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Why Teams Fail and How to Fix Them

Although many business owners and leaders recognise that effective leadership and collaborative teams are critical to success, they often fail to understand what makes teams successful, why teams fail and how to fix them.

Whether you are a start-up or an established business, you must have clarity of direction, effective decision making and collaboration. Leadership and teamwork are essential.



Competitive advantage is not achieved through a dictatorial regime that stifles collaboration, nor by seeking consensus from every team member on every decision. Success comes from striking the right balance between control and freedom.

The Root Cause of Why Teams Fail

The reasons why teams fail include team leaders and members not:

- Taking enough time to get to know each other
- Listening to each other
- Making expectations explicit enough – often expectations are entirely implicit
- Acting as a team – they are merely a group of individuals pursuing personal interests rather than team goals
- Asking for help when they need it



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- Having proper time management – no deadlines, no accountability, a lack of direction, prioritisation and anticipation, etc. Often this comes from a lack of leadership or the utopian desire for full involvement and consensus.

The Foundation of Successful Teams

Trust – Confidence in yourself, in your team, in what can be achieved together and avoiding the leadership and other sins that destroy trust.

Listening – Listening is essential to not only understand the topic of discussion but to also build trust – when you’re truly listening to others, you are in the moment, and they feel respected.



Mutual respect – To be respected, you first need to respect yourself. This means accepting our differences and having the integrity to say yes, no or maybe. The more content we are with ourselves; the more content others will be with us. If we are not satisfied with ourselves, there is a high risk we will project our unresolved issues onto others. Respect yourself, respect your integrity and respect others.

Understanding others – Understanding others helps to improve respect within a team – listen, ask questions, be curious, never assume you’re right!

Solidarity – Understanding the constraints others are operating within and cutting them some slack when appropriate. That is, demanding your team deliver quality work on time, while putting people first and being mindful that sometimes life is not easy and that things go wrong. Listening to others is the key; you will understand them and their situation better and develop mutual respect.

Expressing needs – If team members don’t express their vital needs, most of the time it’s very difficult for others to guess them. Accordingly, team members must make their needs explicit. By sharing why we’re doing things, we give others the ability to better understand us.

Get out of your comfort zone – If we stick to what we already know, we won’t go far. Team members need to step out of their comfort zone where learning, growth and high performance resides, or risk mediocrity.

Openness – Be open, be agile, ready to change and adapt, be generous, choose your battles and sometimes let go.

Humour – Have a sense of humour. Humour is the best medicine against burnout. Do things seriously without taking things too seriously, go for a walk, get some fresh air, laugh, etc.

Pride – Be proud of what you and your team are doing.

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In short, trust, listen, understand, respect and show solidarity, express your needs, get out of your comfort zone, be open, keep some sense of humour, be both demanding and mindful, be proud of yourself and your team.

Overcoming the Reasons Why Teams Fail

There are many aspects of why teams fail. Addressing the above foundations of successful teams will go a long way. However, when creating teams, other relevant factors to consider include team:

- Membership
- Size and stability
- Diversity
- Conflict management
- Collaboration
- Management



These items will be the subject of future blogs. In the interim, consider the following basic rules to help make your team meetings more effective:

1. Start and finish on time
2. Stay on topic
3. Be candid and have an open mind
4. One conversation at a time
5. Listen deeply and observe – what’s not being said and people’s reactions
6. Be explicit and ask questions – don’t make assumptions; instead make the implicit explicit
7. Be united – challenge ideas, explore options and evaluate risks when making decisions, but once the team has decided, treat the decision like it was yours.

If you’d like help to overcome the reasons why teams fail and move beyond mediocrity to create high performance teams, call [Fortitude Business Consulting](https://www.fortitudebusinessconsulting.com.au) on **1300 551 040**.

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