THE ACADEMY OF HIGH PERFORMANCE TEAMS

The four gears every team needs

Set your team up for success

What do Scotland and Melbourne, Australia have in common? The answer? Both are known for weather that can produce four seasons in one day, ranging from hail to blazing sunshine. A similar phenomenon can be observed in some teams, where discussions can shift rapidly from operational details to strategic planning and then to light social chatter, all within a single conversation. This constant switching between topics and the "altitude" of the conversation is highly draining on team energy yet is rarely actively managed. I suggest that every team thinks of the different types of conversations – or separate "gears" – they need to have. Using these four gears helps a team to avoid shifting between types of interaction mid-conversation, which often leads to confusion, depletion of energy, and diminishes the chances of reaching an agreement.

Consider how the following four team gears can be used in different situations.

1. **Operational,** for example:
   - updates, troubleshooting and problem-solving
   - asking for help
   - celebrating wins and reviewing the "done" list.

   Frequency: Typically weekly or bi-weekly

2. **Strategic,** for example:
   - focusing on the outer game: external shifts, market trends and industry dynamics
   - bringing in the voice of stakeholders
   - testing future plans.

   Frequency: Typically quarterly

3. **Developmental,** for example:
   - focusing on team development
   - enhancing team capabilities and thought leadership
   - growing talent and planning for future roles.

   Frequency: Typically quarterly

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4. **Social,** for example:

- strengthening team relationships beyond work
- creating space for unstructured conversations
- engaging in volunteering or shared non-work activities.

Frequency: Monthly

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