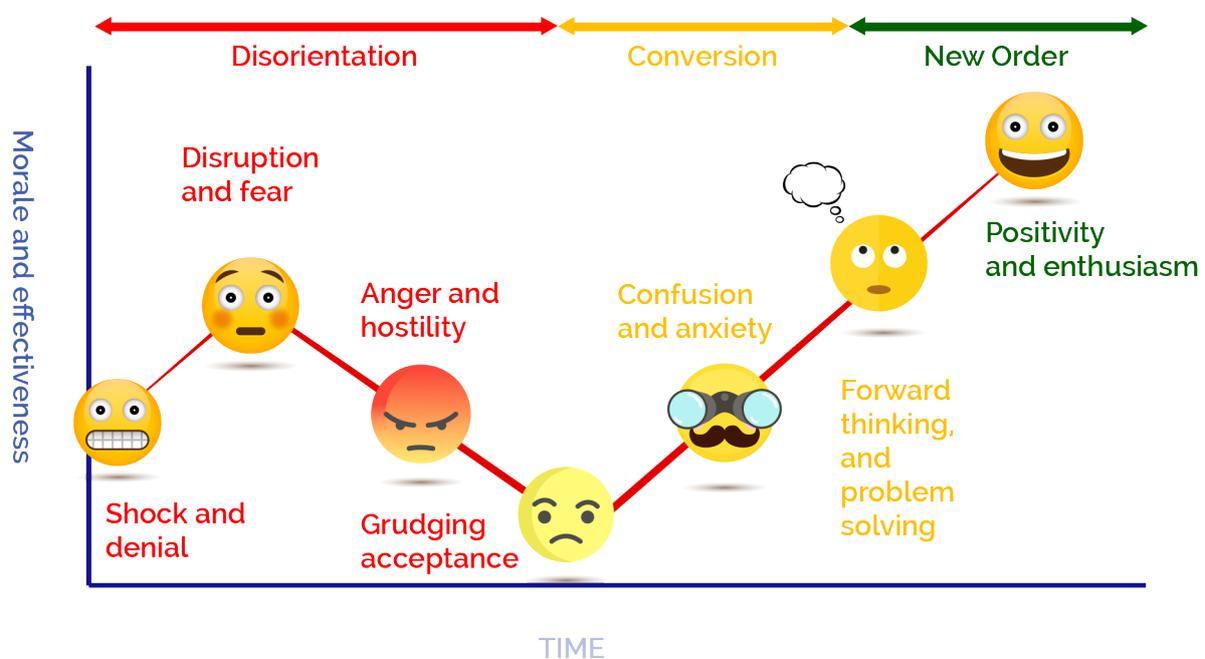
Stage	Behaviours
Forming	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ There is confusion and a lack of clarity over purpose, goals, individual roles and responsibilities. Processes are often ignored.■ Members feel cautious, don't show initiative and avoid responsibility■ Communication is limited and a few members may dominate■ Members look for guidance and direction from the manager
Storming	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Decisions don't come easily within the group and conflict keeps bubbling up.■ Members vie for position, follow their own agendas and act independently.■ The manager may receive challenges and dissent from team members.■ Clarity of purpose increases but plenty of uncertainties persist.■ Cliques and factions form and there may be power struggles.■ Compromises may be required to enable progress.
Norming	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Agreement and consensus largely forms among the team.■ Roles and responsibilities become clear and accepted.■ Commitment and unity are strong. The team may engage in fun and social activities.■ The team discusses and develops its approach. There is a general respect for the leader who may begin to delegate.■ The team gains confidence and feel a sense of momentum■ The team develops agreements on approaches, goals, communication and leadership roles■ Members begin to work together.

A word of warning on Tuckman's model: it is, inevitably, a simplification. Teams seldom move through the stages along this clean, straightforward path. It is much more fluid and ever-shifting, not least because external circumstances and personnel in and around the team keep changing. They are almost always in some form of transition.

So even when you have reached 'performing' something will change – an influential person will leave for instance – and the momentum that has been created can be lost.

Yet, Tuckman's points are helpful and valid: excellence comes at the end of a journey.

THE CHANGE CURVE



This point about 'excellence coming at the end of a journey' is also highlighted by the 'change curve'. It was originally created by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross in 1969 to illustrate how people deal with the news that they have a terminal illness. Nowadays this model is used to explain how people tend to deal with

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