

# Case Study

**Building Great Teams**

September 2017



## Introduction

Just like a sports team it is sometimes not just the best players in each position that make for a great team, there are many examples of super teams not quite performing on the field. Golf though a predominantly individual sport relies

heavily at all levels on effective teams to thrive, from your management team, greens team to your boards and committees they all need to work effectively as a team.

## Building Great Teams

To learn more about building great teams we can look at some recent Google research. Recently, Google wanted to know how to build the perfect team. They found the best and brightest researchers to cull through data and evaluate teams. They reviewed volumes of research. They also evaluated 180 Google teams through more than 200 interviews to discover the skills and traits of the best teams.

Google found 250 traits. They had a library of data collected and analyzed by sociologists, organizational psychologists, and statisticians. From this data one important revelation became clear: building the perfect team had little to do with finding the best people.

Their research found that there are five ingredients that take talented groups of people from good to great. They are:

### 1. Dependability

Every successful team is built on a foundation of trust and it can arise from doing what you said you would do on time and effectively. Great teams have dependable members. As a member of a team do you deliver what you promise on time and in the way you promised? All the talent in the world doesn't matter if a team member isn't dependable and doesn't build trust.

### 2. Structure and Clarity

Great teams implement this ingredient with much fervor and intentionality. If you want to create the perfect team be vigilant about working together to set very clearly defined goals. Be adamant about making sure everyone has clearly defined roles and that "what is success" is clearly outlined.

### 3. Meaning

Great teams have a "why," a greater purpose. A very clear personal significance in work can engage, empower, compel, unite, and transform a group of people into an unstoppable unit. Work with your team to create significance. Help each member find a why. Why are they there? Why do they do what they do? Why are you there? And importantly are the "why's" aligned?

### 4. Impact

Team members need to work for something greater than themselves and to be vehement about supporting the greater good. In terms of your team, sometimes the impact has to do with the team "planting trees you'll never see". All team members are focused on something greater than themselves. They want to extend the legacy passed to them and plant the seeds of that legacy well into future generations.

### 5. Psychological Safety

This is the most important, and rarest ingredient of the perfect team. Creating a place of psychological safety requires us to be willing to provide our team members a place to take risks, to have a voice, to ask judgement-free questions, and safe to be vulnerable. An environment where open honest robust discussions for the greater good are often held and each person's opinion and point of view is respected. And most importantly upon a majority decision being made all accept the decision and support it.

The Google research is pretty clear teams and leaders that instill and cultivate these five ingredients will see a profound impact on team performance, because they raise the standards of the collective. These standards are what is known as "group norms". Group norms are traditions, behavioral standards, unspoken rules, mantras, and habits of excellence that regulate the interactions and functioning of a team. These norms are often unspoken, yet understood through observation and interaction.

The All Blacks for example, have clearly stated norms. They give each new member a "black book" that contains the sayings, the advice, the rules, and the accepted values of the team. Players from generations before remind the new player what makes an All Black and how an All Black behaves. They even have spoken mantras to remind teammates of these norms – Sweep the sheds, for instance. And there are swift consequences for behaving outside these norms.

As golf club managers, administrators, board and committee members the challenge is to look at your teams and identify with their input where they sit in regards to the 5 ingredients identified. You also have as a team an opportunity to create your own "black book" that clearly outlines your group norms or "how we do things around here" starting or continuing that process of creating the long standing legacy.

## Conclusion

The New Zealand Golf Sector Support team is always available and keen to help with advice or facilitation if required. For your local Regional Support Manager contact New Zealand Golf at 09 485 3230. We look forward to hearing from you.

