1 Commit: To Know the Rules, You Have to Make Them

E ven a lone genius needs help from a team.

British mathematician Alan Turing[1] learned this lesson in his race to crack the sophisticated code used by the German military in World War II. Turing was the consummate rogue intellectual, a brilliant savant who foresaw the modern computer and the advent of artificial intelligence. He envisioned a machine that could use algorithms to solve any mathematical problem. But when the British government tapped him to join an elite team of cryptographers tasked with deciphering the famous German Enigma machine, he balked.

Turing was famous for being socially awkward and eccentric. He was known to hold his pants up with string and ride his bicycle to work with a gas mask during allergy season. He at first believed that working in a group would only slow him down. But he eventually came to appreciate the collective capabilities of his fellow mathematicians in the secretive "Hut 8" of the government's central code-breaking station. The group succeeded in besting the most powerful cipher machine in the world because the right foundations for team success were laid, ensuring the output of the whole would be more than the sum of its parts.

In other words, Turing and his group of cryptographers established the rules that created a culture of high-performing teamwork.

For starters, the team was committed to a clear common goal of cracking the German code in a highly distinctive way. Rather than seeking to uncover an underlying structure, it involved identifying probable words in Axis messages and working backward to decipher discrete meanings. This gave the team a central focus around which all of its activities and discussions could be organized.

The team also defined roles that tapped into the personalities, skills, and interests of each individual. The mathematician Alexander Hugh came onto the team as Turing's deputy. But Turing eventually let Hugh take over the team when it became clear that Turing's talents were wasted by having to manage the administrative aspects of Hut 8. By stepping into the leadership post, Hugh enabled Turing to focus his energy where he could provide the most value to the team.

Turing also benefited from working with Stewart Menzies, the head of Britain's intelligence agency and a crucial liaison for the Hut 8 team to the rest of the military administration. In stark contrast to Turing, Menzies was a classic *bon vivant*. The grandson of a wealthy whiskey distiller, he was known for his easy-going personality as well as his multiple marriages. Winston Churchill was skeptical of Menzies' abilities when he was appointed head of MI6, but Menzies eventually won Churchill over and became a part of his inner circle. Menzies' knack for building relationships with key people was crucial to gaining support and resources for Hut 8's activities.

The team was full of oddballs who were more accustomed to getting things done on their own. One of the cryptographers was known for taking long walks to think by himself and then throwing his coffee mug in the nearby lake when he was finished. Strange conduct notwithstanding, between 1939 and 1941, the team solved the puzzle created by the most complicated encoding machine the world had ever seen and shortened the length of the war by years. To do it, Turing had to create a culture that enabled his team to thrive. Essential to its success was the special rules that connected a larger purpose to particular behaviors and habits.

For example, one of those behavioral rules had to do with identifying bottlenecks and immediately alerting decision-makers about them, even if the team had to work outside of the established bureaucratic structure. In an exchange dramatized in the popular Hollywood film about Turing, "The Imitation Game,"[2] every member of the team signed a note sent directly to Churchill about four specific resource needs, one of them being the shortage of trained typists. It was highly unusual to forward this sort of request directly to the British Prime Minister, to say the least. But Churchill swiftly granted all of the team's requests and the work proceeded apace.

Making Commitments: The Power of Structured Conversation

What made Turing and his band of loner intellectuals a successful team? Recall the story of how Jenny from PharmTec got her sales teams on track. Though Jenny and Turing were operating in obviously different environments, what they have in common is a need to be explicit about the rules governing team behavior. It is just too easy to become committed to the wrong ones. Jenny became aware of this problem only after her change initiative sputtered out of the gate, hampered by the old habits that remained unchanged at her company. You can avoid this headache by developing the right rules collaboratively as soon as your team forms.

Of course, the basic question is: What rules should you establish? The first step in the process is all about committing to the rules that *matter*. Research on teams tells us that these fall into three categories, or what we have called the Three Foundations: Goals, Roles, and Norms (see Figure 1.1). HPTs establish those foundations by having
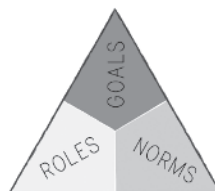

Figure 1.1   The Three Foundations

a structured conversation. Our research has shown that conversation is simply the best tool for organizing collaboration and making commitments.

The outcome of your conversation is what management scholar Leigh Thompson[3] calls a team charter. A team charter can be something formal you write on a piece of paper and post, or it can be as simple as a set of verbal agreements. The key is having a conversation about concrete commitments you can refer to later and hold one another accountable for. In the Resources section, we have provided you with a checklist of questions you should be considering to create effective goals, roles and norms. You can begin with talking about any of the foundations, but you should make sure to address all three. The more explicit you are in identifying specifics, milestones, and metrics, the easier it will be to translate commitments into actions and make adjustments later on. But the reality is that it will take some time—and several conversations—to dig down to a level of detail that reveals the behaviors needed for success.

Let's look at how you can structure a chartering process for your own team.

Goals: Grounding Vision in Practice

One of the most important steps you can take in forming a team is to establish the rules about the team's vision and direction: what goals you will pursue as well as what is outside of your scope.

This is hard enough under the best of circumstances. But imagine how hard it is to do goal-setting with someone who would rather not even be part of the team. That was the situation faced by one of our simulation teams at Wharton, Yellow Lightning, in its very first meeting. We were facilitating an ice-breaker, asking each of the participants why they had come to Wharton and what they wanted to get out of their two weeks together. The conversation flowed smoothly as each member spoke to the importance of learning new skills and developing relationships—until it was Ankur's turn to talk.

Ankur, an energetic and intense principal at a top consulting firm, had only known his fellow EDP participants for a day, but he had

already developed a reputation for bluntness. When asked about his own personal goals, he stayed true to form, telling his teammates that he had been forced to participate in EDP and that he had little to learn from the simulation. He felt pressured to wrap up a time-sensitive issue that his colleagues back at the office were waiting on, and he made the calculation that it was better for him to placate his real team than worry about supporting the simulated one he would be stuck with for two weeks. His flippant attitude set the tone for the first part of the exercise. Ankur would alternate being arrogantly overbearing and being completely disengaged. He often became engrossed with his iPhone while others deliberated.

WIIFM?   What can we learn from Ankur's example? Start with the widely accepted claim: to be successful, every team needs strong, collective goals that members can rally around. Research has repeatedly identified this as one of the fundamental conditions of team success. Intuitively, this makes sense, since individual team members need to align their efforts and shared goals help facilitate alignment. In his book *Collaboration*, U.C. Berkeley management professor Morten Hansen[4] calls a central goal the "unifying lever" of teams, and he urges leaders to make use of it. Sound enough advice, but one of the lessons from Ankur's relationship to his team is that, paradoxically, in order for team members to put the collective goals first, they have to feel there is a clear answer to the WIIFM question: What's in it for me?

Yellow Lightning had lofty goals of learning and self-improvement, but this was not enough to engage Ankur because he felt this vision for the team was of little use to him. Ankur's attitude may be extreme, but it is not uncommon. How many times have you been on a team with someone who was compelled to be there by the higher-ups and thought it was a waste of his or her time? Even when all the members of a team genuinely want to participate, their motivations are often highly diverse. They may have a personal stake in the outcome of the team's efforts because it affects their own unit; or they may be seeking visibility in the organization; or they want to learn a specific set of skills. If these individual aspirations are not met through the team's work, they could easily become free-riders and ultimately cause the group to underperform, no matter how lofty its vision may be.

Our experience shows that team members are much more likely to embrace collective goals when they are aligned with personal goals and motivations. Like Ankur, we all navigate interconnected "webs of significance"—Clifford Geertz's phrase[5] for our multiple commitments—because you belong to different groups with their own values, goals, and demands: the office, your home, the workshop team. You don't just let go of one group's set of concerns when you move to another group. The ties of these webs persist wherever you go and create areas of harmony or conflict with one another.

For just this reason, the goal-setting processes that are a critical aspect of team formation have to begin with a conversation—even a negotiation—about individual goals. When our teams first meet, we like them to start with a simple question: Why are you here?

It may sound straightforward, but the answers we hear tell us a lot about what is motivating each individual as well as what their expectations are for the experience. The answers tend to fall into two categories: they are usually either developmental—for example, an executive in accounting might be aiming to improve her leadership capabilities—or they

Developmental Goals
Learn about the different functions in my business unit
Sharpen my leadership skills
Get a better understanding of modeling software
Impact Goals
Improve the bottom line of my business unit
Increase morale in my team
Create demand in the market for this innovative product

are about creating a certain impact in the organization, the market, or society.

The process of checking and aligning individual goals with team goals thus does as much to support team performance as it benefits individuals. Of course, it is not always possible to close this gap completely, but even the act of trying will often foster engagement, honesty, and trust among team members. This is how Yellow Lightning eventually got through to Ankur and made him into a contributor. When he initially announced his lack of interest in the team, others were unsure of how to handle it. Yet as the rounds went on, they saw that he would light up and turn away from his phone for certain types of

decision-making discussions, particularly those oriented around strategy, which was his personal forte and area of expertise within his firm.

Noticing this, the team began increasingly tapping Ankur to take the lead on developing customer retention and revenue growth strategies. He began turning to his iPhone less and less while becoming increasingly engaged and enthusiastic about his role on the team, offering support in an area where he had more expertise than any other member. Through this process of goal alignment, Ankur went from being deadweight to a productive force.

If/Then Thinking   Even the most well-aligned goals will encounter barriers. While you will never anticipate every setback, you can put your team on solid footing by engaging in if/then thinking during the chartering process. If/then thinking deals with a potential problem by identifying what you will do *if* you encounter it. This is one of the defining characteristics of people who are able to consistently attain their goals, as University of Utrecht researchers discovered[6] when they studied different strategies for changing eating habits. The researchers found that people who anticipated temptations (by proactively creating so-called *replacement* strategies) were more successful than those who simply tried to ignore temptations.

In a similar way, David Allen, creator of the popular Getting Things Done[7] productivity system, has structured his whole approach around the recognition that you inevitably struggle to focus on the right

task at the right time that will maximize your efficiency. His heralded task-management system pushes you to anticipate barriers and create a plan in advance so that your efforts are targeted where they can be most effective.
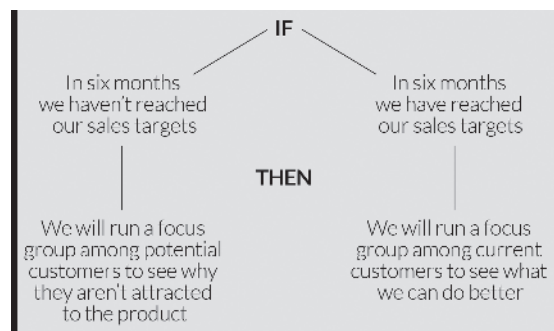
What these insights tap into is the common notion that you are more likely to deal with challenges if you plan for them in advance rather than waiting to grapple with them in the heat of the moment. As you set goals with your team, we encourage you to do more than write a set of milestones down on paper. Imagine the likely issues that could derail your success and create rules for managing them.

Roles: How Do the Pieces Fit Together?

In addition to goals, teams need rules determining what each person does within the team. In other words, teams need roles. Research on team performance and workplace productivity consistently finds that teams work harder and better when members have clear, interdependent roles that tap into their skills, expertise, and sense of meaning. J. Richard Hackman identifies this as one of the main differentiators between a real team and a collection of people working in parallel, or what he calls a "co-acting group."[8]

HPTs establish clear and differentiated roles. To start, you should make sure you have the basics: the skill sets and kinds of expertise needed to achieve desired outcomes. In our simulations, the teams that do best have finance, negotiation, and marketing skill sets represented among the team members. The particular skill–expertise mix may be different on your team, but the point is that you should have a mix and know what it is.

Team members should also consider how they want to shape their roles based on how they derive meaning from work. Researchers Amy Wrzesniewski and Jane E. Dutton call this "job-crafting."[9] It helps people develop a positive self-image, have a sense of autonomy, and connect with others in the workplace—three fundamental ways in which people become passionate in their work. Involving team members in shaping their roles will not only boost their enthusiasm, it will also enhance the quality of their work.

In addition to finding the right fit between individual team members and their roles, you should also consider how all of the roles fit together to form a team's structure. Every team develops in its own

unique way, but in general we find team cultures are differentiated along two major spectrums:

1. Are they more *hierarchical* or *flat*? This axis is all about the distribution of authority within the team. Hierarchical teams give more authority to a strong leader, whereas authority is more widely distributed among the members in a flatter team.

2. Are they more *individualistic* or *more cohesive*? This axis characterizes the team's working relationships. Individualistic teams tend to have more transactional exchanges, while cohesive ones interact in more personal ways.

To discover your own team cultural archetype (see Figure 1.2), take the Team Culture Assessment in the Resources section. The survey will help you determine which of the following categories you should use to describe your team.

Troops (low on cohesion, high on hierarchy)   The team Steve Jobs assembled to produce the iPhone falls into this quadrant. He assembled the company's superstars, pitting them against each other under the threat of being blamed for product failures. The team was heavily individualistic, but committed to Jobs's vision, which eventually
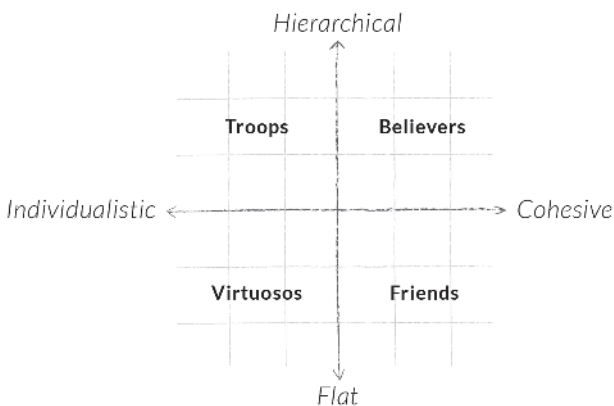

Figure 1.2   Team Cultural Archetypes

produced a breakthrough product. The strength of this team type is in the common direction provided by a strong leader. The downside is the lack of feedback, since team members work in siloes and aim mainly to serve the leader.

Believers (high on cohesion, high on hierarchy)   Facebook is characterized by an iconic leader in Mark Zuckerberg (and increasingly Sheryl Sandberg as well) but also a cohesive bond between employees around a strong culture of experimentation embodied in the phrase "the hacker way." Believer cultures like the predominant one at Facebook are energized and rally around a compelling vision, but they can easily succumb to groupthink.

Virtuosos (low on cohesion, low on hierarchy)   In 2003, Phil Jackson added basketball legends Gary Payton and Karl Malone to a Lakers team that already featured Kobe Bryant and Shaquille O'Neal, two future Hall-of-Famers. The team of big egos stormed through the regular season and play-offs but sputtered out in the NBA finals that year, winning only one game against the Detroit Pistons, a team with much less star power at that point but a great deal of team chemistry. Like that Lakers team, Virtuosos benefit from having the talent to take on big challenges with gusto, but the lack of team rapport or a strong leader can cause them to pull apart under duress.

Friends (high on cohesion, low on hierarchy)   W.L. Gore is one of the few large companies with relatively little top-down structure. The 10,000 employees make decisions on everything from projects to hiring through self-managing teams of 8 to 12 people. As CEO Terri Kelly says:[10] "It's far better to rely upon a broad base of individuals and leaders who share a common set of values and feel personal ownership for the overall success of the organization. These responsible and empowered individuals will serve as much better watchdogs than any single, dominant leader or bureaucratic structure." Research on leadership styles shows that this empowering approach can pay

dividends in the long run, since team members become highly engaged and collaborative. In the short run, though, these teams get a slower start as individuals take time to achieve a high comfort level with each other and their roles.

There is no one right structure. The important thing is to be aware of the trade-offs with each one and to shape the structure that best fits your team and its goals. In the early stages of team formation, your discussions will be fairly abstract, but they will get deeper as your team gains more experience working together. In the next chapter, we give you the tools to assess and consider the benefits and challenges of the structure that your team develops over time.

As examples of different ways to organize, compare the structure of two HPTs we worked with in our EDP laboratory:

1. Team Red Alert was led by a strong figure, Paul, who as a former Navy SEAL could be called "combative" in more ways than one. Paul led his team like a platoon, barking commands at his reports to get them on task. He even had a physically dominating presence when he was in the room, standing and pacing around as others sat down, pecking away at computers or poring over spreadsheets. In frequently reaffirming his commitment to "being bold," he tapped into his experience as a member of an elite fighting unit. He made the vast majority of the decisions for the team, and during group discussions his primary goal was to articulate a vision and get others on board.

2. Contrast Paul to the leader of the Orange Glow, the soft-spoken Jim, who was much more of a facilitator than the strong-willed Navy SEAL. Jim made consensus a priority, and would take the time to ask each person how he or she felt about a decision before he gave it the green light, even when time was tight. It was important to Jim that everyone feel ownership of even seemingly minor decisions. He believed that development of the team dynamic over the long term was more important than winning on a round-by-round basis. While Paul made his voice heard continuously, Jim would go silent and sometimes physically step back from team members while they were finalizing a task, taking

care not to disturb their thought process. Although English was not the native language of most of the team members, Orange Glow saw linguistic diversity as an asset and not a liability. To this team, it meant that each person would have to work to clearly articulate his or her thinking and that they would have to listen to each other even more carefully.

Whereas Paul crafted a team with a fairly hierarchical structure, Jim led a relatively flat group. They could not have been more different, but both teams were high-performing from start to finish, landing among the top three groups in every round. The key was understanding how skill sets, areas of expertise, and personalities interacted, and then creating a role structure that optimized the interactions of these factors. One team valued the clarity of purpose provided by Paul; the other valued the space for equitable contribution and thoughtful dialogue created by Jim. It is also important to recognize that there are trade-offs in any structure. Red Alert's team members felt that at times the lack of dissent in the room led to less well-informed decisions. The Orange Glow team, on the other hand, had difficulty making quick decisions, and at times their external business partners felt out of the loop and devalued.

In considering your own team type and structure, you should assess whether a strong vision and delegation from the top or a more informal structure will contribute to peak performance. You should also consider whether you are better off working in interconnected silos, or tackling each task collaboratively. Having this conversation early on, using our two-axis framework, will help you start defining and organizing roles in a way that promotes team success down the road.

Norms: Making the Behavioral Rules That Matter

Your team structure is related to the third foundation: norms. If goals are about where your team is going and roles describe what you will do to get there, norms are the rules governing how you interact to fulfill both goals and roles. Our experience tells us that these rules tend to fall into three major buckets, each of which prompts a question: How do

we resolve conflicts? How do we communicate? How do we decide? Managing differences, sharing information, and acting on it are the three fundamental processes in which teams engage.

Conflict   Having good norms of communication is different from just getting along as a team. While there is nothing wrong with team members being friendly to each other, a surface-level politeness can cover over a deeper lack of trust that interferes with constructive dialogue. Not only do HPTs learn to accept conflict, they understand that productive tension can sometimes be the most important driver of creative thinking and unorthodox solutions.

Management scholars Bill Fischer and Andy Boynton have conducted extensive research[11] on what they call "virtuoso teams" (a term we borrow for our cultural archetype above)—distinctive groups, like the team behind the Manhattan Project and the creators of *West Side Story*, that came together under high-pressure circumstances and produced revolutionary results in their field. Fischer and Boynton have found that, on these teams of high performers, the egos tend to be big and the dialogue intense. But even the most combative group can create amazing collaborative results if the competitive dynamic is undergirded by a commitment to a common vision as well as mutual trust and respect.

Such was the nature of the famously discordant duo of John Lennon and Paul McCartney. John and Paul could hardly have been more different in their personalities and public image. John was the disorganized, disheveled rebel, famously prickly with the press and willing to sacrifice the accessibility of his music for genre-breaking experimentation. Paul played the role of clean-cut diplomat, with a knack for crafting digestible, crowd-pleasing tunes and a concern with grooming the band's public image.

The standard narrative about the pair's musical trajectory is that, as their conflict intensified, they became increasingly independent songwriters, creating brilliant music on their own in spite of each other. But writer Joshua Shenk argues[12] that even as the band seemed to be falling apart and the relationship between the two became tense, their

songs were a collaborative product, a result of their ability to push each other to achieve new creative heights. For example, Paul recounted in an interview the way John challenged him as he wrote the song "Getting Better": "I was sitting there doing 'Getting better all the time,' and John just said, in his laconic way, 'It couldn't get no worse.' And I thought, Oh, brilliant! This is exactly why I love writing with John."

The pair's stylistic clashes made them each better songwriters than they would have been on their own and the creative tension propelled the band to become one of the most popular and influential musical teams of all time.

The key to channeling this intense energy into collaborative results rather than destructive competition was the respect they had cultivated for each other and a mutual trust that both were striving toward a common goal of producing great music. Even today, Paul still uses his memory of John as a creative muse, as he described in a *Rolling Stone* interview:[13] "If I'm at a point where I go, 'I'm not sure about this,' I'll throw it across the room to John. He'll say, 'You can't go there, man.' And I'll say, 'You're quite right. How about this?' 'Yeah, that's better.' We'll have a conversation. I don't want to lose that."

Good goal-setting will take you a long way toward developing a sense of shared accountability and mutual investment in the team, but another key ingredient of strong rapport is an understanding of your team's attitudes toward conflict. During the commitments chartering process, you should have a conversation with your teammates about how each of you handles contentious issues. We recommend discussing examples of teams that encountered conflict and sharing feelings about how it was resolved. To start your discussion, you might even consider sharing the stories about the Lennon-McCartney partnership and virtuoso teams that we have told. Reflecting on your team members' reactions will help anticipate style conflicts and prepare you for how to respond productively when they arise. If/then thinking, which you employed in shaping goals, can be useful in creating conflict-management strategies, as well.

Communication   Our perspective on communication comes from the work done by one of us with our Wharton colleague, Richard Shell.[14] You can dig a lot deeper into that research in the book, *The Art of Woo: Using Strategic Persuasion to Sell Your Ideas,* but here we want to highlight one of the key Woo concepts: people have distinctive preferences for how they like to give and receive information. In other words, they communicate on different "channels".

You should be aware of the channel you are using in sharing information. Imagine, for example, you were making a case to your teammates about investing in a new technology. You have several options:

Authority   Deliberately call attention to your professional status to make your point with extra force. Teammates might respond positively to this kind of authoritative style—or not, depending on how they relate to authority.

Data   Refer to research studies and market analyses. Data-oriented teammates would find you persuasive if you communicated this way.

Relationships   Make an emotional connection. Teammates who value relationships want to feel an emotional connection with you. For those tuned into the relationships channel, data is less persuasive than rapport.

Interests   Lead with a point about WIIFM. Some people are always asking WIIFM and respond best to proposals that serve their interests.

Vision   Appeal to higher goals. At least some of your teammates are likely to feel motivated and engaged when you appeal to values like those expressed in a vision statement or even in the original team charter.

Politics   Show political savvy. The "politicians" on you team pay most attention to you when you are talking about how to engage key people and groups across your organization.

In summary, there are multiple channels of communication. *The Art of Woo* describes the preceding six. More generally, if you want to get your point across to a teammate, tune in to the right channel. You may have to experiment until you find it.

Even a team with language barriers like the Orange Glow can become strong communicators if people understand each other's styles and adapt accordingly. The Orange Glow had more introverts than extroverts, and the introverts had to be cajoled to speak up. The team created norms related to giving each person space to contribute ideas and listening carefully to their contributions. The team without a common language ended up being among the best communicators we have seen in our simulation research.

When you share preferences for giving and getting information, you reduce the likelihood that discussions will founder on misunderstandings. This also helps instill good communication habits that boost your team's performance.

Making Decisions   In addition to discussing conflict and communication, you will also need to consider a critical question that bears on action. Namely, how are you going to decide? Plenty of teams struggle with this issue, especially when they are made up of peers. But you should have a conversation about it. If you fail to set the rules for decision-making, they will form organically and often produce unintended consequences.

Bad decision-making can affect the "smartest" of teams. Behavioral experts Cass Sunstein and Reid Hastie[15] note that even teams with a disproportionately high IQ can make bad decisions because they neglect to pay attention to how they manage discussions. This can lead to the wrong information getting amplified in a group when, for example, the first person to speak controls the conversation whether he or she is right or wrong, or someone succumbs to groupthink without

checking his or her biases. Sunstein and Reid recommend mitigating these tendencies by finding ways to create an environment in which unique and contradictory information is valued over me-too opinions. As with nearly every aspect of team culture, there is no one right way to manage the group. The most important thing is to be aware of *how* you manage it.

Considering a few basic questions will help your team be clear about how it handles decision-making:

1. Do we have enough diversity of thought?

If teammates come from similar professional or educational backgrounds, then diversity may be lacking. Soliciting input from specialists and other informed outsiders can introduce divergent views into the decision-making process.

2. Are we comfortable expressing differences of opinion?

Attitudes toward conflict obviously affect how groups discuss differences. If your team on the whole seems conflict-averse, you should consider assigning one person the "devil's advocate" role when tough decisions are being vetted. This will increase the chances that both "pros" and "cons" will be expressed.

3. Do we have a way to reach closure?

When the time is right to drive toward a conclusion, teams have several options for getting there. One is to take a vote, Another is to assign one person the "right" to make a decision on a particular issue. A third is to rely on consensus—basically, continuing to discuss an issue until everyone is in agreement, just as Philadelphia's Quakers have done for centuries

A Few Essential Norms   While you might be tempted to come up with a laundry list of norms, it is best to focus on a few rules that will have the greatest impact. These are ones related to resolving conflicts, communicating, and making decisions.

The television producer Glen Mazzara[16] found this to be the case when he asked the women on his own writing team why they didn't speak up more. Mazzara is most recently known for his work on the

popular series *The Walking Dead,* but he got his first big break as a producer with the show *The Shield*. He had worked his way up as a writer, first breaking through on the team of the Don Johnson series *Nash Bridges* before coming to *The Shield* as a senior editor in 2002. After the show took off, Mazzara was promoted in its second season, eventually rising to become the executive producer.

As a leader, Mazzara emphasized inclusiveness in meetings with his team of writers. In an interview, he bluntly articulated his philosophy of constructive dialogue: "Do not knock something off the table unless you are going to replace it. Do not just piss on someone's idea without offering one better. That's not fair. That's not kind. That's not respectful and that's not your job. Your job is to generate ideas."

Mazzara's goal of fostering an environment of inclusive decision-making hit a snag when he realized that two of his younger female writers would stay quiet during meetings while the men dominated the floor. Pulling them aside, he asked why they weren't speaking up. "Watch what happens when we do," they told him. Mazzara paid careful attention to the team dynamic the next time they got together for a brainstorming session and what he saw made him understand the young women's apprehension. Whenever they threw out an idea, one of the men on the team would interrupt them, shooting them down or building on the idea without their input.

At that moment, Mazzara observed an all-too-common phenomenon discussed by Sheryl Sandberg[17] in her book *Lean In*. Many teams, like the writers of *The Shield,* operate by an unwritten and often unconscious rule that men should be the decision-makers. We see this play out in work settings where women who try to take the lead are viewed negatively. In this case, rather than rock the boat, the female writers had opted to sit back and let the men decide the direction of the show.

Seeing this, Mazzara cleverly laid down a norm for the whole team without calling out the gender dynamic. He instituted a rule that no one would interrupt another person while they were pitching an idea for the show. By focusing on one rule that really mattered for the team's success and making it explicit, Mazzara spurred more equitable

contributions from the women on his team and the quality of the show benefited as a result.

How can you write effective rules for your team? Focus on the top three to five things that you think will be most important for the team dynamic based on what you know about your particular group. To determine what these might be, go back to the potential barriers you identified in your engagement-building process. Creating norms that head off those challenges are likely to be your most important priorities. If women on your team raised the possibility of gender disparities in discussion air-times based on their past experience, you might create a no-interruptions rule similar to Mazzara's. Understanding individual styles and then creating the few rules that really matter for channeling those styles into productive dialogue will place your group in a strong position to weather the inevitable storms of conflict, dissent, and discontent that any team faces.

Don't Stop!

Many teams forget about the foundations once they have been defined, but we encourage you to see the discussion about commitments as an ongoing process, not a one-time event. Misalignments in the rules you have made are bound to occur, because the nature of team culture is to be in constant flux. In the next chapter, we turn to the second step of the 3x3. This is when you work on cultivating the right mindset for identifying these misalignments before they sap your team's performance.

HPT Takeaways

Charter first

Team chartering is a method for discussing the Three Foundations. A charter discussion is highly structured, focusing on goals, roles, and norms.

Anticipate barriers to goals

Goal-setting is most effective when it is combined with If/Then thinking to anticipate barriers.

Create interdependent roles

Teams are different from "co-acting groups," where people work in parallel rather than interacting in defined ways. HPTs carefully define roles and periodically check whether the team buys into the definitions.

Norms

The most important teamwork norms provide guidelines for sharing information, making decisions, and resolving conflicts.