

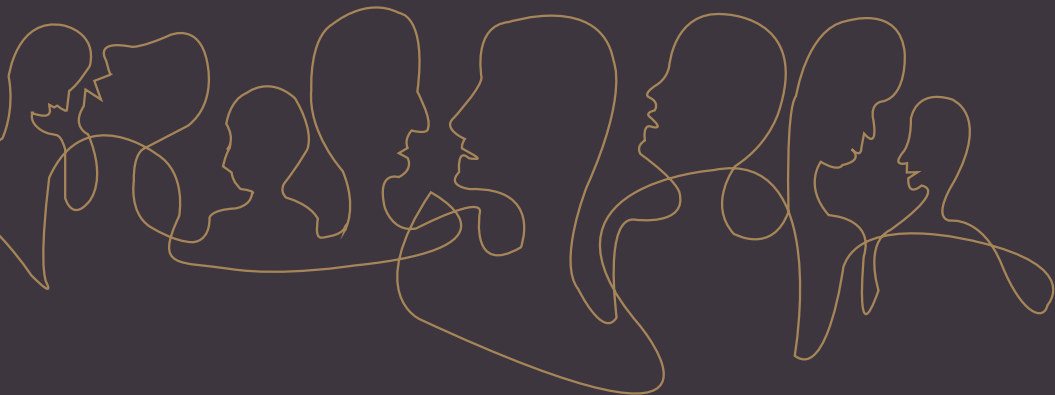
TEAM MEETINGS TOOLKIT

Work happens in teams.

And the best leaders get their teams working brilliantly.

As a team leader you need to run different types of meetings to achieve different outcomes.

The Team Meetings Toolkit gives you tips and the latest leadership practices, ideas on the right questions to ask, and meeting starters to help them go smoothly. Just try one or two out in your regular team meetings.



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1. TEAM GOAL SETTING

Why?

- Teams who are involved and in control of setting their goals are more likely to achieve them.
- To give the team clarity on what they need to achieve and why it matters.
- To set shorter term, agile goals that feel more relevant to the team's day to day work.
- To help motivate, focus effort and keep the team connected to each other.

Tips and Hints

- Use the longer term, overall company strategy as your focus. Whether it be to increase sales, improve customer experience, or launch a new product, your role as a team is work out how you are going to contribute to making the strategy happen.
- When setting new goals avoid processes (SMART, KPI or OKR etc). It's not that these are bad, but you may find your focus is on following a process rather than inspiring the team! Keep it simple. You could just follow a simple What? Why? How?
- Don't have too many goals - fewer will make them more appealing and achievable.
- Work in short sprints (c6 weeks) so that you can see progress and adapt as you go.
- Send follow up comms after the meeting with the actions you've agreed and who is accountable for what.

- Asynchronous records e.g. Google docs are useful as everyone can access, adjust, jot down progress or make comments.

Meeting Starters

- Let's start with looking at our business strategy and what this means for us as a team?
- What goals are we going to pursue as a team over the next three months?
- Why do these goals matter? What impact would they have? Do we feel excited about them? How do they align with the overall business strategy?
- Let's think of activities that would meet these goals? What outcomes will tell us we've been successful?
- Are we trying to do too much, or could we be more ambitious?
- How will we use our strengths as a team to achieve these?
- Are there any obvious skills gaps?
- Are we all clear on each of our roles to deliver?
- What could impact our ability to achieve? How would we deal with that?
- Who else do we need to collaborate with?
- What support will you need from me?
- What other resources will we need?
- How will we ensure we're on track?

2. TEAM PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

Why?

- An opportunity to review how the team is performing against goals, share the challenges and learning, celebrate wins (and failures!) and look at areas for improvement.
- Get your team comfortable sharing feedback with teammates.
- Keep everyone connected and engaged.

Tips and Hints

- Hold team reviews regularly - they don't need to be long.
- Keep the review relaxed and informal - perhaps standing around a desk, in a cafe or even online, so it becomes a normal activity and not something to dread.
- Start with celebrating the team's wins.
- Now discuss what might not have gone so well. Try critiquing your own performance first. If a leader starts with humility - focusing on something you wish had gone better - it gives permission for the team to admit to their own challenges.
- Always ask about what you have learned. This helps create a culture where 'failure' is part of innovating and not always a negative.
- Try and encourage peer to peer feedback to provide deeper insights into strengths and ways to improve. Peers often have better insight into a team member's work.
- Watch out for team members who are defensive when they get feedback. Rather than addressing it in the team meeting, have a chat about it in their next one to one check in.

- Keep a record of any actions and share as soon as possible with the team (use a live document that everyone can access and comment on).

Meeting Starters

- Let's start by celebrating XYZ.
- What else do we feel really proud of achieving and why?
- Let's look at what could have gone better. I think I could have done XYZ differently. Next time I'll do it like this, what do you think?
- Does anybody want to share how they think things went - good and bad?
- Is there anything we're doing that is not adding value or that we're not excited about?
- Is there anything we would change in terms of our team goals?
- What have we learned? And knowing what we know now, what will we do differently?
- How are we spotting any failures when they occur so we can fail quickly?
- Are we trying to do too much, or could we be more ambitious?
- Are we playing to everyone's strengths at the moment?
- What can I do to help you perform better as a team?

3. TEAM INNOVATION

Why?

- Adapt quickly to new challenges and continually reinvent what you do.
- Promote creativity, encourage diverse ideas and motivate your team.
- Opportunity to challenge the status quo.

Tips and Hints

- Keep it light and informal. If your team are relaxed their creative energy will be much higher.
- Give your team a reason to care - keep them in the loop on challenges and opportunities and why their help matters.
- Make sure there's a mix. Different skill sets, knowledge and experiences help you get the best ideas.
- Provide the context a couple of days before eg. "We are getting together to come up with ideas on XYZ".
- Make it OK and even celebrate mistakes or failed projects - otherwise, they will stick to what is already proven.
- This is one of the rare times you need to aim for quantity, not quality. Encourage wild and even "absurd" ideas. There should be no criticism, evaluation, judgement, or defence of ideas during the initial phase.
- Ask your team to jot down their ideas before they come to the meeting. You're more likely to get richer ideas that way.
- Have you got lots of introverts in your team? You might want to make the first 15 minutes of the meeting 'silent' where the team post their ideas into a shared, visible Google Doc.

Meeting Starters

- Do we all understand the idea that we are working on?
- In the next 10 minutes I want you to come up with as many ideas around what we could do? No idea is too stupid.
- Now let's look at what we've come up with. Tell us more about this idea.
- What a great idea. Let's hear from (insert quieter person's name) now.
- What do we know about (insert competitor name) and how they might approach this situation?
- What are the different ways we could go from (insert current state) to (future end state)?
- I want you to put a tick or dot next to the ideas you like. You each have three ticks.
- How can we build on what (person X) has just said?
- Does it fit with the user's needs? Is there demand?
- Is it different enough from what exists to add additional value?
- Is it something that can be implemented now or in the future?
- Can we access the resources, budget and/or technology we need?
- How will we get feedback and buy-in from decision makers?
- If we started with a MVP (minimal viable product), what would that look like? Could we pilot that somewhere to get more feedback?

4. TEAM LEARNING

Why?

- It's more fun, less formal and cheaper than traditional training events.
- A great way to reinforce the importance of being curious and always learning.

Tips and Hints

- Schedule learning as an agenda item at your normal team meetings to make it easier for them to become a part of your team's regular routine.
- Let team members try their hand at a new project or skill they are interested in, for a few hours each month with another team, and get them to tell the team what they've learned.
- Encourage your team to build relationships outside of work – suggest they go to networking events, speak at conferences or take someone to lunch and expense it.
- Make it a 'lunch 'n' learn' with an engaging internal/external speaker or an online webinar.
- Think of a problem that you see your team having, Google a helpful article/video and then send it to them saying that you want to talk about it at the next team meeting.
- Ask your team to take turns to share an interesting article that they would like to discuss.

Meeting Starters

- What are your first thoughts on this? (Podcast, video, article, book chapter etc.?)
- What is the number one take-away from this?
- This is what I learnt ...
- Did you learn anything new that could be useful to you?
- What did you disagree with?
- Based on this, what can we do more of/less of /start doing/stop doing?
- Who could we invite from another team to help us and what could we do for them in return?
- How about we arrange a networking event around this topic?
- What did you enjoy about the activity? What didn't you enjoy?
- What ideas do you have about other topics we could learn more about?

5. TEAM COMMUNICATION

Why?

- Your team want to hear from you and feel connected to the company objectives and how their role fits in.
- Find out how your team is feeling in general - what's going well and what might need to change.
- Create an environment where your team feel they can challenge, ask questions and give you feedback.

Tips and Hints

- Own your communication - don't just forward messages from your internal comms team or senior leaders. Adapt it to your own style to make it more human and meaningful.
- Storytelling is by far the most compelling and engaging way of communicating with your team. Share stories of your wins, your challenges, your motivations etc.
- Ask your team what communication would be interesting or helpful for them to hear.
- Don't feel you can't be honest - your team will want to know the truth, even if it's bad news.
- Consider the different personalities in your team and how they like to be communicated with - ask each one of them in your one to ones.
- Don't just talk about the latest quarter figures - connect with your team on a human level - show vulnerability, admit your mistakes, say thank you, ask about Joe's new cat!

- Hold short informal comms sessions with a few bullet points of what you want to cover, standing around a desk or over Zoom.

Meeting Starters

- Let me share the latest news with you. I'm excited about XYZ and I'm worried about XYZ. Any thoughts or questions?
- How is everyone feeling in general this week? Anyone want to share their best day and worst day?
- This is a challenge I'm facing at the moment - anyone got any advice?
- What things are you hearing that you'd like me to clarify?
- I'm going to ask XYZ in the team to say a few words about what they've been up to.
- Now you've heard the 'official' version, this is my take on it.
- Do you feel the demands of your workload are manageable?
- Am I communicating enough/too much/too little? Which areas would you like to know more about?
- Is the information I'm sending on our comms channel helpful? What else would you like to see?
- You know I'm always here to listen, not judge?

6. TEAM ENGAGEMENT AND WELLBEING

Why?

- Creating an environment for your team where they feel valued, included and cared for will drive better performance.
- Spending time as a team talking about what it feels like to work there can get neglected sometimes.

Tips and Hints

- Focusing on engagement and well-being is not about being their 'parent'. It's about having adult-to-adult conversations but with a focus on how people feel.
- There are a number of different areas to explore; whether people feel valued and appreciated, whether they feel included and whether they feel like they can manage their workload.
- People feel valued and appreciated when we reward them 'in the moment' eg: when they've just done something great.
- Try and find out what each individual would value in terms of reward and recognition - the more personal, the better.
- What is it like to join the team? Is the experience one where they feel welcomed or is it all about completing the paperwork?
- If you have people working remotely, you may need to work harder at helping them feel included and valued. Proximity bias is a THING!
- Being an inclusive leader is more than focusing on demographic differences. It's about making sure that the culture works for people with different personalities and backgrounds.

- Do you have some people who speak more than others? Is that because the quieter ones have less to say or might it be that they don't feel comfortable contributing?

Meeting Starters

- What does it feel like to join our team? Could we be more welcoming?
- What's the one thing I could change to make our team more inclusive and welcoming?
- How can we make our team more diverse in the future?
- Do you feel empowered to challenge the status quo?
- Do you think as a team we have a good work life balance? When do you feel like your work responsibilities interfere with your life outside work? Is there anything we can do to change this?
- What are the biggest barriers to your success and what role can I play in helping to remove them?
- Do you feel safe enough to take risks at work? To try and possibly fail?
- Whose voice or which perspective is missing from our conversations?
- What are the 'moments that matter' for our team? The moments when we should all be together, face to face?
- Do you feel our team demonstrates a commitment to our own health and wellbeing? What more could we do?
- What frustrates you at work/makes you stressed? What could we do to prevent that?

7. PLANNING AND MANAGING CHANGE

Why?

- You can't force people to change but you can help your team be more open to the idea of change.
- Each team member is different and as a manager you need to work out what makes each of them tick and help motivate them to WANT to change.

Tips and hints

- Managing change from the top down rarely succeeds. Instead, identify your 'early adopters' - team members who are open, curious and prepared to try new things - and to enlist them to build the change from the ground up.
- Present your changes in 'small chunks'. It's more appealing than presenting change as something that's time-consuming and difficult.
- Every change involves us 'losing' something; status, certainty, being the expert, or a habit. What does each team member stand to 'lose' with the change you're proposing? Think about how this could shape the language you use.
- Data never convinces anyone to change. Use personal stories or language that connects with them on an emotional level to help communicate the changes.
- Go for as much involvement and co-creation with the team as possible. The more they've shaped the changes, the less resistance they'll have.
- Make sure you are getting a mix of views. Getting a blend of insights from different personality types, experiences, etc. will help avoid blind spots or 'group think'.
- As you start trying out new ways of working, make it ok to 'fail'. Focus on the learnings and celebrate the fact that they tried.

Meeting Starters

- As I talk about these new ideas, are any of you thinking that you'd like to help me shape them? I'm looking for people who are interested in helping create what we do in the future.
- You've heard the business rationale about why this change matters, but I want to share a personal story about why it is important to me ...
- How can we 'market and sell' these changes to our wider team or stakeholders? What will they care about?
- I know that change can be a bit scary. When you reflect on what I'm suggesting, what's the biggest worry you have?
- We've gone through what might be different, but here's what is NOT changing.
- Here's the one small thing I would like us all to try.
- I want us to celebrate some key wins this week and also some key 'failures'! If we're not failing, we're not innovating so let's take a moment to acknowledge what we learned.
- When I said XXX, what did you hear? How could I phrase it differently to reduce potential negative reactions?
- There may come a point where you're feeling anxious or irritated about the changes. That's ok. It's normal. I'm not asking you to be relentlessly positive! All I ask is that you think about why you might be feeling that way and share it honestly.
- I know this is going to mean extra work on top of the day job. If it's getting too much tell me.