



BOTILMS

Module 3: Building Effective Teams

We have previously discussed some of the advantages and disadvantages of working in teams and the types of teams commonly found in business organisations. Next, we'll describe the key characteristics of effective teams and how organisations can build teams that produce high-performance results.

Click on the first lesson below—or the *"Start eLearning"* button above—when you're ready to begin.



What Makes a Team Effective?



Common Techniques for Team Building



Setting Goals That Actually Work



Knowledge Check



Module 3: Completed

What Makes a Team Effective?



The Highly Effective Team

Maybe you read about it in a business article or saw it mentioned on social media. Perhaps it was a blog post title that caught your attention, drawing you in with big, bold, capital letters that read: **THE HIGHLY EFFECTIVE TEAM.**

You may have wondered: *Is it possible? Is there a team of people who perfectly complement one another, never have a disagreement, always beat their deadlines, and have transformed a messy collaborative process into a well-oiled machine?*

While “the highly effective team” may sound like a concept from a fantasy or fable, it really does exist. And no, it doesn’t mean that your team has to be perfect or immune to the everyday challenges that plague any other team.

Rather, it means that a set of concrete traits and characteristics is known to improve a team’s effectiveness. In this lesson, you’ll learn the answer to this question: What makes a team effective? And by understanding the traits that you need to develop, you can work on becoming a highly effective team, too.





What Makes a Team Effective?

Watch this video to learn about the six characteristics of effective teams.

VIEW ON YOUTUBE >

Consider This

Imagine what your ideal team would look like. From your own experiences, what characteristics do *you* appreciate in a team environment? For example, do you remember working with a team of people who made you feel safe to share your honest opinion? Or maybe you recall a team setting where everyone went above and beyond their individual roles to ensure the team's collective success? Reflect on situations where you experienced a really constructive team environment—or perhaps, a toxic one. The instincts you have about what is or isn't an ideal team environment are often spot on. Try to think of examples from your own experience as you learn about the following characteristics of effective teams.

6 Traits of Effective Teams

While many traits contribute to a team's success, this lesson will highlight six of the top traits you can develop to maximise your team's effectiveness. Click on each trait below to expand it and learn more:

Shared Goals —

First, your team needs to have common goals and shared aspirations. Everyone in the group must understand what the team is trying to accomplish together, as well as how their individual contributions fit within those common objectives. Everyone must feel invested in the team's mission.

How to develop it: Define team objectives. Explain why those objectives are important and get the team excited about the end result. Prioritise teamwork to achieve collective goals above competition or individual accolades.

Trust and Communication —

Next, you can't have an effective team without trust and open dialogue. Trust means that team members feel psychologically safe to share ideas, be honest, try new things, and even make mistakes without being judged or receiving a negative response from the group. Trust and open communication go hand in hand. Team members need to communicate openly and often. They need to speak up when they don't agree, express themselves when they have an idea, and trust that their other team members and leaders will act out of goodwill.

How to develop it: Encourage team members to share ideas and information, and engage in respectful debate. Call on all individuals to speak up with their thoughts. Create open and regular channels of communication.

Balanced Roles and Accountability —

Another factor to consider is the composition of your team. You need a balance of skill sets and roles.

For example, it's not effective for one person on your team to take the majority of the team's workload. Your team also needs to have the right blend of knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform at its best. For example, you don't want a team of people who only excel in interpersonal skills. Rather, you want diversity on your team and the right blend of interpersonal, technical, and problem-solving and decision-making skills. Finally, every team member must take accountability for their individual roles on the team, as well as for the team's success overall.

How to develop it: Delegate tasks equally and assign clear team roles. Make sure that all of your team members agree on their respective roles. Don't panic if you notice a gap in your team's abilities. Consider talking to your team and reaching a consensus about who should take responsibility for learning and developing that missing skill.

Effective Processes —

Fourth, your team needs effective processes. Even the most talented teams won't function well if they don't have a good way to communicate, collaborate, resolve issues, make decisions, and receive feedback. They need the right systems and resources to stay organized, avoid bottlenecks, and work together effectively as a team.

How to develop it: Evaluate the current systems, processes, and tools you use to carry out your primary team activities. What's working? What's not? Explore how you can improve systems, clarify how processes work, or consider how you can use technology to make collaboration easier for your team.

Social Capital and Social Sensitivity —

Social capital and social sensitivity are also critical for a team to operate smoothly. **Social capital** refers to the shared values, understandings, reciprocity, and bonds that form between team members. Effective teams develop a positive team culture and team norms. People feel connected and have a sense of belonging to the group. They operate from the same basic understanding and values. They trust and rely on one another. Furthermore, they are sensitive to the thoughts and feelings of others. They can identify their own emotions as well as the emotions of others.

How to develop it: Give team members time to get to know each other outside of work. Put together a team-building exercise or informal social gathering. Also, lead by example and demonstrate the positive norms and values you wish to develop in your team.

Results-Oriented Problem Solving —

Finally, problems are bound to arise in any team setting. It doesn't matter what the problem is, what matters is how your team handles it. Effective teams embrace challenges and different perspectives or opinions. They work through these situations by staying focused on results. A results-oriented approach to solving problems is conducive to reaching a consensus and brainstorming creative solutions.

How to develop it: Delegate problem-solving to your team, and then serve as the team facilitator or harmoniser. Keep the conversation focused on actions and results rather than opinions and feelings. Don't take sides.

What Characteristics *Detract* from Team Effectiveness?

Just as some characteristics contribute to team effectiveness, other characteristics take away from it. What is the opposite of an effective team? It's a team in which individual members are working toward their own aims rather than collective goals. Or it might be a team that doesn't have a shared objective at all. Teams that are dismissive, hostile, overly critical, and disrespectful towards others' ideas are also unconstructive. And while you need effective processes, having too much bureaucracy and hierarchy in a team can slow progress. Finally, teams who are overly competitive, play favourites, or reward all-star players over team players are also not set up for success.

"The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the

world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime."

Babe Ruth

Check Your Understanding

Do you think you know what it takes to make an effective team? Test your understanding by completing the sorting activity below.

Effective Teams

Take a "We" versus "I" approach

Balance the work, roles, and responsibility

Create shared goals, norms, and values

Diversify their skills

**Communicate honestly,
openly, and regularly**

Focus on results

Ineffective Teams

**Receive ideas with judgment
and hostility**

Rely on a few team “all-stars”

Lack unity and cohesion

Have hidden agendas

Avoid dealing with conflict

Summary

Great teams don't just happen. They are built and cultivated with care. While there is no single recipe for a team's success, there are some characteristics that are known to either help—or hurt—a team's effectiveness. For example, effective teams work together toward shared goals. They're built on trust and open communication. Team managers make sure to balance the roles and workload between team members. Also, everyone takes responsibility for their individual roles as well as the team's collective success. Teams need effective systems, tools, and processes to perform their best. Finally, the best teams focus on results when facing a challenge, and they leverage their social connections and shared values to maximise the team's potential—and have fun while doing it.



Embrace humour. All work and no play can make for a less-effective team. Embrace your team's sense of humour, curiosity, and playfulness to bring a positive attitude to your team.

Common Techniques for Team Building



Introduction

Once you know the characteristics of effective teams, how do you go about building those qualities into a group? When initially forming the team, follow these procedures and techniques to help create the environment needed for the development of those characteristics.

Step 1

Set team goals and priorities.



This step supports the key characteristic of clear goals. Team members need detailed explanations of how their individual actions contribute to the achievement of the team goals. Team priorities should be established so that members can understand when and where to provide additional help if needed. Individuals need to understand how their personal SMART goals support the team goals and how supporting the team also allows them to meet their own personal goals. If personal goals and team goals are not interdependent (for example, if a team goal is not specifically tied to a personal goal), then the employee most likely will focus on her own needs to the detriment of the team. Good communication skills are required to make sure that the goals are written clearly and that

team members know their performances will affect the team goal and thus each other's performance.

Step 2

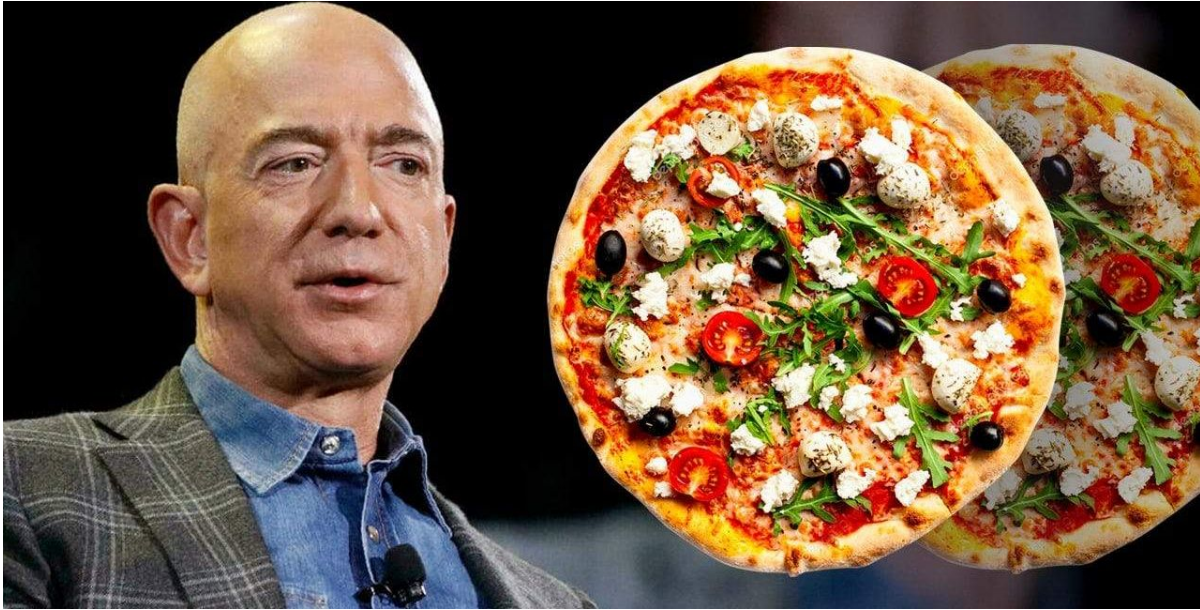
Select team members carefully.

Three factors should be considered when selecting people for a team: individualism, the average level of experience and ability, and the degree of diversity.

- It's a fact that some people make better team members than others. It's also a fact that with determination, anyone can learn to function on a team. **Individualists** generally put their personal welfare and interests first, and they prefer independent tasks in which they work alone. On the opposite end of the spectrum is the collectivist, who prefers cooperation to competition and is happiest working in a group. Although collectivists generally make better team members, there are many instances when independent tasks are part of a larger team effort. It may take more effort to communicate with the individualists, however.
- The experience and ability levels of team members should be balanced so tasks can be distributed with high expectations of the work being done. At the same time, newer employees need to become a fully functioning part of the workforce, and this can happen by teaming them with more experienced people. It is also important to select people based on their skills and leadership potential.
- **Team diversity** represents not only the mix of skills and experiences but also how people of varying cultures, ethnicity, race or gender work together. Diversity is a good defence against groupthink because of a different outlook and belief system that challenges common assumptions.

Step 3

Optimal Team Size



When in doubt about the right size of your team, you can always fall back on the “two-pizza rule.”

There seems to be no question about the right size of many teams. Basketball teams have five players (on the court), football is played with eleven members on the field, and a bridge team is made up of only two players. Businesses don't have rules for the proper size of a team. Jeff Bezos, CEO and founder of Amazon, has his own rule for the right-sized teams: the team should only be as big as can be fed with two pizzas. By normal standards, that would suggest five to eight people on a team. Bezos is said to have followed this guide when he created the innovative and decentralized start-up that has grown into one of the most successful companies in the country.

The ideal size, according to most management experts, falls within the range of five to nine people. The reason the size is so important that it is the focus of research studies has to do with processes and outcomes. Too few people and the team may not have enough resources or skills. Too many people and communication becomes more challenging. Groupthink and social loafing may occur and negatively affect team performance. In one

study, it was determined that teams with more than twelve people had greater conflict and formed subgroups that disrupted the team cohesiveness.

Summary

Experts also agree that the optimal size of the team is driven by other factors: what type of task the team will perform, what skills the team requires to complete the task, and the time provided to complete the task. Answers to those questions will often determine the best size for a team. If the task, for example, is a sales function, then one individual may do most of the work until the very end when a finance and delivery/inventory manager gets involved. One business may be fortunate to have four employees with multiple skill sets whereas another company would have to include six or seven people to reach the same level of abilities. Finally, the shorter the timeframe to complete the task, the fewer people should be on the team. Larger numbers increase the complexity of communication and administration.



Check your understanding by answering the question below...

The way team members function as a group is as important to the team's success as the quality of the individual efforts. Therefore the goals should encourage members

- to finish their own tasks before helping anyone else.
- to do their best work in their own tasks.
- to be attentive to how they interact and collaborate with each other.

SUBMIT



Complete the content above before moving on.

Setting Goals That Actually Work



Introduction

Reese is an employee who wants to improve her work performance. So, she sets a sensible goal to: *“Be more receptive to feedback.”* But as time goes on, her goal starts to fall flat. Reese doesn’t have a plan. She doesn’t know how much is *“more.”* And she hasn’t defined what *“receptive”* even means.

Setting a goal isn’t always easy. Even when we’re committed to change, we can still get caught up in vague ambitions—*“I want a promotion”* or *“I want financial freedom”*—while failing to define any specific terms. As a result, our goals become hazy ideas that we never end up reaching. So, how do you break through that pattern and set goals that actually work?

In this lesson, you’ll learn how to set goals the right way. First, you’ll learn why the method you choose matters and why effective goal setting starts with a process. Then, you’ll learn how to pursue that process and create goals that align with the SMART acronym.





Setting Goals that Actually Work

In this video, we break down goal setting—explaining why the method matters, what process you need to follow, and how to keep goals SMART.

VIEW ON YOUTUBE >

The Method Matters

As much as we might wish otherwise, we can't simply say, "*I want...*" and expect our goals to happen. Imaginative ambitions such as, "*I want to be promoted to firm partner,*" only work if they're rooted in actionable steps. If we don't draw a starting line or explain *how* we plan on getting somewhere, then we set ourselves up for failure.

Simply put, **the method matters.** To accomplish something, we must focus our aim and create a clear path.



Just as a golfer lines up before taking a swing, reaching your goals is about looking at where you are now, where you want to go, and how to carve a path of least resistance. Your method is the path you draw. It's how you get something done—and without it—goals are ineffective.

“A goal properly set is halfway reached.”

Zig Ziglar

Effective Goals Start With a Process

So, how do you set a proper goal? To start, you need to follow a process—one that considers what your top priorities are and how you can reach them. It's a process that

moves from broad to narrow, and when followed correctly, it boosts your chances of success.

The Goal-Setting Process

The goal-setting process follows a series of steps that help you formulate compelling, attainable objectives. Click through this interaction to learn what those steps are.

Step 1

Write Down Large-Scale Goals

The first step of the goal-setting process requires thinking about your large-scale ambitions. Ask yourself: *"What do I want?"*

To come up with those wants, consider what you'd like to achieve, create, have, experience, or give. A great place to start is to brainstorm how those wants fit in with your career, finances, education, family, personality, health, enjoyment, and public service goals. For example, maybe you want to *"Quit smoking by next month," "Help a local animal rescue centre,"* or *"Climb to the top of Mount Fuji in Japan."*

During this brainstorming stage, there are no right or wrong answers. Just get your ideas on paper so that you have a broad overview of what you value most.

Step 2

Pick Your Top Goal

Next, take a look at your large-scale goals and pick the one that means the most to you right now. Which goal will get your complete attention?

To help you make that decision, consider what you find most compelling and inspiring. Scroll through your list and ask yourself: *“What will this goal give me, and why is that important?”*

Keep in mind that your top goal should be self-motivating. So, put aside what others want from you and instead focus on what you want. For example, if your friend wants you to help them put on an improv show, but you’re more committed to helping a local animal rescue centre, then be honest with yourself and choose the animal welfare goal.

Tip: Once you’ve found your top goal, spend some time making it as realistic as possible. Consider what it would look like to reach that objective and why that’s worth pursuing.

Step 3

Set Smaller Milestones

Third, once you've chosen your goal, break it down into smaller targets. No matter what you'd like to achieve, chances are you can find some closer checkpoints along the way. And by mapping out those checkpoints, your large-scale goal will become more realistic and attainable.

When mapping out those checkpoints, it's often helpful to think backwards. For example, if you want to raise R40,000 for a local animal rescue centre in three months, consider how much you'll need to raise by months two, three, and one. Now, consider where you are today. How much do you need to crowdfund during this first month if you want to stay on target?

Step 4

Write Out the Steps

Next, once you have your milestones marked, write out the steps it will take to reach them. Writing out these steps will not only give you play-by-play directions, but it'll also provide you with something to check off later. Then, as those checkmarks continue to pile up, you'll see that you're making real progress and will feel motivated to keep going.

So long as you're moving in the right direction, you can keep these steps as small as needed. For example, if you're raising money for an animal rescue centre, you can set steps such as:

1. Handwrite 10 donation request letters a day.
2. Host a fundraising event every other weekend.
3. Skip one restaurant meal per week and put that money toward my donation total.

Step 5

Schedule Ongoing Process Reviews

Finally, once your plan is in place, schedule time to review your process regularly. Ideas don't always work perfectly. While your large-scale goal and smaller milestones might remain the same, you may need to modify the steps you take to get there.

For example, if you planned to host an event every other weekend, but you find that you don't have time, you might need to host one big event a month. Or maybe you've surpassed your original expectations and can organise several additional events.

Goal setting is an ongoing activity, and to stay on track, you must continually review your process, notice what's working and what isn't, and make adjustments as needed. Schedule these reviews in advance, and those adjustments will feel like opportunities for growth, rather than spotlights on your setbacks.

Summary

Setting effective goals starts by looking at the big picture and writing down your large-scale ambitions. Then, it's about choosing a goal that's important to you, mapping out the milestones along the way, and planning the steps to reach them. It's an ongoing process, and it's most effective when it's reviewed regularly and adjusted as needed.

CONTINUE

Setting SMART Goals

When following the above process, how do you make sure that you're writing out the right goals? The trick is to keep goals SMART, which is an acronym for **specific**, **measurable**, **attainable**, **relevant**, and **time-bound**.

SMART goals set guiding principles that you can use to ensure that you're creating a powerful goal rooted in reality. When setting these goals, you should be able to check off all of the following boxes:



S—Specific. Is your goal specific and well-defined? Effective goals offer sufficient direction as to *where* exactly you want to go. To set specific goals, ask yourself: *“What do I want to achieve? What does that achievement look like? What steps do I need to take to get there?”* The more details you write down, the better.



M—Measurable. Can you track your goal? If not, how will you know if you’re making progress? To set measurable goals, avoid vague words such as *“better”* and *“more”* and stick to action words like *“create,” “produce,”* and *“solicit.”* Then, turn those words into quantifiable benchmarks by adding dates and precise amounts. For example: *“I will create 10 new designs by next Friday.”*



A—Attainable. Is this goal attainable? If you set a goal that you can’t realistically achieve, your only achievement will be frustration and disappointment. While *“becoming an expert furniture designer in three months”* sounds great, if you have no design skills, this ambition isn’t attainable. To set attainable goals, keep your objectives challenging but realistic. Map out the steps you plan to take to reach your goal and then ask yourself, *“Do I have enough resources, time, and funds to make this happen?”*



R—Relevant. Is this goal relevant to *you*? It’s easy to fall into the trap of setting goals that look good on paper but don’t align with what you really want. To set relevant goals, ask yourself: *“Why do I want to reach this goal? Do I think it’s worthwhile? Will I be able to stay committed in the long run?”* Before setting a goal, make certain it means something to you.



T—Time-Bound. Does your goal have a deadline? Without a time frame or target date, it’s easy to procrastinate on a goal and make excuses such as, *“What’s the harm in taking a few days off?”* To keep your goals time-bound (and create that internal pressure) focus on building long- and short-term deadlines, marking those dates on your calendar, and setting reminders.

Consider This

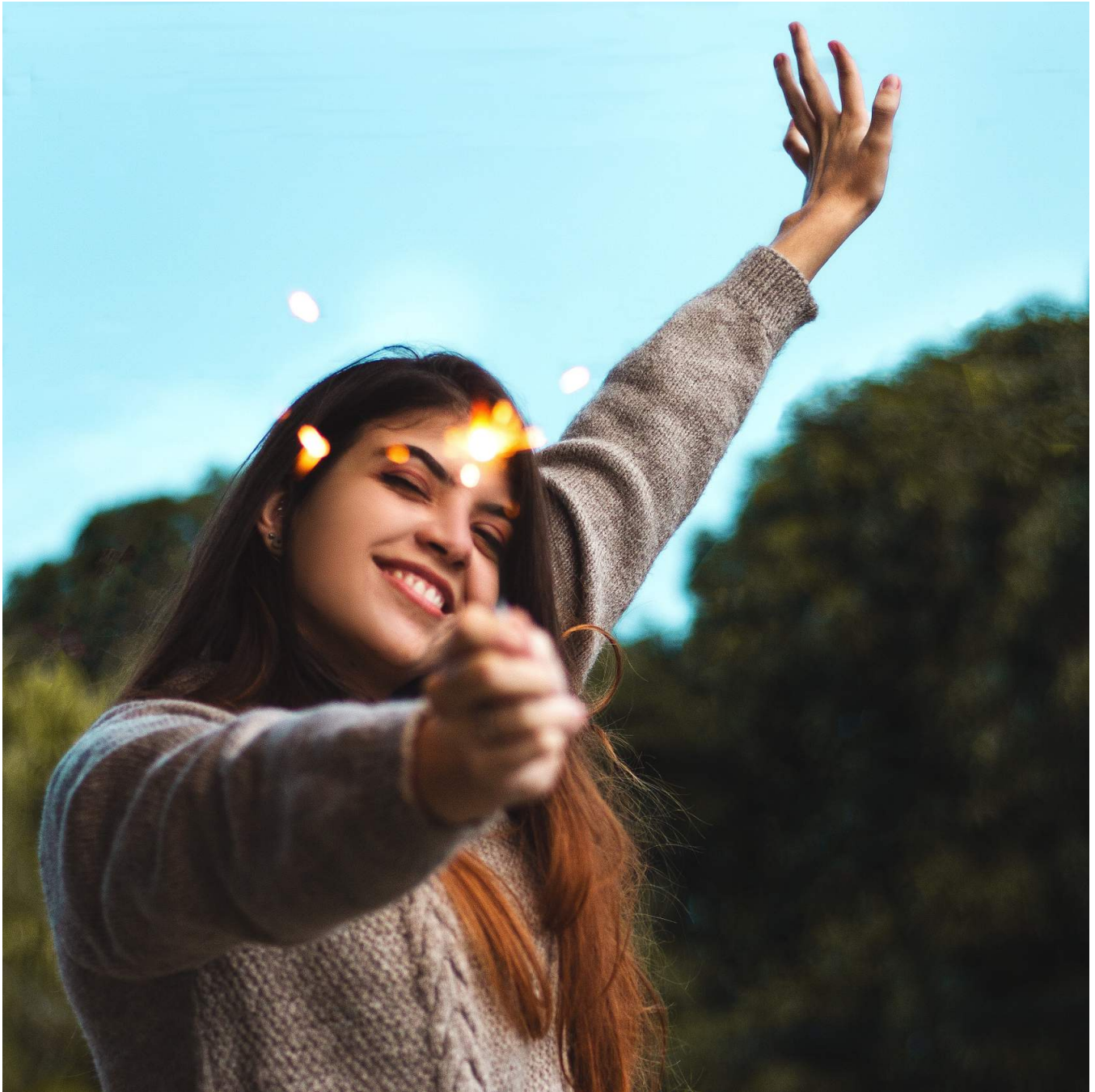
Flip the cards below to consider what happens when we turn the following vague goals into SMART goals:

"I want to improve my fitness."

SMART Goal: *"I want to boost my cardiovascular and muscular strength over the next three months. To attain that goal, I will set up an appointment with a trainer to conduct baseline testing and establish a workout plan. I will use that plan to work out at least five days per week."*

"I want to write a motivational self-help book."

SMART Goal: *"I want to write a book about the benefit of positive thinking. This book will be at least 200 pages long and ready to be published in one year. To attain that goal, I will write a minimum of 25 pages a week. Once the manuscript is complete, I will split the*



SMART goals put the power of success in your hands. They turn vague ambitions into objectives that you can see, hold, and *ignite*. They're **specific**, **measurable**, and **attainable**. They're **relevant** to what you want and **time-bound**. They're resolute answers to the question: *"What do you want to achieve?"*



Check your understanding by dragging and dropping to match the components below...

Rory owns a small chiropractic business and has a vague goal to *“grow my business.”* But it’s not actionable. So, to improve his success, he’s turned that objective into a SMART goal.

Can you pair each of the SMART initials below to its matching component of Rory’s new goal?

SUBMIT

Summary

The type of goals you set will influence how well they work. Not all goals are created equal, and the method you choose will make a difference.

To establish effective goals, you'll need to follow a process that moves from broad to narrow. First, that means writing down large-scale goals and picking your top goal from the list. Then, it requires setting smaller milestones to meet along the way to your objective, writing out the steps it will take to reach each one, and scheduling ongoing reviews to ensure that you're prepared if you need to make adjustments.

Then, when writing out those goals, keep them SMART, which is an acronym that stands for *specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound*. By following these tips, you can confidently set goals that pave a clear path and point you in the right direction.



Break down your goals. If you feel like your goal is too big to accomplish, continue to break it down into smaller and smaller steps. Remember, everyone has to start somewhere. So, map out all the milestones on the way to your objective until you arrive at the target that's closest to where you are right now. Start small and work your way up, and eventually, those impossible goals won't seem so out of reach.



Complete the content above before moving on.

Lesson 4 of 5

Knowledge Check



Module 3: Review Questions

Question

01/10

The purpose of the team must be clearly defined with concrete and _____ objectives.

- Challenging
- Measurable
- Multiple
- Medium-sized

Question

02/10

Effective teams use _____ to improve decision-making and problem-solving processes.

- Collaboration
- Conflict
- Communication
- Cohesion

Question

03/10

_____ reinforces a sense of shared responsibility and increases morale and team performance.

- Management
- The team leader
- Shared leadership
- Communication

Question

04/10

Conflict will still occur, but a positive group dynamic will focus the conflict

_____.

- Consciously
- Effectively
- Negatively
- Productively

Question

05/10

Establishing roles, making plans, and following standard business protocols and procedures are all part of the _____ process.

- Business
- Management
- Team building
- Communication

Question

06/10

M in the SMART acronym represents:

- Measurable
- Meaningful
- Mediocre
- Memorable

Question

07/10

SMART goals put the _____ of success in your hands.

- Power
- Opportunity
- Certainty
- Possibility

Question

08/10

Team members have the _____ to do what they need to do without being checked every step along the way.

- Responsibility
- Commitment
- Accountability
- Authority

Question

09/10

_____ relationships in effective teams are built on trust, respect, honesty, and acceptance.

- Personal
- Individual
- Team
- Interpersonal

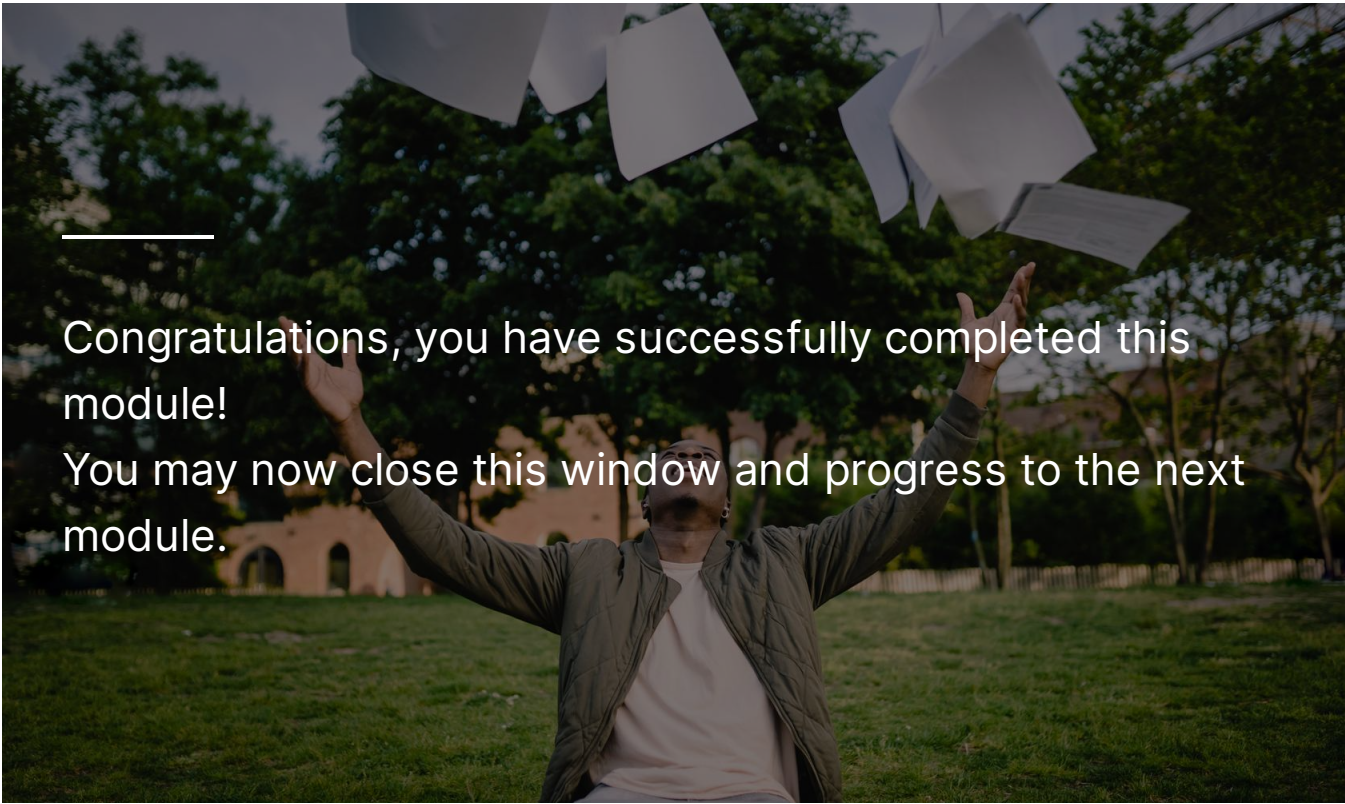
Question

10/10

Diversity is a good defence against _____ because of a different outlook and belief system that challenges common assumptions.

- Conflict
- Groupthink
- Communication
- Brainstorming

Module 3: Completed



Congratulations, you have successfully completed this module!
You may now close this window and progress to the next module.