

How to Build a High-Performance Team

Subash Senthil Mohanvel

West Pharmaceutical Services, Exton, USA

Email: Subash.mohanvel@gmail.com

How to cite this paper: Mohanvel, S. S. (2024). How to Build a High-Performance Team. *American Journal of Industrial and Business Management*, 14, 1181-1188. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ajibm.2024.149061>

Received: August 12, 2024

Accepted: September 17, 2024

Published: September 20, 2024

Copyright © 2024 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

The concept of building a high-performance team is not a new terminology or thought, however, the path that one chooses in making or building one to create a team makes a difference. Many concepts found on the internet focus on how to build a team with a task-based approach. While this approach has its merits, it often overlooks the importance of creativity and partnering with your mind on the execution. By combining task-based execution with creative thinking, a clearer vision and more defined actions emerge, ultimately leading to successful outcomes.

Keywords

Performance, Better Team, High Performance Team, Team Building, Product Building, HPT

1. Introduction

It is human nature to strive to improve and become better. Every organization focuses on the same or share the same goal. However, for an organization to excel, its people—its greatest assets—must form effective teams. In my search for ideas on this concept, there were many conceptual ideas, but I did not find any that focused on execution or how to get it done with breakdown of steps. This article aims to help individuals, teams or anyone in understanding the fundamentals on how to strategize in building a high-performance team. In turn, this also aims to foster the growth of the individual, team, company and eventually humanity! As you read through this article, there are several steps explained in detail that need to be considered and how they can all come together in building the team.

Definition of mentor used in this article:

Person who is interested in building a high-performance team.

2. Steps Needed in Building the High-Performance Team

Humans are better able to understand concepts when they are structured and

articulated in steps. Subconsciously, the brain follows a methodical approach, performing many steps in parallel while connecting the dots or patterns between each step. This article aims to leverage this cognitive process by explaining concepts step-by-step and providing guidance on execution.

2.1. Step 1: Understanding the Human Brain!

Understanding how the brain works is important, as this forms the foundation for building a high-performance team. Most people today are task-oriented, primarily using the left hemisphere of the brain. However, to build a high-performance team, both hemispheres need to be functional. This is a critical step for mentors, who must develop various techniques to activate both sides of the brain.

By examining the picture below (**Figure 1**), one can understand how the brain is structured. The brain has two hemispheres, each responsible for different tasks. They can all run in parallel. The human body is an amazing machine, and the brain is its powerhouse! The left side is task-oriented, organizing tasks sequentially for execution. The right side of the brain is responsible for creativity and imagination. The brain can go beyond limits and conceive ideas that have not been previously considered. The more one uses the brain, the better it becomes.

Brain structure and its functions



LEFT AND RIGHT HEMISPHERE OF THE BRAIN

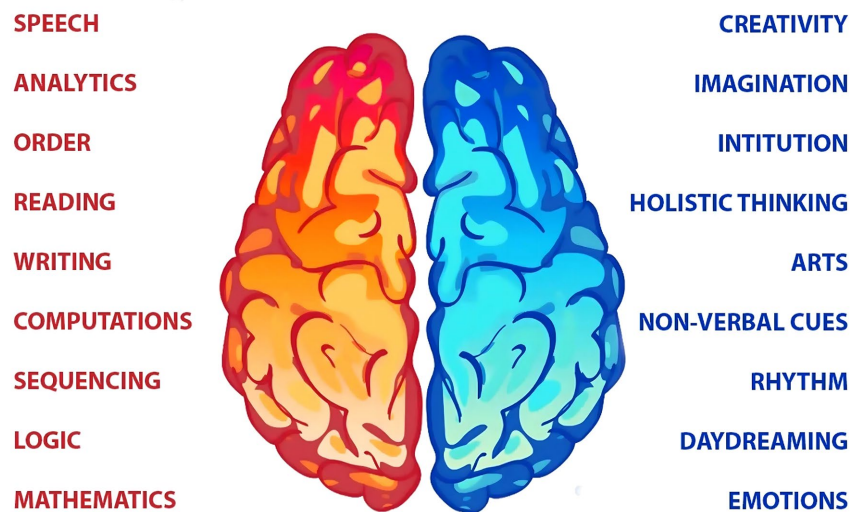


Figure 1. Brain structure and its functions. Image Source: <https://www.centurymedicaldental.com/left-and-right-hemisphere-of-the-brain/> (Century Medical and Dental Center, 2024).

If you as a mentor are focused on building a high-performance team without imagination i.e., the right side of the brain—then you are fighting an uphill battle. Your imagination, creativity and holistic thinking gets better the more you use it.

That's the foundation of the human body: the more we use it, the better we get at it. If we don't use it, we lose it.

2.2. Step 2: Have a “To-Do” Attitude

Another important aspect of the behavior that needs to be inculcated is the “To-Do” attitude. In every person behind procrastination there is a hidden gem: the willingness to-do attitude resides. Conversely, behind the to-do attitude procrastination can also be found (Fose, 2007). This concept needs to be understood, and as a mentor, the focus should be on maintaining a balance where the team prioritizes the to-do attitude and avoids passing the responsibility.

Create the environment that fosters the to-do attitude and use tools to break down action items which are clearly articulated so that the team starts to see finite deliverables. Then engage with the team to complete these tasks.

2.3. Step 3: Have a Goal—Visualize and Imagine about It

When working on any project or task, it's important to have a goal. Though it seems simple, this is something many teams struggle with. One might have a goal, but what is its purpose? Do you, as a mentor, and your team truly understand it? Your team is made up of a diverse group, no matter if they speak the same language, come from the same country, or are from the same family. Diversity indicates how one thinks and acts, which is fundamental to understanding your team. Everyone dreams and visualizes differently, and this is something you have little control over. However, you can use this to your advantage in building a high-performance team.

For example, let's say the team's goal is to build a house. This goal needs to be broken down into multiple objectives, each with its own smaller goals. For instance, the house is composed of the basement, rooms, wiring, etc. Then, each room is designed and planned in detail. Each team member needs to visualize and dream about the project, refining the concept with each iteration. This loop is infinite, but the mentor's job is to guide the team to a point where the goal is shaping up for action. This approach of visualization is key.

So, how does one help the team visualize and imagine the goal?

As a mentor, understanding this is crucial, and it is a skill you must learn. The learning process for a mentor and team is explained below on how to progress.

When setting goals, a mentor needs to dream about the steps (right side of the brain activation) and milestones. Then, break these down into small chunks and think about how the team will execute them or dream about them. Even if you can get your team to dream about the goal 40% to 50% of the time, you are building an efficient, high-performance team.

Understand that many external factors influence execution. It's a natural process, and your manager may not have the same understanding. Another team that your team depends on might not have the same understanding either. That's the beauty of it—you will always be learning and imagining how to achieve the goal. Acknowledging how this works is a significant learning process by itself, and

mentoring your team to dream and visualize is crucial.

Always ensure you visualize the goal and help your team visualize it as well. Your views may differ, but the destination should be the same.

2.4. Step 4: Prepare a Road Map of the Goal and Break It into Chunks

As one repeatedly visualizes the goal, things become clearer, and clarity emerges. The next step is to break it into smaller parts to create each milestone. Draw out the roadmap and engage with your team.

For example, your goal and the team's goal might be to build a product. Let's use building a house as an example where the mentor and the team are in charge. Since you have imagined the house and have a holistic understanding of it, you are now able to break it into smaller steps. For example, you can break it down to look at how the foundation should be, the framing, how each room will look, how the entire house will come together, etc.

As one dives even deeper into their creativity, imagination weaves in how the materials used play a role and starts to think deeper about each material. Imagination travels to a point where the smallest item is envisioned, and your mind becomes convinced of how it will all come together. The deeper you go, the better your imagination or creativity becomes. This is the key to unlocking great products or building high-performance teams.

2.5. Step 5: Understand and Learn Every Steps

As the mentor breaks tasks into smaller steps, the journey towards execution begins. As you take every step you will run into unforeseen challenges that has not been thought through. Ensure to understand every challenge and learn it. Learn from diverse sources and connect the pattern of learning between them. This is a very important step as your creativity wires all the different learnings and gets a pattern out of it. There is always a pattern to everything!

Identifying patterns in your actions is crucial, as it allows you to refine your execution strategy. The more you practice, the better you become at execution, which thus continues to refine itself.

For example, whether you are in charge of building a product, coaching a team, managing your home, or planning a birthday party, each task has an objective. The same methodology and patterns can be applied to any goal we aim to accomplish. As you apply these core functions to various tasks, the pattern becomes clearer, and your approach to each step deepens. This is a critical phase.

Additionally, incorporate feedback from all age groups. No matter how deep your learning goes, there is always more to learn. Nature and the earth continually teach us. Don't lose patience or get frustrated; your learning process is making you better and stronger each day. Pass on this learning to your team, guiding them through the same steps and approaches you have experienced. While their steps and learning may differ, everyone must undertake the same exercise.

3. Step 6: Action

This is the step where everything comes together. Take all the above steps and put them into action to test your learning. As you try to move forward, you are bound to encounter setbacks. These are not setbacks or failures, but rather learning opportunities. These setbacks occur because certain details may not have been thoroughly considered. For example, when the house you built or the software product you designed is used, you will start to see how external forces or customers react to it. Not every action would have been accounted for or tested. Connect this to the imagination step mentioned earlier; some thoughts might have been overlooked or given less importance. It follows a curve, and as you progress, the curve starts to straighten as shown in **Figure 2**.

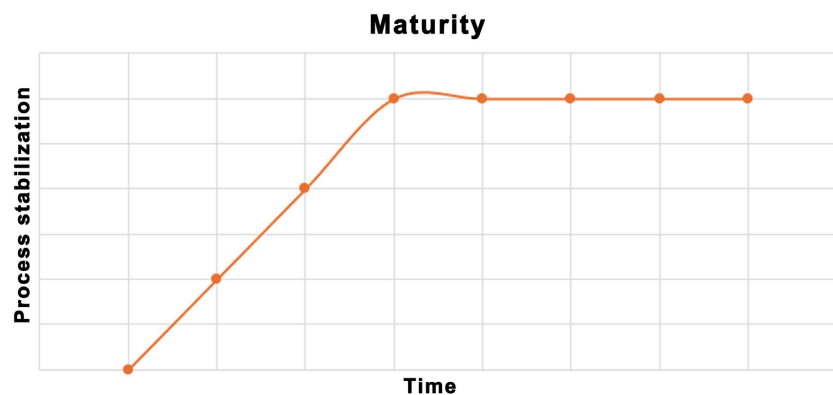


Figure 2. Maturity curve for process stabilization.

Mentors and their teams will be tested thoroughly in many shapes and forms. Your peers, managers, family, etc., may not share your thought process and might criticize you. This is part of the learning process, so view it through a lens that most do not see. Instead of absorbing the criticism or feeling agitated, step outside that zone for a minute, think through the facts, and see how you can turn it to your advantage. With time and practice, this is achievable. If the mentor and the team continue this path, you will start to see progression.

As one puts things to action, results are seen and become measurable. However, one should remember that there is no Success or Failure. Instead, there is only Progression and Learning. Action is a cycle that can be initiated through imagination or creativity and carried through until it results in tangible action items. Define the tasks that can be executed, then observe and collect feedback. This feedback then re-enters the creativity loop, fueling continuous improvement (**Figure 3**).

The key thing is to work with the mind—think and imagine through the learning. This is the most important piece of the puzzle.

if you succeed ... you have only progressed from one the next stage...

As Swami Vivekananda said, the experience through the journey is the most important part of life rather than the destination.



Figure 3. Action cycle representation.

3.1. Understanding Your Customer

As the action cycle is executed, the output starts to take shape. It's important to keep the goal in mind, as that drives your product or any objective you are striving to achieve. Many times, people who build products think that customers don't know what they want, and that gathering requirements is a waste of time. This is true to some extent! However, knowing your customer matters. You need to know how they behave, what they see, what's important to them, and how their muscle memory works. Steve Jobs, for example, mentioned in one of his interviews that before he built the Mac, he took classes to understand calligraphy. This is one of the few examples that illustrate why it matters. At that point in time, people used cursive writing, and when he built the product, he ensured that it was one of the fonts included. Mr. Jobs did not ask people for their requirements; instead, he understood what they needed.

This is fundamental to building a product, and teaching your team this skill as a mentor is crucial. When a customer speaks, just listen. Do not shut them down with questions. As you listen to the customer, your mind should visualize and wander about the tasks, yet refine it in a way to extract only the golden nuggets buried inside the speech. These golden nuggets are what they need to know, what they see, what's important to them, and how their muscle memory works. Use the right side of the brain while the left side breaks it down into tasks. This is an art in itself, and teaching your team to understand this builds a high-performance team!

3.2. Leader and Mentor

Anyone who manages a team, reports to the CEO, or is part of the board belongs to a category called mentors. If one calls themselves a leader, a lot of learning and progression must be done. Regardless of the level within the hierarchy, everyone who manages a team has the same job: to nurture the team. Therefore, I would call them mentors. If your team starts to exhibit the behavior of a high-performance team, then eventually you will earn the title of leader. Don't go hunting for it or give yourself the title. It will come naturally to you if you have done your job right!

What Are the Needs of the Mentor

The art of building a product lies in understanding the fundamentals of how it

needs to be done. For example, if one is a software architect, you need to know the capabilities of the software platform you are using to build the product. Once you know that, you also need to understand how it can scale. When too many users start using the app, how is the application going to handle it? How does data exchange happen between layers, and how do the APIs and services work? One should also understand where and how a commit happens and how the system queues it. Additionally, understand how the hardware interacts with the overall product.

Even though all details may not be covered, the depth of detail needed for any product to be built is quite extensive. To impart this knowledge to your team, you need to understand the product deeply and be able to break it into small chunks for your team to grasp. While some may disagree, I find this extremely important as it allows you to know or figure out each building block that makes up the product.

Additionally, imagining and tying everything together in your mind comes with a lot of proactive observation. You cannot limit this practice to your work alone; it must be incorporated into everything you do. This is extremely important as you start to see patterns in everything you build. For example, if you are coaching basketball, how does one create a high-performance player? The same fundamental principles apply here as well. By finding patterns in everything, you will begin to understand the details of building a high-performance team and how to execute it.

Thus, understanding the depth of what you are doing, combined with your mind, is the foundation for building a high-performance team. As you start to lay this foundation for your team and continue to nurture them, you can also see if your creativity aligns with the outputs.

Never focus on victory; it's just an outcome. There is no success or failure; these need to be replaced with progression and learning, respectively.

Reaching a goal indicates that you have progressed. During that journey, you encounter many pitfalls, and these are learning experiences. No matter the situation or how deep your trouble is, applying the progression and learning approach will take you to greater heights.

4. Conclusion

As you embark on the path of building anything, whether it's a high-performance team, a product, or coaching, adhere to the same common principles explained above. Put these principles into action and seek feedback to improve. When you maintain the same mindset towards everything you work on, whether it's work-related or personal, you will see your techniques improve each time. Your journey matters the most, so execute it without losing your principles. Your principles define who you are.

As you continue to move forward, you will be tested to see if you can withstand the challenges. During these periods, do not get lost, as these tests are designed to solidify the concepts within you. Despite this, you might feel you have reached the edge, feel exhausted, and think you have tried hard enough. But remember, there is

always hope. Have faith in whatever you believe in, trust your instincts, and try again!

About the Author Subash Senthil Mohanvel

Director, business process expert & solution architect with Software Industry experience of 20+ years and have strong expertise in product design, build, technology and team development.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

- Century Medical and Dental Center (2024). *Left and Right Hemisphere of the Brain*. (n.d.). Century Medical & Dental Center.
<https://www.centurymedicaldental.com/left-and-right-hemisphere-of-the-brain/>
- Fose, L. M. (2007). *The Bhagavad Gita*.
<https://moon-soup.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/bhagavadgita.pdf>