
Exercise: Best Team Exercise**Dimension / TPI:** Productivity and Positivity**Supplies:**

Flip chart – with a large group or multiple small groups you may want 2
Flip chart pens

Time:

20-30 minutes

Set-up:

With a small team, you can do this exercise with the whole team. Once team size gets above 10 or so, you may decide to divide into smaller groups. With very large groups this exercise has been done with pairs or triads.

Context:

The goal is to become a high performing team—and have a fulfilling experience working with others on the team. The core question then is this: what makes great teams great? This exercise gives the team the opportunity to share their own personal experiences of being on great teams and a way to highlight the qualities that make those great teams, great.

Instructions:

Ask team members to “scan back in your memory and recall a really great team you’ve been on. It could be a work team; it could be a team from school or a volunteer organization, a sports team, a music or theater group — even your family or an informal group—a one-time event. That team really stands out in your memory. What did it feel like to be on that team?

“Take a few minutes to bring yourself back to that time—those people—what you accomplished—maybe what you had to overcome.”

As coach, watch the reaction of team members. There are almost always a couple who are nodding, maybe smiling; you can tell they know which team it is. Start with those who are ready to tell a story.

After a few minutes: “We want to hear about these great teams, and this is how we’ll do it. Briefly – tell us the story about that team. Take us back in time. What was it like to be on that team? After we hear the story, we want to pull out the attributes that made that a great team.

As people tell the story, you, as facilitator, help to evoke the emotional field, the feeling of experience. Then harvest the special qualities of that exceptional team. Amplify without over- doing it. If you hear a quality that sounds like one of the factors in the model, you can suggest it—but only if you’re confident it will ring true to the story.

On a flip chart — use two flip charts and two scribes if necessary — harvest those best team qualities.

Debrief:

When all team members have told their story, ask the team, “What were the themes? What did these teams have in common?” Circle these special characteristics on the flip chart.

As facilitator your objective with this exercise is to:

- Create a positive energetic field — the spirit of successful, high-performing teams imbues the air; the feeling is contagious. You are creating Positivity in the meeting room. The first person to tell their story will typically be the one with a great, heartfelt story. Even if there are others who are resistant or having difficulty finding a story, they will be infected by the energy.
- You are capturing qualities that you can point back to throughout the day, especially when it comes time to describe the Productivity and Positivity strengths. Most if not all will be somewhere on that flip chart — different words perhaps, but the qualities will be there. Everyone in the room already knows what it’s like to be on a high-performing team. You are igniting the motivation to create that same feeling on THIS team. These are also qualities the team may want to include in their team agreements.

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- You set the tone for the day — a container in which people tell personal stories. They are positive stories of personal success and yet they are about a team so people are less likely to feel shy or self-conscious. In fact they are talking about a system experience not a personal one. And yet in the process of telling the story they are being personally vulnerable which also builds intimacy. Because the stories are positive it is safer to share from their personal experience.
 - This exercise also shifts the relationship between team coach and team. If the team has been waiting for the “consultant” to tell them what attributes are necessary in order for a team to excel, this exercise reminds them that they already know. In fact a good question to ask as you end the exercise is this: “See? You already know what makes great teams great. (I guess my job is done). Question is, if we already know what makes great teams great, why aren’t all teams great teams? One reason might be, we know ‘what’ – but we don’t know ‘how’. And that’s where we’re going in our work together.