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CHAPTER 1

We Need Better Team Habits Now More Than Ever

No matter your role in the company, you have the power to change your team's habits.

How broken printers are a symbol and symptom of root-cause team dynamics • Sometimes it isn't an actual printer • Workways are how we work with each other, including policies, tech, and org structure • Team habits are a subset of workways • Why we start with teams instead of with individual people • How teams work well or poorly is not the people in the team, but how they work together • Teams are where we experience belonging • How we spend 80 percent of our work time with the same four to eight people • How 3 percent shifts the culture • How changing our habits can change our organizational culture • How to navigate VUCA environments • You're either participating in broken team habits or working to change them • How to read this book • Who this book is for

CHAPTER 2

We Live And Breathe Team Habits

Team habits are how a team or organization breathes. The breathing is happening whether you notice it or not.

Team habits are how a team breathes • We build team habits the same way we build individual habits • Why the work of changing team habits includes the why, not just the how • Why small changes stick better than big changes • Why to focus on small things you can change more quickly • Why a month is an ideal timeline for a team habit sprint • How small changes get buy-in more easily • The eight categories of team habits, and where to start changing • The problem you start with is rarely the root problem, and that's great • Why to start with belonging • Some guideposts for choosing • The team habit assessment

CHAPTER 3

Belonging

Groups flail while teams sail. And belonging is the key ingredient.

Crisco watermelons • Belonging is what turns a group into a team • Belonging creates shared context • Teams with high belonging tend to have higher readiness • High-belonging teams stay together • High-belonging teams communicate better • Why you should put your values on the floor, not on the wall • Belonging is built through our ties to each other, both strong and weak • Build belonging with coffee breaks, meeting highlights, celebrations, and more • Why you should be intentional about inclusion and exclusion • Why acknowledging bumps makes them less personal

CHAPTER 4

Decision-Making

When teams take the time to build good habits around decision-making, they see the benefits reverberate through everything else they do.

Decisions aren't just social; they're also emotional • Why teams should learn to make decisions, and what happens when they don't • How and why to remove decision-making bottlenecks • The three levels of decision-making • How to democratize decision-making • Intent-based decision-making • Who's closest to the work? • Who owns the question? • Who's got the monkey? • How to make better decisions as a team • Keeping a decision log • Build time for complex decisions • How to address the stakes in decisions • How to address "maybe" decisions • Known knowns, known unknowns, and unknown unknowns

CHAPTER 5

Goal-Setting and Prioritization

Most teams know how ready they are, even if they don't have space or language to express it.

How ready is your team to win? • Dunkirk spirit, and what it really means • Why improving team habits is one of the fastest ways to increase readiness level • Human goals are based on a number of non-rational factors • Why we should emphasize pull goals over push goals, and how to convert them • Why and how to turn goals into priorities • The TEAM of project costs: time, energy, attention, money • Why and how to leave room for failure

CHAPTER 6

Planning

Planning is everyone's job.

A great plan is something the team runs with, not into • Why you should teach every team member how to plan • the 5Ps: Poor Planning Produces Poor Performance • A plan is made up of four things: goal, timeline, people, and commitment • A plan isn't just to help us align at the beginning, but keep us on track as we go • What makes a good timeline, and how to make better ones • How to avoid strategic-routine-urgent logjams • Commit:Complete Ratio • The One-Third-Two-Thirds Rule • The 3x Rule for strategic work • The 5 Projects Rule • The Voice of No and why it's so critical to team planning • Plans are made to be changed and how to create more flexible plans

CHAPTER 7

Communication

Most teams fall into a few broad patterns when it comes to how they communicate. Too much in one direction, and you create a bunch of unnecessary noise. Too little, and it's a recipe for confusion.

How to tune the dials on your communication: frequency, detail, focus, courage • How to specify what needs to be communicated now vs. later • Define your communication cadences • Clear communication is proactive, preemptive, and brief • Use shortcodes to increase communication speed and clarity • How to be intentional and consistent with communication mediums

CHAPTER 8

Collaboration

The goal is to eliminate any confusion about who's in charge of which parts of the workflow so that all roles and responsibilities are extremely clear.

Our natural default answers to “Who’s on First?” • Assessing team composition and how it affects collaboration • The Doer-Reviewer-Coordinator Triad • The TIMWOOD model for assessing waste in an organization • Knowing which expert (Mr. Wolf) to call to solve a particular problem • How to open the Black Box to get clear on how work happens • Where does work occur? • How do check-ins happen? • How is work assigned? • How are tasks assigned? • Determining your team’s project pace • Creating the habit of forming ad hoc project teams, how to stand one up, and why you should

CHAPTER 9

Meetings

Meetings can be either a powerful force multiplier or a powerful force diminisher.

Meetings display all our bad team habits in the span of an hour • Calculating the true costs of your meetings • How and why to eliminate crutch meetings, and what to do instead • How to calculate your Meeting Promoter Score: Would you recommend this meeting to a coworker? • Performing a meeting audit • How to build better meetings • The six meeting blocks: decision-making, planning, brainstorming, bonding, review, update • Setting clear agendas with clear facilitators • Building meeting templates for common meeting types • Default to not inviting someone to a meeting • Using the last five to ten minutes to capture and assign next steps

CHAPTER 10

Core Team Habits

As individuals working together, we need to practice a few core skills in order to collaborate, communicate, and show up to do our best work for our team.

The importance of all team members practicing a few important core skills • Show your work: share your early drafts, your status as you go, and an artifact of your efforts • How to use focus blocks to get real about your capacity and help you prioritize • Why focus blocks are a great tool for project estimation • How to free up focus blocks for your most high-value work • The benefits of coworking focus blocks • How to schedule focus blocks according to your chronotype • Using “Shoot! Move! Communicate!” to fix problems and stay connected to your team • Identifying and sharing your Achilles Heel and hidden superpowers with an Achilles Heel Map • How to support teammates when they fall behind • How to give (and receive) direct feedback • How performing well creates a foundation for belonging

CHAPTER 11

Team Habits Are Political – So Play the Game

Team habit change is about alignment, not power.

How to align your team around team habit change • Identifying the champion for the team habit change project, and why it's better if they're not a team leader or manager • Identifying who stands to lose when you start changing things (because they'll resist the change) • Why you should sell the problem instead of selling the solution • How to enroll your teammates in a shared vision (particularly the disengaged)

CHAPTER 12

Create Your Team Habits Roadmap

With every change, you'll also be training your team in the metahabit of team habit change, creating that positive feedback loop.

If you're unsure where to start, beginning with a pain point can give you a tangible win right away • Identify which habits will have the most impact • Why it's better to start small and ratchet up • Change is a marathon, but work in sprints • Decide on a monthlong or quarterlong project horizon • Determine how you'll track and report on progress • Be prepared for setbacks (and also positive surprises) • How to deal with failures and navigate the stall: hold 'em, fold 'em, walk away • How to know when you are really done and ready to move on to the next habit change project

Glossary: Helpful Definitions By Chapter

Chapter 1: We Need Better Team Habits Now More Than Ever

Broken Printer: small and fixable breaks in the way team members work with each other

VUCA Environment: An environment that is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous.

Workways: how we work with each other, determined by a mix of our team habits, organizational policies, technology, regulatory compliance, and org structure.

Chapter 2: We Live And Breathe Team Habits

IKEA Effect: The cognitive bias where people tend to place a high value on outcomes, products, and experiences they have partially created.

Chapter 3: Belonging

Crisco Watermelons: The missed handoffs and dropped balls that occur when teams collaborate on projects.

Chapter 4: Decision-Making

DRIP: Shortcode for “decision, recommendation, intention, or plan,” used to indicate the user’s intention for next steps.

The Three Levels of Decisions: L1 = make the decision; L2 = make the decision and inform management; L3 = defer decision to management

Chapter 5: Goal-Setting and Prioritization

Dunkirk Spirit: The pattern in which, despite terrible planning and decision-making, a team rallies and accomplishes a daunting goal through valiant efforts, long hours, and sheer tenacity.

Green Hat: The person with the green hat currently owns the main effort for pushing a project forward and should be given priority to focus on that work until they’ve finished it.

Chapter 6: Planning

Ghost Plan: A plan that was made by a few members of the team but not communicated to the rest of the team.

One-Third–Two-Thirds Rule: Only one-third of the time allocated to execute a plan should be spent creating the plan, and two-thirds should be left to complete the project.

Strategic-Routine-Urgent Logjam: When accomplishing urgent and routine work regularly becomes the biggest priority, and strategic work falls by the wayside.

Chapter 7: Communication

Shortcodes: The acronyms and unique phrases your team uses to communicate rich information in only a few letters or words.

Chapter 8: Collaboration

Doer-Reviewer-Coordinator Triad: Three roles make up the atomic elements of the team:

Doers: the people rolling up their sleeves to make the work happen.

Reviewers: the people who keep an eye on the quality of the output so the doers can stay focused on production.

Coordinators: coordinates not only the doer and reviewer but also with elements outside the team.

TIMWOOD: A framework to help identify the common sources of waste in your team or organization: transportation, inventory, motion, wait time, overproduction, overprocessing, and defects.

Wolf: The person (whether an internal or external expert) who you call to handle a particular problem whenever it arises.

Chapter 9: Meetings

Crutch Meeting: Meetings that act as stand-ins for poor team habits. Crutch meetings often address things that should have been taken care of outside the meeting.

Meeting Math: A calculation of the true cost of meetings in terms of actual hours and salary spent.

Chapter 10: Core Team Habits

Focus Block: Those ninety-minute to two-hour blocks of time in which we can do deep work and stay focused enough on a project to move it forward or complete it.

Chronotype: Your personal natural rhythm (morning larks, afternoon emus, and night owls).

Chapter 11: Team Habits are Political—So Play the Game

Change Champion: Acts as the political face of the change project. The champion's job is to create and enhance partnerships with allies and speak their language when things get out of whack.

Change Manager: Manages the change project, focusing on the operational work to make things happen.