

# 3 Steps to Create a High-Performing Project or Change Team



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# Want to develop a high-performing team?

**At Project Leader, we use a detailed 9-step model to help you build great, high-performing, project & change teams.**

But, to get you started, here you'll find 3 critical steps in that process for you to think about now.

If you take these 3-steps, you're on your way to developing a really good team.

## Let's dive in ...



# 1. Crystallise Goals.

What seems obvious and clear to you, isn't always obvious and clear to everyone on your team.

**Goals need to be crystal clear.  
100% absolutely, never in doubt,  
everyone knows them,  
clear.**

Everything that follows comes as a result of having the right goals to pursue, with every member of the team pulling toward those goals.

But, crystal clear clarity, is key.

*'Are we clear?'*

*'Yes, sir.'*

*'Are we clear?'*

*'Crystal.'*

- Jack Nicholson & Tom Cruise,  
A Few Good Men, Columbia Pictures.

**Exercise:**

Before you next gather your team together (or leadership team, for bigger teams) ask them to prepare an answer to:

'What's our #1 Priority Goal as a team?'

Ask team members to bring their answers on paper to your next gathering but not to share their answer beforehand.

At the meeting, share the answers, one by one (anonymously or not).

You may be surprised by the results.

Alternatively - when the time is right at your next team meeting - go around the table ask your team the same question:

'What's our #1 Priority Goal as a team?'

**No matter how you facilitate input,  
the team need crystal clear goals that everyone  
works toward.**



## 2. Focus on Process Goals

Once there's absolute clarity of purpose, how you operate as a team becomes your most important target.

You can think of these as your 'Process Goals' (rather than the 'Target Goals' in Step 1 above.)

When it comes to Process Goals - 3 areas you may wish to focus on are:

**How you communicate**

**How you deal with conflict**

**How you make decisions**

### **Communicate**

There's a lot to getting your communication right - creating the right environment for trust, mutual understanding and candour.

But one often under-considered enabler is getting your team's synchronous / asynchronous communication tooling & rhythm right.

Knowing when to communicate in real time - at virtual and in-person meetings, or via real-time chat, and when to use asynchronous comms instead, helps build effectiveness, reduces digital fatigue, and improves wellbeing. It's a good, easy start.

Of course, comms tooling is just an enabler - trust building involves creating the psychologically safe place for people to talk straight without jeopardy, respect each other's diverse approaches, be transparent about intent, be loyal to the team and deliver what you promise.

If just one member of the team doesn't buy-in, then the team will struggle – it invades everyone.



**Exercise:** Trust is developed over time but you can nurture trust by getting to know each other better.

Find ways to let team members explain a little more about themselves with the group.

Perhaps ask them to share a skill or achievement from their background - work or personal.

Surfacing hidden talents and sharing previous successes can find common ground and build credibility.

**Oh ... and as a leader, it's  
your job to go first.**

# Conflict

It's ok to disagree.

In fact, high-performing teams feel safe to challenge each other - provided trust is being developed as you go.

If trust isn't there, conflict becomes about politics and CYA (covering your ass).

Creating room to disagree without jeopardy is key, so calling out breaches of trust and when people play politics is key too.

... and if some people threaten the team's psychological safety ... you know what to do. There's no room for that in high-performing teams.

# Decisions

It might be useful to think about decision making in 3 ways:

- where and how are decisions being made? Are these the optimal places?
- what's your decision culture? (If you don't articulate your culture, you still have one, just not one you control).
- how are you supporting decisions? Data / reporting is one way but decision support goes further than decision science. Decision-making is a core competence for everyone in the team. Develop your team to be trained & competent at making decisions.

### 3. Commit

*"When you agree to do this, think of it as signing your name to a promise -*

*- in blood, in triplicate."*

*"It sounds a little dramatic, but it was certainly memorable. In my early-thirties as a young VP in a FTSE-100 business, my chief exec asked this from me (metaphorically) when we set targets. I still think of it when I set targets for teams today."*

*- Gary Travers, Founder, Project Leader.*

Commitment means wholehearted buy-in from everybody on the team.

It doesn't necessarily mean consensus.

Teams at Intel have adopted a philosophy of 'disagree and commit' - which can be great for airing challenge and then committing to deliver the outcome.

**In high-performing teams everyone commits to deliver.**

#### **Exercise:**

Signing team charters and Sponsors signing 'Letters of Appointment' are two simple examples of explicit commitment.

Consider other ways to have you and your team explicitly commit to delivering the goal and process targets you have set.





So, the 3-steps for you to take  
are:

**1. Crystallise Purpose**

**2. Focus on Process Goals**

**3. Commit**

These 3 steps alone will really help your team on the path to  
high-performance,

but there's also ...

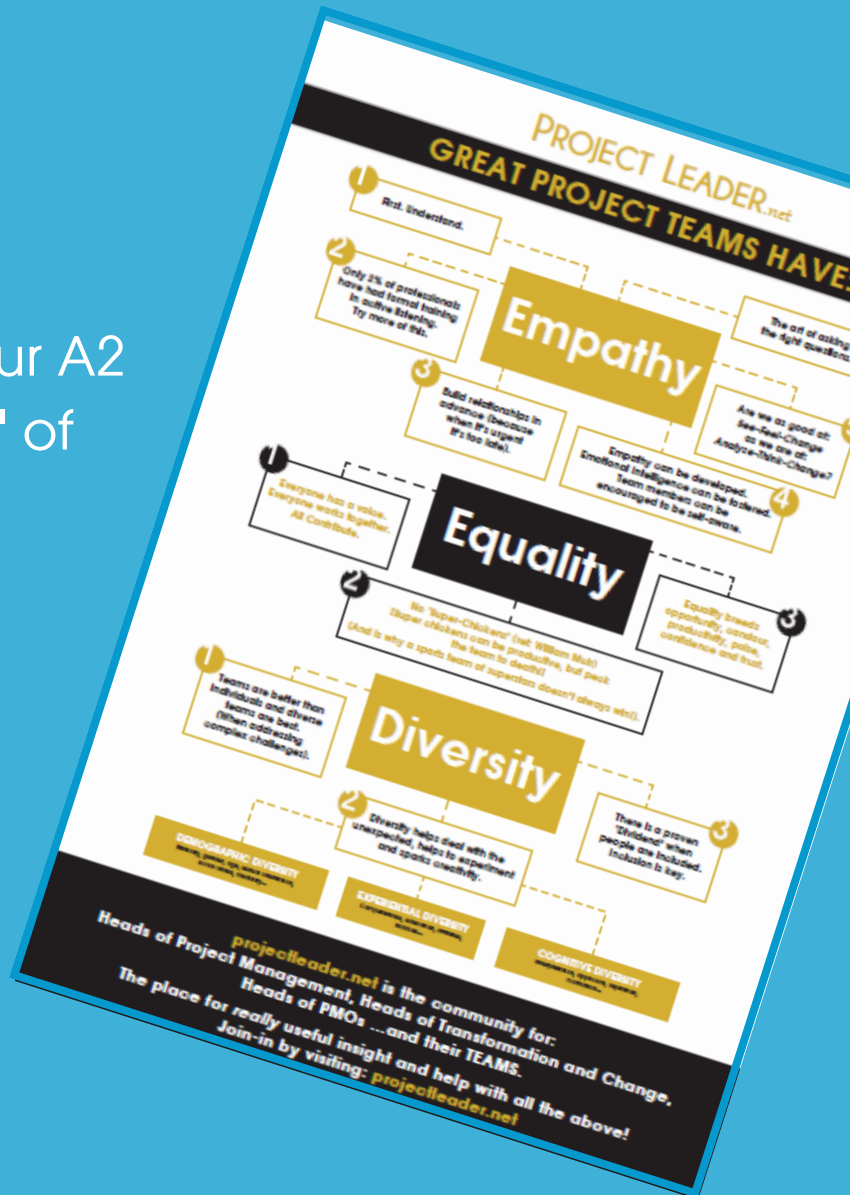
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# Foundations of High-Performing Teams:

If you found these 3-steps useful, you may also like our A2 poster on 'the foundations' of High-Performing Teams.

You can request a hard copy by mailing:

hello@  
projectleader.net



... or to help create a high-performing, resilient team that can operate in challenging conditions and consistently hit targets, this experience may be for you ....

<https://projectleader.net/cohesive-team/>

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to deliver smarter and faster, improve how work flows, increase throughput and build capability.

## People Development:

to develop better managers and leaders, build higher performing teams or create Communities of Practice.

## Change Support:

to help you and your team deliver change, take people with you and gain buy-in.

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... everyone loves dolphins ...

... and together, they make high-performing teams.

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