

Introduction



It has been more than a decade since the first edition of *The Team Building Tool Kit* was published as a resource for start-up and existing teams. Over the course of time, I heard from many individuals who used the book as a “bible” to help them launch and grow their teams. They brought the book to their meetings so that questions could be answered right away, distributed copies to team members as a “read and discuss” training opportunity, and shared the book with reluctant managers or coaches who needed to know the practical “how to’s” to embrace the teaming concept.

On occasion, when someone asked a question or referenced something in the book, I would realize how far we have come with teaming since the original book was written. Over the years each team we worked with had added improvements to agenda formats, star point role descriptions, team decision making, and conflict resolution strategies to name a few. And, with the advent of the Internet, cell phones, e-mail, e-rooms and the global workplace, there was information that no longer seemed relevant or applicable. Since the first book was still in print, it made sense to do a second edition. The goal of *Team Building Tool Kit 2* is to provide you with the most current information that teams work with and makes them successful.

Team Building Tool Kit 2 is written for all types of teams in both for-profit and nonprofit organizations, especially those trying to transform into flexible, lean enterprises with empowered employees capable of high performance. In addition, trainers and college faculty will find it a valuable reference for teaching team building skills to others. Like the first book, *Team Tool Kit 2* can be used in a variety of ways. It can be used as a quick reference when setting up a team or as a cover-to-cover read to check for new teaming ideas. Certain parts of the book, such as Chapter 3, which discusses team behavior and conflict resolution, can be read by team members to help them achieve a common level of understanding before discussing these issues as an entire team.

Every chapter in *Team Building Tool Kit 2* has been rewritten and updated with additional information that is relevant for teams today. New chapters have also been added: Chapter 4, “Team Accountability and Decision Making,” provides specific strategies to improve the level of responsibility teams are willing to assume based on each stage of the team’s development, and we have included a step-by-step consensus decision-making guide to help meeting facilitators. Chapter 5: “Team Problem-Solving Process and Tools,” provides a simple problem-solving approach that teams love, plus the most popular group process tools to make problem solving easy. Chapter 7, “The Teaming Roadmap,” puts all the pieces together into a clearly laid-out process for building your teams. Also included are many new charts, diagrams, and other graphics to help in your team building efforts.

To complement what is available in the book, we are also offering supplemental materials online through www.NewDirectionsConsulting.com/samples. Sample team charters, role descriptions, team protocols, and measuring tools will provide additional examples and supports.

In 1994, we probably had a somewhat altruistic view of teams: They would improve morale, increase empowerment, and engage employees in the workplace. Although teams do achieve these goals, today teams are an economic necessity, because organizations can no longer carry six or seven layers of supervision and management and be competitive. The pressure to be a “low-cost producer” in all types of organizations is growing; the necessity to work in teams across global boundaries is a daily reality. The new generation of employees has an even greater tendency toward collaborative workplace models than previous generations. Yet, few organizations derive the full benefits of teaming because they fail to “grow” them correctly. That’s where *Team Building Tool Kit 2* comes in!

The following is a sample from Chapter 3: Team Behavior

Managing Team Conflict

Most people have considerable difficulty surfacing and working through problems and conflicts. They “collect stamps,” or little injustices, for long periods of time and use passive-aggressive tactics (triangling, procrastination, perfectionism, stubbornness, sniping) to surface their difficulty. In teams, group conflict cannot be shoved under the rug. Process observers must be empowered by the team to surface conflicts and problems while they are still minor. A simple wave of the help/hinder list has been known to bring problem behavior back in line.

On occasion, members may experience serious difficulty with each other. Personality conflicts or irritable behaviors can undermine the team’s efforts unless they are dealt with openly and directly.

Triangling

Triangling (or talking behind someone’s back) is when we talk with a third party about something that is bothering us about another person. Triangling is so prevalent in organizations that I often tease that if we had infrared lights on all the triangles going on, the entire organization would light up. We may think that we’re talking to the third party for support for our position, but I contend that what we really want is for that person to talk with the person who is upsetting us. Then, when the person says, “I understand that you’re upset with me,” we can say, “Who told you that?” as a way to keep the focus off of what we have done. People who triangle like to come across as squeaky clean and let others do their dirty work. Triangling is extremely detrimental to the team and must be stopped.

Stamp Collecting

Many team conflicts have been brewing for some time and simply come to a head when there is no longer a supervisor to intervene. I call these old resentments “collecting stamps.” A team member experiences a resentment and rather than deal with it directly, she opens her imaginary book of stamps to the page with the individual’s name, licks a stamp, and puts it in the book. Then, each time the individual does something wrong, the team member uses the behavior to validate the original stamp. Meanwhile, the other person doesn’t have a clue that his colleague has been upset with him for years. After a while, some people develop bulging books of stamps containing all the “bad” things that other people have done to them over an entire work history. These stamps are the seedbed for much of the conflict on teams. Obviously,

teams can't function effectively with bulging books of stamps, so they must commit to surfacing old stamps and not collecting any new ones.

One of the advantages of using terms such as *triangling* and *stamp collecting* is that they give the team a common language to use when discussing things that are difficult for them. For example, a team member may approach an individual he is having a problem with and say, "I'm starting to collect a stamp on this and I'd like to talk with you about it."

Learning to Give and Receive Feedback

When team members are learning how to handle conflict with each other, they need to understand that sharing feedback about how they feel is actually a "gift" to the other team member. We teach them three rules about receiving feedback:

1. *Don't kill the messenger.* There are several ways we "kill" people who are trying to give us feedback: being defensive, blaming them instead, or even ignoring the person altogether.

2. *See the feedback as a gift.* A team member could choose to triangle or stamp collect, so to be brave enough to share the feedback directly is just like bringing a beautifully wrapped gift to the person. When team members can see that clearly, they respond differently when receiving the feedback. Learning how to say, "Thank you for the feedback" is an important step before suggesting that team members handle their own conflicts.

3. *Separate getting the feedback from deciding what to do with it.* When we receive feedback, it's natural to have a fight/flight response. Rather than respond during this emotional phase, team members learn to say, "Thank you for the feedback. I'd like to think about what you've said and get back to you." This delay allows the team member to sort the feedback into three piles: valid feedback, vague feedback, and manipulative feedback. Once sorted, the feedback becomes more manageable for the team member to address. Although the team member has a responsibility to respond to the feedback, nothing says that that response has to be immediate.

Team members also have to learn how to give feedback in a way that minimizes the fight/flight response in another team member. Rather than make aggressive "you" and "should" statements, team members apply what we call the RISC and PAUSE model² to give and receive the feedback. The acronym RISC stands for:

R = Report the facts. When initiating feedback to another team member, the first sentence should be factual: "Yesterday at the team meeting I suggested we try a different approach and you responded, 'How dumb is that!'"

I = State the **Impact** and why. Here team members are taught to express their feelings as a result of the action that occurred in the Report statement: “It made me feel really upset because everybody laughed at my expense.”

Now at this point, the team member pauses to see how the other team member will respond to the feedback. If the other team member apologizes, then the process stops right there. However, if he or she refuses to accept responsibility, then the team member continues.

S = **Specify** what you prefer. The team member makes a preference statement about what he or she would like to see happening instead: “I prefer that when you disagree with my ideas, you simply say that instead of suggesting that I’m dumb.”

C = State the **Consequences**. The team member begins with the positive consequences that will happen if the other team member responds to the request: “We’re going to get along much better as a team if you can do this.” However, he or she must also be prepared to state the negative consequences that will occur if the other team member ignores the request and behaves the same way again: “If you continue to embarrass me in front of team members, you need to know that I’m prepared to bring it up at a separate team meeting to have us discuss respect and courtesy as a whole team.”

As the one team member is uses the RISC model to get the first four sentences out in a constructive manner, the other team member uses PAUSE to help him or her keep defensiveness to a minimum. PAUSE stands for:

P = **Paraphrase** what you hear: “Let me make sure I understand what you’re saying to me. I said at a meeting last week that you had a dumb idea?”

A = **Ask** questions: “Did I say it in front of other team members or just to you alone?” “What was my tone like when I said it? Was I jesting?”

USE = **Use** time: “I don’t recall the incident that you’re relating, but I’d like to think about what you’ve just said and get back to you.”

Prior to any one-to-one conflict resolution among team members, they must have training in how to give and receive feedback in a professional and constructive manner. The RISC and PAUSE model has proven to be easy to use and helpful when structuring the conflict resolution session.

Conflict Resolution Protocol

During the forming stage of the team’s development, when members are friendly and accommodating, the team needs to develop a conflict resolution protocol. The protocol spells out how the team will approach conflicts. It’s

valuable for the team to have this protocol complete before entering the storming stage, when conflict is commonplace.

The protocol begins with defining general rules that team members must follow when conflict occurs:

- It must be understood that the goal of the protocol is to result in a win/win resolution of conflicts.
- All important decisions in the conflict resolution process must be made by consensus.
- A check must be made early in the process to make certain the conflict is appropriate for the team members to resolve.
- Discussion cannot be closed until every party in the conflict has had a chance to speak.
- Talking about the conflict with others outside the team is not allowed.
- Triangling (talking behind somebody's back, which avoids resolution of the conflict) and stamp collecting (holding grudges) during the conflict resolution are not allowed.
- No swearing or yelling is allowed during discussions.
- A private space must be used for conflict discussions.
- When using a mediator, the team must select someone who is perceived by both parties as neutral and has good facilitation skills.
- A team member has the right to seek coaching from another individual with a caution not to triangle (take sides). The emphasis should be on encouraging the member to talk with the other member with whom they are in conflict.
- Team members are to use RISC and PAUSE to facilitate conflict discussion.

The following is a sample four-step method for resolving conflicts within the team. The team must discuss, and agree by consensus, on the method it chooses to use.

1. *Have a one-on-one discussion with the team member with whom there is a conflict:*
 - Set up a time to meet with the member privately.
 - Open the discussion by surfacing the problem: "I'd like to talk with you about a problem I'm having with something that happened..."
 - Use the RISC model to share the details of the problem and to speak assertively.
 - Allow the other team member to respond to the conflict using the PAUSE model.