

What is a team? While this may seem a simple inquiry, I've found that how a team answers the question has a lot to do with how well they perform and interact.

How does your team define itself? What underlying beliefs about "team" are hindering or helping your progress? Below are some commonly held myths I've heard (and experienced) in my work with teams over the years:

- If we just had more time, money, and people we'd be successful.
- When I get my way or my idea is implemented I'll be happy.
- When our boss fixes everything on our team it'll be great.
- We are a family.
- When conflict goes away, we'll thrive.
- Teams happen.
- We all need to agree on decisions.
- The more the merrier.
- Everyone enjoys being on a team.
- I get more done when I do it myself.
- Teams are a group of individuals.

These ways of thinking (conscious and unconscious) prompt team members to vie for power, wish constraints didn't exist, play "he said/she said", demand leadership mediate, reenact dysfunctional family roles and produce status quo results. Self-sufficient individual contributors pretend to be a team and bring conflicting expectations to the table of results delivery.

Productivity and engagement can improve (as much as 25% in the teams I've worked with) when team members experience and become accountable for the generative culture they co-create. As the natural intelligence of the system is attended to and leveraged, new ways of being a team and defining success emerge. Time and energy is consciously invested in collective creativity, constructive interaction, reflective inquiry, and aligned work efforts that yield inspiring outcomes with less stress. If this possibility excites you, start by inviting your team to explore the question, "What is a team?"

For more on the "team as system" approach to team effectiveness, contact shawn@brainstormingalamode.com. You may also explore:

- *The Power of Full Engagement* by Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz
- *Theory U* by C. Otto Scharmer
- *The Wisdom of Teams* by Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith
- www.centerforrightrelationship.com
- www.margaretwheatley.com
- www.teamdiagnosticassessment.com

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