

Team Work Agreements: Cost so Little & Do so Much!

Q. What's the most pervasive and often ignored barrier to team performance?



A. Unresolved interpersonal issues.
When these issues are avoided, it erodes trust and reduces the team's ability to address and resolve conflict, and creates a cycle of blame.



Q. What's the most effective approach to address this?

A. Not training alone, nor attacking or avoiding the issues. Training is valuable, but it's not enough for teams struggling with interpersonal conflicts. And aggressive tactics only worsen the problem.

The Better Solution...

TEAM WORK AGREEMENTS: A Best-in-Class Behavioral Intervention Tool

Unresolved interpersonal issues occur when someone is so irritated by another's behavior that they avoid addressing the conflict or respond aggressively, causing more damage. This weakens team performance as people complain instead of focusing on their work.

Costs of Avoidance

- Mired reorganizations
- Shrinking profits
- Shattered initiatives
- Unrealized M&A goals
- Loss of market share
- Poor decisions
- Loss of trust
- Undesirable turnover
- A culture of "blame"
- Little / no accountability

These issues have significant financial consequences for companies, employees, and shareholders.

Ineffective Approaches

Training or aggressive tactics are often used, but they don't address the root cause: a lack of individual, team, or leadership responsibility. Training is only effective if applied, and hardball tactics reinforce avoidance behavior.

The Better Solution

Team Work Agreements are a powerful way to initiate change and maintain progress. It's an accountability-based approach involving short sessions where team members discuss and agree on behaviors to address interpersonal or process issues.

What Are Team Work Agreements?

A Work Agreement is a promise to transform non-productive work behavior. It is not a flimsy ground rule. It is an emotionally mature work performance agreement.

There are **two types** of Work Agreements:

- A **Process Agreement** describes who will do what and the respective work methods they will use. This Agreement consequently defines roles and responsibilities, interfaces, and procedures.
- A **Behavioral Agreement** describes how people will behave while they perform their tasks. This Agreement defines how teammates will resolve difficult issues or interpersonal conflict striving for transparency in all interactions.

Between the two, all teamwork issues are suitable for team Work Agreements.

Two Parts of a Work Agreement

A well-written Work Agreement starts with an Intention Statement. Here is a good example:

1. Each teammate will communicate their thoughts and feelings in an appropriate way.

Each Intention Statement will also have clarifications and/or conditions for acceptance. Here are some examples:

- We follow the spirit and intent of our company values.
- If a teammate is not communicating in an appropriate way, we will call it to their attention.
- We will give positive teammate reinforcement when we see and hear good communication.

Creating team Work Agreements happens in a team-building workshop. In this setting, the team leader and teammates are willing to discuss and agree on work behaviors. They intentionally use Work Agreements to resolve interpersonal or process issues that are hurting the team because they know it will help the team achieve their goals and function better together.

Why Team Agreements Work

Team Agreements work when teammates live and follow them. It is not a matter of IF conflict will happen, but WHEN conflict happens among teammates. It is far better to have Work Agreements in place before conflict happens. But even if your team is currently in conflict, it is never too late to create and follow Work Agreements.

Here's a True Success Story

One year after their Work Agreements workshop, which included a "Moment of Reason," this team had completely turned around.

During their workshop the year before, they had recommitted to their shared goals and created powerful Work Agreements to solve several team challenges.

After honoring their Work Agreements for a full year and tracking their results, they not only felt like a true team but had the data to prove it. In just a year, they experienced the following:

- 78% increase in teammate trust
- 46% increase in mutual team member support
- 61% increase in complying with decisions
- Over \$350,000 in savings.

Applications

Team Work Agreements can prevent or resolve interpersonal friction in any group. They're useful during change initiatives, team building, leadership coaching, and more.

Other applications:

- Team building: all levels during forming, storming, norming stages
- Board of Directors
- Leadership Coaching
- Change management
- Re-organizations
- Alliances / JV's
- M&A integrations
- Ethics Initiatives
- Safety programs
- Outsourcing
- Labor / Management

To Learn More

To learn more about Work Agreements visit RightMindedTeamwork.com and search for How to Facilitate Team Work Agreements: A Practical, 10-step Process for Building a Right-Minded Team That Work as One.

About the Author

This article was written by **Dan Hogan**, an Author and **Certified Master Facilitator** with over 40 years of experience in team-building facilitation.

Dan has worked with more than 500 teams globally and is the author of eight how-to books on team-building processes and methods.

Dan specializes in creating practical, real-world solutions to help teams achieve sustainable and meaningful results.

His unique philosophy, **Right-Minded Teamwork**, emphasizes clarity, collaboration, and achieving desired outcomes. You can use all the Right-Minded Teamwork tools and processes in your practice. Check it out soon.

To learn more about Dan and explore his work, visit [Right-Minded Teamwork](http://RightMindedTeamwork.com).

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Work As One.®*

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