# FACTORS THAT CREATE HIGH-PERFORMING TEAMS

A great deal of research has been carried out to identify the contributory factors that have an impact on the success of working teams, leading to high levels of team performance. Many lists of characteristics have been compiled. These can be broken down into four main categories:

## WORK METHODS

The team has an agreed, well-understood and skilful "system" of working. There are stages through which the team progresses when dealing with problems. These are the methods which the team uses to process information or ideas and by which it works productively together. All members of the team clearly understand this process and their individual responsibilities in it.

✓ An observer who sees the team processing its work in an effective and apparently effortless way is seeing strong work methods in action.

## LEADERSHIP, DIRECTION & CONTROL

It is unlikely that a team will operate successfully without effective leadership, direction and control, but no single leadership 'model' is right for every team. Leadership may be provided by one clear 'boss'. Leadership may come from different people at different times (e.g. one person chairs planning discussions and another controls implementation). Leadership might be delegated to others by the appointed head of the team, or it may be genuinely collegial, as in a peer team where accountability is mutual. However leadership and accountability of some kind are required to ensure the team maintains a clear mission and purpose, and is progressing towards the achievement of its goals.

✓ An observer who sees purposeful decisions being taken and implemented is seeing effective leadership, direction and control at work.

## SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE

All effective working teams require their members to possess the right blend of technical skills appropriate to their tasks, and to the challenges they must address. We could describe these as the 'task' skills. However for teams to be fully effective a blend of additional 'team' skills is required. Examples of these different personal contributions individuals may bring to a team include: driving tasks with energy, analytical skills, diplomacy, creativity and problem-solving. Probably the most important thing is that the group really knows the skills and knowledge of individual members - including the deficits.

✓ An observer who sees all in the team knowing whom to turn to when different technical or team issues arise, and people supporting one another in such situations, is seeing skills and knowledge well-used.

## CLIMATE

This category is overlooked by many teams because it is less tangible and is felt to be difficult to address. In a good climate, all team members have a hearing, individuals get support from colleagues and suggestions are discussed openly. Differences of view are clearly resolved in a way which values all contributions and does not create bad feelings. Mutual trust and openness exist between members. Teams can operate successfully in the short term without a positive climate, but to be effective in the longer terms it is vital.
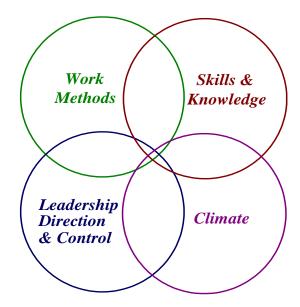
✓ An observer who sees robust mutual challenge and critique in a team, but without this creating ill-feeling or discomfort, are seeing strong evidence of a positive climate at work.

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## SUMMARY

These four categories of characteristics are interrelated and if any one of them is lacking, the performance of the team will suffer. This could be compared to the performance of a car in which the efficiency of one cylinder was poor in relation to the other three:

· it would not run smoothly

· it would waste fuel (energy) and

· it would never achieve its potential performance!



Use the space below to add characteristics you can identify based on your experiences in effective working teams:

| Work Methods | Skills and Knowledge | Leadership, Direction and Control | Climate |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |

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# *PROJECT TEAM EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW*

Make notes on the strengths and weaknesses of a project team you lead. Note ideas on how to begin building greater team effectiveness in this team.

Project team name:

## *Work Methods*

Strengths of team

Weaknesses of team

## *Skills & Knowledge*

Strengths of team

Weaknesses of team

## *Leadership, Direction & Control*

Strengths of team

Weaknesses of team

## *Climate*

Strengths of team

Weaknesses of team

Actions I can take to improve this team's effectiveness:

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# PROCESS TEAM EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW

Make notes on the strengths and weaknesses of a process team you lead.  Note ideas on how to begin building greater team effectiveness in this team.

Process team name:

## Work Methods

Strengths of team

Weaknesses of team

## Skills & Knowledge

Strengths of team

Weaknesses of team

## Leadership, Direction & Control

Strengths of team

Weaknesses of team

## Climate

Strengths of team

Weaknesses of team

Actions I can take to improve this team's effectiveness:

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