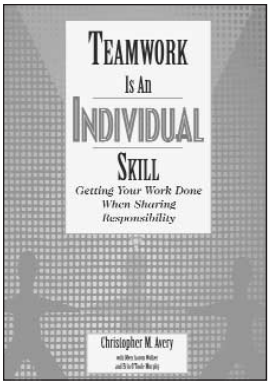
TeamWisdom at Work

In the new workplace of flat structures, all work is teamwork. Now a leading expert debunks the myths about how teams work and puts the focus on individual skill, not group process.



"I got put on a bad team."

Are you tired of hearing it? Or, above all, saying it?

It's a common excuse for lackluster team performance from even the most intelligent and experienced professionals, says Christopher Avery, a leading expert on teamwork and author of ***Teamwork Is an Individual Skill: Getting Your Work Done When Sharing Responsibility*** (Berrett-Koehler, $18.95).

According to Avery, as long as you believe that teamwork is a group skill—and consider others responsible for your team experience—you'll continue to suffer, particularly in the new workplace of "flat structures" that requires you to know how to work effectively in and through groups.

Until now, the available resources on teamwork put the emphasis on group process and ignored the role of the individual, says Avery, founder and president of Partnerwerks, a Texas-based consulting firm whose clients include AT&T, BMC Software, IBM, 3M, and Whole Foods. He developed the "TeamWisdom" technology—a set of individual skills and behaviors that leads to a stellar team experience—that focuses on taking personal responsibility, creating strong partnerships, establishing shared purpose, trusting "just right," and developing a collaborative mindset.

In ***Teamwork Is an Individual Skill,*** Avery tackles the "mythology" of teamwork—debunking destructive and age-old myths, like team members must subordinate their self-interests for the good of the team—and offers a variety of tips, case studies, and personal and teambuilding exercises. Among the ideas and issues he covers are:

- How to take personal responsibility for your team experience
- Why motivation is more important to teamwork than talent
- Why teammates don't have to like one another for their team to be successful
- Why the most powerful member on any team is the one who cares the least
- The five conversations every team should have
- The "tit-for-tat" relationship strategy and why every team member should know and use it
- How to know if your team is "built" (and what to do if it's not)
- The mindsets that most often cause teams to fail
- Why "team player" is an outdated and insulting label

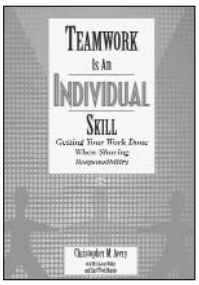
Fast Facts About Teams*

- *Nearly one-half of all organizations use teams.*
- *Teams are more prevalent in organizations with multiple divisions, multiple departments, higher sales, and more employees.*
- *The average team size is 11 members.*
- *Nearly two-thirds of all teams have a formal leader, though three-quarters of teams consider members equals.*
- *Consensus is the primary decision-making technique used within teams.*
- *The most common tasks for teams are interacting with a stream of customers, solving quality problems, building products, formulating strategy, and developing new products.*

- How to trust "just right" and why it's important to teamwork
- What to do when a teammate leaves you holding the bag
- How "fast teams" reach consensus quickly and harmoniously

Christopher M. Avery, Ph.D., author of *Teamwork Is an Individual Skill,* is a nationally recognized thought leader on teamwork among professionals and executives. Founder and president of Texas-based Partnerwerks, he is a sought-after consultant, trainer, and speaker, and counts AT&T, BMC Software, IBM, Landmark Graphics, 3M, and Whole Foods among his many clients. Avery earned a master's degree in organizational communication from Bowling Green State University and a doctorate in the communication of technology from the University of Texas. A monthly columnist for the 3M Meeting Network, he also writes "TeamWisdom Tips," a digital weekly read by professionals in some 40 countries. He lives in Comfort, Texas with his wife and two young sons.

Partnerwerks—German for "people working productively together"—is a leading performance development firm that supports executives and professionals in building world-class teams. Founded in 1991 on Avery's doctoral research, the firm documents and promotes best practices for people collaborating under competitive conditions, through leadership development seminars, custom team support, and change management services.



TEAMWORK IS AN INDIVIDUAL SKILL
Getting Your Work Done When Sharing Responsibility
Christopher M. Avery, Ph.D.
Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
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- *Nearly two-thirds of organizations that use teams keep the personalities of individuals in mind as they select or replace team members.*
- *Nearly one-third of organizations that use teams formally appraise team performance, while only slightly more than one-quarter base pay in part on team performance.*
- *Slightly more than one-third of organizations that use teams employ live practice or simulations to train teams as a whole, while only slightly more than one-quarter use interpersonal or diversity training.*

**Small Group Research* Journal, December 1999

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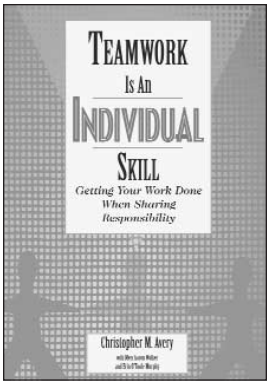
Interview Topics



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- **Teamwork: Why it's an individual skill, not a group process**

  In today's workplace, all work is teamwork. But what does it take to make a team *work?* Avery can discuss why it's individual responsibility—not group process—that matters most and pinpoint the five skill sets that create a positive team experience.

- **TeamWisdom: What is it, and why does it matter to your career?**

  TeamWisdom is a set of individual skills and behaviors that leads to highly responsible and productive relationships at work. Avery can discuss the four ways TeamWisdom can boost your career, plus offer a five-step action plan to achieve it.

- **The 8 most common myths about teamwork: The truths behind them, and why they're important to your team**

  The "mythology" of teamwork fools even the most intelligent and experienced professionals. Avery can debunk the most common myths and explain the power of the truths behind them.

- **Motivation first, skills second: Why commitment is more important than talent when it comes to teamwork**

  When teamwork is important, skills must come *after* factors like drive, energy, interest, motivation, and enthusiasm. Avery can discuss why it's shared desire—not talent—that creates teamwork and why skills will follow when a team arrives at commitment.

- **Friendship or focus? Why team members don't have to like one another, but do need a shared interest in a common result**

  Encouraging affinity for a shared task—not for each other—is the fastest and surest way to create cohesion on any team. Avery can discuss why your team should skip the exercises and techniques to promote friendships and work to adopt a common focus instead.

- **Your team is formed, so now what? The 5 conversations any new team must have**

  Team members must learn to make their needs and desires known without ambiguity. Avery can discuss the five critical conversations for every new team and why they lead to optimal performance.

- **The most powerful member on your team: Like it or not, he's the one who cares the least.**

  The most powerful member on your team isn't your team leader. Or your most inspired team member. Or even your smartest member. Sad but true, it's your least-invested member. Avery can discuss the reasons behind this uncomfortable reality and how to address motivation issues early, directly, and regularly.

- **Is your team "built"? What it means and how to get there**

  A team is "built" if its members share direction and energy. Avery can discuss what it takes to get there, including a five-step orientation process that begins with examination and results in momentum.

- **Team player? Why it's an outdated and insulting label**

  The moniker "team player" often refers to an individual who's compliant—a "yes" person who goes along to get along. Avery can discuss why team players add very little to the team experience and explain why being authentic is more important than being nice in today's workplace.

- **Why teams fail: The 5 mindsets that sabotage teams and how to overcome them**

  It's a team's attitude that most often causes it to fail. Avery can discuss the five mindsets that doom most teams and the best fix for each of them.

- **Hierarchies and teams: Why they can and should be compatible**

  The "tall" structure of hierarchies can be a problem for the "flat" structure of teams. However, when hierarchies are done well, teamwork can flourish. Avery can discuss what makes the best hierarchies work and why they're compatible with teams.

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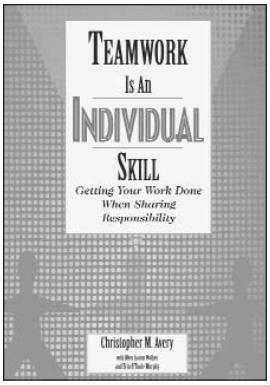
More Interview Topics



- **Tit-for-tat: Why it's the best strategy for teaching others how to cooperate with you**

  Derived from game theory, computer science, and evolutionary psychology, "tit-for-tat" makes others aware of their responsibility for your relationship. Avery can explain the two rules of this simple relationship strategy and how and why the strategy works.

- **Fast teams: Their 5 secrets for reaching consensus quickly and harmoniously**

  Fast teams reach consensus with a high-velocity decision-making process. Avery can discuss how they achieve it—five secrets that include considering more rather than fewer alternatives and involving more rather than fewer people—and why any team can do it if they have nothing to hide and don't fear losing a fight.

- **Accountability versus responsibility: How they're different but equally important to teamwork**

  Accountability and responsibility are complementary rather than identical forces. Avery can discuss the differences between them—for starters, accountability can be assigned, while responsibility can only be taken—and explain why team members must take accountability for deliverables and responsibility for relationships.

- **Left holding the bag, again? 7 steps for discussing violations of trust truthfully and completely**

  When someone leaves you holding the bag, you can live with the relationship in its damaged state or remove yourself from it completely. However, if the relationship is important to you, you must chart a new course by engaging the individual in a conversation about the broken agreement. Avery can discuss how to do it with a proven seven-step process.

- **Cleaning up broken agreements: 4 steps for resuscitating a relationship when *you* break an agreement**

  What happens if *you* break an agreement? Rather than sweep it under the rug, you should clean it up immediately. Avery can discuss how to gain back trust and confidence with a four-step clean-up process.

- **Virtual teamwork: Why technology doesn't create better teamwork**

  If teamwork is challenging, then virtual teamwork is just plain difficult. Avery can discuss why technology won't provide you with better team skills—it merely supports communication across distance—and why first developing and demonstrating those skills in co-located groups works best.

- **Personal responsibility: 9 keys to taking responsibility for your team experience**

  Some people go from project to project doing little more than hoping the team will provide them with a good experience. Or they come to expect a mediocre team experience, not a great one. Avery can discuss why teamwork is an individual skill—not a group process—and reveal nine keys to taking responsibility for the team experience.

- **Creating powerful partnerships: 10 principles for turning every relationship at work into a collaboration**

  Powerful partners support each other in winning without exception. Avery can discuss how they do it by sharing 10 tried-and-true principles.

- **Collaborating "on" purpose: 10 secrets for discovering common goals that unite and inspire your team**

  The best teams discover common goals that unite their members and cause them to naturally collaborate "on" purpose. Avery can discuss the role of shared purpose and the 10 secrets that lead to its power.

- **Trusting just right: 10 ways to make any relationship better by trusting neither too little nor too much**

  Do you get burned by trusting too much? Or lose opportunities by trusting too little? Avery can discuss why trust relates more to what you do than what others do and share how to get the most from every relationship with 10 strategies for trusting "just right."

- **The collaborative mindset: 11 strategies for stepping up to the highest level of teamwork**

  Great collaborators build and maintain great relationships because their mind is tuned for collaboration. Avery can discuss 11 uncommon strategies that push the boundaries of collaborative principles and action.

- **Playing a win-win game in a win-lose world: Why teamwork would be easy without the contradictory demands of hierarchies, bureaucracies, and politics**

  It isn't teamwork that's difficult. It's initiating teamwork in a world that's antagonistic toward teamwork. Avery can discuss how to rise above the competition and the win-lose intentions to play a win-win game.

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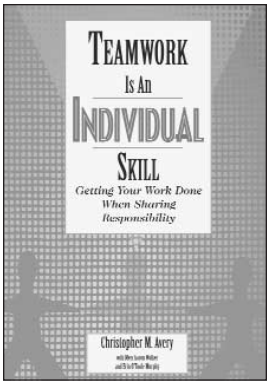
Achieving TeamWisdom

5 steps to getting started



- **Step 1: Assume personal responsibility for your team's productivity.**

  Tell your teammates that you'll only do work that leads to the entire team's success and that you won't meet your goals unless the team meets its goals. Let them know that you'll do everything in your power to help the team gel and operate at superior levels of performance.

- **Step 2: Get in the same boat together.**

  Ask your teammates to put aside individual roles and to focus on what you'll accomplish collectively. Ask them to think of the team as a single unit—indivisible into smaller units—and to answer the question, "What must this unit do?" Make that task your "super-objective" and give it more importance than any other goals or objectives.

- **Step 3: Determine what's in it for you, then what's in it for them.**

  Once you know your super-objective, ask yourself, "What's in it for me to pursue this task?" Prioritize your answers until you truly understand your motivation, then ask your teammates the same question.

- **Step 4: Make and keep agreements.**

  Create a list of how the team "should" behave in individual and group interactions, including communication issues like timeliness, participation, openness, honesty, respect, and confidentiality. Then prioritize the list in terms of which expectations, if turned into operating agreements, would be the most productive for the team.

- **Step 5: Call it!**

  Ask your teammates to agree to "call" each other on behavior that's inconsistent with the agreements, as well as with the team's task and team members' interests. Make each call immediately and in a manner that allows the behavior to be examined and corrected.

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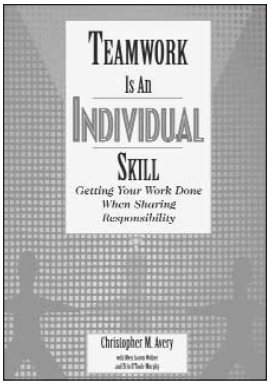
The 8 Most Common Myths About Teamwork

It's time to debunk them and get your team on the right track.



Myth: **Individuals aren't responsible for the quality of their team experience because teamwork is a group skill.**

Truth: This is a popular belief that causes even the smartest and most highly skilled individuals to excuse their poor performance by saying, "I got put on a bad team." Individuals make a vast difference on teams and should act on all of their personal abilities to affect their entire team's performance.

Myth: **Managers and consultants are responsible for building teams.**

Truth: Teambuilding is a series of specific communications or conversations that occur between people who share responsibility to get something done. Team members can and must learn to have these conversations on their own, particularly since a manager or consultant isn't always there.

Myth: **Team members' skills are more important than their motivation.**

Truth: When teamwork is important, skills should come *after* factors like drive, energy, interest, motivation, and enthusiasm because it's shared desire—not talent—that creates teamwork. It's also true that low motivation is more infectious on teams than high motivation. And while skilled individuals act within their roles, committed team members improvise to get the job done.

Myth: **For a team to be really successful, its team members must like one another.**

Truth: Teams that encourage affinity for a shared task—not for one another—create the strongest group cohesion. Rather than using exercises and techniques to promote friendships, they work together to adopt a common focus so that team members see good reasons to work with one another.

Myth: **Team members must subordinate their self-interests for the good of the team.**

Truth: Responsible team members retain their personal power. They find a way to align their self-interests with the team assignment, knowing that "going along" without passion or commitment can take the team to where no member wants to go.

—more—

Myth: **Team members must choose or compromise between getting the job done and treating one another humanely.**

Truth: The best teams believe that the task can get done *and* that team members can have an extraordinary experience.

Myth: **Teambuilding means taking time away from "real work" at offsite events.**

Truth: Teambuilding happens in the course of work.

Myth: **A team that starts on the right track stays on the right track.**

Truth: A number of events can occur during the life of a team to break the team's healthy dynamics. To stay "built," team members should pinpoint problems as they arise and address them immediately.

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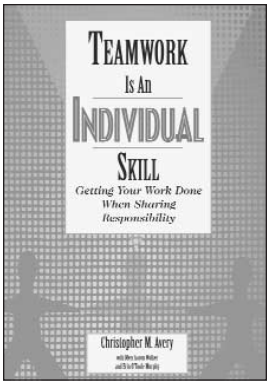
Why Teams Fail

5 mindsets that sabotage teams and how to get over them



- **The Island Mindset**

  The Issue: Team members have an intense desire to fly solo, with little or no overlap or dependencies.

  The Fix: Team members accept that they can accomplish their goals only by playing a "bigger game" and sharing the responsibility of winning that game together.

- **The Win-Lose Mindset**

  The Issue: Team members determine their wins by their teammates' losses.

  The Fix: Team members accept that if their teammates aren't winning, they're not winning either.

- **The Right-Wrong Mindset**

  The Issue: Team members blindly believe that their point of view is right and all other points of view are wrong.

  The Fix: Team members accept that the focus is on function—what works and what doesn't work about a particular point of view—rather than judgment.

- **The Carrot-Stick Mindset**

  The Issue: Team members use rewards and punishments to control their teammates—a mechanism of "tall structures" versus the "flat structures" of teams—and often ask one another, "What will you give me to be on your team?"

  The Fix: Team members accept that the only way they can motivate each other is to ask one another, "What's in it for you to be my partner in this effort?"

- **The Skill-Role Mindset**

  The Issue: Team members believe that their teammates' skills predetermine their roles and their roles fix their accountabilities.

  The Fix: Team members accept that their teammates' roles, as well as their own roles, emerge based on what needs to be done and who is energized to do it.

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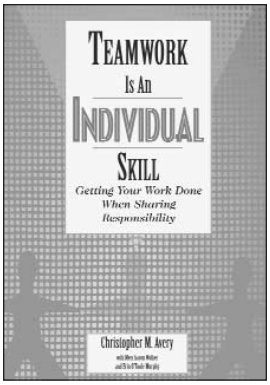
9 Keys to Personal Responsibility



Teamwork is an individual skill—not a group skill—and begins with taking total responsibility for your own team experience.

Do you go from project to project doing little more than hoping this team will provide you with a good experience? Or have you come to expect a mediocre team experience, not a great one? Raise your standards for team performance with nine keys for being totally responsible for your own team experience.

- **Agree to response-ability.**

  Unlock the key to your personal power and growth by becoming consistently more willing and able to respond to whatever happens on your team. When you find yourself in a non-productive or counter-productive relationship, rather than deny, blame, or justify, ask yourself, "How did I create this for myself, and how will I respond to change it?"

- **Retain your personal power.**

  Treat every action and decision as one you consent to and take responsibility for speaking up when you disagree with your team's purpose and direction. Know and understand that "going along" without passion or commitment takes your team where no member wants to go.

- **Increase your "provocability."**

  Get over the need to be nice—or the need to be seen as nice—by "calling" others on their broken agreements or irresponsible behavior. Address small irritations first—they're easier to confront—and identify your teammates' poor behavior and let them know what you prefer instead.

- **Experience and express judgments fully, then let them go.**

  Traditional wisdom admonishes you to "judge not," but not judging is an improbable—if not impossible—action. Rather than make quick judgments, examine your emotions and respond in a way that improves the relationships that are at risk.

- **Learn from every upset.**

  Harvest value from an upset by moving from an "excuse mentality"—getting upset at someone or something, then assigning blame or making excuses—to asking yourself how your own choices and actions created the situation. Determine how you can change your behavior to strengthen the team. And if you need to ask for new agreements with your teammates, do it then and there.

—more—

- **Open a new relationship with a contribution.**

  Advance the work of the new team by making a valuable contribution up front—anything that has value to the group, from sharing special information to which you have access to leveraging your network of contacts to get something done. Make it known that you don't expect an immediate payoff, but extraordinary payoffs later.

- **Be a "present hero" by serving yourself and your team simultaneously.**

  "Present heroes" are individuals who are mindful of the abundance they enjoy as members of their families, teams, and communities, and assume it's in their own self-interest to invest a little personal energy to help the group. Choose one of the dozens of annoyances that you've been wishing "someone" on your team would take care of—from confronting a teammate's difficult behavior to redesigning an inefficient work process—and take care of it yourself. Think in terms of service and avoid being self-righteous or attention-seeking.

- **Master your intentions.**

  Intention is always both conscious and unconscious. Use this awareness to fuel self-discovery, develop cooperation skills, and harness these forces to build powerful integrity. Have teammates ask themselves, "What are my intentions for participating in this team's activities? Will my intentions, both conscious and unconscious, lead the team closer to its goals?" And next time you catch yourself taking words back by saying "I didn't mean it," reflect on how you really might have meant it at some level.

- **Live and work "on" purpose.**

  By working with the conscious intention that comes from determining and knowing your purpose in life, you attract individuals who help you learn and achieve more and are served by your purpose as well.

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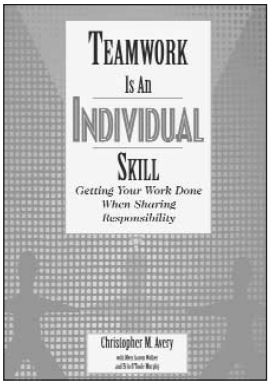
The 5 Conversations Every Team Should Have



Your team is formed, so now what? Consider these make-or-break conversations your first order of business.

- **Conversation 1: Get clear on the collective task.**

  Teambuilding starts with clarifying your team's purpose, not with getting your teammates to like each other. (After all, the task itself—not the people performing the task—is the reason for creating your team.) Thus, the first conversation should focus on clarifying why the team was formed and how you can work together to accomplish something larger than any one member could accomplish on his own.

- **Conversation 2: Align interests and motivations.**

  Making sure that your teammates share the same level of motivation is far more important to successful teamwork than matching appropriate skills. (Though your teammates will improvise skill-wise, they'll perform to the level of your least-invested member motivation-wise.) Thus, the second conversation should focus on members' individual reasons for contributing to the collective task.

- **Conversation 3: Establish behavioral ground rules.**

  The widely used four-phase model of team formation—forming, storming, norming, and performing—suggests that norms don't develop until the third phase. Your team can accelerate the development of these norms by making and enforcing agreements about appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. Thus, the third conversation should focus on how you should treat each other and "call" one another on broken agreements and other behavioral issues.

- **Conversation 4: Set bold goals and anticipate conflicts, breakthroughs, and synergy.**

  Unless you've experienced it several times, you can't anticipate and appreciate how your work on a team can lead to real breakthroughs. Thus, the fourth conversation should focus on setting bold goals and anticipating conflicts, breakthroughs, and synergy as you work to achieve them.

- **Conversation 5: Honor individuals and their differences.**

  Differences in perspective are powerful, particularly when they're aimed at a collective task in an environment of trust. Your team should create explicit opportunities for each member to participate and add value. Thus, the fifth conversation should focus on discovering what each member brings to the task and agreeing to honor differences in approach and perspective.

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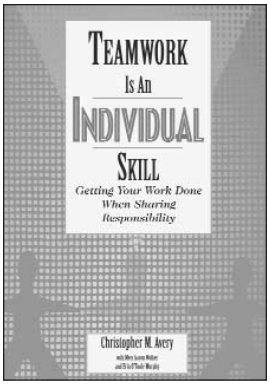
10 Secrets to a Shared Purpose



How the best leaders discover common goals that unite people to collaborate "on" purpose

Learn the secrets for collaborating "on" purpose and your work will always have meaning.

- **Establish shared clarity.**

  Discuss the charter, the mission, the deliverables, and the outcome of your team's work until you can articulate together a common and clear description of your purpose.

- **Select teammates for their motivation first, their skills second.**

  If teamwork is important to you, then look at skills *after* factors like drive, energy, interest, motivation, and enthusiasm—because it's shared desire, not talent, that creates teamwork.

- **Accept—once and for all—that teammates don't have to like each other.**

  Encouraging affinity for a shared task—not for each other—is the fastest and surest way to create strong group cohesion. Instead of using exercises and techniques to promote friendships, get everyone to adopt a common focus so that each team member sees good reason to work with the others.

- **Stop trying to motivate.**

  Why try motivating others when it's nearly impossible? Instead, tap into the motivation that already exists in teammates by asking them about their needs and desires.

- **Determine if your team is "built."**

  A "built" team has shared direction and energy. To achieve this status for your team, lay the foundation early by asking yourselves a variety of important questions. What is the team's task? What is the benefit to each team member for committing to the team's work? Are agreements in place that allow the team to operate rapidly and efficiently? Do team members share a common goal that inspires them? Do you know what each member brings to the team?

- **Know your most powerful team member.**

  Your most powerful team member isn't the team leader. Or the most inspired team member. Or even the smartest member. The uncomfortable truth is, your most powerful team member is your least-invested member, as his lack of commitment establishes a low baseline to which other team members may fall. Accept this sad-but-true principle and address motivation issues early, directly, and regularly.

- **Understand and honor the definition of consensus.**

  Consensus is not about being nice, nor is it about the majority beating up the minority until the minority withdraws. It's 100% agreement to move forward together. For your team to achieve consensus, you must know what to do when there is a difference of opinion, including silencing the majority and giving dissenters a voice.

- **Become a "fast team" by knowing how to arrive at decisions quickly.**

  Your team can achieve high-velocity decision making by considering more alternatives and generating them together; involving more people and more points of view; communicating and integrating with other parts of your organization; drawing on the wisdom of the "gray-hairs"; and establishing the importance of collective action by agreeing that getting a result and learning from it together is more important than being right.

- **Don't fall into the "common enemy" trap.**

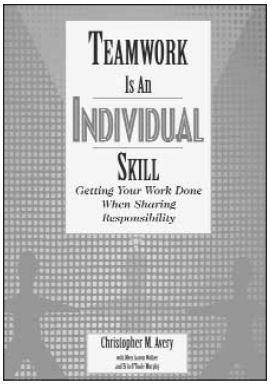
  Instead of simply rallying to beat a common enemy—a frequent and intoxicating tactic that's more like a cheap trick—look for more sustainable and expansive goals that lie beyond beating an opponent.

- **Reorient the relationship when productivity begins to lag.**

  The best time to reorient a team is any time you notice that the sense of shared direction has been lost or that the team's energy has decreased. Get the team members back on track by asking them to articulate what the team has been formed to do, what's in it for them to be on the team, what the team rules and agreements are, and what they bring to the group in terms of skill and responsibilities.

For more information, contact Patti Danos at (312) 335-1464 or pattidanos@aol.com. **www.partnerwerks.com**

10 Principles for Creating Powerful Partnerships



How powerful partners support each other in winning

Do you struggle to get what you need from the people on whom you depend at work? Do you feel that you're on each other's side? Make every work relationship a true partnership by applying the principles used by powerful partners.

- **Work with others to determine what's in it for them.**

  It's smarter and easier to tap into others' motivations rather than to try to dictate them. Ask what's in it for them to work on a particular team until they come up with the personal benefits that motivate them.

- **Be helpful to others. (It's in your best interest.)**

  Learn as much as you can about others' goals, then look for opportunities to help them achieve them. Don't subordinate yourself or give up your own pursuits to help others exclusively, but understand that you gain greater access to their ideas and motivations when you are helpful to them.

- **Protect others' interests.**

  Playing the role of "integrity cop" makes others uncomfortable, but it also contributes to the strength of a team. Record and remember the explicit agreements and implicit expectations made within your team and sound the alarm when one team member's actions threaten to violate other members' interests or boundaries.

- **Give "efficient gifts."**

  Efficient gifts—favors that cost you little or nothing, yet provide great value to the receiver—often add more value than traditional exchanges. Efficient gifts include giving a heads-up on an opportunity or threat, proofreading a document, or making an important introduction. Give them often and ask for favors with the same principle in mind.

- **Celebrate others' successes.**

  Envying the success of others reinforces the assumption there's a limited amount of success in the workplace. Fertilize the ground to grow unlimited success by celebrating the wins of others.

—more—

- **Appreciate conflict.**

  Treat team disagreements as an opportunity to learn. Give others permission to express their viewpoints or dissatisfaction and remember that any upset, fear, or conflict disappears once it's thoroughly confronted by the group.

- **Distinguish criticism from feedback.**

  "Constructive" criticism is still criticism and should be replaced with "compassionate revelation"—or telling your truth with compassion. Feed the consequences of others' actions or behaviors back to them truthfully and compassionately. And when you find yourself about to give criticism, stop yourself until you can compassionately "feed back" your thoughts and feelings.

- **Practice "tit-for-tat."**

  Tit-for-tat makes others aware of their responsibility for your relationship. Derived from game theory, computer science, and evolutionary psychology, this simple relationship strategy has two rules: 1) always cooperate on your first interaction with someone; and 2) follow his lead on each successive interaction.

- **End with the beginning in mind.**

  As teams come to an end, most members jockey for position, politick, or blame negative circumstances on others. Improve the quality of your endings by avoiding burning bridges, harming reputations, and being inhumane to yourself or others. Instead, bring to mind the best days of the collaboration and envision a way to craft a more responsible endgame.

- **Achieve closure.**

  Don't allow your team to begin ceremoniously, then disregard the value of a ritual ending. Determine what closure activity would make you all feel complete, then design an event that has meaning for everyone.

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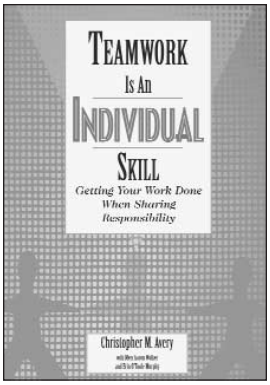
10 Ways to Trust Just Right



How to make any relationship better by trusting neither too little nor too much

Do you get burned by trusting too much? Or lose opportunities by trusting too little? Get the most from every relationship with 10 strategies for trusting "just right."

- **Know that trust reflects responsibility.**

  Trusting others has less to do with them and more to do with your ability to respond to what they do. That's because trust is not only a product of a good relationship, it's a product of what's happening inside you. Identify at least one relationship in which you balk at trusting the other person, then expand your "response-ability" to trust him.

- **Begin building trust by making and keeping small agreements first.**

  Building trust is simple if you begin by making small, low-risk agreements and, if you meet with success, moving on to larger and riskier agreements. Never make an agreement you don't fully intend to keep, and clean up broken agreements at the first opportunity.

- **As you work to trust just right, err in the direction of trusting too much.**

  The immediate repercussions of trusting too little never seem as severe as the repercussions of trusting too much. However, there are very real costs to not trusting enough, including lost opportunities and lackluster team performance. Discuss with your team what happens when members trust too much and too little, then dare to trust beyond your habitual comfort zone by starting with smaller agreements.

- **Talk about violations of trust.**

  When a team member has left you holding the bag, engage him in conversation about the broken agreement and chart a new course for the relationship. Be explicit, use cause-and-effect language, and tell him how the violation of trust affected you personally. Practice feedback skills by giving good news to a teammate who kept an agreement or helped you in another way.

- **Call others on broken agreements.**

  If you want to operate in a trusting relationship with people who haven't kept their agreements, call them on it the way an umpire calls a foul or strike. Call it in a clear and non-demeaning way and ask for a new understanding about how you'll treat each other's agreements in the future.

- **Clean up your own broken agreements.**

  Don't sweep your own broken agreements under the rug. Clean them up immediately by acknowledging and apologizing for them, then asking what you can do to correct the situation.

- **Acknowledge relationship mistakes quickly and move to resolution.**

  You won't learn or move forward if you don't acknowledge your mistakes. How you acknowledge them makes a big difference, too. Be careful about the language you use—for starters, try phrases like "I blew it" or "I let you down"—and make sure the other person knows that you are sincere.

- **Apologize effectively.**

  A successful apology signals responsibility and learning, not subordination or shame. Apologize readily with grace and integrity. Rather than chanting the same old, "I'm sorry," try saying, "I apologize to you. You didn't deserve that from me."

- **Ask how you can make amends.**

  Asking how you can make amends with a teammate gives you the information you need to get the relationship back on track. Don't assume you know what to do, and avoid making amends in a way that encourages him to quickly accept or overlook your behavior.

- **After making amends, recommit by describing how your relationship will work better in the future.**

  Recommitment reduces your likelihood of repeating your mistake and allows your teammates to restore their faith in you. Tell a teammate what you will do to care for the relationship from now on and, if you want to make your new attitude really stick, tell him in the presence of your other teammates.

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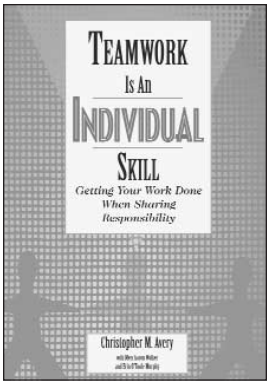
11 Strategies for Developing a Collaborative Mindset



How to build and maintain great relationships by tuning your mind for collaboration

Step up to the highest level of teamwork with 11 uncommon strategies that push the boundaries of collaborative principles and action.

- **Play a big game, not a small one.**

  You experience more opportunities and find more people who want to play on your team when you expand the boundaries of your game.

- **Treat whatever people tell you as true for them.**

  Don't work overtime to prove others wrong or disparage them for having a different point of view. Remove "right" and "wrong" from your vocabulary and consider statements like "That works for me," or "That doesn't work from my point of view."

- **Honor differences.**

  You reap the full benefits of the diversity in today's workplace when you treat it as a functional imperative, not a political or moral issue. When you encounter people from different cultures, go beyond political correctness and consider how their different points of view contribute to your team's goals and outcomes.

- **Distinguish between competition and antagonism.**

  Competition is a useful force in team relationships, particularly when it fosters choice and invention. However, when a team confuses or mislabels antagonism with a competitive spirit, it weighs heavily on its performance. Explore the distinctions between competition and antagonism and make an agreement to shift your attitudes and behaviors to respect your teammates and competitors.

- **Identify relationship values that transcend win-win, win-lose, and lose-lose.**

  You have more choices than cooperation and competition within your team. Understand the relationship values and their full range of outcomes, including cooperation (win-win), competition (win-lose), mutual harm (lose-lose), and martyrdom (lose-win).

- **Value the task and the people performing the task.**

  While working to accomplish a task, conflict can arise between accomplishing the task and treating people humanely. To break through the conflict, apply a dual-value mindset that says your task must get done and your teammates must have an extraordinary experience.

- **Embrace the power of exchange, expansion, and integrity.**

  Learn and apply three keys to producing extraordinary collaborations: 1) exchange—taking turns to grant favors, talk, listen, give, and receive; 2) expansion—agreeing upon a goal that is bigger than any of the individual collaborators; and 3) integrity—communicating frequently, telling the truth, keeping agreements, and creating a conflict-resolution process in advance.

- **Insist on contractual exchange and relational exchange.**

  Make the distinction between contractual exchange and relational exchange. A contractual exchange—the give-and-receive component of a partnership—won't sustain your collaboration if the relational exchange—the fair-treatment component of a relationship—isn't intact due to negative behaviors like niggling after a deal is made, ignoring needs, breaking agreements, or asking too many favors.

- **Don't be afraid to set big or even huge goals.**

  The more expansive the goal, the more opportunity that will be created. Make your goals so clear, specific, and bold that team members initially won't be able to imagine how they'll be met.

- **Don't be the first to defect.**

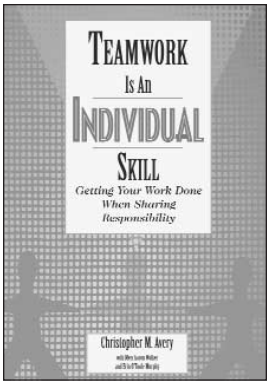
  This doesn't mean that you have to become a doormat. As soon as you feel the need to put yourself before the collaboration—and there's nothing wrong with needing to do it—tell on yourself and negotiate a change in the relationship.

- **Know the relationship between integration and expansion.**

  Integrate for expansion and expand for integration. In other words, integrate to draw your teammates toward each other and hold them there until two or more points of view mesh into a larger, more expansive whole. Then expand by suspending judgment and looking beyond preconceptions for the purpose of defining a vision large enough to include or integrate people who previously weren't included.

For more information, contact Patti Danos at (312) 335-1464 or pattidanos@aol.com. **www.partnerwerks.com**

Do You Have TeamWisdom?



Put yourself to the test and see if you're taking responsibility for your team's success.

TeamWisdom is a set of individual skills and behaviors that leads to highly responsible and productive relationships at work. To learn if you've got it, read each pair of statements below and check "A" or "B" as being most true for you.

1. A _____ I take personal responsibility for the success of my team experience.

B _____ I make excuses or blame others when my team doesn't succeed on a task or assignment.

2. A _____ I ask myself and my teammates, "What has our team been formed to do?"

B _____ I expect my team leader or teammates to tell me my role on the team, then leave me alone to do it. If a team member doesn't do his part, it's not my problem.

3. A _____ I take an active interest in what motivates my teammates, as well as think about and share what winning as a team means to me.

B _____ I think our team members' interests and motivations are our manager or team leader's concern, not my concern.

4. A _____ I only make agreements that I fully intend to keep. If a teammate breaks an agreement, I call him on it and explain how important agreements are to me and our team.

B _____ My teammates can't predict whether I'll follow through on my agreements. And who knows whether they'll keep their agreements?

5. A _____ I make certain that our team is energized by clear and bold goals that unite and stretch us.

B _____ I think goal setting is a waste of time and energy, and I simply want to get to work.

Did you check more "A" or "B" statements? If you checked more "A" statements, your TeamWisdom allows you to get more done with less time and energy, earn more, attain satisfaction, and even transform your workplace. If you checked more "B" statements, you lack TeamWisdom and often frustrate yourself and others and cost your company money.

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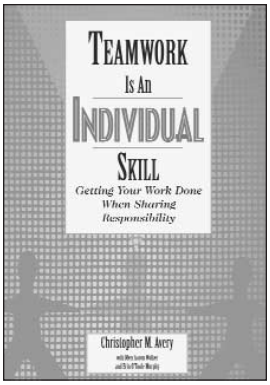
7 Steps for Managing Violations of Trust



Tired of being left holding the bag? Learn how to discuss it truthfully and completely.

- **Step 1: Acknowledge your own feelings about calling someone on a broken agreement.**

  It may conjure up a variety of feelings, from fear or doubt to commitment or courage.

- **Step 2: Be invited.**

  Since you can't tell others what they're not ready to hear, make it your personal responsibility to prepare them to receive your feedback. Start with something like, "I want to talk with you about how we're working together. Is this a good time?"

- **Step 3: Be explicit.**

  Be specific about the actions and behaviors that cause you concern. Tell the individual that you had an agreement with him for a specific action to take place by a specific time, but he didn't follow through.

- **Step 4: Use cause-and-effect language.**

  Describe what the consequences of the broken agreement were to you, as well as to the team. You might say, "When you didn't deliver on your promise, I was unable to complete my task and, in turn, the team fell behind schedule."

- **Step 5: Explain how the broken agreement affects you personally.**

  Take responsibility for your judgments about the person—most likely, you've made them—by sharing your feelings with him. You might say, "I feel betrayed," or "I sense that your promise is not as important to you as it is to me."

- **Step 6: Stop talking and listen.**

  If your words are accurate, compassionate, and nonjudgmental, you'll tap into the person's integrity and find him prepared to make amends. If he begins to deny, justify, or blame others for his behavior, invite him to examine his own behavior with you.

- **Step 7: Make a new agreement.**

  Tell the person what you want from the relationship and how you'd like him to handle future agreements that stand a chance of being broken.

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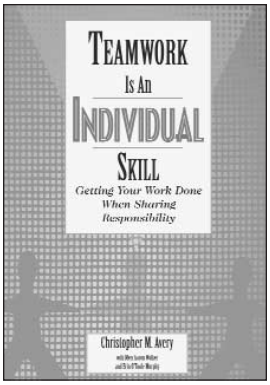
The 5 Secrets of Fast Teams



Put them to work on your team to reach consensus quickly and harmoniously.

- **They consider more alternatives and generate them together.**
  Fast teams know that generating lots of alternatives actually enhances decision making.

- **They involve more people and more points of view.**
  Fast teams hear from more participants, not fewer participants. In turn, they gather more and unique viewpoints and increase their probability of discovering more creative and expansive alternatives.

- **They communicate and integrate with other parts of the organization.**
  Fast teams invite other departments to participate in their planning sessions because they often suggest new and better solutions.

- **They draw on the wisdom of the "gray-hairs."**
  Fast teams check their thinking with coaches and mentors whose knowledge, experience, and intuition help the team make smarter choices.

- **They value getting results and learning together over being right.**
  Fast teams make sure that everyone is heard, especially those with minority views. If consensus doesn't emerge in a reasonable amount of time, the leader calls for group action on the alternative that has the greatest chance for success.

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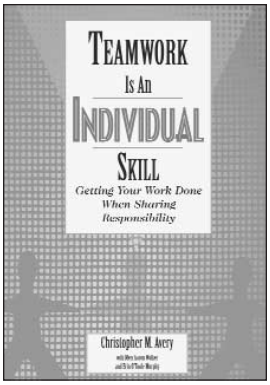
How Are Your Team Skills?



Got the right stuff when it comes to creating successful teams and partnerships? Put yourself to the test and know for sure.

People who consistently create powerful relationships at work are people who know and practice great team skills. Are you one of them? Check the statements below that are true for you, then read on to see where you stand.

_____ I build effective partnerships with people on whom I depend to get my work done.

_____ I have a proven system for creating productive partnerships.

_____ I stay on top of others when they don't deliver so I can continue to depend on them.

_____ I ask myself if I intend to keep an agreement as I make it.

_____ I own up to a broken agreement immediately and make amends at the first possible opportunity.

_____ I know how to break an agreement without breaking trust.

_____ I confront co-workers when they have broken an agreement with me rather than ignore or stew over it.

_____ I confront co-workers when they behave unethically, immorally, or illegally.

_____ I negotiate with co-workers about how we'll work together and treat one another, as well as how we'll address problems.

_____ I know how I want to be treated in a work relationship and understand how to ask for it.

_____ I view my judgment of others' inappropriate behaviors as an opportunity to ask for what I want to see happen in the future.

_____ I work to ensure that I'm aligned with others and pursuing shared goals when our results depend on their performance.

_____ I learn and act upon what winning means to others when my work depends on their performance.

_____ I pledge to never defect on others when my work depends on their performance.

_____ I know how to discover and amplify others' motivation for their work.

—over for scoring—

Scoring

Give yourself one point for each statement you checked as true. Then look below to see where you stand when it comes to your team skills.

0–3 Your results at work suffer from a lack of working successfully with others. Invest in individual team-skill development soon.

4–7 You miss out on the optimal benefits of working responsibly and productively with others. Learn more about team skills and practice them.

8–11 You maximize your technical skills through your relationships with others and are considered a good partner and teammate. Focus on sustaining and building upon these strengths.

12–15 You are poised for collaborative greatness. Put yourself in a position to leverage your own and other's talents.

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