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4 HABITS

Of Winning Teams

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INTRODUCTION

You are probably inundated with tips, tools and advice about how to become a 'winning' team. While that sounds all well and good, what does that really mean in the new world of work today?

What does a winning team look like? How does one 'build' a winning team? What do 'winning' teams do differently?

If you can answer those questions – great. You don't really need the information that follows. If you can't, this is for you.



A NEW VIEW OF WINNING

Since 2020, we have learned a lot about teams in the world of business. Almost overnight, the world of work shifted for just about everyone. In spite of spikes in disease and fear, prolonged uncertainty, and limited or no physical contact with teammates, teams figured out how to work together. We discovered that location mattered, but not in the way we thought. We welcomed each other into our homes, we were introduced to kids and pets (often by accident), and discovered more about each other as people. Technology was the thread that connected everyone, and in our micro-pods of isolation, we became more connected.

We learned that we could work together just as well (or in some cases, even better) by leveraging the tools we had and figuring out how to adapt to the new reality together.

Everybody contributes, and everybody matters. Winning is the capacity to overcome challenges and consistently achieve results together.

Relationships are like root systems; they have a starting point but continue to grow and get stronger when conditions are favorable. The information that follows can help you create the conditions that feed those connections and for everyone on your team to flourish and thrive – individually and together.

TEAMS CAN'T BE BUILT

One of the biggest myths in business is that when you get the 'right' people on the team, things work themselves out. The fixation on finding the best talent or the person with the perfect combination of competencies and characteristics is a never-ending game of recruiting roulette.

Do people need to have a requisite set of skills, abilities, and mindsets to do the work? Absolutely. But even in the world of sports, where each player on the team is an exceptional athlete in their respective position, the most successful teams are rarely the team of 'stars'.

Winning teams are a combination of 'who' and 'do'. They do what most other teams don't: they not only focus on the work itself but also on how they work together. They know that their success or failure is a result of how well they consistently function collectively, not just as individuals, and that their capacity to do that depends on every team member's trust in each other. They don't leave trust to chance: they design practices and adopt habits that help them develop and maintain bonds of trust.

THE POWER OF HABITS

Everyone has habits and patterns of automatic behavior that are invisible to them but obvious to others. Ways of working that are so natural that they don't even realize they are doing it. Your team also has habits: some likely support your capacity to consistently achieve your outcomes together, and a few that don't. Habits happen automatically, just by doing something over and over. Once a habit is established, it is easy and natural; it's 'just what we do'.

Forming and maintaining strong relationships isn't complicated. It's just like getting stronger or better at doing anything: all it takes is focused attention, a specific action, and doing that action over and over until it becomes automatic. To get stronger and more connected as a team, you just need to deliberately develop new habits that serve you and support you achieving the outcomes you want.

So if you want to help your team consistently perform well, you don't need to reinvent the wheel or itemize all the things that are wrong. You just need to choose a direction and start doing ONE thing that helps you start moving. Do it once, and if it seems like it might be helpful, do it again.

The information that follows gives some insight into what winning teams do to help them stay connected and in-sync. You may notice that some of the suggestions and tips are similar to what you might already be doing but with a slightly different approach. Or you might notice that you are already be doing something, just not consistently. If so, you are already in motion – you just need to make slight adjustments to develop a pattern of progress.

The key to getting stronger and developing your capacity to perform together on demand begins and ends with single steps, putting one foot in front of the other. Over and over.

And you already know how to do that.

THE 4 HABITS

1

CELEBRATE STRENGTHS

2

MANAGE CHANGE

3

BE HUMAN TOGETHER

4

DEVELOP RITUALS

Habit #1

Discover and celebrate
each person's unique
strengths and find ways
to leverage those to help
the team make progress.

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CELEBRATE STRENGTHS

Each person has many things in common with everyone else, and each person is unique. While that may seem like a paradox, it is actually an essential foundation of trust. **Understanding how we are the same – what we share – helps us develop empathy and form connections.** During the 2020 pandemic, every parent of a third grader was jolted into a new reality. As if uncertainty and chaos in the world weren't enough, they had to quickly find a way to ensure their child was cared for full-time and add 'teacher' to their long list of daily responsibilities. People who shared that experience have a perspective and a visceral understanding of that experience that unites them in a way that can't be replicated with someone who didn't experience it. Discovering – and continually reinforcing – what we share is incredibly important.

every person longs to be understood, accepted, and respected by others as they are and for who they are. While our similarities create automatic connections, differences can divide us – and often do. Winning teams don't let that happen. They recognize that differences aren't good or bad – they just are. They put processes in place to **continually discover individual differences**, not only to understand and honor each person, but also to leverage each person's strengths to help the team expand their collective capacity and ability to get work done. Successful teams focus on helping every person discover, develop and gain confidence using their strengths. Team members shine a light on each other's strengths to help them see their individual superpowers. They **encourage each other to discover and grow their superpowers** –and ensure that each person is able to use them to contribute to the team's success. Positions and roles are a starting point; learning to meld their strengths and become more powerful and agile together is the goal. When challenges arise, winning teams don't let anyone fail; when one person stumbles, the team suffers. They call on the individual(s) whose strengths can best help the team overcome the challenge and maintain momentum.

Learning each other's strengths is a start, but winning teams take it a step further. They celebrate each person's uniqueness: their experiences, their perspective, their strengths and their struggles. They continually learn from each other, and care about and support each other personally and professionally.

CELEBRATING STRENGTHS: A UNIVERSAL CHALLENGE

Discovering strengths and celebrating differences isn't as easy as it seems. There are two reasons for that:

Using our strengths is natural for us and requires little or no effort; it takes effort NOT to use our strengths. We often overlook or dismiss our strengths because 'that's just the way I am'.

We are 'taught' to fit in rather than stand out. What makes us unique sets us apart from others, and our natural tribal instinct to be accepted and protected by the group can get triggered. It can be even more challenging if we were criticized in the past for any of our strengths /differences or got negative messages about others like us



Habit #2

Actively manage change

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MANAGE CHANGE

Many organizations have an onboarding process to help people who join the organization get up to speed easier. Does your team have a similar process when someone joins the team? If not, you are leaving teaming to chance.

When someone new joins the team, **healthy teams actively manage that transition.** They have rituals to welcome the new person and processes to help them get up to speed.

Some tips:

Set up a meet & greet team sessions. It's important to do this in the first few weeks when any new person joins the team. It sets the tone and eases the anxiety of connecting 1:1. In addition, people often discover that they have something in common.

Use a template or tools to share similar information. It creates consistency and keeps the discussion efficient and light. **Sharing information about key initiatives and who is responsible for what can be helpful.** It is also essential that there is a way for everyone to provide some details about their 'operating system' – how they work, their strengths, styles, dos'/don'ts, etc.

Create a simple 3 question temple to help the new member introduce themselves to the team. Provide the questions to the new person ahead of time so that they have time to reflect and prepare for the conversation.

Ensure that each team member schedule time to meet 1:1 with the new team member. Each person has a treasure trove of information that can help someone new get a richer view of the team, organization and each other. It plants and nurtures the seeds of relationship, and helps each person better understand how their respective work connects to the whole and how to work better together.

THE COST OF CONFORMITY

Teams that don't honor and celebrate each person and their unique gifts – or judge individual differences as good or bad or compete with each other have little to no chance of becoming a winning team. When conformity is the norm, teams struggle to function effectively. People don't feel comfortable being themselves, speaking up, or revealing their strengths. Without the ability to use their superpowers and work as a team, disengagement and distrust are inevitable. It's toxic – and it's contagious. It impacts not just the individuals on the team, but also everyone they come in contact with inside and outside the organization. It drains hope, confidence and well-being. Those that can leave do, and those who stay suffer personally and professionally.



Habit #3

Schedule time to be
human together

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BE HUMAN TOGETHER

What most people call 'team building' is really an opportunity for team members to bond by getting to know each other in different ways. These are typically events that give everyone a "relationship energy infusion". People have the opportunity to shift out of work mode and have the shared experience of doing a novel activity, working in a new location, or learning something new together.

Being together in the same space can be an incredibly helpful experience for teams at any time. The energy is palpable, and discussions are much more natural and free-flowing than they are in the digital world. Gathering together takes on even more significance in today's world.

While it can be tempting to try to squeeze a whole lot of 'stuff' into a few hours of together time, doing so can actually prevent you and the team from reaping the **benefits of a precious few hours of face-to-face contact**. To help people connect when the team gets together, you could:

Schedule more space for breaks. People are wired to connect and being physically present in the same space is the easiest way to do that. Conversations that happen naturally are the most powerful and memorable experiences people can have. We know what it is like to have been deprived of that for an extended period of time. **Everyone is craving in-person connection** more than ever. Give people time to be human and connect by scheduling more time and space for that to happen by scheduling longer breaks.

Boost energy - use a quick ice-breaker exercise to get the team energized in the morning, and maybe in the afternoon as well. Make it something fast and fun, that isn't work related but also isn't too personal.

Get the team involved. Include team members in developing an agenda, or to provide input before the agenda is finalized. Ask them to offer suggestions on timing and topics, or to come up with ice-breakers or quick energizer activities. This can also be a good idea when choosing to have a team activity that takes a bit more time.

Habit #4

Develop rituals that
energize your
relationships and keep
connections strong

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DEVELOP RITUALS

Team 'events' are energizing experiences. But like a double shot of espresso, the effect fades away quickly when everyone gets sucked back into the riptide of routines and regular work. Keep the energy stoked and the discussion going by having frequent focused discussions. Some examples:

Start monthly/weekly team meetings with a quick ice-breaker. Each person shares their answer to an easy question.

- What's your favorite music/band?
- What's your least favorite food?
- If you had to spend a morning binge watching something, what would it be?
- What are your hobbies/past-times outside of work?
- What's are your favorite holiday foods?
- Bonus post activity – have members share recipes and create a team recipe 'book'

Have a monthly 'team-time' meeting (~ one hour) where **everyone learns something new together**, participates in an activity, discovers more about each other by sharing stories/responses to more detailed questions.

Try an 'ice-breaker' that takes some reflection and/or allows individuals to share a bit more, get curious, and discover commonalities:

- When you were 10, what did you want to be when you grew up?
- Who was your favorite teacher and why?
- What lessons did you learn about leadership from a really good boss (and/or bad boss)?
- What book have you read lately?
- If you were a historical person, who would you be and why?
- Have a **'celebrating each other' discussion**. Each team member prepares by reflecting and sharing one thing that they admire or appreciate about each other team member.
- TIP: Find 'ice-breaker' activities online. Or ask team members for volunteers to suggest, gather questions or other activities

CONCLUSION

You can spend a lot of time and money doing a lot of research trying to find 'secrets' of winning teams, looking for 'best' practices or searching for the 'right' or 'best' talent. But no matter how amazing the people on the team are, if you expect them to figure out how to work well together on their own, you will be disappointed.

Every team is a group of people, each with passions, superpowers, quirks, histories, and lives that are unique. Successful, winning teams know that when they honor, respect and protect each other, they can discover how combine their superpowers to do amazing things. They stay curious and deepen their appreciation and care for each other. In time, with practice, trust develops – and they become unstoppable.

They know that the 'secret' to winning is deliberate, consistent attention and action; they know that habits are always the answer.



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Start unlocking the
potential of your team
today with Personalysis!

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