



**Teamwork At Its Best:
Training handouts to build
a thriving team at work**

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Measure Your Own Teamwork

Read each statement below and answer on a 1–5 scale: 1 is “never true”; 3 is “true about half the time”; 5 is “always true.”

_____ If I’m recognized by my boss for a job well done, I’ll immediately praise others in my unit who deserve credit.

_____ When I’ve participated on teams, I’ve enjoyed the camaraderie of the group.

_____ I’ve impressed clients or bosses by showing how well I’ve worked with others.

_____ In my performance reviews, I’ve been recognized by my boss for my effective teamwork.

_____ I prefer to engage in group brainstorming sessions instead of coming up with ideas on my own.

_____ If a colleague is struggling with an assignment, I’ll offer to help.

_____ I’m comfortable working with other managers on a project, even if they’re rivals for a promotion.

Total your score. If it’s 24 or more, you’re clearly a team player who enjoys collaboration. You should have no trouble leading teams and empathizing with your employees.

If you scored 17 to 23, you’re on the right track, but you may need to polish certain areas to become more engaged in group activities.

If your score falls below 17, you might still be a strong leader; to improve teamwork among your staff, however, you may need to become sensitized to their situation. To gain credibility with your team, identify ways to strengthen your awareness of group dynamics.

Create a Culture Where Teams Thrive

Does your organizational culture provide the right climate for teams to thrive?

Answering the following questions with Yes or No:

	Yes	No
Is your organization more likely to reward individual achievement over team achievement? (<i>Example: At its annual awards dinner, does the company recognize individuals rather than teams?</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your organization encourage competition among individuals rather than cooperation? (<i>Example: In running the sales force, does the sales manager pit person against person to earn the most commission, or can salespeople earn more by working together to woo a big account?</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do your senior executives routinely assign projects to individuals rather than teams? (<i>Example: When the CEO confronts a complex problem, is she more apt to say, "I want the best person we have on this" or "Let's put our heads together on this and assemble a team"?</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In the halls and common areas of your organization, are the walls covered with photos of individual employees rather than groups? (<i>Example: Are you more likely to see "Employee of the Month" than "Team of the Month" photos?</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When left to their own devices, do your employees tend to work independently as opposed to sharing ideas and information? (<i>Example: When you wander around the work area, are you more likely to see individuals seated alone at their desks or pulling up chairs and holding impromptu meetings?</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In terms of the physical layout of the workplace, are the meeting rooms underused and shabby as opposed to vibrant and appealing? (<i>Example: Are the conference rooms dark, uncomfortable and ill equipped for groups, or are they clean and well stocked with supplies?</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Add the number of **Yes** answers to the above questions. If the total of **Yes** responses is three or more, that's a strong indicator that your organization lacks the kind of team-based culture that enhances collaboration.

While none of the above questions is conclusive in and of itself, as a whole they can help you determine to what extent your workplace provides the proper setting for teamwork.

The Hunt for Gung-Ho Dynamos

After you've explained the team's purpose and provided an overview of how the team will operate, give each prospective member this exercise to complete. Have them read each statement and select the best response.

	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree
I am eager to join this team.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I see how I can contribute to this team.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think my work on this team can enhance my stature or career prospects.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Joining this team will help me establish valuable alliances.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I respect the team leader.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The work that this team will do excites me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A year from now, I'm sure I'll be happy with my decision to join this team.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

To score the exercise, assign three points for **Agree**, two points for **Not Sure** and one point for **Disagree**. The higher the total score, the more likely you've found someone who truly wants to play a role in the group.

How to Hype Your Team

You want both your team members and the rest of the organization to treat the group as an elite, respected unit with an important mission. To determine whether you've maximized the group's perceived exclusivity, take the following multiple-choice test:

1. To enlist team members, you:

- A. Personally contact employees via written invitation or phone call and ask them to join the team.
- B. Post a sign-up sheet for anyone to join the team.
- C. Ask a few supervisors to "round up" some people for the team.
- D. Delegate the team selection to your assistant.

2. To persuade individuals to join the team, you:

- A. Emphasize the importance of the project to the organization.
- B. Explain that their contributions can help them learn and grow on the job.
- C. Ask the CEO or company president to discuss why this team matters.
- D. Let employees convince themselves by holding a meeting where they can get to know one another.

3. To show that the team's work is a top priority, you tell them:

- A. How much their work will affect the bottom line.
- B. There's never been "quite another team here that's this strong, with such an important job ahead."
- C. To treat the team as their No. 1 duty and to delegate other parts of their jobs to co-workers.
- D. You've already arranged for them to be relieved of some of their routine, daily tasks.

4. You inform

- A. Mentioning it in passing at staff meetings.
- B. Sending an email that lists the team's formation among other developments in your unit.
- C. Sending a memo to key managers and staff that discusses the team's mission, lists its members and ends with a "please cooperate with the team" request.
- D. Waiting until others ask you about it.

5. You arrange for the team's first meeting to take place in:

- A. A standard conference room.
- B. The company cafeteria or some other open area that's not in use.
- C. Your office or a team leader's office.
- D. A reserved room in a nearby restaurant, library or other off-site location.

Answers:

- 1. A.** Create an air of exclusivity from the start by personally contacting individuals to join the team. The benefits are twofold: You show that you treat their inclusion on the team as a matter important enough to justify your call or letter, and you make them feel “preselected” for the unique strengths they can bring to the group.

B and **D** aren’t necessarily bad answers: If employees sign up on their own or hear from your assistant, they may still want to contribute to the team’s success—but they won’t view it as much of an honor. In terms of **C**, knowing that their supervisor suggested them for the team can help them feel special, but if you’re going to go to that much trouble, you might as well contact them on your own.
- 2. C.** There’s no better way to inject a dose of exclusivity than to have your CEO or president attend a closed-door meeting to discuss the team’s importance. Fence-sitters will almost surely decide to join up if they see that the corporate bigwigs care about the group’s work.

A and **B** are decent, effective approaches, but neither carries the weight of bringing in the head honcho to do the selling for you. Plus, there’s a risk that your assurance of the team’s importance or your promise that teammates will learn and grow can sound predictable. Jaded individuals may dismiss such entreaties, figuring they’ve “heard that all before.” **D** is also risky: While taking a hands-off approach can pay off, you may find that the chosen employees don’t particularly like one another or don’t want to band together for a common purpose.
- 3. D.** Taking proactive steps to alleviate team members’ workloads can signal how much you want them to view their inclusion on the team as a prestigious invitation, not an additional chore. They’ll certainly appreciate that it’s a top priority if you give them the gift of time to concentrate on team duties.

While **C** is similar, it’s not as effective because you put the monkey on their shoulders: They still need to delegate and possibly face conflicts with their co-workers who may be unwilling to help out. **A** and **B** may be true sentiments, but they’ll probably ring hollow. Most employees simply ignore hyperbole about how they’re “the strongest team ever” or how their work will “affect the bottom line.”
- 4. C.** Unless you’re assembling a top-secret team, you should enhance the group’s stature by preparing a memo describing its goals and listing each member. Send your memo to division heads and key staffers throughout the organization.

B works almost as well, but an email doesn’t attract attention the way a printed memo does. Plus, if you list a series of items in an email—burying news about the team in the body of the message—readers may not pay much attention, and team members won’t feel as special. **A** and **D** are reactive: Waiting for staff meetings or for people to ask you about the team is an ineffectual way to build up the group’s exclusivity.

5. **D.** Holding a team meeting off-site can enliven the proceedings. The group will work together more effectively if they see that management takes the initiative to make team gatherings unique or memorable.
- A, B** and **C** won't help enhance the exclusivity you want to foster for the team.

Secrets of Fast-Start Teams

You want to motivate your new team from the outset. But if you go overboard, you may lose credibility and appear canned or phony. Playing a fist-pumping cheerleader may leave your audience skeptical. Before your first team meeting, take this multiple-choice test to determine if you're ready to lead them the right way.

1. I intend to get the team to trust each other by:

- A. Giving a stirring speech on the importance of trust.
- B. Warning of the dangers of mistrust among a team; telling a lot of cautionary tales of what can go wrong.
- C. Explaining that I want teammates to trust each other and remain open to working together.
- D. Staging a "trust fall" in which a volunteer plunges helplessly into the arms of everyone else.

2. I want to make each person feel special, as though part of an elite team. I'll do that by:

- A. Lavishing praise on everyone with phrases such as "You're the cream of the crop" and "I chose you because you're winners."
- B. Going around the room and giving each team member an endearing nickname.
- C. Comparing this team to past teams I've managed and declaring, "You're by far the best."
- D. Sharing the specific criteria I've used to select the team.

3. I want to send a message that everyone's equal on this team. I'll do that by:

- A. Announcing a series of incentives that will be awarded to each member based solely on team results.
- B. Insisting that when an individual speaks, everyone else must listen at all times.
- C. Requiring that a different team spokesperson represent the group each month when updating management.
- D. Arranging the seats at the first meeting in a circle so that no one's "at the head of the class."

4. I want the team to realize this isn't business as usual—that their work can really affect the bottom line. I'll do that by:

- A. Reading a memo from the company president on the team's vital mission.
- B. Sharing the latest quarterly and year-over-year budgetary numbers, and tying the team's role to improving those numbers in the future.
- C. Declaring that the company is at a crossroads, and the team will set its direction for the next few years.
- D. Giving examples of past teams that have made a positive impact on the firm's bottom-line performance.

5. To establish a few ground rules for team interaction, I will:

- A. Distribute a list of do's and don'ts.
- B. Write three of the most important rules on a flip chart during the first meeting and refer to them often.
- C. Ask the team, "What rules should we set up to govern how you interact with each other?"
- D. Announce the rules in the first few minutes to lay the groundwork for everything that follows.

Answers:

1. **C.** Simply and briefly explaining the need for trust and openness is enough—for now. Carry on too much and you may overdo it.
A is unnecessary at this early juncture; there will be times for stirring speeches later. Plus, if you give a long-winded speech with the "just trust each other" theme, it may sound eloquent but will leave little lasting impact. Trust is built from feelings; you can't tell your audience how to feel. **B** is too negative and sets the wrong tone. **D** might work if you're training an Outward Bound hiking group, but in most corporate settings such theatrical touches tend to fall flat.
2. **D.** By letting everyone know how they qualified to join the team, they can conclude for themselves that they're special. For example, share the objective measurements you applied in selecting them ("I considered only individuals with superior performance reviews over the last three years, a history of launching bold initiatives and at least one proven area of technical expertise.").
A will ring too hollow. If you speak in superlatives, most listeners will know you're just spouting generalities. **B** risks alienating team members while making you appear childish. Like **A**, **C** is somewhat meaningless: Suggesting that this team is "the best" is probably not true, and everyone will know that.
3. **A.** To enforce equality, dangle a carrot. Explain that individuals will win or lose as a unit—not at the expense of each other.
B is harmless blather. Team members have heard it all before, and you won't gain compliance just because you preach it. **C** is an artificial attempt to impose equality on the team. Just because they rotate spokespersons doesn't mean that one or two dominant personalities won't try to hog all the credit. **D** can't hurt, but it won't necessarily help. Classroom-style seating can work just as well; you can still make everyone feel equal while subtly reinforcing your authority as the manager in charge.
4. **B.** Use "open-book management" to drill home the importance of the team's potential contribution. Your audience is less apt to turn away from hard numbers than soft appeals.

Unless your company is run by a charismatic, beloved charmer, **A** won't matter much. **C** may motivate a few old-timers—the historians on your team—but no one else. **D** may lead individuals to think, “That’s nice, but what do past teams have to do with my being on this one?”

5. **C**. Whenever you want employees to comply with rules, give them a say. By throwing the floor open to their input, you can draft rules that they deem important—and that raises the odds they'll pay attention to them.

A won't work because team members may disregard a handout or treat its contents lightly. **B** will have only a limited effect; while you'll drill home the rules by posting them in plain sight and referring to them repeatedly, they may fade from everyone's memory in the weeks after the initial meeting. **D** is the worst choice: You don't want to devote the opening minutes of the first meeting to telling them what they can and cannot do.

Grade Their Listening Skills

Ask each team member to complete the following confidential exercise. Explain that there are no right or wrong answers, and they will not get graded on it. Its purpose is to raise awareness of each individual's communication style and isolate areas that need improvement.

After reading each opening phrase, choose the answer that most accurately captures how you would act most of the time:

If I'm in a meeting and eager to make a point, I will:

- A. Jump in at the earliest opportunity.
- B. Wait for a natural lull in the conversation and then speak up.
- C. Whisper my point to a more assertive co-worker, who will raise the issue.
- D. Write it down and put it in a memo later.

If a teammate explains something and I can't hear clearly, I will:

- A. Think to myself, "Oh, well, I can't hear what's being said. I guess I'll tune out."
- B. Prod the speaker by gently interjecting, "Would you speak up, please?"
- C. Pretend to listen by nodding and maintaining eye contact, even though I can't really hear a word.
- D. Wait for a pause and ask my neighbor, "Can you hear this?"

If a teammate says something that I find a bit offensive, I will:

- A. Respond right away: "I don't appreciate that comment!"
- B. Continue to listen without letting the comment derail my concentration.
- C. Keep quiet, but dream up different ways to express my disapproval.
- D. Say to myself, "I'll let this pass, but the next time I'll speak up."

If a speaker babbles aimlessly and wastes the team's time, I will:

- A. Use the time to daydream.
- B. Restate the speaker's main point and add, "Based on what you've said, let's move on . . ."
- C. Check in mentally every minute or so that I'm generally aware of the speaker's point, while grumbling and shifting restlessly the rest of the time.
- D. Start jotting reminders on my to-do list—or simply doodle on a note pad.

If a colleague criticizes me somewhat harshly in a team meeting, I will:

- A. Defend myself instantly and justify my actions.
- B. Allow the speaker to finish, and then ask a follow-up question, such as: "Can you give me an example?" or "When did you first notice this?"
- C. Stew in resentment but not say a word, figuring I'll get back at this person later.

D. Try to listen while thinking of a criticism I can make against the speaker to even the score.

If you answered **A** to any of these statements, consider this a red flag: Your listening skills need to take a higher priority. In your rush to speak, you may miss what others say or overlook subtle nuances—nonverbal cues such as shrugs or embarrassed smiles—that can help you understand their message more accurately.

If you answered **B** to any of the above, you're a patient, attentive listener. You possess the discipline to hold off speaking your mind until the timing's right and your remarks will do the most good.

Any **C** responses? If so, they show that while you may be attempting to listen, you're not giving it 100 percent. In fact, you may face a separate skills challenge: lack of confidence in your ability to communicate. If you're hampered by self-doubt or prefer not to make waves, you may be unwilling to make your voice heard.

Finally, **D** answers indicate that you like to keep busy, mentally and physically. That's not necessarily bad, but it doesn't make you a rapt listener. For example, trying to listen while thinking of what you want to say later will prevent you from retaining the full message. And jotting notes may help you remember a speaker's key points, but don't go overboard; you may get too wrapped up in your writing and sever any eye contact or other connection with the speaker.

Take a Team Diagnostic Exam

Does your team need a push? Sit in on a few of its meetings and then complete this exercise. Read each statement and answer Yes or No:

	Yes	No
The team leader distributed an agenda or action items before the meeting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All of the team members show up for the meeting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Team meetings begin promptly at the scheduled time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All of the team members complete their assignments (present research, provide facts and so forth).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Everyone participates in the meeting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The team reviews goals from its last meeting, and members give progress reports.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Team members take notes, especially when they promise to do a special assignment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Team members take responsibility for their work rather than giving excuses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Team members linger after the formal meeting ends, discussing issues with enthusiasm.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you checked **Yes** for all nine statements, odds are your team is in fine shape. But each **No** answer raises a red flag. If you notice the number of **No**'s increasing from meeting to meeting, you need to intervene and take steps to lift the collective spirit and performance level of the group.

Measure Your Team's Energy Level

Does your team tend to avoid conflict, thus producing mediocre results? Use this exercise to assess your team's tolerance for conflict. Answer each question below with Always, Sometimes or Never:

	Always	Sometimes	Never
When someone makes a rosy prediction, does a teammate inject a dose of reality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Before a team makes a decision, do skeptics or naysayers speak up?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When two teammates disagree, does this seem to energize the room?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When someone makes a bold comment, do at least some listeners shake their heads?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do team members express their views passionately with emphatic gestures?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do arguing teammates substantiate their views with solid evidence?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the team leader prompt people who may disagree to speak up?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there time at the end of meetings for participants to raise objections?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The more **Always** boxes you checked off, the more likely your team cares about its mission and clashes freely to reach more effective decisions.

If you chose a mix of **Always** and **Sometimes**, that also indicates at least some capacity for healthy conflict among the team.

But if your answers are mostly **Never**, the best way to boost your team's results is by prodding participants to take more forceful stands and be willing to fight for acceptance of their views.

Track Performance Benchmarks

Fill out this worksheet to determine how you're going to hold your team accountable:

1. What are the team's top three performance goals?

2. Are all the above performance goals measurable? Yes No

If Yes, go to Question 3.

3. If No, how can you rework the goal(s) to ensure a fair, accurate measurement of the team's progress?

3. How will I know to what extent the team has attained each of the above goals? (Check all that apply.)

The team will have a deadline for turning in reports that contain specific information, such as the percentage of on-time deliveries or the number of customer returns for a certain product.

The team will submit written, actionable steps the company can take to solve a specific problem.

The team will train or educate others (such as employees, suppliers or customers), who will adopt certain practices or follow specific procedures as a result.

I'll ask employees who aren't on the team or consultants to audit or assess the team's work in reaching its performance goals, based on preset benchmarks.

I'll meet regularly with a team representative to see whether the team has met specific standards (such as producing work that meets or exceeds a checklist of quality criteria).

Other: _____

4. How will I monitor the team's effort in pursuing its goals?

I'll ask a team representative to write up "minutes" describing how the team spends its time in meetings.

_____ I'll sit in on parts of team meetings and rate the group in key areas, such as diligence, determination and resilience when facing setbacks.

_____ I'll ask each team member to send me a short memo on a regular basis summarizing his or her involvement and overall assessment of the group's performance.

_____ I'll set up checkpoints every week, month or quarter when the team must complete short-term assignments.

4. _____ Other: _____

Check Performance During Organizational Change

Use these questions as the basis for assessing each team member's performance as the old and new collide. Answer Yes or No:

Does [name of employee]:

- _____ want to remain on the team in view of the changes?
- _____ show a willingness to accept new challenges?
- _____ suggest ways the team can regroup in view of the changes?
- _____ propose specific ways that the team can adjust how it measures its performance?
- _____ complain frequently or make cynical comments about the changes?
- _____ point out problems with the changes without offering solutions?
- _____ express pessimism about the team's ability to stay focused?
- _____ slack off in terms of effort or show less interest in helping the team?

If you answered **Yes** to the first four questions and **No** to the last four, that speaks well of this employee. This person deserves accolades for responding professionally to change.

But if there are any **No** answers in the top four questions or **Yes** responses for the final four, each one represents a possible red flag in evaluating performance.

Test Your Team's Self-Starter Quotient

You want to assemble a team of self-reliant employees who can still work as a unit. Too many mavericks can lead to anarchy, but too many followers will guarantee mediocrity.

Answer these questions Yes or No to determine whether your team strikes the right balance:

___ Do team members frequently propose bold, original ideas without much prodding?

___ Do your most independent-minded employees welcome a chance to serve on the team?

___ Do self-starters positively influence other, more reactive teammates?

___ Does the team as a whole show an eagerness to produce results, as opposed to discussing process-oriented matters?

___ Do team members gain resources via the group that they couldn't otherwise get?

___ Do you think your self-starters make a better contribution by being on the team than they would on their own?

___ Are there opportunities on the team for more apathetic employees to "step up" and take more responsibility?

Add the number of **Yes** answers to the above questions. If the **Yes** responses total 5 or more, that shows you're allowing self-starters to make a valuable contribution to the group. Every **No** response indicates areas for improvement. The team's chances of long-term success increase if individuals don't grow too reliant on one another to think and act independently.

Does Your Team Ask Questions to Forge Agreement?

Take this quiz to diagnose how well team members seek to learn from each other in arriving at group decisions. Complete the test soon after you have sat in on a meeting and listened for 30 minutes as your team attempted to make a collective decision.

Choose the best answer:

1. As you observe your team trying to make a decision, do they:

- A. Take turns expressing their opinions about the topic at hand?
- B. Keep repeating themselves or seconding each other's views?
- C. Ask each other questions to clarify ambiguities or ensure they understand each other?
- D. Go off on tangents and debate other issues?

2. When team members question each other, do they:

- A. Answer their own questions before allowing the respondent to chime in?
- B. Listen attentively without interrupting?
- C. Bury their question in a long lecture or diatribe, so that others are unclear what they're being asked?
- D. Keep rephrasing a single question or ask a string of questions all at once?

3. After hearing their questions answered, do the original questioners:

- A. Ask appropriate follow-up questions?
- B. Move on by asserting their views without acknowledging the answer they just heard?
- C. Dismiss the answer or disagree with it in an effort to shut down further discussion?
- D. Exhibit negative body language indicating impatience or disapproval with what they hear?

4. Note how team members phrase their questions. Are they:

- A. Choosing neutral words that do not reflect their own biases?
- B. Lacing their questions with loaded terms that detract from the core information they seek?
- C. Assuming a negative or worst-case answer?
- D. Speaking in a cynical, smug or know-it-all tone?

5. After about 30 minutes, count how many team members posed questions. Do you conclude that:

- A. Team members were falling into roles, where a few "teachers" drove the discussion while everyone else played the "students"?
- B. Some participants apparently gave up because other, more vocal teammates monopolized the discussion?
- C. Based on their lack of interest in the proceedings, most team members were apathetic about reaching consensus?

D. Everyone who wanted to speak up did so?

Answers:

1. **C.** If teammates are asking questions, that's a strong signal they're going to arrive at a more meaningful, sound decision. It shows they prefer to extract knowledge from each other rather than pelt the team with opinions, as in **A**.

In terms of **B**, if they're merely seconding each other or rehashing obvious truths, they probably won't reach a breakthrough consensus. And if they seem more interested in other issues and sink their teeth into tangential concerns (**D**), they may not feel qualified to discuss what matters most or may not be engaged in their primary mission.

2. **B.** Questions don't serve much purpose if the answers get ignored. You want to see teammates truly wanting to hear the answers.

A reveals that they're probably asking rhetorical questions just to make a point; they're actually pontificating rather than willingly turning over the floor. The same goes with **C**. But if they're reeling off a string of questions or needlessly rephrasing the same inquiry (**D**), they may need coaching on how to slow down and give others a chance to respond.

3. **A.** Nonthreatening, clarifying follow-up questions indicate that questioners are earnestly seeking to understand their teammates' views. That raises the odds the group will reach a solid, sensible consensus.

B is worrisome: Questioners who show little or no interest in the answers may be putting on an act. Their inquiries may be a sham when all they really want is to argue and assert their own views. **C** is just as dangerous: When questioners hear something they don't want to hear, they should have the maturity to digest it gracefully and open the floor for further discussion. And if questioners' negative nonverbal cues intimidate others (**D**), then fence-sitting teammates may clam up and refuse to share less popular findings that could benefit the team's decision making.

4. **A.** How a question is worded can largely influence how it gets answered. You want to see team members asking fair, balanced questions that do not come disguised as opinions.

B indicates the questioners are engaging in a bit of arm twisting rather than a sincere desire to learn something. **C** shows a pessimism that can bring down the team and foreclose possible avenues to consensus. **D** can polarize teammates and delay any compromise that could lead to group decisions.

5. D. Ideally, all the team members should feel comfortable making their voices heard. But in many cases a group breaks up into leaders and followers, where the followers hesitate to speak up and ask questions. That's the problem with **A** and **B**. Apathy can also drag down a team (**C**), so it's important that you motivate the group to care about its decision and perceive the importance and consequences of its work.

Invite the Team to Grade Your Performance

Distribute this exercise to all of your team members, and ask them to complete it. Promise anonymity: Insist that they not write their names on the form. Also, let them take the exercise with them so they can type any comments on it before returning it to you. Otherwise, some respondents may fear that you'll recognize their handwriting, which would discourage them from providing honest feedback.

Read each statement below. Rate the team leader on a scale of 1 to 5 as follows:

1 = Never

2 = Occasionally

3 = Sometimes

4 = Somewhat often

5 = Frequently

_____ She acts arrogant when talking with the team.

_____ She treats team members rudely.

_____ She micromanages the team.

_____ She gives us too much negative feedback.

_____ She lies to the team.

_____ She enjoys making people sweat.

_____ She treats team members disrespectfully.

_____ She plays favorites on the team.

_____ Her humor is inappropriate.

_____ She loses her temper.

_____ She doesn't recognize the team's efforts.

_____ She keeps changing deadlines or shifting team goals.

_____ She can't keep a secret.

Comments: _____

After collecting the forms, add up the score. Any total below 20 means that you're an enlightened leader. Once you pass 25, however, you're entering the danger zone. Take their input to heart, and try to improve your communication and leadership skills.