

THE TEAMWORKING POCKETBOOK

By Ian Fleming

Drawings by Phil Hailstone

“Clears the fog in team dynamics and makes teamwork enjoyable as well as essential.”
Steve Evans, Director of Leisure and Community Resources, South Gloucestershire Council

“There are very few truly high-performing teams; this book provides practical tools and tips to help you ensure that the teams you belong to join the few.”
Ian Anderson, Human Resources Director, The Post Office

“A very reliable and practical guide for team leaders at all levels.”
Allan J. D. Taylor, Training & Development Manager, Scottish Courage Brewing Ltd

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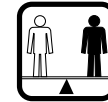
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HOW TO BUILD A TEAM

IDENTIFY SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES



In an ideal world, effective teams should have a balanced mix of both skill and experience. In practical terms, however, the challenge for many of today's leaders is to blend the best of what they inherit, often within limited timescales.

It will help the group to form if time is spent at an early stage getting members to talk about:

- The skills they have developed, at work and elsewhere
- Their achievements (this despite most people tending to be naturally modest)
- Their experience of working in teams and what they have learnt
- How they prefer to operate, and what they value in others
- What they think they can contribute to the task
- Their interests and what they regard as a worthwhile challenge
- Any initial concerns they may have

Jumping straight into work methods and action planning will be of little value unless you know what is available in your team.

HOW TO BUILD A TEAM

FROM VISION TO GOALS



The secret is not necessarily to have a series of well-written technically correct goals or objectives.

What is needed are statements that capture the imagination and energy of those involved, whilst helping to achieve the vision.

Give some thought to what these ought to be before you meet with your team. However, aim to get buy-in and accountability, rather than impose your own views.

Don't be afraid if team members challenge suggested goals, as this could stimulate debate.

HOW TO BUILD A TEAM

GIVE PEOPLE ROLES



In teams that work well:

- Individuals are clear about the part they are expected to play
- Roles may overlap but they don't conflict
- The mix of roles and skills is sufficient for the task in hand

It is easy to become over concerned with research into team roles, but most leaders do not get the luxury of hand picking their people.

In practical terms, you need people to be flexible if and when circumstances alter. Identifying people's abilities and preferences at the initial team meeting can be helpful both in allocating roles and in times of change.



HOW TO BUILD A TEAM

FIND THE BEST METHOD



Within the group there is likely to be a great deal of experience of how not to do things. You will, no doubt, recall:

- The meetings that overran their planned time
- The group that never made a decision
- The time it took to get approval for even the simplest items

Encourage people to share their experiences, so that as a group you can work out the best way to organise yourselves. Suggestions may include:

- Keeping things simple and not over complicating matters
- Not over planning (things can - and inevitably will - change)
- Breaking down large tasks into manageable sections with their own timescales
- Encouraging flexibility and openness to new ideas and methods
- Constantly looking at what you are doing and how (Are there easier ways?)

Work on the basis that the fewer rules the better, as rules reduce freedom and responsibility.

HOW TO BUILD A TEAM

TEAM MEETINGS



Give particular thought to running your team meetings. Consider:

- The purpose of holding meetings in the first place
- How often you need them
- The practicalities of getting people together
- The option of rotating the chair at meetings, as a way of getting everyone involved

Use a system for solving problems and making decisions. Consider:

- Creativity techniques for those problems that aren't routine ('The Creative Manager's Pocketbook' will show you how)
- How decisions will be made by the leader or by consensus
- What levels of authority people will have (Who will have the power to decide and on what issues?)
- How you will communicate any decision
- How you will judge the success of your meetings

Finally, consider ways you can make team meetings inspiring and stimulating.

(For practical advice read 'The Meetings Pocketbook' by Patrick Forsyth.)

HOW TO BUILD A TEAM

REVIEW PROGRESS



It is often difficult to find the time to review progress, when caught up in the day-to-day running of a business. However, if you want to be successful, you need to take time out and examine:

- Progress against the goals and objectives that have been set
- How the team is functioning:
 - Openness to people and ideas ('Ah yes, but ...')
 - Co-operation; is it happening?
 - Meetings; productive or a waste of time?
 - Communication; are there gaps?
 - What have people been grumbling about?
 - Conflict; constructive or harmful?
 - Skills and talents; is the team making best use of them?
 - Are we our own worst enemies?
 - Are the real issues being tackled or avoided?
 - What lessons can be learnt?

Try and take time out to reflect - it will pay dividends in the long run.

HOW TO BUILD A TEAM

HAVE FUN!



Sometimes work can be all too serious.

Teams operating in even the most difficult circumstances still manage to have fun. You can tell this from:

- The 'buzz' and energy about the place
- The smiles on people's faces; they actually look as if they are enjoying their work (How often do you see that?)
- The way they celebrate success

What can **you do** to make work more enjoyable and exciting, and people more enthusiastic?



About the Author

Ian Fleming, MA DMS Dip Ed

Ian works as a freelance management trainer. With a preference for coaching rather than lecturing, his approach is to work mainly in-company helping managers and teams tackle real issues.

This is his fifth title in the Pocketbook Series and is based on his practical experience of helping groups who are stuck on the journey of trying to become a team.

Contact

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