// **What are the ingredients of a successful team?**
// **How do you bring out the best in your team members?**
// **How do you keep your team learning continuously?**
// **How do you embrace diversity, challenges and commitments outside the team as contributors to your team's effectiveness?**

When a team is working well, productivity is high, individual differences are recognised, and successes are celebrated and shared. But as anyone who has been part of a team will know, its effectiveness can easily be eroded by communication problems, overwhelmed by information, and defeated by rapidly evolving circumstances.

Ensuring that a team is effective requires balancing action and reflection. Teams benefit greatly from learning from each other's experience, and translating that into new ways of working. The ideas and examples in this book will help you calibrate how best you can be both an effective leader and member.

Wherever in the world you are, whatever kind of team you are in, *100 Great Team Effectiveness Ideas* provides a wealth of prompts to enable you to thrive during the most demanding of times, and deliver outcomes you never thought possible.

DR PETER SHAW is a founding partner of Praesta Partners and works with individuals, teams and groups to help them grow their strengths and tackle demanding issues confidently. He has held a wide range of board posts covering finance, personnel, policy, communications and delivery, and worked in five UK Government departments. He is the author of 20 influential books on leadership, and is a Visiting Professor at Newcastle University Business School, at the University of Chester Business Faculty, and at St John's College, University of Durham.

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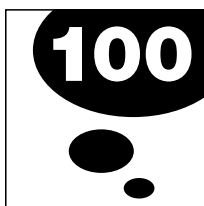**Marshall Cavendish** Business

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I am very grateful to Sarah Davidson, who has written the foreword to the book. I have known Sarah for a number of years as she

has risen to increasingly senior posts in the Scottish Government. Sarah always brings wisdom and clarity of thinking to the way she leads and participates in teams.

I have dedicated this book to Alan and Kath Briers. Alan introduced me to walking in the Yorkshire Dales over 40 years ago. In recent years we have had delightful walks on the Yorkshire Wolds Way, the Alternative Coast to Coast Walk and the Ribble Way, as well as in the French and Austrian Alps.

My family have been very supportive as I have committed time to write this book. Frances and our three children and their spouses regularly tease me about the writing, but always show a reasonably polite interest in the finished product.

I am grateful to you, the reader, for committing your time to dip into the ideas in the book. I hope they are a fruitful source of ideas.

FOREWORD

WHICHEVER SECTOR WE WORK IN, whether our contribution is paid or unpaid, whether we operate to a traditional pattern or on a flexible basis, a common denominator for the vast majority of us is the need to collaborate and cooperate in order to get things done. In other words, most of us are members and/or leaders of teams.

Recent years have witnessed a significant shift in our thinking about leadership. Admiration for the so-called 'hero leader' of the past is being replaced by recognition of the human skills necessary to enable people to give of their best – empathy, emotional intelligence, open communication. Increasingly, our performance management systems recognise this by rightly measuring not just *what* we do, but *how* we do it. Feedback from our peers and our staff often contributes to our overall performance assessment. Promotion and recruitment exercises test our ability to motivate, inspire and collaborate with others in order to deliver outcomes. Our understanding of the key drivers of employee engagement points to the importance of high-quality relationships at work.

It is not surprising, therefore, that those aspiring to be good leaders want to know how to lead effective teams.

This is an increasing focus for leadership development just at a time when it is getting ever more challenging to form and direct teams of people who will work together productively and efficiently. Over the past 20 years of my own career, I have witnessed changing dynamics in the workplace leading to more flexible and remote working, the growth of short-term projects with tight delivery schedules, an emphasis on collaborative working across multiple organisations, the concept of the 'virtual team', and the expectation that we will lead and contribute to a number of discrete project teams at any one time. All of these, and other factors, place a high

premium on the ability to bring your team to operational maturity as quickly as possible and to support people in working together effectively (and, hopefully, happily) for as long as is required.

My own experience suggests that this won't just 'happen'. Critically, the sum of positive bilateral relationships between the leader and each individual member, while important, will not of itself create an effective team. Similarly, the application of good governance – proportionate programme and project management included – is insufficient on its own to create the conditions for exceptional team performance.

What makes the difference is a thoughtful and sustained dialogue within the team that leads to deeper mutual knowledge and understanding, identifies preferences and capabilities, supports challenge and debate, and allows individual members to build their own influence and contribution to the collective effort. Through this process, expectations of the leader – and the leader's expectations – can also be explored and established in an open forum.

Simply knowing this to be true is, alas, also not sufficient. You and your team need to make a conscious and deliberate investment in each other, and experience suggests that it is useful to have a framework to help initiate and guide the process. I was very fortunate some years ago to be able to draw on Peter Shaw's expertise in offering me exactly that framework through a series of team coaching interventions.

I was struck, and humbled, by the responses of team members to questions posed by Peter such as, 'What brings out the best in you in a team setting?' and 'What was your previous experience of a team that helped you to be confident and effective?' People I thought I knew well in my role as line manager shared personal motivators and experiences that were news to me, let alone to the colleagues with whom they needed to work effectively in order to

meet challenging objectives. Explicit bonds of reciprocity were established 'horizontally' across the team in addition to the more traditional 'vertical' management relationships. Team members articulated their 'ask' of me in new ways, reflecting the context of shared endeavour.

None of the questions we worked with in that team coaching process deployed 'rocket science', to use the colloquial expression. Yet, so often, the most obvious approaches are the ones we struggle to find for ourselves. That is the beauty of Peter's approach, encapsulated in this book. Alongside digestible chunks of theory, he offers practical suggestions which bring the ideas to life.

I encourage you to use this book in whatever way is useful to you. It is ideally designed to dip into according to your current circumstances, whether establishing a new team or taking on an existing one, whether in your first role as a team leader or as an experienced leader looking for some refreshment.

Used well, these approaches should help each member of your team to bring the best of themselves and to elicit the best from their colleagues – an excellent basis for whatever it is we are seeking to achieve as leaders, and the experience of work I would wish for everyone.

Sarah Davidson
Director General: Communities
The Scottish Government
Edinburgh, Scotland

INTRODUCTION

This book seeks to provide prompts to enable teams to thrive and be effective in demanding times.

When a team is working well, productivity is high. Individual competences and differences are recognised. Successes are celebrated and shared. When mistakes happen, they are viewed as times of learning and not failure. But not all teams jell. Frustration can ooze out when there are slight difficulties. The focus can be far too inward-looking and progress slow.

There is a huge interest in how to ensure teams are effective. The pace of change has meant teams have to be quick to adapt. Information technology means that teams have access to much more information, but need to be able to use that information in a constructive and sure-footed way. Globalisation means that there are many more virtual teams which have to find ways of working quickly and effectively, while adapting to cultural differences about expectations and ways of working.

Good team leaders are regularly looking for ways to equip their teams to work effectively at pace, whilst also ensuring there is time to reflect on longer-term issues. There is a growing appetite to keep trying new approaches and learn from the experience of others.

The ideas in this book will provide a range of suggestions to help you calibrate how best you can be both an effective team leader and member. The book is divided into ten sections, looking in turn at:

- Observing teams that work well
- Taking on leading an existing team
- Bringing out the best in team members

- Building a new team

- Becoming an even better team leader

- Ensuring effective teams across your organisation

- Being an authoritative team member

- Ensuring effective team development

- Ensuring teams keep learning

- Ensuring continuous learning about leading teams well

The book is designed so you can dip into the different sections. It can be used by individuals or teams. It is intended to be a practical tool for managers and leaders at any level, in any organisation, in any country.

I have drawn from my first career working in the public sector for 32 years and then a second career working in the private sector for 12 years, alongside a number of roles within the voluntary sector. In addition I have worked with teams across five continents, ranging from international executive boards to local community teams. It has been a privilege to draw from experience in such a wide range of contexts and to see teams deliver outcomes they never thought possible.

I hope the ideas in the book provide valuable prompts for thought and action as you participate in a range of different teams.

SECTION A
OBSERVING TEAMS THAT WORK WELL

1 WHY DO TEAMS MATTER?

Observing when teams make a difference to overall outcomes, as well as being cognisant of the contribution of individuals, enables you to develop your own understanding of why teams matter.

The idea

When I begin working with a team, I ask team members to reflect on teams they have been part of in the past that have worked well and to identify the characteristics of those teams. I suggest that they think about teams from different spheres – a sports team, a choir, a community organisation, a faith group, a family unit, or a work team in a different organisation that they were part of.

I invite them to share their observations on what binds a good team together and what makes it effective. We then talk about outcomes that the teams delivered and the extent to which operating as a team makes a difference to the prospect of success.

The stories that are shared are often about how members of a team bring different skills and experiences. In good teams, forward thinking is developed in dialogue as individuals build on each other's ideas. The sense of shared endeavour, the working up of ideas together, and the resolve that comes from a common purpose mean that the team becomes 'more than the sum of its parts'.

A telling characteristic of a good team is its ability to provide support to its members and constructive challenge during periods when the team's resilience is being tested. A team with clarity about reality and boldness of intent reinforces the courage of its members and their belief that they are acting responsibly.

When Miranda was appointed as a Director in a Government Department, she began to reflect on what type of senior team she wanted to develop. She had been part of teams in the private sector before, and was a lay member of a leadership team in a church. She had observed at first hand the positive benefits of a team working well together.

When working in a marketing agency, the team was at its best when it was developing a creative idea and building on members' contributions. In a previous role in Government, the teams were most effective when they were interrelating evidence and facts with practical opportunities. In the voluntary sector, the team worked at its best when participants were able to play to their strengths and be honest about the practical constraints on the time they could give.

By drawing from her experience in three very different sectors, Miranda could see the benefits and pitfalls that came from working with diverse and often opinionated team members.

In practice

- Reflect on the range of teams you have been part of and why they were successful

- Note down the generic characteristics of teams you have been part of that worked well

- Seek the views of others on why teams matter and see how much overlap there is with your perspective

- Reflect on what would have happened in particular situations if you had not been part of a team, and to what extent the outcomes would have been less good

2 WHEN CAN A TEAM HELP YOU BE EFFECTIVE?

Reflecting on when a team can help you be effective will sharpen your understanding of a good team and your commitment to make a team work well.

The idea

A team can help you be more effective when it has a positive reputation on which you can build. Being a member of a credible team opens doors for you. The input of other members of the team might give you a wider set of perspectives and enable you to develop your own thinking. Constructive challenge from members of the team might enable you to sift ideas into the practicable and not so practicable.

It is worth recalling when fellow team members' contributions and influences shaped your thinking about the art of the possible. Perhaps interaction with a colleague enabled you to have the courage of your convictions to take forward action when you were hesitant. Or perhaps a colleague forewarned you of a problem or correctly anticipated the views of other people.

Being part of a team can help you be more effective through a combination of discussions in team meetings, planned meetings with other team members, informal conversations, and steers in writing between meetings. A good team dynamic helps outside the meeting room too. You can be carrying in your head the wisdom of your colleagues as you reflect on their perspectives and insights on different issues. Perhaps a colleague's advice to 'do what you think

is right' can be a mantra that helps you reach a point of decision after weighing up the evidence.

Miranda was always grateful to the members of her team in the marketing organisation, who encouraged her to develop her ideas and turn them into practical propositions. The team encouraged her to stretch her thinking and forced her to test out how robust her ideas were. Miranda knew she had the support of her colleagues, and recognised that the team's effectiveness flowed from this robust awareness of each other's ideas.

Miranda recognised that she would be given a hard time when her ideas were examined from different perspectives. She also knew that at the end of what felt like an interrogation, there would be moments of laughter and what felt like a 'virtual hug' as people left the room feeling it had been a constructive meeting with ideas turning into next steps. The debate could feel painful, but the team had developed an honest, rigorous approach that worked well within a supportive environment.

In practice

- Reflect on teams you have been part of that helped develop you as an effective team member

- What was the contribution of others in such teams that enabled you to grow in confidence and effectiveness?

- How much of the benefit for you of being part of a team resulted from the knowledge of your colleagues, or their ability to help you develop your ideas and have the courage of your convictions?

- Which team had the biggest positive effect on you and why?
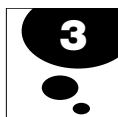
3 WHEN IS A TEAM NOT A TEAM?

A TEAM MAY LOOK to be working effectively, but probing where a team is not maximising its potential can provide revealing insights for any new team leader or member.

The idea

Members of a team may look as if they are engaging and listening to each other in a team meeting or a team event. But as soon as they move out of the company of their colleagues, they operate as individuals rather than as part of a coherent team.

Members of a team might not be acting as a team partly because of the absence of any comments of support from team colleagues. There may be no words of criticism, but the absence of explicit words of support may give the impression that the team is not that important.

It can be helpful to imagine yourself as an observer of the teams you are part of. When do you see such a team in dialogue, building each other up, supporting each other and challenging each other in a way that is constructive and leads to better outcomes? In some teams, you may notice that what is said in a team meeting is not fully lived out in conversations and actions between meetings. As you observe the body language that team members display to each other, it can often be painfully clear where there is respect and a keenness to engage, and where there is scepticism and mistrust.

Miranda felt ambivalent about the leadership team she was part of in her church. She recognised that her contribution to this team could only be limited because she had a full-time job. Miranda

was fully committed in the meetings she was present at but felt undercurrents as different team members had different priorities, with an inner circle of people who were able to commit more time than she could.

Miranda debated in her own mind whether it was inevitable that such a team would not be entirely at ease with itself. Miranda suggested that the leadership team spent a Saturday morning reflecting on the extent to which the team was working effectively. There was some progress in the resulting conversation, but there were clearly underlying assumptions that were deeply felt about appropriate levels of commitment. This meant that the team was unlikely to be as open and creative as Miranda had hoped.

In practice

- Bring your own perspective about when a team is working well and when it could be a lot better

- Observe how much of a team dynamic continues purposefully between meetings

- Observe how team agreements can be undermined by the words and behaviours of participants between team events

- Reflect on how a greater degree of openness and honesty can be encouraged, so participants are conscious of where they are not operating well as a team

- Be realistic about the limitations on how much more effective a team can be because of the personalities or circumstances

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DR PETER SHAW works with individuals, teams and groups to help them grow their strengths and tackle demanding issues confidently. His objective is to help individuals and teams clarify the vision of who they want to be, the values that are driving them, the value-added they want to bring and their sources of vitality.

His work on how leaders step up successfully into demanding leadership roles and sustain that success was recognised with the award of a Doctorate by Publication from the University of Chester in 2011.

Peter is a founding partner of Praesta Partners, an international specialist coaching business. His clients enjoy frank, challenging conversations leading to fresh thinking and new insights. It is the dynamic nature of the conversations that provides a stimulus for creating reflection and new action. He often works with Chief Executives and Board members taking on new roles and leading major organisational change. Peter has worked with a wide range of different leadership teams as they tackle new challenges.

Peter has worked with Chief Executives and senior teams in a range of different sectors and countries. He has led workshops on such themes as 'Riding the Rapids', 'Seizing the Future', 'Thriving in your Work', 'Being an Agile Leader' and 'Building Resilience' across five continents.

Peter has held a wide range of Board posts covering finance, personnel, policy, communications and delivery. He worked in five UK Government departments (Treasury, Education, Employment, Environment and Transport). He delivered major national changes such as radically different pay arrangements for teachers, a huge expansion in nursery education and employment initiatives which helped bring unemployment below a million.

He led the work on the merger of the UK Government Departments of Education and Employment. As Finance Director General he managed a £40bn budget and introduced radical changes in funding and accountability arrangements. In three Director General posts he led strategic development and implementation in major policy areas. In 2000 he was awarded a CB by the Queen for his contribution to public service.

Peter has written a sequence of influential leadership books. He is a Visiting Professor of Leadership Development at Newcastle University Business School and a Visiting Professor in the Business, Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Department at the University of Chester. He has worked with senior staff at Brighton University and with postgraduate students at Warwick University Business School and at Regent College in Vancouver. He is an Honorary Professorial Fellow at St John's College, Durham University. He was awarded an Honorary Doctorate (Doctor of Civil Law) by Durham University in 2015 for 'outstanding service to public life and the the Council of St John's College'.

Peter is a Reader (licensed lay minister) in the Anglican Church and has worked with senior church leaders in the UK, North America and Asia. His inspiration comes from long-distance walks: he has completed seventeen long-distance walks in the UK, including the St Cuthbert's Way, the South Downs Way, the Yorkshire Wolds Way, the Yorkshire Dales Way, the Ribble Way, the Speyside Way, the St Oswald's Way and the Great Glen Way. Peter and his wife, Frances, have three grown-up children who are all married, and a growing number of grandchildren.