

ATD Soft Skills Series

Teamwork in Talent Development

Thane Bellomo

ATD Soft Skills Series

Teamwork in Talent Development

Thane Bellomo

atd
PRESS

Alexandria, VA

© 2021 ASTD DBA the Association for Talent Development (ATD)
All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America.

24 23 22 21

1 2 3 4 5

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, information storage and retrieval systems, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permission requests, please go to copyright.com, or contact Copyright Clearance Center (CCC), 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923 (telephone: 978.750.8400; fax: 978.646.8600).

ATD Press is an internationally renowned source of insightful and practical information on talent development, training, and professional development.

ATD Press

1640 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314 USA

Ordering information: Books published by ATD Press can be purchased by visiting ATD's website at td.org/books or by calling 800.628.2783 or 703.683.8100.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2021939796

ISBN-10: 1-952157-66-8

ISBN-13: 978-1-952157-66-0

e-ISBN: 978-1-952157-67-7

ATD Press Editorial Staff

Director: Sarah Halgas

Manager: Melissa Jones

Content Manager, Career Development: Lisa Spinelli



Developmental Editor: Jack Harlow

Production Editor: Hannah Sternberg

Text Design: Shirley E.M. Raybuck

Cover Design: John Anderson Jr.



Printed by BR Printers, San Jose, CA



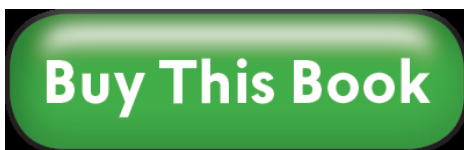
To my Mom and Dad,
who always believe in me.

To Seth Beardsley and Brian Zukauckas
for their thought partnership.

To my children Calvin, Charlie, Sam, and Coco,
who have taught me what matters.




Contents



About the Series	vii
Series Foreword	ix
Introduction	xv
Part 1. Making the Case for Teamwork	
Chapter 1. What Is Teamwork?.....	3
Chapter 2. Why Teamwork Matters.....	13
Chapter 3. Challenges to Teamwork	29
Part 2. Teamwork and Talent Development	
Chapter 4. Why Teamwork Matters in Talent Development	43
Chapter 5. Frame the Work	53
Chapter 6. Embrace Conflict and Encourage Curiosity	75
Chapter 7. Engage in Challenge.....	85
Chapter 8. Build Trust	95
Chapter 9. Establish Community and Duty	107
Chapter 10. Putting It All Together.....	121
Index	123
About the Author	129

About the Series



The world of work is changing. As companies once prioritized radical workplace performance and productivity improvements, they focused on training their employees with the purpose of getting more work done faster. But companies have learned that while their people might be increasingly productive, they aren't working better, particularly with each other. Lurking on the horizon is always greater automation, which will continue to shift the balance between the needs for hard and soft skills. Employees of the future will spend more time on activities that machines are less capable of, such as managing people, applying expertise, and communicating with others. More than ever, soft skills are being recognized as a premium.

Enter talent development.

TD professionals play a unique role in addressing the increasing demand for soft skills. They work with people and on behalf of people: A trainer facilitating a group of learners. A team of instructional designers working cross-functionally to address a business need. A learning manager using influence to make the case for increased budget or resources. But how can TD professionals expect to develop future employees in these soft skills if they're not developing their own?

At the Association for Talent Development (ATD), we're dedicated to creating a world that works better and empowering TD professionals like you to develop talent in the workplace. As part of this effort, ATD developed the Talent Development Capability Model, a framework to guide the TD profession in what practitioners need to know and do to develop themselves, others, and their organizations. While soft skills appear most prominently under the Building Personal Capability domain,

these crucial skills cross every capability in the model, including those under Developing Professional Capability and Impacting Organizational Capability. Soft skills enable TD professionals to take their instructional design, training delivery and facilitation, future readiness, change management, and other TD capabilities to the next level.

Just as TD professionals need resources on how to develop talent, they need guidance in improving their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills—to be more adaptable, self-aware and empathetic, creative, team-oriented and collaborative, and influential and persuasive. This ATD series provides such guidance.

Organized with two parts, each book in the ATD Soft Skills Series tackles one soft skill that TD professionals need to foster in themselves to help the people and organizations they serve. Part 1 breaks down the skill into what it is, why it's important, and the internal or external barriers to improving it. Part 2 turns the lens on the daily work of TD professionals and how they can practice and perfect that skill on the job. Featuring worksheets, self-reflection exercises, and best practices, these books will empower TD professionals to build career resiliency by matching their technical expertise with newfound soft skill abilities.

Books in the series:

- *Adaptability in Talent Development*
- *Emotional Intelligence in Talent Development*
- *Creativity in Talent Development*
- *Teamwork in Talent Development*
- *Influence in Talent Development*

We're happy to bring you the ATD Soft Skills Series and hope these books support you in your future learning and development.

Jack Harlow, Series Editor
Senior Developmental Editor, ATD Press

Series Foreword

Oh, Those Misnamed Soft Skills!

For years organizations have ignored soft skills and emphasized technical skills, often underestimating the value of working as a team, communicating effectively, using problem solving skills, and managing conflict. New managers have failed because their promotions are often based on technical qualifications rather than the soft skills that foster relationships and encourage teamwork. Trainers as recently as a dozen years ago were reluctant to say that they facilitated soft skills training. Why?

Soft Skills: The Past and Now

The reluctance to admit to delivering (or requiring) soft skills often starts with the unfortunate name, “soft,” which causes people to view them as less valuable than “hard” skills such as accounting or engineering. The name suggests they are easy to master or too squishy to prioritize developing. On both counts that’s wrong. They aren’t. In fact, Seth Godin calls them “real” skills, as in, “Real because they work, because they’re at the heart of what we need today” (Godin 2017).

Yet, as a society, we seem to value technical skills over interpersonal skills. We tend to admire the scientists who discovered the vaccine for COVID-19 over leaders who used their communication skills to engage the workforce when they were quarantined at home. We easily admit to not knowing how to fly an airplane but readily believe we are creative or can adapt on the fly. We think that because we’ve been listening all our lives, we are proficient at it—when we’re not. As a result, we put much more emphasis on developing our technical skills through advanced degrees and post-higher education training or certifications

to land that first or next job than we do on mastering our interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.

Fortunately, many businesses and their leaders are now recognizing the value of having a workforce that has technical knowledge supported by soft skills. That's good because soft skills matter more to your career than you may envision. Consider: as a part of the Jobs Reset Summit, the World Economic Forum determined that 50 percent of the workforce needed reskilling and upskilling. The summit also identified the top 10 job reskilling needs for the future. Eight of the 10 required skills in the 21st century are nontechnical; these skills include creativity, originality, and initiative; leadership and social influence; and resilience, stress tolerance, and flexibility (Whiting 2020). LinkedIn's 2019 *Global Talent Trends Report* showed that acquiring soft skills is the most important trend fueling the future of the workplace: 91 percent of the respondents said that soft skills matter as much or more than technical skills and 80 percent believed they were critical to organizational success (Chandler 2019). A Deloitte report (2017) suggested that "soft skill-intensive occupations will account for two-thirds of all jobs by 2030" and that employees who practice skills associated with collaboration, teamwork, and innovation may be worth \$2,000 more per year to businesses. As the cost of robots decreases and AI improves, soft skills like teamwork, problem solving, creativity, and influence will become more important.

Soft skills may not be as optional as one might originally imagine.

Soft Skills: Their Importance

Soft skills are sometimes referred to as enterprise skills or employability skills. Despite their bad rap, they are particularly valuable because they are transferable between jobs, careers, departments, and even industries, unlike hard or technical skills, which are usually relevant only to specific jobs. Communication often lands at the top of the soft skill list, but the category encompasses other skills, such as those included in the ATD Soft Skills Series: emotional intelligence, adaptability, teamwork, creativity,

and influence. These personal attributes influence how well employees build trust, establish accountability, and demonstrate professional ethics.

Soft skills are also important because almost every job requires employees to interact with others. Organizations require a workforce that has technical skills and formal qualifications for each job; however, the truth is that business is about relationships. And, organizations depend on relationships to be successful. This is where successful employees, productive organizations, and soft skills collide.

Soft Skills and the Talent Development Capability Model

Talent development professionals are essential links to ensure that organizations have all the technical and soft skills that are required for success. I sometimes get exhausted just thinking about everything we need to know to ensure success for our organizations, customers, leaders, learners, and ourselves. The TD profession is no cookie-cutter job. Every day is different; every design is different; every delivery is different; and every participant is different. We are lucky to have these differences because these broad requirements challenge us to grow and develop.

As TD professionals, we've always known that soft skills are critical for the workforce we're responsible for training and developing. But what about yourself as a TD professional? What soft skills do you require to be effective and successful in your career? Have you ever thought about all the skills in which you need to be proficient?

ATD's Talent Development Capability Model helps you define what technical skills you need to improve, but you need to look beyond the short capability statements to understand the soft skills required to support each (you can find the complete model on page 48). Let's examine a few examples where soft skills are required in each of the domains.

- **Building Personal Capability** is dedicated to soft skills, although all soft skills may not be called out. It's clear that communication, emotional intelligence, decision making, collaboration, cultural awareness, ethical behavior, and lifelong learning are soft skills.

Project management may be more technical, but you can't have a successful project without great communication and teamwork.

- **Developing Professional Capability** requires soft skills throughout. Could instructional design, delivery, and facilitation exist without creativity? You can't coach or attend to career development without paying attention to emotional intelligence (EI) and influence. Even technology application and knowledge management require TD professionals to be adaptable, creative, and team players for success.
- **Impacting Organizational Capability** focuses on the soft skills you'll use while working at the leadership and organizational level. For you to have business insight, be a partner with management, and develop organizational culture, you will need to build teamwork with the C-suite, practice influencing, and use your EI skills to communicate with them. Working on a talent strategy will require adaptability and influence. And you can't have successful change without excellent communication, EI, and teamwork. Future readiness is going to require creativity and innovation.

Simply put, soft skills are the attributes that enable TD professionals to interact effectively with others to achieve the 23 capabilities that span the spectrum of disciplines in the Capability Model.

Soft Skills: The Key to Professionalism

So, as TD professionals we need to be proficient in almost all soft skills to fulfill the most basic responsibilities of the job. However, there's something even more foundational to the importance of developing our soft skills: Only once we've mastered these skills can we project the professionalism that will garner respect from our stakeholders, our learners, and our peers. We must be *professional*, or why else are we called *TD professionals*?

Professionalism is the driving force to advance our careers. To earn the title of TD professional we need to be high performers and exhibit the qualities and skills that go beyond the list of technical TD skills. We

need to be soft-skill proficient to deliver services with aplomb. We need to be team members to demonstrate we work well with others. We need to be EI-fluent to ensure that we are aware of, control, and express our emotions and handle interpersonal relationships well. We need to be creative to help our organization achieve a competitive advantage. We need to be adaptable to future-proof our organizations. And we need influencing skills that help us earn that proverbial seat at the table.

We all need role-specific knowledge and skills to perform our jobs, but those who achieve the most are also proficient in soft skills. You will use these skills every day of your life, in just about every interaction you have with others. Soft skills allow you to demonstrate flexibility, resourcefulness, and resilience—and as a result, enhance your professionalism and ensure career success. And a lack of them may just limit your career potential.


Clearly, soft skills are more critical than once thought and for TD professionals and trainers they are likely to be even more critical. Your participants and customers expect you to be on the leading edge of most topics that you deliver. And they also expect you to model the skills required for a successful career. So, which soft skills do you need to become a *professional* TD professional? Is it clearer communication? Interpersonal savvy? Increased flexibility? Self-management? Professional presence? Resourcefulness?

E.E. Cummings said, “It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are.” I hope that you have the courage to determine which skills you need to improve to be the best trainer you can be—and especially to identify those misnamed soft skills that aren’t *soft* at all. Then establish standards for yourself that are high enough to keep you on your training toes. The five books in the ATD Soft Skills Series offer you a great place to start.

Elaine Biech, Author

Skills for Career Success: Maximizing Your Potential at Work

Introduction

 The wind-swept hills of southeast Turkey are arid. Fertile valleys give way to dry hills dotted with shrubs and small trees. Small villages populate the green valleys and goat farmers have eked out a living in these hills for thousands of years. There is nothing here to suggest anything other than the slow passage of time. And yet, in 1994, on a small hill roughly translated as Pot Belly Hill, Klaus Schmidt of the German Archaeological Institute began to fully explore Gobekli Tepe. You may not have heard of Gobekli Tepe (not many people have), but among the many fascinating things there are to know about it, it may also be one of the most important landmarks in the history of teamwork.

Gobekli Tepe is huge. Across a dozen acres, it is a buried complex of stone monuments and structures. Enormous monoliths standing more than 20 feet tall with intricate relief carvings are arranged in geometric order and weigh up to 20 tons. The complex was apparently built over centuries by the people of this land. Archeologists presume it was a temple structure of some kind, but we cannot be sure why so many hundreds or thousands of people would labor consistently over centuries to build such a place. Indeed, the scope of the Gobekli Tepe cannot be overstated in its complexity, the logistical coordination required to build it, and the engineering knowledge applied to complete such a massive undertaking.

What makes the complex so incredibly extraordinary, almost impossible even, is that it was built more than 11,000 years ago. You read that correctly—11,000 years. That is more than 5,000 years before the Great Pyramids. Its construction was so far back into the dawn of precivilization that it was built during a time when archeologists have presumed

that humans were merely small bands of hunters and gatherers living in caves and scrubbing the forests and hills for food and shelter. How is this possible, you might ask? By what miracle did these ancient hunters and gatherers band together to labor for centuries to create such a wonder of the world? We do not know, and we may never know. But we do know that for whatever reason they labored together over many centuries, and that reason was important to them. The importance of the work inspired and motivated these people to use their natural predisposition to collaborate and cooperate to dedicate generations of effort to accomplishing a monumental task.

Teamwork Is Human Nature

I tell this story because Gobekli Tepe demonstrates the power of collaboration and teamwork on a scale almost unimaginable. What it took to mine and carve 25-ton granite blocks, transport them, design and build the complex structures, and coordinate hundreds (if not thousands) of people and provide food, water, and shelter is almost beyond imagination for the presumably “primitive” nature of these small hunter-gatherer groups. And the skills required to accomplish such an undertaking did not appear overnight.

The discovery of Gobekli Tepe most certainly reaffirms not only the power of teamwork, but also that humans are the inheritors of a primal instinct to work together, to collaborate, and to coordinate to accomplish important work. We are wired to work together in the same way that wolves hunt in packs or trees grow in fertile soil; it is simply what humans do. In fact, there was never a time when people didn't work together. There was never a first time when two people got together and decided, “You know what, we should work together!” No, the power of teamwork resides within every one of us. If hunter-gatherers more than 11,000 years ago could come together to build such things, surely we are capable of the same. As we go forward together to explore teams and teamwork, keep the story of Gobekli Tepe in mind.

Over thousands of years of incremental cooperation and collaboration, we have succeeded in building the world we live in today. Working together allowed us to build functioning societies, raise families, live in ordered communities, and run organizations. And that, in the end, is the point of this book. How can we most effectively leverage this innate sense of teaming to accomplish important things that we've used for millennia? How can we most effectively identify, develop, and hone this teaming predisposition into a set of processes and, most importantly, skills that we can get better at? How can we use this predisposition to work together to improve our teams and our organizations and to potentially continue to help your organization and indeed humanity on its journey?

You may smirk at the notion that you are engaged in helping humanity itself achieve something. You are, perhaps, only a small cog in a large mechanism. Maybe you are a talent development consultant or an L&D professional. Perhaps you are a leader running a small or even large organization. It may feel like your contribution to such a large story is necessarily small; minute even. But I am here to assure you that the contribution you are capable of making is not insignificant. Humanity progresses in incremental fashion. As you lead or contribute to your teams, you are presumably accomplishing something; something useful and important to whatever it is you and your organization do. And all those tiny accomplishments add up to something that has the potential to be a force for good in the world, to your organization, to your teammates, and to yourself.

The Power of Teams

Teams are powerful. Fundamentally, the team is the unit whereby change in our organizations happens. It is in the collaboration of ideas and the sharing of perspectives that allows us to accomplish something meaningful. It is in this struggle that people grow and develop into something more than they were before. And we can thus contribute to our shared endeavor more powerfully than we previously could.

Great good can come from teams that goes far beyond the output the team has been tasked to create. The sense of purpose, community, and belonging that great teams generate is the most powerful force for loyalty and engagement your organization can leverage. Of course, it may be that your organizational mission is so compelling that people will dedicate their lives to whatever it is you do based on the honor of working for you. But more than likely, people's loyalties are rooted in the people that they work, live, and breathe with each day. This dedication to one another and to the mission of the team translates into organizational dedication and discretionary effort that can reach far beyond the confines of that individual team. It has the power to create intrinsic motivations that generate activity not for money, power, or prestige, but because they are in the service of the goal and each other.

Therefore, let us also not forget, as we sometimes do, that our participation in collectively accomplishing something important not only helps our organization, but it also has the potential to have a profound impact on each of us. Our experience working on teams is the venue where many of us get the most satisfaction from our work. It is the vehicle where we can most effectively see our efforts bear fruit. It can help us see that we have something to contribute. In the crucible of struggle within a real team doing important work, all our strengths and weaknesses become apparent. In that context, teams can help us understand that what we can offer, and indeed who we are, is not only good enough but is valuable.

If You Want Teamwork, Give the Team Work

Important work is the catalyzing force that prompts people to display the attributes of high-performing teams: engagement, discretionary effort, curiosity, challenge-seeking, accountability, the development of trust and vulnerability, and the creation of community and belonging. Without important work, we generally see none of these things; in fact, the inverse is true. When people engage in unimportant work, they commonly dis-

play attributes that we associate with poor teams: disengagement, apathy, little discretionary effort, low accountability, and mistrust. When people engage in work that is important to them, they gravitate toward its accomplishment because of that importance. They are willing to endure suffering, they are eager to engage, and they are forced by the hardship of that effort to bring their true selves to the team. And it is in the sharing of this common experience that trust, community, belonging, and acceptance come to them, creating a virtuous cycle that powers true teams to accomplish things they may not have thought possible.

All of this is nothing to diminish. How we organize our teams, how we lead our teams, and how we participate in our teams has a real impact on people. When done well, teams have the power to engage and validate. But they also have the power to disengage and invalidate. Teams can reshape your organization and its people. Using teams wisely and effectively can take your organization to another level and elevate its members in many ways. Used unwisely, teams can disengage employees, ruin your culture, and sow mistrust. Provide people with excellent team leadership in accomplishing important and difficult work, and your team will likely perform well. Present people with unimportant work and poor leadership, and they will likely perform poorly—no matter how many team-building exercises you have. When creating a team, it is important to think deeply about its implications; for you, your organization, and the members of your team.

How This Book Will Help You

The burden of team leadership is heavier than we might otherwise think. Talent development professionals play a significant role in addressing team effectiveness. While leaders are the ones who actually lead teams, they are sometimes ill-equipped to understand team dynamics. They are primarily the ones who throw people together to solve a problem without thinking much about how to best craft the team to gain all the secondary benefits that we will talk about. Talent development professionals can encourage

leaders to take appropriate action. They can influence leaders on how to best create the conditions whereby the team will develop the kind of dedication to each other that will harvest the most value.

To fulfill this critical function, talent development professionals must understand the circumstances whereby great teams emerge, as well as the leadership skills and decision points that foster great teams. But before they can do that, they must develop their own teamwork skills. Because while we are primed to collaborate and cooperate to accomplish things, that doesn't necessarily mean we are naturally very good at it. Teamwork is a skill like any other, and we can get better at it.

With this in mind, this book is for leaders, TD professionals serving as team leaders, and team members who wish to build great teams and improve their team performance. That said, the contents, approaches, and methodologies are applicable to any team in any industry. Teams and how to best think about them are as universal as any characteristic that humans exhibit.

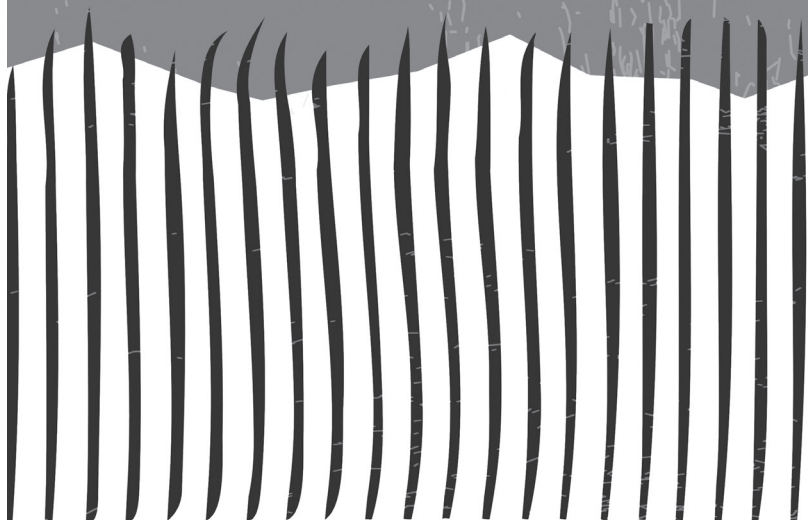
We start by defining teams and teamwork in chapter 1. In chapters 2 and 3 we will talk about why teams are important and some of the challenges related to teaming and how to overcome them. In chapter 4 we will discuss why teamwork matters so much for talent development professionals and their work, with a look at how teamwork ties into the capabilities for successful talent development. We will also introduce a model for how best to think about teamwork that maps team skills and the progression from the establishment of important work and clear goals (chapter 5) through the development of a curiosity and challenge culture (chapters 6 and 7). In chapters 8 and 9 we discuss how these attributes, when done well, ultimately lead to the kind of trust and community that will help power your organization in ways you may not have thought possible.

It is my hope that you will walk away from reading this book with a newfound appreciation for not only the importance of teaming, but also how you and your organization can get better at it to drive greater levels

of engagement, innovation, and community. I hope that you will build a deeper understanding of how organizations can most effectively leverage the most powerful tool that humanity has at its disposal to move your organization forward to accomplish great things.


PART 1

Making the Case for Teamwork



CHAPTER 1

What Is Teamwork?

 You've probably been on a number of teams in your life. Sports teams are where many of us had our first opportunity to experience what it is like to be on a team. Working with groups in a religious organization, school, or community are other places where we may have been introduced to the idea of teaming. These experiences often shape our initial understanding of what it is like to collaborate, coordinate, and cooperate. They give us a pretty decent understanding of what it is like to work together to accomplish something.

Through those experiences we also get to see what success in teaming looks and feels like . . . and also what it's like to work with ineffective groups. If you are like me, you found some of those experiences to be satisfying and others to be much less so. As I think back on those early experiences, I find myself chuckling at the mess some of them were, such as the school fundraiser that was semi-organized by the two energetic parents and "supported" by a dozen others who showed up on the final day to "help." All of them may have called themselves teams at some point or another, but many most assuredly were not.

Commonly defined, a team is the group of individuals working together to achieve their goal, and teamwork is the collaborative effort of the group to achieve that common goal in the most effective and efficient way.

Fair enough. However, I would define a team a little differently. In my years of consulting with dozens of organizations and hundreds of leaders, I have noticed a distinct difference in outcomes between what I would call a team versus a group of people doing things together. So when people ask me what a team is, my answer is:

A group of people working together to accomplish an important goal, as understood by the team, that requires the efforts of each team member to successfully accomplish.

When these components are present, the benefits of teaming can be realized: community, purpose, trust, and engagement. When they are not, we may get things accomplished, but the broader benefits of teaming will not manifest themselves. This is fundamentally what this book is about: How you can leverage teams to get important things done but also to build the connections and community that generate the loyalties driving broad organizational engagement. And, most importantly, you must understand that all of these things are learned behaviors—skills that can be developed. As we will see, the modern workplace requires the development of this skill set. Teams are the primary units of production in almost all areas of work, and organizations lacking in understanding of how teams form and function will be at a disadvantage.

It's important to be on the same page on what a team is. One thing I have learned over the years is that when we call something a “team” when it is not, we are disappointed when we do not see the ancillary benefits that we would expect from a team. I have seen work groups or professional practices continually work on their team because they aren't seeing the benefits of camaraderie, shared values and norms, and constructive conflict that good teams generate. Their frustration is understandable.

As an example, I once worked with a group of organization development (OD) professionals who desperately wanted to be a team. They all worked in the same department, they all did the same kind of work, and they all reported to the same leader. But they all had different clients who had different priorities, they worked together rarely, and they had no common goal. They were an OD practice, but not a team. But they were disappointed that they didn't have the kind of closeness and affinity they thought a team should have. They didn't really have the same aspirations, values, shared beliefs, and personal bonds they thought

being on a team would bring. Deep down, they wanted those things. This is not uncommon.

Human beings are, after all, social animals. We need connection. We need to belong. We need to feel valued. We need to love and be loved. People get these things from all kinds of places: their families, their religious affiliations, their civic and community organizations. But many of us spend a lot of time—a substantial portion of our lives—at our jobs, and it is not weird that we want to experience a sense of community in our places of employment. Teaming in the workplace is directly connected to these secondary benefits and the powerful impact they can have on the larger organization. This is a theme we will return to time and again throughout this book: the idea that true teams and teaming get a lot of stuff done, but also create benefits that extend well beyond the team and have the power to transform your organization for the better. But to garner these benefits, we must focus our efforts on actual teams rather than workgroups.

Are You a Team or Workgroup?

Think of a time when you were voluntold to be in a group where you had to accomplish some body of work that you and everyone else on the team knew wasn't all that important. We have all been there before. It often needs to be done, but we can't say the task is all that fun or meaningful. We enter into such work with a sense of resignation and do our best to engage so that we can get it over with as quickly as possible. Contrast that with times you have been on real teams where the work you were engaged in was actually important, and the group had the visceral sense that it was. The feeling is very different. The group is energized by the work and eager to get started. The difference between these two groups is not the people or the leader, but rather the work itself. The latter group has the possibility to become a high-performing team. The first group generally does not.

We have all been on workgroups. We have all experienced the dynamic of people only intermittently providing their best work, weak enthusiasm, and variable participation, and a few people shouldering most of the

burden. It may be that the actual work the group is trying to accomplish isn't that important, and they know it. Maybe it is just busy work that needs to be completed. Maybe the work is what I call brand management, or work done solely to demonstrate that we are here and we are working.

If the work isn't actually important, recognize that it isn't and thus you are not going to get the broader benefits of a team. You should be honest with yourself and your people about this. We all recognize that we sometimes have to do work that is unimportant. Being dishonest about it and trying to sell something unimportant as important just diminishes trust. It sets people up to be skeptical when you do have important work to do.

Important work thus defines the team, and not all work is important. While that should seem obvious, many leaders reflexively think all work is important. Or they don't recognize that really important work requires thinking purposefully about more than just what bodies can we put on the team. If it is important work and you decide you are going to create a real team, then leaders need to consider what expertise they need on the team and what personalities and perspectives will give the team a diverse enough perspective so that the outcome will be as successful as it can be. Who needs the kind of development that being on the team might provide? Who is interested in the work? Who needs to be mentored through the work, and who can do the mentoring?

When done well, being on a team can provide not only the pride of creating the tangible outputs the team was charged with producing, but also a sense of belonging and engagement, common norms and values, and the generation of innovative solutions. We will use our definition of a team as we go forward to ensure that we are not confusing teams with workgroups.

The role of talent development professionals in this capacity is pretty clear. You should influence and coach leaders to define the importance of the work, clarify whether they want to create a team or a workgroup, and determine how to craft the team in a way that will be most effective

to not only get the work done, but also create and leverage the secondary benefits of teaming. You should also work closely with leaders to gain clarity and commitment on what autonomy the team will have, what values it will embrace as it moves forward, and what problem the team is trying to solve. And for those talent development departments, it means practicing this idea within your own team and demonstrating the difference to the greater organization. Going forward, we will explore all of these teaming components.



Consider This

- A team is a group of people working together toward an important goal that requires the efforts of every member to achieve. The importance of the work defines the team.
- Be honest about the motivation for the work and the reasons for it.
- When leading a team, do the upfront work of purposefully thinking through whether you want to create a team or a workgroup. Delineating the importance of the work is the first step in this process. Decide whether the work is important and whether you are prepared to support that work by giving the team sufficient autonomy, funding, and ability to problem solve.

The Myth of the Loner

Not much that will broadly impact the organization gets done by individuals anymore. Gone are the days when someone working alone late into the evening will create and implement a solution to a broad organizational problem. Organizations are too sub-specialized and dispersed to easily allow individuals to move the organization in one direction or another.

In fact, the individual may not have ever really done so. This has been written about extensively before, but it is worth mentioning. The classic example is the inventor Thomas Edison. Much has been made of his individual brilliance in inventing the light bulb, the movie camera, and so on. But it is worth noting that he had a team of technicians and scientists at

Menlo Park that co-created many of these inventions. For example, it was William Kennedy-Laurie Dickson, a technician working for Edison, and his team who is credited with doing most of the work on the development of the Kinetograph, which would later become the movie camera.

The modern business world requires teams of individuals to develop solutions to broad organizational problems. Take the simple example of developing a training program. An individual could conduct the required needs analysis, design and create all the necessary components, and track learning adoption across the organization. It is possible. But it is also a full-time job and potentially takes longer. It also pre-supposes that the individual has the requisite perspective, knowledge, and insight to do so. Worse, it deprives the organization of the ability to broadly learn from the creation of the program. It denies the insight and perspective of other parts of the organization that would make the program more effective. It doesn't leverage experts in the organization (such as data analysts) to ensure the final product is operationally sound, and thus requires reinvention of the wheel. And it doesn't create the secondary benefits of teaming that have the potential to influence the organization in positive ways.

I once worked with a L&D client group in a Fortune 500 company where this was exactly how they went about creating their learning programs. Each consultant developed learning programs for their clients depending on what gaps they were seeing. While the products were acceptable in terms of creating programs that sometimes influenced their client group, the fact that the consultants did them in relative isolation ensured that the products were less effective than they could be. This model failed to take into account broad gaps across all client groups, failed to generate learning content that could be accessed across the organization, and failed to holistically determine learning adoption. That is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of opportunities lost.

What if this L&D department created a cross-functional program team to tackle the problem of assessing needs, creating learning programs,

and measuring adoption? Not only would they get the benefit of creating programs that were built upon a robust needs assessment, line input into content development, potential shared facilitation and delivery, and meaningful assessment of learning adoption; they would also have built relationships across the organization and generated a number of secondary teaming benefits. This may seem like a no brainer, but the model that this organization used is more common than you think.

In all manner of organizational work, teams are generally more effective than individuals in tackling broader organizational problems. Individuals have the ability to tackle a lot of work, but usually there are too many stakeholders, too many sub-specialties, and too many external and internal factors for any one individual to effectively manage. In most places we don't generally work on assembly lines anymore. And while that model has advantages in terms of scale and volume, it doesn't take into account the complexities of modern work.

The Teamwork Renaissance

In today's world, teaming and getting work done through teams is having a renaissance. Once upon a time almost nothing got done without a team. Then industrialization drove us to work in specialized roles on assembly lines and in workshops, and that tended to shape our worldview on how work got done. Eventually, large parts of the workforce traded assembly lines for cubicles, where managers tasked individuals to produce outputs that were handed off up the chain. There was little sense of the connectedness of the workplace. And of course, that is because it was largely disconnected. Old models of how work got done were shaped by the industrial revolution and its application of mass production methodologies, which culminated in the creation of those assembly lines and sweatshops. Indeed, mass production methodologies were introduced in all aspects of work and life.

Mass production and specialization drove, and were driven by, the changing goods and services technology introduced, and which were sorely

needed by a growing US and world economy. One can easily see how difficult it would be for a single craftsman to build a locomotive alone. One could also imagine that building a locomotive would require a renaissance of teamwork, and in some ways it did, but its manufacture was largely completed by individuals specialized in very discreet tasks—in other words, a workgroup. A riveter may work all day riveting by himself, a welder the same; and never the two shall meet.

And now we are changing once again. Technology once atomized the workplace, and now it's bringing us back together. The modern world still leverages specialization but combines that specialization through a level of connectedness in ways once unimaginable. People the world over can now collaborate in real time, and cross-functional teams across the enterprise can quickly coordinate to ensure alignment, leverage the perspective of various disciplines, and manage stakeholders.

Technology also requires the collaboration of various disciplines. For example, healthcare organizations now need to collaborate with IT and data analytics to help them manage interconnected care systems and spot trends in patient outcomes. Even something as routine as creating a training program requires close cross-functional collaboration. Learning and development coordinates with IT functions, data analytics, marketing, and other departments to compile needs analysis, develop and deliver effective virtual and in-person training, and assess training effectiveness and skills adoption.

Once upon a time a few training professionals could develop and deliver such training, but with variable results across the enterprise. Now, technology requires and allows the teaming of various cross-functional stakeholders to develop and deliver training that is more likely to move the enterprise in the right direction. Organizations that can effectively leverage teaming and technology in these ways have a distinct competitive advantage.

In short, teaming is having a renaissance because technology is allowing, and indeed requiring, us to closely coordinate and collaborate to

compete in the market. It doesn't matter what discipline you work in, organizations are recognizing that teams are now more necessary than ever to develop new systems and processes, create new products and services, embrace new ways of interacting with customers, and design new ways of doing business.

And with this teaming reemergence comes a need to revive our teamwork skills. We need to master how we collaborate effectively with others toward team goals. We need to build trust and safety with team members who recognize each person's unique contribution. We need to improve how we hold ourselves and others accountable.

Conclusion

When we fail to differentiate between teams and workgroups, we deny the organization the opportunity to develop the secondary benefits of teaming. We also erode trust. Teamwork matters. And as we shall see in the next chapter, effectively defining teams and purposefully thinking about how we will create and leverage them will generate a host of outcomes that engage your organization in ways that simply doing stuff cannot.

Index

Page numbers followed by *f* refer to figures.

A

- accountability
 - for failure, 77
 - on teams, 114–115
- alignment
 - around clear goal, 70–73
 - on values, 114
- appreciation, culture of, 110–112
- authoritarian leadership, 77
- autonomy, 60, 62–65

B

- behaviors
 - ego-driven, 93, 95, 109
 - metrics and KPIs for tracking, 36
 - norms for, 112–115
 - praising, 110–112
 - that work, 24
 - toxic, 109–110, 113–114
- belonging. *See also* community(-ies)
 - human need for, 5
 - teamwork for, 19–22
- biases, 35–40
- broad organizational challenges, solving, 8–9, 15–19
- Building Personal Capability, 47–48, 48*f*
- buy-in, using teams to ensure, 43–47

C

- caring, 110
- causes, symptoms vs., 65–71

- challenge culture, 85–94
 - and challenge as test of team engagement, 88–90
 - creating a, 90–92
 - for engagement, 87–88
 - positive view of challenge in, 92–94
 - and predisposition to harmony, 90
 - trustworthiness in, 100
 - and work distribution, 31
- challenges (in general)
 - broad, solving, 8–9, 15–19
 - defined, 85
 - designated challenger role, 24–26
 - with diverse teams, 23–24
 - positive view of, 92–94
 - as test of team engagement, 88–90
- challenges to teamwork, 29–40
 - constructing diverse teams, 32–35
 - distribution of work, 29–32
 - leaders and organizational bias, 35–40
- change initiatives, 16–17, 43–44, 46
- Color Team process, 33–35
- commitment
 - of organization, 60
 - to success of team, 111
 - on and to teams, 108
- common values and norms, 112–115
- community(-ies), 107–115
 - common values and norms for, 112–115
 - culture of appreciation for, 110–112
 - duty to, 108
 - human need for, 5
 - for human survival and progress, 20

- shared sense of, 80
 - teamwork for, 19–22
 - and toxic behaviors, 109–110
 - conflict, 75–84
 - constructive, 77–83
 - and curiosity culture, 79–83
 - destructive, 77–78, 81
 - and important work, 75–78
 - and leadership styles, 77–78
 - cross-functional teams, 15–18
 - culture, 21
 - of appreciation, 110–112
 - of challenge (*See* challenge culture)
 - of curiosity (*See* curiosity culture)
 - organizational, 24–26, 35–40
 - Cummings, E.E., xi
 - curiosity culture
 - as key to constructive conflict, 79–83
 - questions for building, 81
 - and work distribution, 31
- D**
- Deming, Edward, 89
 - designated challenger role, 24–26, 91
 - Developing Professional Capability, 48–49, 48f
 - Dickson, William Kennedy-Laurie, 8
 - dishonesty, 98–99, 101–102
 - disinterest, 88–90
 - distribution of work, 29–32
 - diverse teams
 - challenges with, 23–24 (*See also* conflict)
 - roadblocks to constructing, 32–35
 - diversity
 - for different perspectives and ideas, 22–24
 - in team makeup, 116–120
 - duty, on teams, 108
- E**
- Edison, Thomas, 7–8
 - ego-driven behaviors, 93, 95, 109. *See also* toxic behaviors

- engagement
 - and autonomy, 65
 - challenge as test of, 88–90
 - challenge for, 87–88
 - through teams, 21
- executive sponsorship, 46, 60

F

- failure
 - accountability for, 77
 - fear of, 107
 - reason for, 43
 - situations at high risk of, 85–86
- fear
 - and challenge culture, 88–89, 92
 - of failing your team, 107
- framing work, 53–73
 - and addressing causes, not symptoms, 65–69
 - to align and orient team around clear goal, 70–73
 - to drive interest, 57–59
 - and honoring important work, 59–62
 - importance of, 53–55
 - and important work as litmus test, 55–56
 - and team autonomy, 62–65
- funding, 60

G

- goals, aligning and orienting team around, 70–73
- Gobekli Tepe, xiii–xiv
- Godin, Seth, vii
- groupthink, 34
 - challenging, 26
 - in nuclear industry, 38–39
 - in OD cultures, 39
 - and organizational fit, 37, 39

H

harmony, predisposition to, 90
 honesty
 in building trust, 98, 99, 102
 of leaders with teams, 59–60
 honoring important work, 59–62

I

Impacting Organizational Capability, 48, 48f, 49
 importance of teamwork, 13–27
 for community, belonging, and purpose, 19–22
 for different perspectives and better ideas, 22–24
 for shared organizational values and norms, 24–26
 in solving broad organizational challenges, 15–19
 in talent development (*See* talent development)
 important work, xvi–xvii. *See also* framing work
 in building teams, 96
 and conflict, 75–78
 framing, 56–58
 honoring, 59–62
 as litmus test for projects, 55–56
 recognizing/defining, 6–7
 reframing, 58
 and team effectiveness, 53–55
 inclusion, creating environment of, 87
 interest in the work
 framing work to drive, 57–59
 identifying those with, 101–103
 interview-format communication style, 81–83

K

key performance indicators (KPIs), 36

L

leaders
 autonomy given by, 62–65
 in challenge culture, 87–88, 91–93
 honesty about work elements by, 59–60
 and organizational bias, 35–40
 team composition input from, 23
 trustworthiness of, 98–100
 leadership styles, conflict and, 77–78
 loner, myth of the, 7–9
 lying, 98–99

M

metrics, 36
 micromanagement, 65–66, 77

N

norm(s)
 of dictating outcomes, 93
 shared organizational, 24–26
 for teams, 112–115

O

objectives, clarity of, 70–73
 offsetting personalities, 117–119
 organizational bias, 35–40
 organizational culture, 24–26, 35–40
 organizational fit, 35–40
 orientation, around clear goal, 70–73
 Outward Bound, 19–20

P

Pareto Principle, 30
 personalities, offsetting, 117–119
 personal value
 and being heard, 82
 challenge in creating environment of, 87
 perception of, 62, 66
 perspectives, different, 22–24
 praise, 110–112
 problem statements, 71–72

professionalism, x–xi

purpose

shared, 80

teamwork for, 19–22

R

root-cause analysis, 65–71

S

Schmidt, Klaus, xiii

selecting team members, 107–120

and community, 107–115

for development, 115–116

for diversity, 116–120

interest in the work as criterion for,
101–103

in time-sensitive and critical situations,
119

and toxic behaviors, 109–110

shared organizational values and norms,
24–26

skills, complementary, 117–119

soft skills, vii–xi

specialization, 9–10

stress, regulating, 103–106

symptoms, addressing causes vs., 65–71

T

talent development, 43–51

as important work, 61–62

Talent Development Capability Model,
ix–x, 47–49, 48f

teaming as, 115–116

as teaming evangelist, 21

using teams to ensure buy-in, 43–47

Talent Development Capability Model,
ix–x, 47–49, 48f

team-building activities, 96–97

team effectiveness progression, 50–51, 51f

team(s)

autonomy for, 62–65

cross-functional, 15–18

defined, 3–4

executive sponsorship for, 46

giving important work to, xvi–xvii, 96

including stakeholders on, 16–17

number of people on, 29–30

power of, xv–xvii, 20–21, 121–122

reasons for creating, 14–15

relationships developed on, 17–18

workgroups vs., 5–7

teamwork, 3–11

challenges to (*See* challenges to team-
work)

as human nature, xiv–xv

importance of (*See* importance of
teamwork)

and myth of the loner, 7–9

renaissance of, 9–11

in talent development, 43–51

and teams vs. workgroups, 5–7

technology, 10–11

“tell me more,” 80–81, 119

timelines for projects, 104–105

toxic behaviors, 109–110, 113–114

training/learning program development,
8–10

trust building, 95–106

by being trustworthy, 98–100

and identifying interest in the work,
101–103

magic formula for, 95–96

by moving beyond talking about trust,
96–97

by regulating stress, 103–106

trustworthiness, 98–100

U

unimportant work, 5–6, 54, 55

V

values

- aligning on, 114
- noticing who lives by, 116
- shared organizational, 24–26
- team, instilling, 112–115

“voluntelling,” 101–102

W

work

- distribution of, 29–32
- framing (*See* framing work)
- identifying those with interest in, 101–103
- important, xvi–xvii (*See also* important work)
- for team building, 96–97
- unimportant, 5–6, 54, 55

workgroups, teams vs., 5–7

Y

York Minster Cathedral, 53

About the Author



Thane Bellomo is an executive coach and team and organization development practitioner. He has more than 20 years of experience working with Fortune 50 leaders to maximize their potential and optimize their results. Thane is an accomplished author, speaker, and coach and spends his time studying how leaders and teams most effectively form and function. He lives in Harrisburg,

Pennsylvania, and can be reached at thanebellomo.com.



Buy This Book