

GERRI KING PH.D.
HUMAN DYNAMICS ASSOCIATES, INC.

Characteristics of Strong Teams

what makes
effective teams
tick?

© Gerri King, Ph.D.

Gerri King, Ph.D. - social psychologist and internationally recognized speaker and seminar presenter - consults to corporate, manufacturing, educational, health care, non-profit, and governmental clients throughout the US and abroad. Gerri also keynotes at national conferences throughout the year.

Dr. King presents on a wide range of topics including team building, resolving conflicts, effective communication, motivating employees, the dynamics of change, reducing stress, why people avoid success,

and the changing role of leadership. She facilitates strategic planning, mergers and acquisitions, staff and administrative retreats, collaborative efforts, and mission & vision development.

Gerri is the author of *The Duh! Book of Management & Supervision: Dispelling Common Leadership Myths* and the founding partner and President of the 30 year old Human Dynamics Associates in Concord NH. www.gerricking.com.

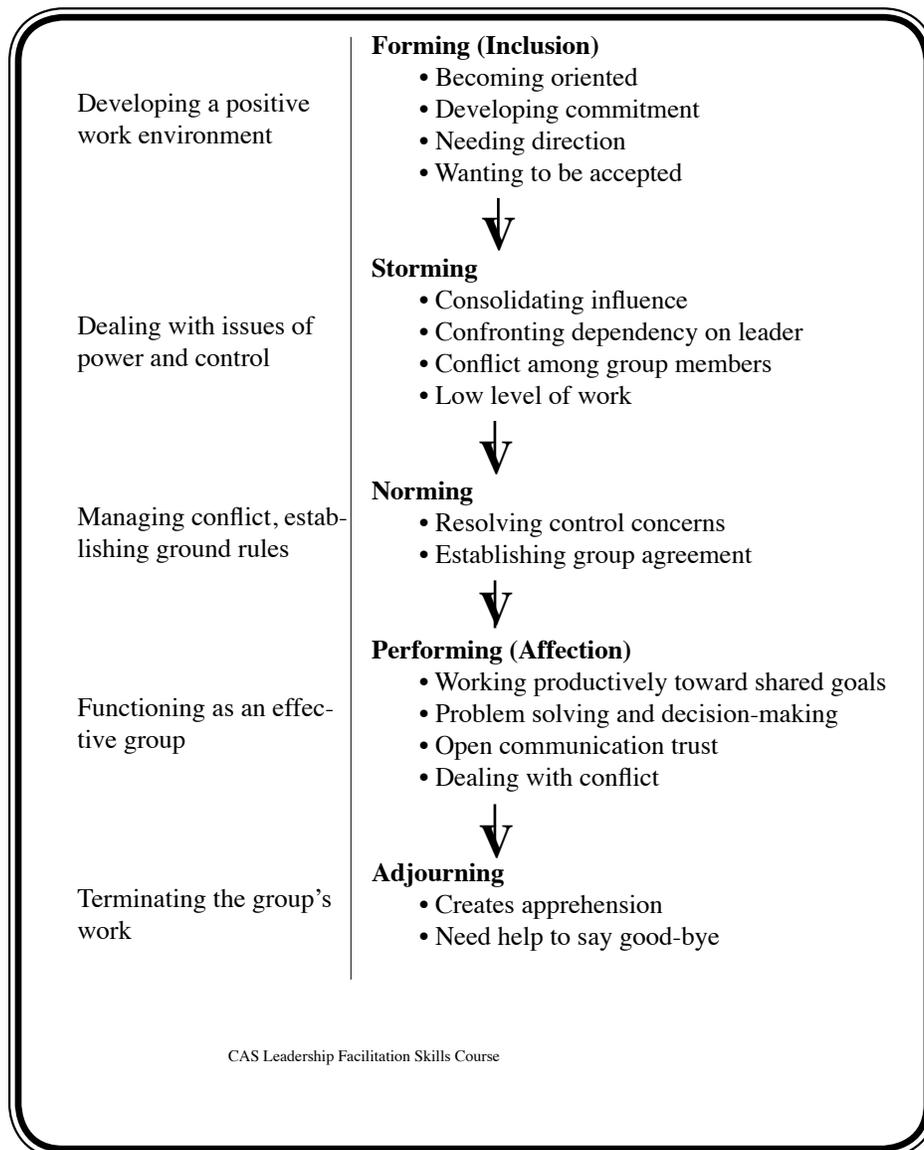


Characteristics of an Effective Team

- Clear goals and a shared vision.
- Cooperative leadership.
- Appreciation of group development.
- Appreciation and use of diversity among the team members.
- Creative conflict management.
- An ability to accommodate change.
- Ability to problem solve.
- Incentives that pertain to the individual but enhance the group.
- Involvement and energy.
- Open, honest and respectful communication.
- Shared meaning.
- Flexibility (consistency being present in on-going support).
- An ability and invitation to work with other teams and departments.
- Individual and group competency and responsibility.
- A safe and trusting environment.
- More fun times.

Because teams are groups, and groups behave in specific and predictable ways, it's essential to understand the stages of group development. The more we appreciate how groups progress, the less we personalize issues that emerge.

Stages of Group Development



The Team Approach

Issues and Concerns

Setting up

- A hierarchical structure somewhat hampers a team approach.
- Changing from a hierarchical structure to one that's team-based can be enormously stressful on everyone. However, the rewards of higher productivity, higher morale and less waste make the transition worthwhile in the long run.
- Building and maintaining productive teams requires a lot of time which, in the beginning, may have to be taken from other duties.



Maintaining

- Shared decision-making can appear to be a slow and frustrating process. It ultimately saves time, so it's important to be patient in the beginning.
- Resolving conflicts within the team should be approached with the whole group in mind, but respect for the individual must be the primary concern.
- Constant, constructive communication is a necessity.
- Actively listening to all team members is essential. Truly "hearing" what they have to say is a skill requiring continual practice.
- Teams work well only if they are kept informed about the reasons for administrative actions which might affect them.

Evaluating

- Teams succeed only in a safe and supportive atmosphere which encourages the freedom to express oneself, take risks, seek or offer help and even fail. Particular attention must be paid to establishing and believing in this atmosphere if the supervisor doing performance evaluations is on the team.
- When team members trust their leaders, the team works well. However, the team will only be effective if the leaders also trust the team members.
- When walking into a team meeting, it should sometimes be difficult to determine lines of authority.
- The spokesperson for the team need not always be the leader.
- Leadership is a function of competence, not title or authority. With shared leadership, authority should be delegated to the person(s) with the most expertise in that phase of activity.
- Competition among teams often diverts them from their larger goals. Your challenge is to make sure they always feel a part of and act on behalf of the larger team.

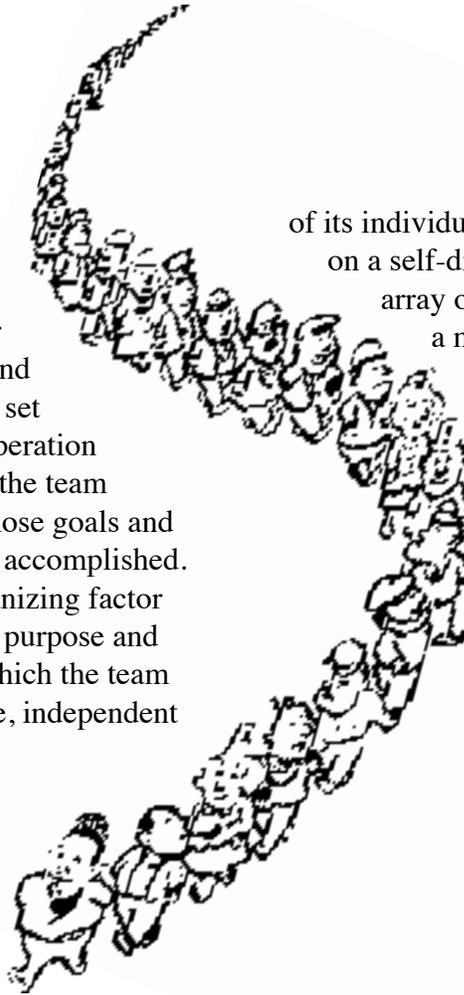
The Empowered Approach to Teamwork, Decision-Making & Problem Solving

Self-Directed Teams

A *self-directed team* is a group of interdependent people who are responsible for managing themselves and the work they do. They set their own goals, in cooperation with management, and the team plans how to achieve those goals and how their work is to be accomplished. The team's central organizing factor is that it has a common purpose and measurable goals for which the team can be held accountable, independent

of its individual members. Employees on a self-directed team handle a wide array of functions and work with a minimum of direct supervision. (from *Teaming Up* by D. Ray & H. Bronstein, McGraw-Hill)

Mary's self-directed "S" Team



Situations when joint decision-making can be a disadvantage:

- When time is of the essence or the solution is simple enough that the other team members trust one person to forge ahead.
- Individual issues are sometimes better solved unilaterally.
- If confidentiality is an issue, it may be impossible to include others.
- Immediate demands may take precedence, but follow-up communication to the team members is mandatory.

Advantages of problem-solving and decision-making within the team concept:

- More heads are better than one if the problem is complicated and would benefit from diverse input.
- Joint ownership means a better chance of achieving joint commitment.
- Quality is improved as a result of a variety of perspectives and increased responsibility.
- Morale is increased.
- Cohesion and communication improves.
- Rather than simply helping others when asked, people begin noticing when someone is in need and offer help because everyone has a stake in things going well.

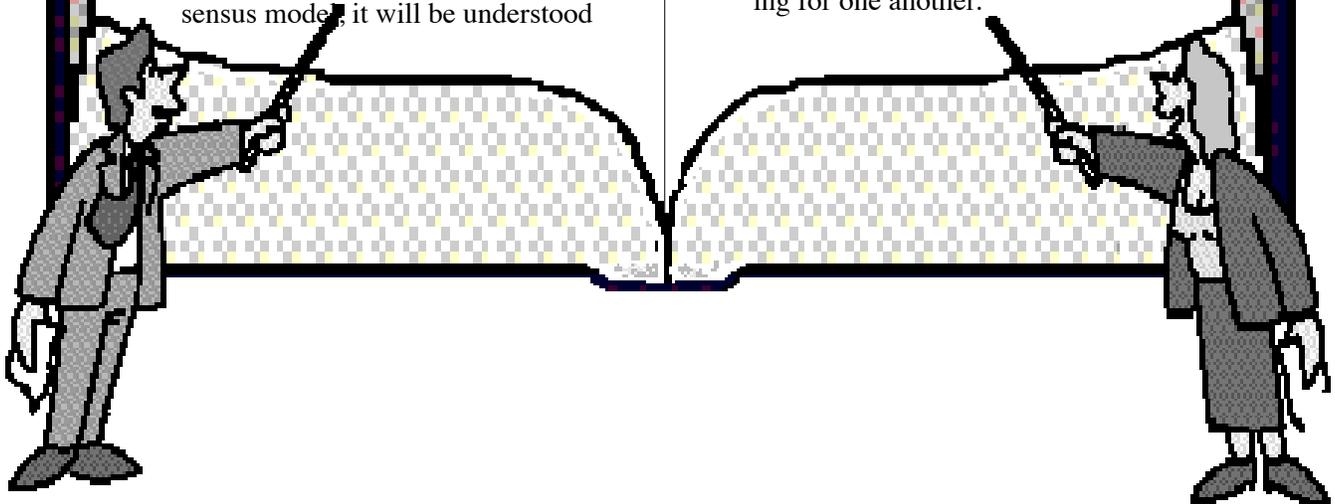
Self-directed team guidelines

Self-directed teams create their own guidelines and working parameters. Below are the results of some self-directed team activities. They can also be used as guidelines for expectations regarding your own team's functioning.

- Meetings will be prepared for in advance.
- Agendas will either be set at previous meeting or, better still, anyone can add to the agenda between meetings and one person will compile it as the time nears.
- Meetings begin and end on time.
- Meetings are regular and not too far apart.
- Maximum and inclusive participation are encouraged.
- Leadership will be increasingly shared.
- Time taken to discuss issues now will be seen as time saved later.
- Diversity is embraced.
- Mutual respect will be the basis of our communication style.
- Conflict will be managed from a win/win point of view.
- Conflicts will be resolved within the team and not taken outside if inappropriate.
- If the decision is to work from a consensus model, it will be understood

that people may not see the final solution as their top choice, but consensus is formed when people can honestly live with the decision or plan.

- Agendas and minutes will be in writing and shared with missing team members.
- Impact statements will be issued to other teams and departments when our decisions affect them (some companies issue them to everyone every time in the event they may not be aware of the impact of their decisions and changes).
- When more information is required, "consultants" from other parts of the organization will be invited in or a liaison from the team will seek out the information.
- Both positive and negative feedback will be shared respectfully and helpfully.
- When a team member's performance is lacking, the team is committed to coaching toward improvement rather than blaming or judging.
- The team will engage in self-assessment and be committed to ongoing improvement.
- Team members will provide mentoring for one another.



Building Trust In A Group

**The Effectiveness of the Group
Is Directly Affected
By The Degree of Trust In The Group**



The group will not immediately and automatically have trust. Each person makes the decision as to whether to trust the group in her or his own time and it is based on the perceived safety of the group.

Ways of Establishing Trust

- A great deal of time should be spent at the outset **forming the group**. It saves a whole lot of time later.
- Introductions or re-introductions or some other form of common experience go a long way in helping people be comfortable.
- Spend time sharing individual styles in communication and especially dealing with conflict. When people understand each other's styles they are less apt to negatively personalize comments, responses and body language.
- Remember, the group has to trust the leader. But also remember, that the leader has to trust the group.
- Developing group guidelines are very important in creating a safe environment.
- Non-judgmental behavior is most important.
- Being present, here and now, and completely focused is a message that the people in the room are of the utmost importance.
- Respecting confidentiality should be a given.
- Willingness to spend time working through conflict and difficult issues models respect and trustworthiness.
- Each person's pace and fears should be respected.
- Viewing silence, awkwardness and conflict as normal encourages a healthy atmosphere.
- Truly listening to one another goes a long way. However, it takes practice and allowances should be made for skill-building in this area.



Looking At Your Workplace Environment

- Do you have a clear purpose: is the vision, mission, goal, or task defined and accepted by everyone?
- Is the climate informal, comfortable and relaxed? Are tensions low or high? Does there seem to be boredom at meetings?
- Is participation high? Is there a lot of discussion and does everybody participate?
- Do people listen effectively and truly understand what each other is saying and meaning?
- Are people comfortable with conflict and do they have good resolution skills?
- Do people employ good decision making, using consensus where possible?
- Is there open communication? Do people feel free to express their feelings and are there few hidden agendas? Does most communication take place face-to-face and not behind peoples' backs?
- Are there clear roles and work assignments and are people happy with the arrangement?
- Is there shared leadership? Does everyone take responsibility for the functioning of the organization?
- Do people spend time developing key outside relationships, mobilizing resources, and building credibility with important players in other parts of the organization?
- Is there diversity within the group and is it appreciated, respected and utilized?
- Do people periodically examine how well it is functioning and what might be necessary to improve its effectiveness?

The Five Team-Building Stages (Team Evaluation)

1. Where would you place this team's status based on the 5 team-building stages?
Rank on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high).

	Low				High
Norming	1	2	3	4	5
Storming	1	2	3	4	5
Forming	1	2	3	4	5
Performing	1	2	3	4	5
Adjourning	1	2	3	4	5

2. What are the advantages of having this group work as a team?
3. Are there any disadvantages to having this group work as a team? What are they?
4. What problems does this group exhibit in working as a team?
5. What are you doing as a facilitator to help the group work better as a team?

Looking At The Team

Comment on the following:

- 1 Does this team have a clear purpose: is the vision, mission, goal or task of the team defined and accepted by everyone?

- 2 Is the climate informal, comfortable and relaxed? Are tensions low or high? Does there seem to be boredom at the meetings?

- 3 Is participation high: is there a lot of discussion and does everybody participate?

- 4 Do the members listen effectively and truly understand what each other is saying and meaning?

- 5 Is the team comfortable with conflict and do the members have good resolution skills?

- 6 Does the team employ good decision making, using consensus where possible?

7 Is there open communication? Do team members feel free to express their feelings and are there few hidden agendas? Does most of the communication take place within the meeting rather than outside?

8 Are there clear roles and work assignments and are members happy with the arrangement?

9 Is there shared leadership? Does everyone take responsibility for the functioning of the group?

10 Does the team spend time developing key outside relationships, mobilizing resources, and building credibility with important players in other parts of the organization?

11 Is there diversity within the group and is it appreciated, respected and utilized?

12 Does the team periodically examine how well it is functioning and what might be necessary to improve its effectiveness?