

As the manager you are able to shape and influence the dynamics of the team: you can set standards for the culture, the ways of working and the effectiveness of the team with better results than if these are allowed to form organically, even if you are new and the team is established.

### The Big “Why?”



To connect the team with the purpose of their work

To increase the motivation and commitment of the members

It is generally accepted that the most powerful motivators come from within. This tool aims to define the purpose of the team and the beneficiaries of their work and also allow the individuals in the team to understand what motivates them too. This tool sets out a vision of future success that all the team can contribute to.

I. This tool is can be used as an early part of team development or when there has been a change to the structure of the team (its members, its strategy etc)

II. With the team articulate the purpose of the team’s work—if possible have attendees who directly benefit from the work who can speak, or the data to show the difference the team’s work makes.

III. If the team’s work benefits the organisational internally, then arrange for a senior leader to speak about their importance.

IV. Ask the team if they have any clarifying questions or comments.

V. Ask the team to then imagine the team is performing at their best level.

What does this look like? What do the customers/beneficiaries say about the team?

VI. Ask the team what it would feel like to be working in this team? What would they say about each other?

VII. Ask the team what challenges have they had to overcome to be in this scenario of delivering the team vision?

VIII. Ask them to say what a major stakeholder (such as the VC) would say about the team and their achievements and articulate this?

IX. Say that each of them have the chance to create this story of the team’s success, and develop the vision of the team that you want them to become.

**Things to think about:** People also work for their own goals, such as career development. These can be explored in one to one meetings, and can exist alongside the greater vision for the team.

### Tuckman’s Stages of Team Development



To understand the team’s current stage of development

To understand how to increase the team’s maturity

Proposed by Bruce Tuckman in 1965, this model illustrates the different stages of team development and how to move through them to the desired “Performing” state. It acknowledges a seeks to establish its own culture and without leadership and consistency a team may otherwise become stuck and never realise its potential.

I. Tuckman’s model sets out five stages of development: ask the team to identify where they think they are and what they can do to advance through the model.

II. **Forming**—the team meets and learns about the team’s purpose, opportunities and challenges. Members are usually quiet here and try to assess the group dynamics. The tasks are defined and work begins.

III. **Storming**—while the group starts to integrate there are natural clashes of opinion and some attempts to assert authority in their groups., including attempts to challenge the manager. These conflicts can be productive if managed, and lead to dysfunction if ignored, as sub-groups can be form or individuals can disengage.

IV. **Norming**—disagreements are resolved or adjudicated on and the team starts to normalise its behaviours and work patterns. The team takes responsibility for delivering its goal, and effective patterns of behaviour and cooperation emerge. The role of the manager is confirmed here—do they provide clear leadership? Are they consistent? Are they to be trusted?

V. **Performing**—the team is motivated and knowledgeable now. The manager may be able to allow more autonomy and empowerment in the knowledge the team are ready for this.

VI. Tuckman also recognised the Adjourning stage when the team disbands. This could apply to a project group or a team restructuring. This can cause a sense of loss in the team members.

**Things to think about:** The process restarts when the team structure changes—if you are newly appointed as the manager of the group you have the potential to now define what “normal” is.

### Taking Feedback



To establish principles of giving and receiving feedback

To design and implement the feedback mechanisms

Feedback has the potential to help a team develop its communication, identify strengths and challenge weaknesses, and ultimately increase effectiveness, but creating this culture takes conscious effort. Feedback, delivered poorly, can be attached to blame and provoke negative emotion. This tool removes the potential for criticism.

I. Introduce the question of taking feedback into an early team meeting and establish the benefits of a feedback culture:

- ◇ Developing communication and collaboration
- ◇ Identify what isn’t working
- ◇ Reinforce what is working
- ◇ Identify and correct negative team behaviours
- ◇ Identify and adapt to changing circumstances

II. Ask each member to describe how they feel about a feedback process,

talking without interruption. Seek a consensus this could be useful and that the team will commit to the process.

III. If the team feels hesitant to agree to this, set out the principles of “no blame” (see right).

IV. Explain that a process could be generated by the team, or they could seek feedback from external sources, or both. Below are some possible approaches to collecting feedback.

V. Once agreed, discuss how often and in what format the data will be collected and presented.

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Data only collected by the team	Simple to administer—could be verbal or through survey, ques-	Can be easy to avoid difficult issues, and could be too insular in thinking.
Data collected from stakeholders (such as 360° feedback)	Provides more objective information and different perspectives.	Needs more time and resource to administer and may need to be anonymised.

**Things to think about:** The team should be able to offer opinions and feedback sincerely without fear of reprisal—if this has been their past experience consider how will you address it?

### No Blame Culture



To understand the benefits of a blame free environment

To establish that emotion does not have to be part of feedback

A team in dysfunction might adopt a blame culture as a means for individuals to feel safe. Reactions to problems can include anger, fear and sadness and the dysfunctional team seeks to avoid these by blaming someone else. As manager you have the opportunity to reframe this culture and can be a role model for living this in practice.

I. Organise a discussion around “no blame” culture.

II. Ask the team what this would look like and write up the key points for all to see.

III. Explain that in a safe culture we do not need to worry about blame and the need to place fault with someone else. Ask how this would improve the performance of the team.

IV. Ask for examples of situations that might apply where no blame should be attributed.

V. Ask how no blame sits with accountability and the need to deliver, and suggest this would make the team more effective.

VI. Suggest the team draws up its principles of no blame, such as:

- ◇ Acknowledge your emotional reaction and then put it aside.
- ◇ Focus on facts and seek to understand what happened.
- ◇ Talk to those involved, using dialogue and not accusation.
- ◇ Consider the options available to resolve the issue
- ◇ Ask what has been learned from the situation.
- ◇ Agree what changes are needed in process to prevent it happening again.

VII. Ensure the first time a major problem arises that the protocol is used and lead as manager. This will embed the behaviour.

**Things to think about:** Amongst other things, blame also has the effect of shifting responsibility. A team that doesn’t blame is a team that takes ownership of its problems and works to resolve them.

Manager Toolkits

more available at <https://www.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/organisational-development/leadership/managers-toolkits>