

Exercise: Team Purpose

Dimension / TPI: Alignment

Supplies:

- Flip chart
- Flip chart pens

Time:

30-45 minutes

Set-up:

Chairs in a tight circle with one extra chair that will be the “Voice of the Team” chair

Context:

The goal of the exercise is to create a short, powerful team purpose statement. It is different from the corporate mission — it is the mission or purpose of this particular team. There is a mission that this team is meant to accomplish and if the team does not, the organization will be missing an important piece.

The words do not have to be perfect. It is more important that the essence is captured. Too much effort on word-smithing will turn the exercise down an analytical path and the heart and soul of purpose will be lost.

This statement is for the team, not the world. If they want to share at some point that’s fine of course, but the intention is that this is just for the team.

Instructions:

This exercise is self-managed by the team with the least possible facilitation by the coach. Before starting let the team know they are self-facilitating. Also give them these two tips:

1. Get the essence; don’t worry about getting the words perfect. Keep it short. If everyone agrees a quality is apparent you may not need to include words to that effect. Some things don’t need to be

written into the purpose statement because everyone on the team knows it is included. Simply adding everyone's words creates a cumbersome, lengthy discourse—too hard to remember.

2. Listen for action words: we are here to: learn, drive, create, build, etc. Action words have energy and momentum.

The exercise begins from the team member's personal position. Complete the sentence, out loud, "I am here to..." and complete the sentence. Team members often start with their role on the team, as in, "I am here to ensure we put our best marketing messages out to the world." That's fine. The declarations move off of formal roles and into a deeper level.

Everyone on the team adds their own unique perspective, completing that sentence. People can pop randomly, like popcorn, or you can go around the circle in order.

Team members will begin to hear common points of view. Some team members may want to revise their statement based on what they are hearing.

At some point one team member will have a sample for the *team* purpose. That person leaves their personal chair and sits in the Voice of the Team chair. The team sentence is: We are here to...

After offering a version of the team purpose, that person returns to his / her individual chair as the team discusses that first offering. Some may say, "I love the part that says..." Others may say, "Here's the piece I think is still missing."

Continue this exercise until the team has a purpose statement — a statement that is short, clear and has energy behind it.

Note: Some people will take notes during the discussion and some will not. It's a personal choice. Inevitably someone wants to start writing on the flip chart these sample ideas.

The coaches job is to just listen and observe, keeping in mind the words, "How a team does anything is how a team does everything." This will be another example of the team in action.

Examples:

- "We are here to innovate, communicate, collaborate."
- "We are here to empower change."
- "We are here to learn, practice and lead."

Debrief:

- What do you know about this team you didn't know before you started?
- What does this alignment give you as a team?