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Leading effective teams from home:

Launching the team

By the Catalyst Research Team* on April 21, 2020



Moving your work-base home may have presented a challenge you had to overcome. To complicate the situation, that transition probably disrupted your team's ongoing work processes. By now, you may have ironed out some of the most glaring problems, such as which communications platform to use for messages and for meetings, how often reports from members needed to be shared with you or with the whole team, where to archive notes from meetings, etc. An effective launching of the team should have

included some key steps, including the following:

Discuss these 10 questions in your early team meetings thoroughly. Payoffs of that discussion include informed members, more commitment from members, better coordinated action, and less wasted time from confusion later. Team leaders who do not make the investment to discuss these questions openly have chosen to set their teams on the road to mediocrity.

10 Key Questions:

Ask these Key Questions during the First Meeting and record the answers for later review and updating:

1. What resources do we have on our team? Ninja skills or Team Talent Audit – capture in writing on a shared whiteboard who knows what, who, how, etc. that relates to this project. Then what is the best role for each member?
2. What is our team's purpose and mission? The focal point of all effort by the team must be clear to every member and the touchstone of all decisions.
3. What information does the team need for a successful project? From the customer, upper management, the marketplace, other teams, content experts, each other – knowledge gaps create barriers to progress.

4. Is this the best way of organizing to facilitate our collective work? How can we improve our structure and process – a question to ask every day.
5. Who are the stakeholders we need to influence? Where are the decision makers and the resources we need to succeed on this project?
6. Is this what the stakeholders want? How clear are we on their preferences? How does our current work align with them? When did we last check?
7. Are our products/services clearly defined in terms of outputs and outcomes?
8. What details need checking based on priority and urgency?
9. Are we maintaining the best standards and procedures?
10. How will we work with each other (norms) to achieve our goals? How will we make sharing effective for optimal information flow? How well are we linked, both internally and externally?

Useful answers to these questions take effort and time. Those answers need to be effectively captured. Related questions will emerge during the discussion that will be worthy of attention. Schedule a time at regular intervals to revisit the answers for possible updating. Hold yourself and each other accountable for the agreements that emerge from the discussion.

Some of these steps apply to any team whether virtual or face-to-face. When you transition back to an office-base for your work, use the same steps to reorganize your team in the new environment for continued performance excellence.

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