



HIGH PERFORMING TEAMS

5 steps to building high
performing hybrid teams

High performing teams in numbers

High performing teams are the cornerstone of successful companies. With teams globally dispersed and disrupted by the pandemic, a quick glance at the numbers reveals that teambuilding can make or break your business.



85% of remote workers want to continue working in a **hybrid environment** despite the easing of pandemic restrictions (ONS, 2021).



63% of survey respondents had **difficulty communicating** with colleagues during lockdown (GovNewsDirect, 2021).



20% of businesses report **compromised team communication and productivity** as a result of remote working (ONS, 2021).



Productivity increases when executives are working in a **high performing team**, compared with a team with average performance levels (McKinsey, 2017).



Cohesive leadership teams are twice as likely to achieve above-average financial performance (McKinsey, 2017).

Considering the changes to employee expectations and the impact of teamwork on a business' bottom line, building high performing hybrid teams is crucial to recovery.

What is a **high performing team**?

High performing teams are the foundation of any successful business. But every team has the same potential for disconnection, which depending on how it is managed, can either be resolved immediately or cause irreparable damage.

High performing teams are characterised by **unity of purpose, strong communication and high levels of collaboration**. When building high performing teams, complementary skills and attitudes are all-important.

Why is team performance important?

Teamwork is the ultimate competitive advantage. Cohesive teams are 21% more profitable (*Gallup, 2020*), and 20% more productive (*Atlassian*). In addition, 97% of employees believe that team alignment influences the success of a project (*Clear Company*). But ambitious and capable people can vie for influence, resources, and promotion. **Organisational success depends on strong teamwork.**

A 2017 study by McKinsey showed that an expert team performed less well than a diverse team,

even when the task related directly to their area of expertise. Individual excellence correlates less strongly with success than the cognitive diversity of the team.

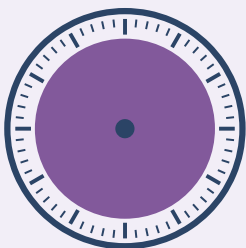
Real-world impact of high performing teams

The pandemic disrupted teams and dispersed them across the globe. With **over half of UK workers switching to remote working** overnight (*ONS, 2020*), many furloughed, and hybrid working presenting new challenges as companies restructure, teamwork has never been more testing or more necessary.

“No matter how brilliant your mind or strategy, if you’re playing a solo game, you’ll always lose out to a team.”

Reid Hoffman, LinkedIn Co-founder

Takeaways



- *Organisational success depends on strong teamwork. Make communication a priority within the team to improve motivation, productivity and profitability.*
- *Tackle any barriers to effective communication (such as assumptions or a lack of listening) immediately to successfully build a high-performing team.*

Top 5 Blockers of Team Performance and How to Overcome Them

Teamwork is transformative, but it is also hard to implement because of the levels of discipline and persistence required. Here are the five biggest blockers of high performance in teams, according to organisational psychologist Patrick Lencioni, and how your company can overcome them to help you build the high performing teams your organisation needs to succeed in the new normal.

Psychological safety is being able to express oneself without fear of negative consequences. In practice, this means that employees can be open and speak their mind, take moderate risks and exercise creativity (or problem solving) without fear of repercussions.

When a workplace is challenging but not threatening, teams remain constructive. In a psychologically safe environment, our brains release Oxytocin which builds trust.

1 LACK OF TRUST
The foundation of teamwork is trust. The alternative to trust, fear, can be incredibly destructive within an organisation, at best reducing its efficiency and at worst precipitating failure. Troubleshooting requires psychological safety, which allows team members to speak up and address issues without the fear of being ignored, criticised, or punished.

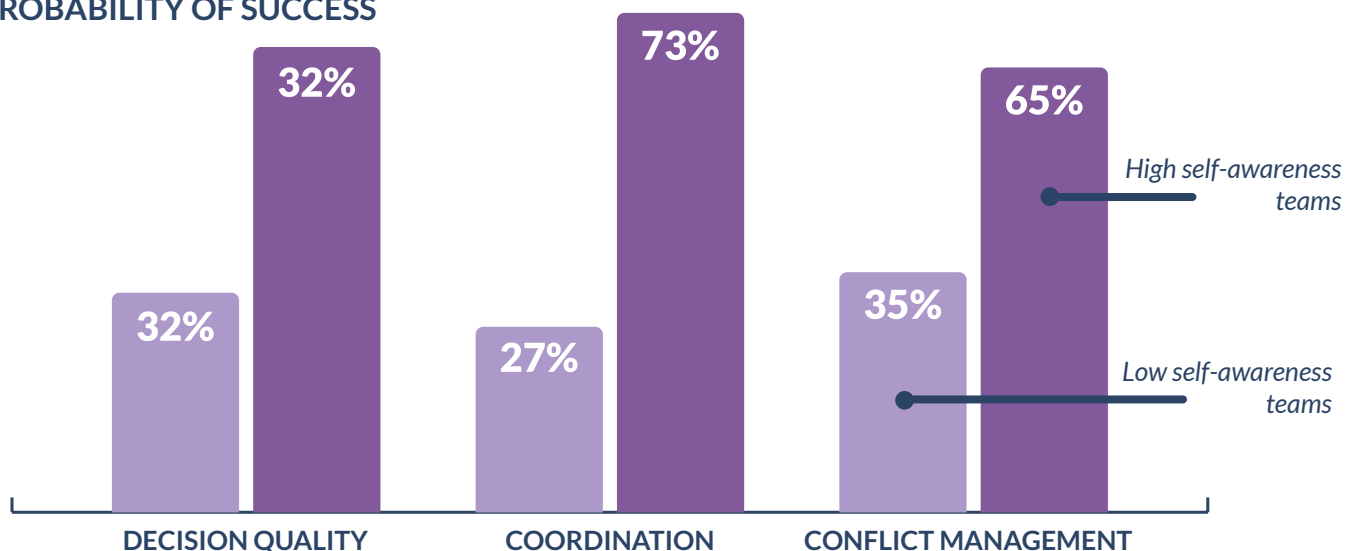
Absence of trust stems from unwillingness to be vulnerable within the group. As popular

organisational psychologist Brene Brown states, “vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity and change” (*Daring Greatly*, 2012).

How can you build trust in a team?

The best way of building trust in a team is by developing the self-awareness of its members. Research by organisational psychologist Tasha Eurich found that self-awareness improved team resilience, confidence and adaptability, increasing the probability of success in key performance areas:

PROBABILITY OF SUCCESS



SOURCE ERICH C. DIERDORFF AND ROBERT S. RUBIN - HBR.ORG

You can improve a team's self-awareness using personality profiling assessments, which highlight the traits, preferences and competencies of team members. These insights are invaluable when shared in a team building session, facilitating mutual understanding and trust within the group.



Google's 'Aristotle' research project on team efficacy placed psychological safety at the top of its list of prerequisites for high performing teams (2016).

2 FEAR OF CONFLICT

On average, around 485,800 employees resign in the UK each year as a result of conflict at work. The cost of recruiting replacement employees amounts to £2.6 billion, while lost outputs amount to £14.9 billion annually (ACAS, 2021). Positive conflict and open communication can highlight inefficiencies, leading to improved processes and innovation.

However, positive conflict can lead to improved processes, open communication between employees and highlight any inefficiencies within the team. Sometimes a difficult conversation needs to be had, especially if a team member is showing signs of reduced productivity, increased absence and other sudden behavioural changes. Unfortunately, such scenarios often trigger 'fight, flight or freeze' signals in the brain's amygdala, which cause us to manage conflict poorly.

How can you encourage constructive conflict?

Unproductive conflict often arises from a lack of understanding. Gaining insight into group dynamics, pressure points and development areas can become an invaluable cheat sheet for focusing training to fast-track outperformance. Research shows that behaviour-based training significantly improves team coordination and performance (McEwan, 2017).

Team personality and behavioural assessments can provide a common language with which to talk about team dynamics, and an objective basis for understanding them. Building an awareness and appreciation of the complementary skills and attitudes each team member brings to the table, builds trust and facilitates constructive conflict.

We've found patterns of communication to be the most important predictor of a team's success. Not only that, but they are as significant as all the other factors—individual intelligence, personality, skill, and the substance of discussions—combined.

Sandy Penland, Lead Researcher at the MIT Human Dynamics Laboratory



3 STAGNANCY

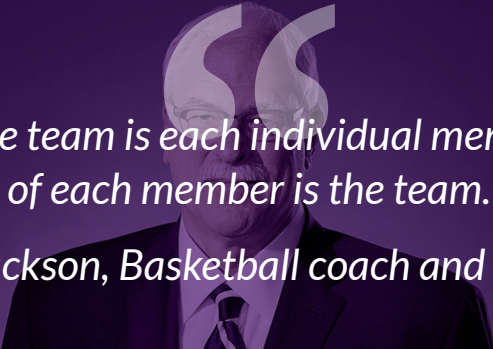
If team members become complacent or aren't given the opportunity to air their opinions in an open debate, they will rarely commit to following through on team decisions. Buy-in is essential for building a productive, well-oiled machine, but can be more challenging to achieve in a hybrid working environment.

Famously, educational psychologist Bruce Tuckman identified five stages in the lifecycle of a team: forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning. Commitment is established in the norming phase, an essential precursor to performing. Having worked out conflict in the storming phase, norming is about the team becoming cohesive.

How can you increase team commitment and cohesion?

You can make sense of your team's DNA by assessing their emotional intelligence. Bringing emotional intelligence, personality styles and preferences to the group's awareness can be game-changing. Benefits include increased innovation and commitment to delivery.

The number of team members is another important consideration. Research suggests that individuals lose ownership of group decisions in teams of more than ten people. Yet a lack of diversity and bandwidth can hamper teams of under six. Consider splitting larger teams into multiple focus groups.



The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team.

Phil Jackson, Basketball coach and author

4 AVOIDANCE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Teams who fail to commit develop an avoidance of accountability. This can rapidly impede team performance, as noncommittal members are unlikely to hold their peers to account for delivery. To outperform, teams need to be able to push through adversity. According to McKinsey, "a strong sense of renewal" is a core feature of high functioning teams (2017).

This sense of renewal, or 'resilience' is the capacity for teams to take challenges in their stride and remain accountable for delivery. Resilience also involves being actively energised by the opportunity to innovate and achieve something that matters, against the odds. The social isolation and economic uncertainty caused by the pandemic have made resilience critical for high performing teams, both now and in the future.

How can you instil accountability in your team?

Some team members will be more resilient than others, innately possessing a buffer of psychological resources that helps them to cope. Key indicators of high resilience are perseverance and a capacity to manage stress and uncertainty.

Team members with lower resilience levels may need targeted support to perform under duress. One way of providing such support is by using an emotional intelligence assessment to identify and mitigate stressors, maintaining team-wide accountability for performance.

Regular '360 degree' feedback sessions create performance transparency, helping to engender a culture of striving. Personality and behavioural assessments enrich feedback sessions by providing objective data about the impact of behaviours on team performance.





How to give 360-degree feedback to improve team performance

- > Contextualise the conversation, highlight its confidentiality, purpose and benefits
- > Explain your role as facilitator and ask permission to make any interpretations
- > Discuss the results of behavioural assessments in relation to team performance
- > Identify competencies and development needs in a personal development plan
- > Recap and wrap up

5 LACK OF INNOVATION AND POOR RESULTS

By definition, high performing teams deliver results. In such teams, individuals put the group's goals ahead of their own (such as ego, career development or recognition). One of the biggest levers for improving a team's financial performance is increasing its diversity. Diverse teams typically yield 35% higher financial returns than industry medians, according to McKinsey (McKinsey, 2017). Cognitive diversity also enhances decision-making, innovation, and employee satisfaction (McKinsey, 2020).

Whilst team composition is critical, an important part of the drive for results comes from the top down. Great leaders provide direction, inspire a shared belief in what the company is striving

towards, and empower the team to get there. According to the Harvard Business Review, results-driven team leaders with high emotional intelligence are the most effective at delivering outperformance, ranking in the 91st percentile of all leaders (HBR, 2017).

How can you kickstart innovation in your team?

One of the best ways to kickstart innovation is to increase team diversity. Minimise unconscious bias in the hiring process and look for culture-add rather than team fit in your recruitment. Assessment tools enable hiring managers to create a job profile and match candidates' skills and potential against it, supporting hiring decisions with rich, unbiased insights into candidates' likely in-role performance.



Even in 2021, many hiring decisions are still based on gut feel, leading managers to hire in their own image. A 2017 study revealed that decisions made and executed by diverse teams delivered 60% better results, businesses looking to create high performing teams cannot afford to forgo diversity (Cloverpop, 2017).

The ability to ignite passion through people is critical for leaders of high performing teams. To create competitive advantage, leaders must be behaviourally agile, setting stretch goals whilst also building trust. Insights into team dynamics can help leaders identify opportunities for performance improvement and drive team-wide accountability for delivery.



Which **3 steps** can you take now to make your team **high performing**?

PERFORMING TEAMS

- > Cooperate
- > Express positive emotion
- > Solicit input
- > Act in accordance with team values
- > Address current opportunities
- > Are ready to act
- > Make extra effort
- > Listen
- > Read nonverbal cues
- > Are open to diversity

OUTPERFORMING TEAMS

- > Encourage
- > Build team rapport
- > Are transparent about challenges
- > Act in accordance with team values, even when under pressure not to
- > Initiate actions for the future
- > Practice active listening
- > Engage in debate
- > Understand others
- > Are diverse

WHAT 3 STEPS CAN YOU TAKE NOW TO MAKE YOUR TEAM A HIGH PERFORMING ONE?

- > Encourage communication and constructive conflict
- > Be open about the roles and responsibilities within the team through analysis of strengths and limitations of individuals to create cohesion
- > Recruit for diversity and innovation



Do these **5** things to make hybrid teams high performing



1. COMMUNICATE

This doesn't mean cluttering up diaries with lots of meetings. Be creative and test multiple ways of relaying information, such as an informal chat message, a workflow management tool, an email or a quick phone call. Be mindful that different personality profiles within your team are likely to respond to some forms of communication better than others.



2. FOCUS ON TOGETHERNESS

Schedule team calls that are specifically geared towards the social aspects of work that you would have if you were all in an office grabbing a coffee. Team members will feel a greater sense of cohesion and greater comfort with relying on one another.



3. CELEBRATE SUCCESS

Find platforms where you can quickly give team members kudos for outperformance, share success stories and praise team members visibly within the wider business. This will help to drive collaboration and motivation throughout your organisation.



4. FOSTER MENTAL WELLBEING

Make time to discuss what is going well as well as what has been frustrating in a space that is not task-focused, but rather a group discussion where team members can provide each other with support and reflect on their workflow at a higher level.



5. KEEP BOTH VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON TEAM MEMBERS IN MIND

Make sure camera angles allow individuals to see each other clearly, whether they are in person or virtual. Include virtual attendees in after-meeting discussions so that they have access to this valuable information.



Real world success stories: outperforming teams

We've used Thomas assessments to match consultants to new projects and it has enabled us to put similarly minded individuals together in a team. This has given us a competitive advantage by accurately placing high performing consultants to support their client's requirements.



Thomas tools have proven to be a really effective baseline for us to zoom in on our teams - for both recruitment and development, the tools help drive conversations about how our people work together and the roles we all fulfil in each team that we play in.

THE ICONIC

The key at Hoffmann Group to building high performing teams lies in their ability to understand each other. The tools provided by Thomas International help us and our teams to articulate more clearly about ourselves, create conversations more easily and recognise both similarities and opposites within each other that lead to a greater understanding, trust, plans of action and overall a more high functioning team.



Helping you develop high performing teams

When people flourish, so do the organisations they work for, so an effective engagement strategy is essential. Our assessments help you understand the behaviours, communication styles, potential and engagement and motivation levels of your workforce. Start today and give your business the foundation it needs to thrive in the post-pandemic era.



Behaviour

Our behavioural assessment provides deep insights into a person's behavioural preferences, strengths, limitations and communication style. This is great for setting achievable goals that help an employee drive and measure their own progress.



Emotional Intelligence

Our emotional intelligence assessment measures 15 emotional traits concerning Well-Being, Self-Control, Emotionality and Sociability. These traits will help you spot the areas where an employee might need the most support to stay motivated and engaged at work.



Personality

Our personality assessment is grounded in the 'Big 5' model, assessing traits that predict job success and risk for derailment. With their personality profile, you can lay a clear path for an individual's progress in your organisation.



Engagement

Our engagement survey provides insight into the engagement levels of teams, departments and across your organisation. This understanding can then be used to identify the areas that would benefit most from engagement initiatives.

Visit [Thomas.co](https://thomas.co) now for more information.

Contact us

Devoured this guide and hungry for more snackable HR insights?

The next 2-Minute Thomas Takeaway serves up fresh, fast tips for for **retaining your employees in a job-seeker's market**.

You can learn more about our **psychometric assessments**

here →

You can also explore the new-and-improved **Thomas Perform**

here →

Alternatively, we'd love to hear from you. So get in touch for a one-to-one chat on **01628 470980** or info@thomas.co.uk.



© Thomas International Ltd 2021. Founded in 1981, Thomas International transforms the performance of organisations around the world through smarter people decisions, looking beyond just skills and experience to identify the true potential and capability of people. Its talent assessment platform combines technology, psychology and data to make the complex nature of human behaviour, aptitude and personality easier for everyone to understand. Today, Thomas helps over 11,000 companies across 140 countries unleash the power of their people.

thomas 

www.thomas.co