

You're holding a powerful toolkit to
create alignment, build trust, and get results fast.
Rediscover the joy of teamwork with these five...

High-Impact Tools for Teams

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Written by
Stefano Mastrogiacomio
Alex Osterwalder

Designed by
Alan Smith
Trish Papadakos

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Series

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Business Model Generation
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copies sold in over
40 languages

High-Impact Tools for Teams

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**“Management is
about human beings.
Its task is to make
people capable of
joint performance.”**

Peter Drucker, Management Thinker

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Foreword

Amy Edmondson

If you are leading a team – or plan to any-time soon – you’ll want to keep this book close at hand. Most leaders today recognize that their organizations are deeply dependent on teams to accelerate innovation and digitalization, address changing customer demands, and cope with sudden disruptive events such as the global pandemic, social unrest, and recession.

But just putting a team together does not ensure its success. Teams fail on a regular basis. Launched with a meaningful goal, the right people to accomplish it, and even sufficient resources, time and time again, teams nevertheless struggle to deliver on their undeniable potential. They get bogged down by coordination lapses, ineffective meetings, unproductive conflicts, and dysfunctional group dynamics – leading to frustration, delays, and flawed decisions. Researchers call these factors “process losses” – in an effort to explain the gap between inputs (skills, goals, and resources) and outcomes (team performance or member satisfaction). Even when teams seem to get work done, their performance may be suboptimal – conventional rather than

innovative, or come at a cost of high levels of overwork, stress, and disengagement.

It doesn’t have to be this way.

Stefano Mastrogiacomo and Alex Osterwalder show us how teams can thrive by using simple practices that work. They offer a playbook any team can use to immediately put itself on a path to full participation, productive conflict, and steady progress. With its engaging illustrations, accessible tools, and thoughtful sequences of activities that teams can use to avoid (and recover from) predictable team problems of all sorts, this book is an invaluable resource. I have long believed that simple tools can bring synergy within reach by nudging team behavior in the right direction. And this book is full of such tools – activities and guidelines that will serve any team well.

Yet, what is particularly powerful about *High Impact Tools for Teams* is its emphasis on team process and the psychological climate. Most authors address one or the other – offering a step-by-step guide to manage a team project or else explaining the benefits of a psychologically safe climate that allows teams to learn and innovate.

This book offers simple tools to do both. When speaking up in a team is thwarted by a poor climate, innovation suffers, problems fester and sometimes turn into major failures. But creating psychological safety can sound like an elusive goal, especially for team leaders under pressure to deliver results. Drawing from my research, and that of so many others whose work underpins this terrific resource, Stefano and Alex demystify the quest for a healthy team culture – and walk us through how to create it. For this reason alone, I’m excited about this book. It injects new energy – and new tools – into the quest to build teams that can thrive in the 21st century by fully engaging the energy and expertise of all who work in them.

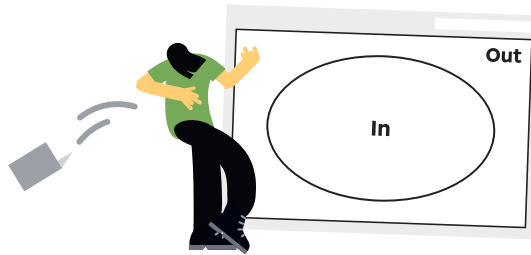
Even if teamwork will always be challenging, leaders now have access to practical, easy-to-use tools to help teams work well. Leaders who adopt them with passionate intent will be poised to build the kind of teams that companies need and employees want.

– Amy C. Edmondson
Harvard Business School, Cambridge, MA

Seven Great Thinkers Who Inspired This Book

Herbert Clark

Herbert H. Clark is a psycholinguist and professor of psychology at Stanford University. The very foundations of this book lie in his works on language use in human coordination. The design of the **Team Alignment Map** is inspired by his research on mutual understanding and the coordination of joint activities.



Alan Fiske

Alan Page Fiske is professor of psychological anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles. His works on the nature of human relationships and cross-cultural variations have disrupted our understanding of what “social” means and resulted in the actual design of the **Team Contract**.



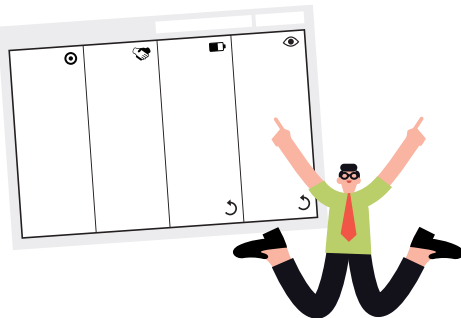
Yves Pigneur

Yves Pigneur is professor of management and information systems at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. His work in design thinking and tool design helped us bridge the difficult gap between theory and practice. Without his conceptual support and guidance, this book and all the tools it contains would simply not exist.



Amy Edmondson

Amy Edmondson is professor of leadership and management at the Harvard Business School. The integration of the four add-ons has been influenced by her work on trust in teams, in particular the notion of psychological safety among team members. Her research provided us with great insight in understanding the impact of trust in cross-functional teamwork and on innovation.





Steven Pinker

Steven Pinker is professor of psychology at Harvard. His works on psycholinguistics and social relations, in particular the use of indirect language and polite requests in cooperative games, inspired the design of the **Respect Card**. His recent works on common knowledge shape our future developments.



Françoise Kourilsky

Françoise Kourilsky is a psychologist and coach specializing in change management. She pioneered the introduction of systemics and brief therapy techniques to manage change in organization, working directly with Paul Watzlawick of the Mental Research Institute, Palo Alto, California. We owe her the **Fact Finder**, which is a new interpretation of her “language compass.”



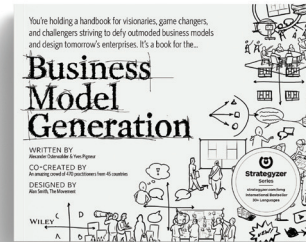
Marshall Rosenberg

Marshall Rosenberg was a psychologist, mediator, and author. He founded the Center for Nonviolent Communication and worked worldwide as a peacemaker. His work on the language of conflict resolution and empathetic communication inspired the design of the **Nonviolent Requests Guide**.

Meet the Strategyzer Series

We believe that simple, visual, practical tools can transform the effectiveness of a person, a team, and their organization. While new business ideas fail, existing businesses are under constant threat of disruption and obsolescence. Unacceptable amounts of time and money are lost each year due to lack of clarity and alignment on fundamental business issues. Each of our books has a set of purpose-built tools and processes to tackle specific challenges. These challenges are interconnected, so we've meticulously designed the tools to stand on their own and integrate with each other to create the world's most integrated strategy and innovation toolkit. Get one or get them all, either way — you'll get results.

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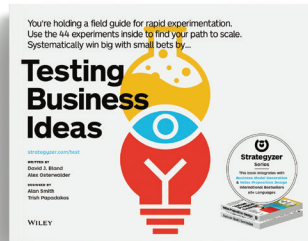
Business Model Generation

A handbook for visionaries, game changers, and challengers striving to defy outmoded business models and design tomorrow's enterprises. Adapt to harsh new realities and get out in front of your competitors with *Business Model Generation*.



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Tackle the core challenge of every business — creating compelling products and services customers want to buy. Discover a repeatable process and the right tools to create products that sell.



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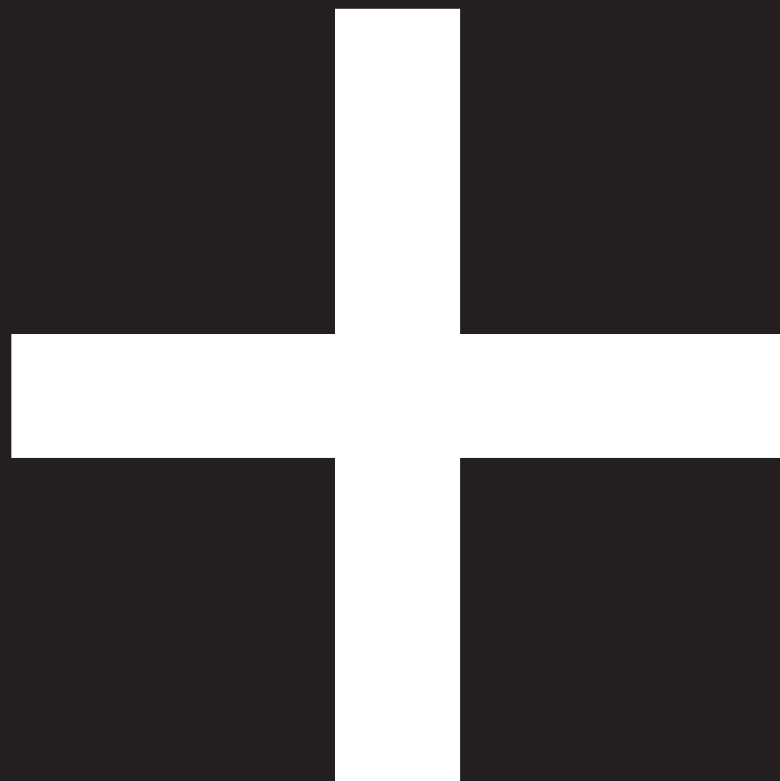
The Invincible Company
Become unstoppable by simultaneously managing a portfolio of existing businesses and exploring a pipeline of potential new growth engines. Discover practical and essential tools including the Business Portfolio Map, Innovation Metrics, the Culture Map, and a library of Business Model Patterns.



High-Impact Tools for Teams
Five powerful teamwork and change management tools to successfully implement new business models. Make every innovation project a success with the Team Alignment Map, the Team Contract, the Fact Finder, the Respect Card, and the Nonviolent Requests Guide.

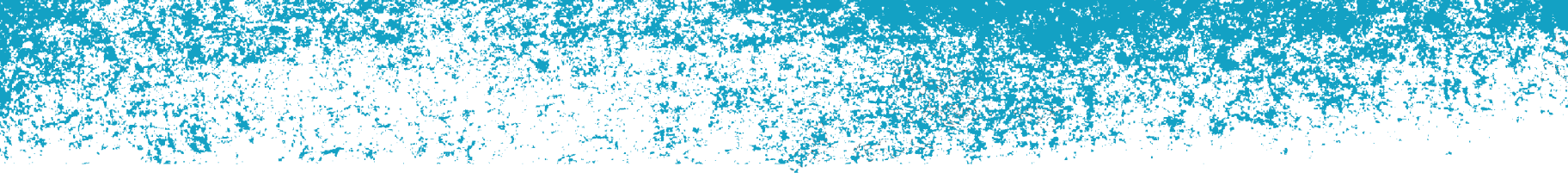
Essentials

What makes teams
underperform
and how to get
better results



**“Talk is the technology
of leadership.”**

Jeanne Liedtka, Strategist



Our people are top-notch.







So, how come we have all these problems?



When was the last time you enjoyed contributing to a team?

50%

of meetings are
considered
unproductive and
a waste of time.

*Atlassian **

\$37B

is the salary cost in
USD of unnecessary
meetings for U.S.
businesses.

*Atlassian **

29%

of projects are
successful.

*Chaos Report,
The Standish Group, 2019*

75%

of cross-functional
teams are
dysfunctional.

*Behnam Tabrizi, "75% of Cross-
Functional Teams Are Dysfunctional,"*

Harvard Business Review, 2015

10%

of team members
agree about who is on
their team (120 teams).

*Diane Coutu, "Why Teams Don't Work,"
Harvard Business Review, 2009*

66%

of U.S. workers are not
engaged or are actively
disengaged at work.

*Jim Harter, Gallup, 2018 ***

95%

of a company's
employees are
unaware of, or
do not understand,
its strategy.

*Robert Kaplan and David Norton,
"The Office of Strategy Management,"
Harvard Business Review, 2005*

1/3

of value-added
collaborations come
from only 3% to 5%
of employees.

*Rob Cross, Reb Rebele, and
Adam Grant, "Collaborative
Overload," Harvard Business Review,
2016*

* "You Waste a Lot of Time at Work," Atlassian, www.atlassian.com/time-wasting-at-work-infographic

** "Employee Engagement on the Rise in the U.S.," Gallup, news.gallup.com/poll/241649/employee-engagement-rise.aspx

What Makes Teams Underperform

Teams underperform when members work *around* each other and not *with* each other, something that happens when the team climate is unsafe and the team activities are poorly aligned.

Working around each other is an exhausting journey. Endless meetings and skyrocketing budgets for poor results usually occur in a poor team climate where most members work under high pressure and feel isolated and unhappy. This is the daily life of many team members, without caricaturing things as surveys illustrate.

We are capable of doing more than merely work around each other. We can work with each other, for real. When this happens we can accomplish the nearly impossible with passion. We may not necessarily realize it but in that moment, we are experiencing a “high-performing team.” Something people coin in retrospect because good results gradually add up.

We have experienced both types of teams, and this book contains what we have learned over the past 20 years. Our key learning is that joint success and failure largely depend on how well we manage our day-to-day interactions, at two levels:

- The team activities: having an obsession for mutual clarity — what’s the mission, who is doing what, is it clear for everyone?
- The team climate: carefully nurturing strong, trust-based relationships.

We believe in teams and we believe in tools. This is why we spent the past five years designing and revamping tools that do just that. Tools that help team members improve:

1. the team activities through better team alignment, and
2. the team climate by building psychologically safer work environments.

Only teams can tackle the complexity of the challenges brought by an interconnected world. We’re going through a period of spectacular changes: game-changing technologies and unprecedented lockdowns are disrupting entire industries. Organizations are forced to innovate and deliver at an unprecedented pace, and teams are, for us, the building block. The need to revisit the way we work together has never been greater.

As the visionary Peter Drucker announced long ago: The critical question is not “How can I achieve?” but “What can I contribute?” We couldn’t agree more. We hope the Team Alignment Map and the other tools presented in this book help you as much as they help us become better team contributors, every day.



Unsafe Team Climate

Signs of a poor team climate

- Lack of trust between colleagues and teams
- Internal competition
- Disengagement
- Lack of recognition
- Fear: it's difficult to speak up
- Over-collaboration
- Lost joy of working together

Misaligned Team Activities

Signs of poor alignment of team activities

- It's unclear who does what
- Invaluable time is lost in endless meetings
- Work is delivered too slowly
- Priorities keep changing and no one can figure out why
- Duplicate projects and projects overlap
- Team members work in silos
- A lot of work is done with poor results and little impact

Activities Get Stuck in Misaligned Teams

In concrete terms, alignment is communicating to create common ground, common knowledge, shared or mutual understanding (all used as synonyms in this book — Dive Deeper, p. 252). Common ground enables team members to anticipate the actions of others and act accordingly through aligned predictions. The richer a team's common ground, the better the mutual predictions between team members and the overall execution, thanks to a seamless division of labor and a consistent integration of the individual parts. Interestingly, conversation — face-to-face dialogue — is still the most effective technology on Earth to build relevant common ground.



How Team Alignment Works

Successful alignment

Anything teams achieve, from having a party to building an airplane, is a by-product of team alignment. Alignment is the process of making individual contributions converge to achieve a shared goal for mutual benefit. It transforms individuals going about their business into successful team contributors. Working in a team requires more effort than working alone; team members must constantly synchronize with each other in addition to doing their own part of the work. The payoff is achieving (greater) goals that can't be accomplished alone.

Cooperation for Mutual Outcome

Unsuccessful alignment

Expect only poor results from a misaligned team. Unsuccessful communication prevents the creation of relevant common ground; participants do not understand each other and mispredict each other's actions. This causes team members to carry out tasks with important perception gaps. The division of work and the integration of the individual parts goes off track and the lack of collaboration is inefficient and costly. The intended results are not achieved as expected.

Adapted from: Herbert H. Clark, *Using Language* (Cambridge University Press, 1996). Simon Garrod and Martin J. Pickering, "Joint Action, Interactive Alignment, and Dialogue," *Topics in Cognitive Science* 1, no. 2 (2009): 292–304.



Successful communication
Team members openly exchange relevant information.



Relevant common ground
Mutual understanding is established among team members; they are aligned on what needs to be achieved and how.



Effective coordination
Team members make successful predictions about each other; coordination is harmonious and individual contributions integrate successfully.



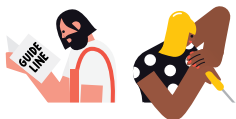
Mutual benefit

Communication
Information team members share verbally and non-verbally, synchronously and asynchronously.

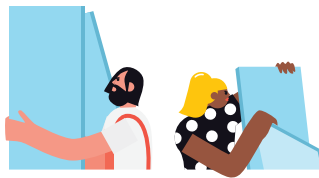
Common Ground
Knowledge team members know they have in common, also known as common knowledge or mutual knowledge.

Coordination
Tasks team members need to perform to work together harmoniously.

Outcome



Unsuccessful communication
Team members do not exchange relevant information.



Low or irrelevant common ground
Perception gaps build up while team members execute their individual parts.



Coordination surprises
Individual contributions are not integrated with one another. Bad surprises accumulate due to inefficient coordination.



Mutual loss

An Unsafe Team Climate Undermines Innovation



I feel insecure: I don't want to look ignorant, incompetent, intrusive, or negative. Better to not take risks.

I stay silent and don't share crucial information

Adapted from Amy Edmondson, "Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (1999): 350–383.



Psychologically unsafe environment

Team members protect themselves from embarrassment and other possible threats by remaining silent when the climate is psychologically unsafe. The team doesn't engage in collective learning behaviors and that results in poor team performance.

+
No learning behaviors

Low common ground

The team's common ground (or common knowledge) is not updated. Perception gaps increase between team members and the team relies on outdated information.



Low team learning

Habitual or automatic behaviors keep being repeated, despite changes in context.



Low team performance

Assumptions are not revised and plans are not corrected. The work performed is not in line with the actual situation and the delivered outcomes become inadequate.



Status quo or worse