THE ACADEMY OF HIGH PERFORMANCE TEAMS

Three tips

To become a better team member

1. Practise the “We before Me” mindset

“We before me” underscores the fact that no team member should ever be bigger than the collective mission of the team. Practising this mindset requires honest self-reflection. Are you truly committed to the team’s overarching purpose, or are you primarily focused on achieving your personal objectives? If the team’s purpose feels unclear or uninspiring, take the initiative to help redefine it into something worthy of collective dedication. Living “We before me” may also involve making concessions in your area for the greater good of the team. Ask yourself how you would feel about such a compromise. What would need to be true for you to embrace it willingly? This thinking is essential to align your personal goals with the team’s broader mission.

Ultimately, embodying “We before me” is not just about the occasional grand gesture of self-sacrifice. It is also about cultivating a mindset that consistently prioritises collaboration, mutual respect and shared purpose. This approach strengthens the team’s cohesion and resilience, enabling it to thrive in the face of challenges. As each member learns to see their role as integral but not greater than the whole, the team’s ability to achieve extraordinary results is magnified. In this way, “We before me” becomes more than a mantra; it becomes a way of working and thriving together.

2. Listen, amplify and follow

One of the worst afflictions that can plague a team is ‘Rightitis’, a subtle yet pervasive addiction to believing your own perspective is always correct, and that your ideas represent the best or only way forward. This mindset creates environments where individuals aren’t truly listening to one another. At best, team members politely bide their time, waiting for an opening to impose their views.

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Have you ever noticed that the word “listen” is an anagram of the word “silent”? To genuinely listen to someone requires silencing the mental chatter of your own clever ideas and presumed “right” solutions. It demands giving your full attention to the person before you. Esther Perel, a psychotherapist and expert on modern relationships, observes that “it is the listener that creates the speaker”, not the other way round. True listening, then, is a formative act – one that empowers and elevates. In a team context, deeply listening without interruption is one of the most generous and trust-building behaviours a colleague can offer. It allows you not only to grasp the essence of an idea but also to help refine, amplify and advocate for it. Supporting others’ contributions in this way builds trust, confidence and efficiency within the group. However, this doesn’t mean accepting flawed ideas uncritically. If a proposal has genuine weaknesses, it is your responsibility to highlight them. The challenge lies in doing so constructively, offering critique in a manner that affirms your trust in the person’s abilities while addressing the idea’s shortcomings. If you can extend to your colleagues the same benefit of the doubt that you instinctively grant yourself, you will cultivate a culture where ideas flourish, and people feel supported as well as challenged.

3. Balance presence

In any team, the balance of contribution matters greatly. Some individuals dominate discussions, either intentionally, relishing the spotlight, or unintentionally, as they naturally process their thoughts aloud. These members can end up occupying more than their fair share of the team’s time and energy. At the other extreme are those who remain largely silent, either by consciously choosing to speak only when absolutely necessary or because of a passive, almost reflexive agreement with others’ views. Both extremes can subtly but significantly disrupt the team’s balance, undermining trust, engagement and collaboration. The key lies in paying close attention to how much space you take up in the team: too much, too little, or just enough? Striking this balance is not only about speaking up but also about creating room for others. Dominating voices may inadvertently stifle valuable contributions, while those who hold back too much risk depriving the team of potentially critical insights.

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To assess your contribution, consider seeking feedback from a trusted colleague or mentor. Another effective method is to record and review a team meeting to observe how much airtime you occupy and how constructive your input is. Are you enhancing dialogue or monopolising it? Do you contribute purposefully, or do you tend to fade into the background? These reflections can help you recalibrate your presence. When each team member finds their “right size” – engaged but not overpowering – the collective dynamic transforms. Balanced contributions reduce unnecessary friction and pave the way for more meaningful, productive collaboration. By fostering an environment where everyone’s voice is valued but not overwhelming, teams can achieve their full potential and maintain harmony in their decision-making processes.

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