

Team Purpose to Performance

The Catalytic Process for
Legacy-Making Lasting Change



Laura J. Stone

Illustrated by Taylor Wright

A Pocket Guide to Purpose Series | Volume 3

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Praise for Team Purpose to Performance

Efforts and courage are no substitutes for purpose and direction. Team Purpose to Performance is the ideal guide on what it takes to embed both into your culture. It pays.

Paul Polman, former Unilever CEO,
Climate and Equality Campaigner, co-author of *Net Positive: How Courageous Companies Thrive By Giving More Than They Take*, a *Financial Times Business Book of the Year*.

Don't confuse the apparent simplicity of the process outlined in this book with the significant benefit of guiding your team through Laura's approach to finding your Team Purpose to Performance. Enjoy the journey!

Sharon John, President and CEO, Build-A-Bear Workshop

In a world that seems to move faster and faster, our challenges can feel overwhelming and too massive to tackle. This work is such a positive light that breaks down ways to think about AND move through situations to turn them into true opportunities for growth.

Jennifer Brant-Gargan, Chief Information Officer, Bacardi

Laura Stone again lends her authentic gift as a guide to helping us unlock the power of purpose-driven performance. This process works if you work the process. I hope you will enjoy reading this book and work the process with yourself and your team.

Richard Leider, Founder, Inventure, The Purpose Company, and
international bestselling author of *The Power of Purpose*, *Repacking Your Bags*, and *Life Reimagined*

Laura Stone has done it again! In her latest book she has distilled a complex process of developing team purpose into a clear and straightforward approach that any leader and team at any organizational level could successfully implement. Coupled with her many insights about doing this work, her explanation of the power of paradox, and her understanding of sustaining the important work of purpose, this book is a must-read!

Michael Fischer, Former Vice President,
Organizational Development and Talent Management, Sysco

Laura's new book delves deeper into team dynamics, dealing with a complex topic with her hallmark simplicity. The journey starts from understanding the individual team members, quickly moves on to the development of a collective team purpose. It builds a sense of pride and a unique collective identity, even more so in culturally diverse global teams and even more so when the teams are in the process of rewiring themselves following an organizational transformation. The journey continues into team learning to better articulate problem statements, deal with apparent paradoxes ambidextrously, and work towards collective situations. Laura's unique ability as a team coach to get into a team's skin and guide them through this journey helps to span the purpose-to-performance spectrum, manifesting the theory into real business results.

Vikram Agarwal, Chief Operations Officer, Danone

Laura leads with purpose herself, and helps teams identify their true purpose, and leverage that to bring them together and solve critical business problems. I've worked with Laura both domestically and internationally, and her method of identifying and leveraging a shared purpose, and focusing on the right outcomes, drives strong business results — every time. And she is a blast to work with!

Mark Griffin, Chief Human Resources Officer, BJ's Wholesale Club, Inc.

... A fantastic roadmap for creating high-functioning teams and organizations. Team Purpose to Performance offers unique ideas and practical ways to involve each individual, encourage and collaborate across different points of view, and create a shared purpose in the only way that matters, from the heart.

Katherine Sherbrooke, Co-Founder and Former President of Circles, a subsidiary of Sodexo

This book goes beyond theory — it's a hands-on guide to creating purpose-driven teams that perform at the highest level, grounded in a process I've experienced firsthand. Laura's coaching has made me a better leader and has helped me take teams from good to great. I've seen the framework Laura shares in this book work at companies like IBM, CVS, and NorthgateArinso. In Laura's world, change isn't just a necessity — it's an opportunity to create something that truly endures.

Paul Hutchinson, EdD, SVP Enterprise Execution, BECU



When we went through the Team Purpose to Performance process, it did feel like magic. But we knew and discussed often all that we had gained from the work to get there. That was ours to keep. This is for any team that wants to continue to be better. The results will follow.

Donna Sams, Senior Vice President, Information Technology,
Retired, CVS Health

... invaluable to any group of people that was made a team by a distant senior manager and to those senior managers that wonder why sending out that email listing the names of the team members along with some vague goal was not enough to actually set the organization in motion.

David Eveleth, President, CEO and Founder, Trefoil Therapeutics

Though our team had been honest at a surface level, we found the cracks we'd been avoiding as soon as we delved deeper into our company culture, strategic direction, and desired outcomes. With Laura's guidance, we had a series of brutally honest conversations, which not only brought us to alignment on purpose and direction but also to new levels of trust and mutual connectivity that would serve us through future successes and tough situations.

Elizabeth Napolitano Carlson, Former Head of People & Culture, Accolade Inc.

Team Purpose to Performance is a wonderful guide for moving forward with any team. Each chapter addresses the most prevalent issues teams face as they try to coalesce around a common purpose, create action plans, and move forward. Laura J. Stone's breadth of experiences with organizations globally is evident in the examples she shares and the solutions she suggests to the most common issues teams face.

NJ Pesci, Former CHRO, Scripps Networks Interactive

In order to maintain and improve team member satisfaction, retention, and attraction, it's vitally important for businesses today to cut through and cut out meaningless and de-energizing stress created by deadline driven work that is not directly or indirectly aligned with a higher purpose to which team members subscribe. The solution is not necessarily to eliminate the work, but to align it with feelings that energize and empower the people who are doing it, not only reducing stress, but also motivating higher performance levels achieved through positive emotions associated with a higher purpose. I am grateful to Laura for her help in aligning CVS behind such an important purpose.

John Barron, retired Vaccine Czar, CVS

Team Purpose to Performance is a fun read, a visual delight, and a great way to get your team members moving together in a focused, exciting direction. The book provides easy to follow exercises that get team members to open up about what is important to them individually and what they hope they can all accomplish as a team. Filled with tidbits of wisdom gleaned from both theory and practice, the book is easy to digest but goes deep. Pick it up to move your team from disheartened and bored, to excited and ready to go.

Deborah Ancona, The Seley Distinguished Professor of Management at MIT Sloan
and the Founder of the MIT Leadership Center

Other books by Laura Stone:

A Pocket Guide to Purpose:
A Quick and Simple Way to Access and Advance
Your Purpose

A Pocket Guide to Purpose For Leaders:
A Powerful Approach to Create and Unleash
Greater Innovation, Inclusion and Engagement

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“Alone, we can do so little;
together, we can do so much.”

- Helen Keller

This book is dedicated to the courageous
leaders who elevate their teams to dream big and
accomplish more than they could ever imagine.

Thank you for your trust and partnership.

To my children – Sophie, Jackson, Isa, Miyako and
Diego – thank you for your love, support, and
inspiration – it means the world to me.

To Jorgito – I love you and am grateful to be on
our evolutionary journey together.



“Leaders can create an
environment that unleashes
human magic.”

Hubert Joly, Former CEO of Best Buy

Introduction

Thank you for engaging with this book!

In your hands is a culmination of over 30+ years of learning, testing, research, amazing client engagements, magic, and reflection. The visual distillation of insights will show you how to best ignite, accelerate, and elevate teams in a positive, energetic way that engages the hearts, minds, and souls of everyone in the Team Purpose to Performance™ process.

This pressure-tested approach is the catalyst for massive change and is used in Fortune 500 companies with profound effects. At Danone, the Purpose to Performance process helps the global operations team align to become “Best in Class,” elevating their Gartner ranking. At IBM, it helps their outsourcing division make “HR Easy.”

At CVS, it was the catalyst to help eliminate the sale of tobacco; representing over \$1.5 billion of revenue. As a result of this landmark decision, in February of 2014, President Obama shared, “CVS Caremark sets a powerful example to advance ... efforts to reduce tobacco-related deaths, cancer, and heart disease, as well as bring down healthcare costs – ultimately saving lives and protecting untold numbers of families from pain and heartbreak for years to come.”¹ This kind of outcome is possible for you too.



Typically, this consultative process has been only afforded to executive leadership teams but can easily be employed by HR teams, marketing, product line managers and more. Now it is time to democratize team purpose — the more leaders and teams that know, and more importantly, use this process, the better the world will be . . .

The Team Purpose to Performance framework is simple and provides a profound and meaningful foundation for you to take and evolve for your unique business, culture, and needs. The process also surfaces and advances the REAL conversations in a psychologically safe way that aligns and engages all team members.

The ultimate goal of this book is to answer the question and create a plan for ...



“What is the work that ONLY WE can do as a team that will make us proud?”

Leadership teams rarely ask this question. Instead, most teams simply inform each other of their individual function, rather than use their precious time together as a catalyst to see and leverage the world from multiple perspectives.

Where can the Team Purpose to Performance Process take your team? See below for some common problems teams face and the solutions the process provides:

Problems Addressed	Solutions Provided
Team members represent their own function for report outs, remaining in silos, and only working at a fraction of their potential.	Defines the highest level of work that only the team can do together.
Leaders doing the work of their people because it is where they feel most knowledgeable, comfortable and have been rewarded for it.	Clarifies the work that leaders are meant to do; in other words, work at the highest strategic level possible.
Looking to the team leader for decisions, unwittingly abdicating their own leadership responsibilities.	Each team member realizes their genius and becomes more decisive and effective.
The team being limited by the past, focusing on the old ways — static, fixed mindset, checking boxes, order taking...	Creates a future that will make the team proud and ignite possibility and excitement.



Why create an illustrated guide for a process that catalyzes billions of dollars in revenue?

Leonardo da Vinci once said,

“Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.”

Pictures and simplicity increase clarity. While a picture book may seem childish, silly, or a waste of your precious time, the exact opposite is true. Visuals cause faster and stronger emotional reactions than words.²

Research suggests 65% of the population are visual learners.^{3,4} Pictures consistently yield much higher recall than words.⁵ In addition, visual information can improve decision quality as well as speed.⁶

Given that we are overloaded with data and desperately need white space to process it, this very different book design is intended to address these challenges directly.

The theoretical underpinning and roots for this process was inspired by Harvard Psychologist David McClelland's motive research as well as David Burnham's research into empirically understanding what, over time, differentiates a good leader from a great one.



Rather than citing research and academic sources throughout the book, I wanted the content to feel more approachable. That being said, I deeply value research and am more of the “trust and verify person” when it comes to ensuring the data supports the work. Therefore, in the appendix, you will find the research, books, and data used, as well as additional resources to help you advance your team’s purpose. Please don’t just trust me. Trust your own insights, data verification process, gut, and experience to validate what can and will be possible.

The heart of this work focuses on what great leaders feel and think about their work. Yes, feel. Emotions and feelings are addressed and woven throughout this book including a somatic approach to using your body to help guide you in your team journey. Our emotions play a critical role as a check-and-balance throughout this process. If you aren’t comfortable integrating emotions along the way, answer the questions provided to help advance the team.

If you only complete the exercises in the first half of the book and define your team’s purpose, you will be far ahead of most teams. However, to realize the more significant potential of the Team Purpose to Performance process, I encourage you to continue exploring the paradoxes and tensions your new purpose creates for you and your team. Seeing the process through to the end will enable you to overcome the toughest topics objectively and strategically. This part of the work clearly defines the most critical, highest impact work that only your team can and should do. The final part of the process brings all the work together — resulting in your game plan!

Most teams create a strategic plan they rarely revisit. The opposite is true here: the elegantly simple game plan you’ll create through this process will be dynamic by design — ready to evolve alongside the changing world, customers, technology, insights, etc. When the team is given the



time to have the important series of dialogues provided in this book, your resulting game plan will be foundational and likely only needs to be tweaked regularly (vs. overhauled).

Once you have your game plan, the team will have to contend with their own leadership paradoxes and assess new knowledge and skills that will be required to realize the Team Purpose to Performance game plan.

Celebration is key as well. Learning from what is working or failing is critical to this journey. Individual and team reflection time is essential. Ideally schedule a series of team check-ins over time to review progress, celebrate, speak truthfully about what is really happening, and revisit your game plan to ensure progress against the plan, and adjust accordingly.

In the following pages, you will learn how to engage beyond each individual's area to bring together the hearts and minds of what binds you. And remember, "suffering is optional; progress is powerful."

May you enjoy this life-changing journey ahead,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura Stone". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Laura" and last name "Stone" clearly distinguishable.



The Team Purpose to Performance Journey



Chapter 1	
Prepare for Purpose.....	22
Chapter 2	
Agreements & What is at Stake	30
Chapter 3	
Focus Finder: Where are We?	40
Chapter 4	
Redefining Purpose.....	52
Chapter 5	
Creating a Meaningful Foundation	64
Chapter 6	
Drafting Your Team's Purpose Statement.....	76



Chapter 7	
The Power of Paradox.....	92
Chapter 8	
Creating Paradox Statements.....	106
Chapter 9	
A Good Problem Statement is Hard to Find.....	124
Chapter 10	
Key Results: Keeping the End in Mind	138
Chapter 11	
Milestones: A Way to Celebrate Progress, Understand Setbacks and Adjust Course	146
Chapter 12	
Maintaining Progress: The Fun Just Begins!.....	160
Resources & References.....	176

GAME PLAN

Our Purpose

Key Milestones

Key
Paradoxes



Problem
Statements

30-60-90
Days

Q2

Q3

Q4

Next
Year

Key
Results/
Outcomes

What is at stake?



Chapter 1

Prepare for Purpose

Before we start on this journey,
we need to optimize your brain and heart.

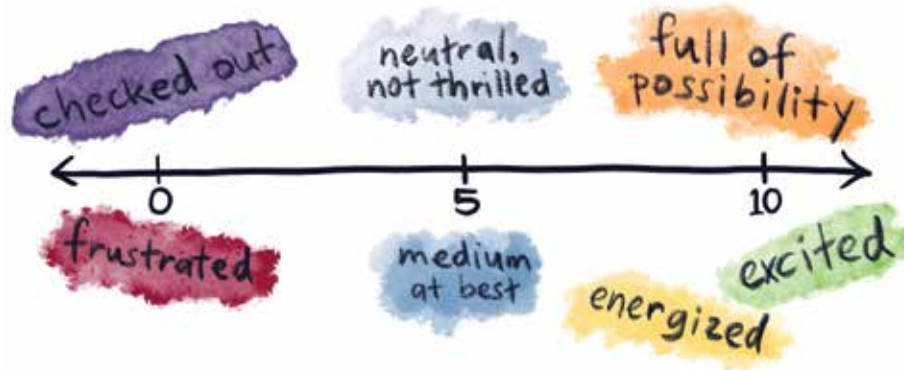


To perform at the optimal level and leverage your creative and innovative brilliance (which you do have), take a moment to self-score where you feel you and your team are. (0 utterly stressed and sad to 10 excited, energized, and full of possibility.)

Remember that a low score doesn't mean it is this way forever. Rather, it is a snapshot in time, and a recognition of where people are at in the moment. All scores are what they are.

To help increase scores keep reading!

Where are you?



Optimal brain plus team performance requires
at least a 7 on the scale.



Stinkin' thinkin' doesn't help!
Nor do sincere sore heads.
— Ed Foreman

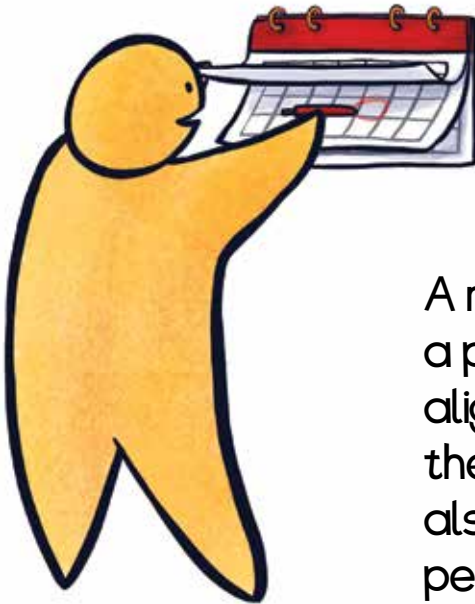
Healthy skepticism combined with curiosity,
possibility and openness (growth mindset⁷)
is a good place to start.

If you and/or the team fall in a



you have a couple of options ...

Recognize that timing is everything.



A moment of massive change can be a perfect time to do this work to help align teams. Alternatively, waiting until the majority of the team is on board is also ideal. Know that there is never a perfect time. Rather, a “good enough” time works.

Consider having the team explore
their positive intelligence⁸ to maximize
all your sage brains.



If nothing else is possible, help the team take three deep breaths and become present in this moment and recognize the good that is happening with the team, projects, and the progress that has been made so far . . . This will help you improve your mood – even if it's only by one point.

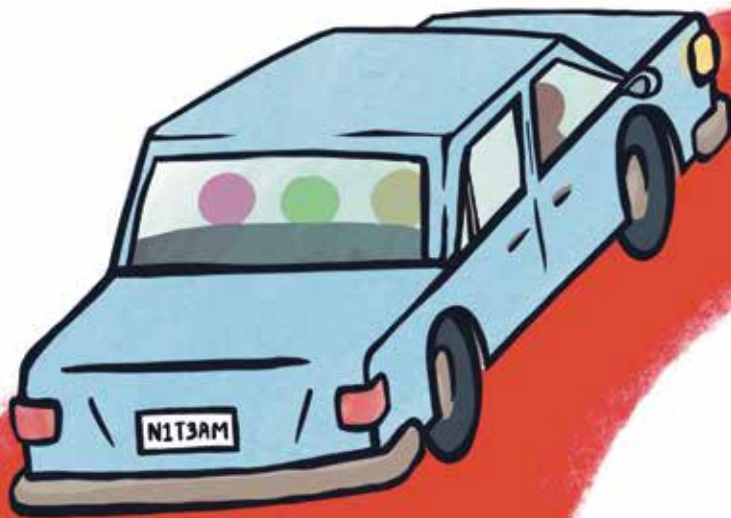
Recap & Notes

- Help you and your team achieve the best possible mindset.
- Recognize where you are currently and what you can do to help raise your mindset score.
- Decide if this is a good time to launch this work with your team before proceeding.

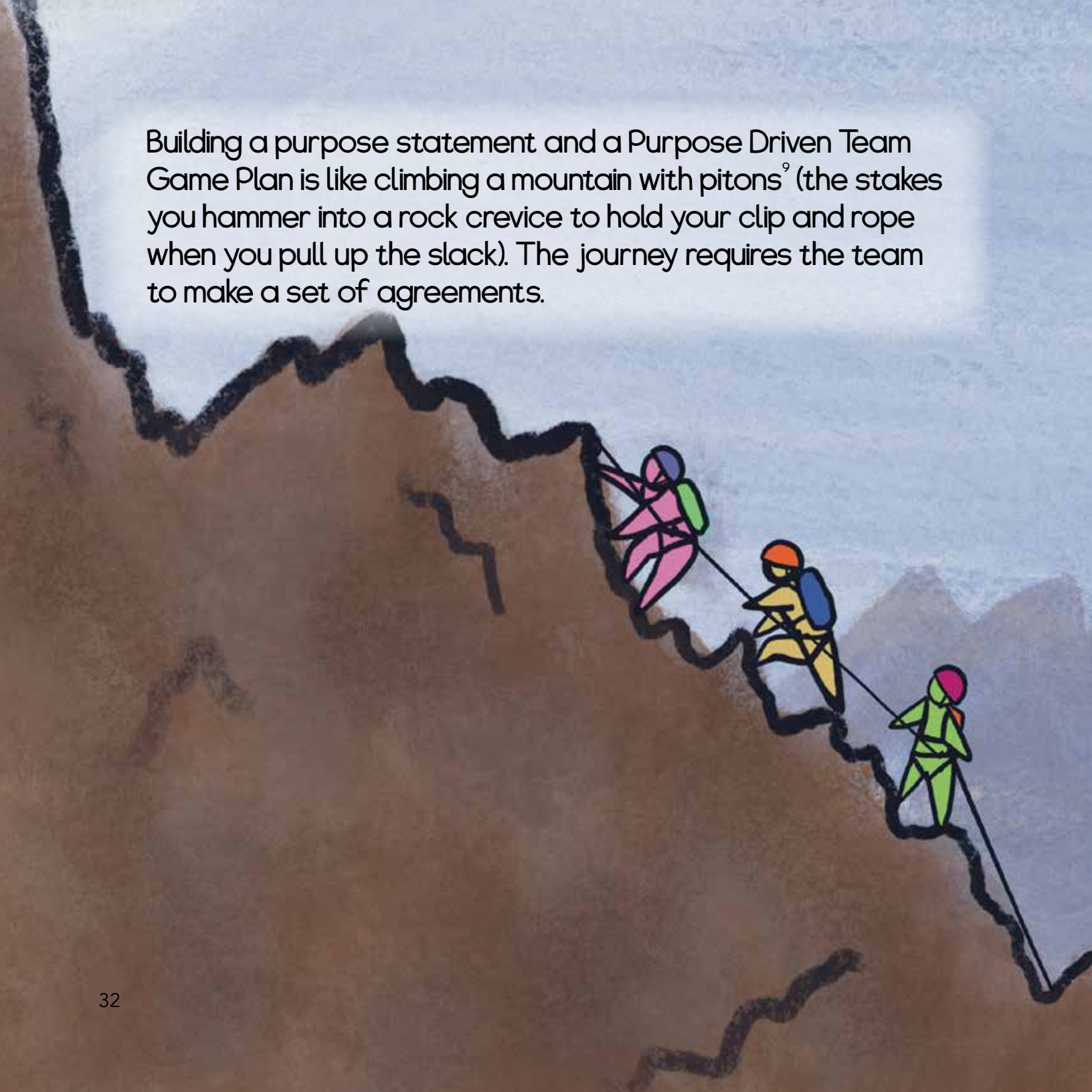


Chapter 2

Agreements &
What is at Stake



Building a purpose statement and a Purpose Driven Team Game Plan is like climbing a mountain with pitons⁹ (the stakes you hammer into a rock crevice to hold your clip and rope when you pull up the slack). The journey requires the team to make a set of agreements.



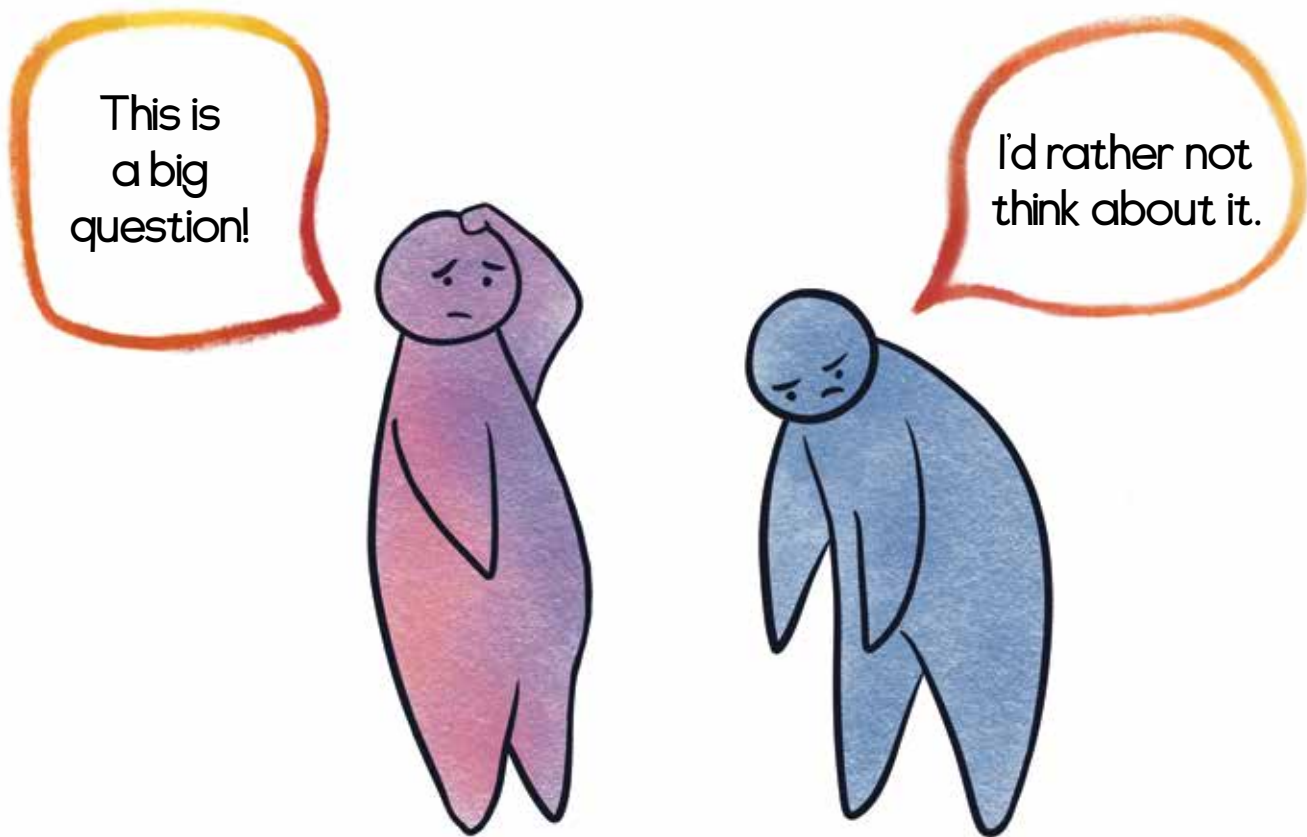
When doing technical climbing, you can only climb 2 to 3 feet at a time. That way, if you fall, you only fall 2 to 3 feet.

Building sustained alignment is like technical rock climbing: one agreement at a time before making another agreement.

Just like this team purpose process, you are taking a legacy-making journey. The bigger the purpose, the more agreements you'll need to make, which will require more time. You need to listen and deeply understand each other as though your lives depend on it — just like climbers who must rely on their equipment and their co-climbers.

The first agreement is about an essential understanding of what is at stake if you and your team don't align on the work that only you can do and that will make you proud.

What is at stake?



You must think about it because ...



What is at stake is the source and energy to give you and your team reason to change.

Otherwise it is just another day.

We are intentionally creating tension by understanding the threat and opportunity.



Take only 10 to 15 minutes to dialogue about this question. See what surfaces.

The responses should both raise concern and give a reason to propel you forward.

Examples of what could be at stake:

Burnout

Business
Results

Turnover

Mission of our
organization

Our culture

Retention of key talent

Wasting
resources

Reputation

Innovation

Future of the organization

Employee
engagement

Productivity

Recap & Notes

- Understand that agreements are made in small steps that build-up.
- Each solid agreement made fortifies the foundation.
- Exploration of what is at stake fuels the team with reason to change and is a short but critical dialogue.

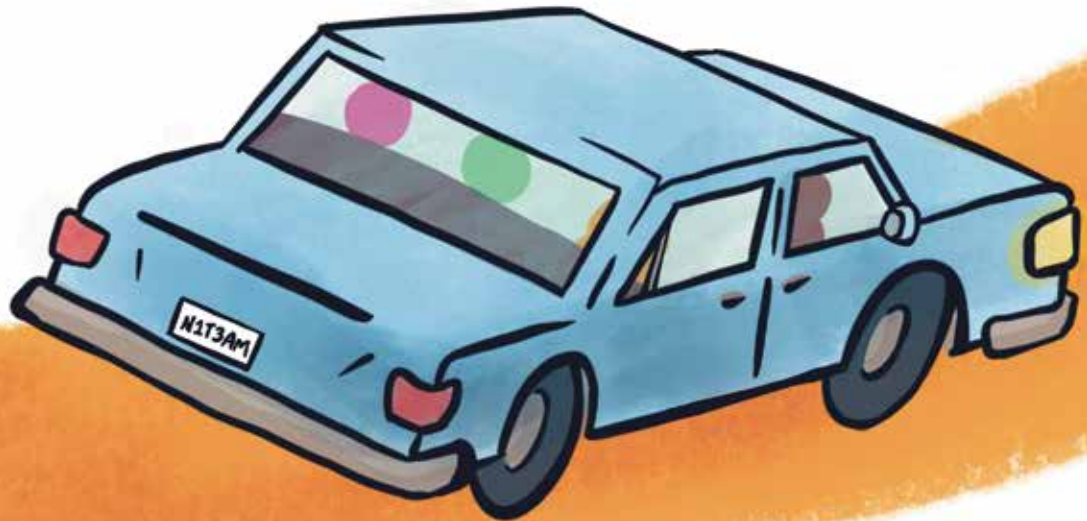
What's at stake for
you and your team?





Chapter 3

Focus Finder:
Where are we?





Every epic journey has
to start somewhere.

Where are you and your team?

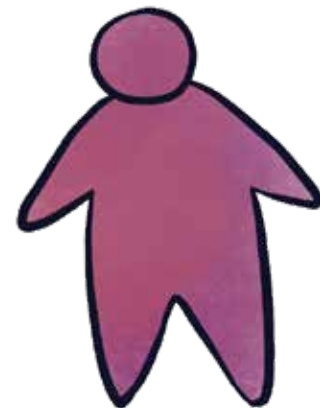


Ask each team member
individually ...



If we could accomplish
anything, what would
make you proud 2-3
years from now?

What are our biggest
challenges as a team
from your perspective?



What successes
has the team had that
you are most proud of?



What are the obstacles
that keep us from achieving
what will make us proud?

How might we
overcome these
obstacles?



NOTE: Include external stakeholders (internal to the company, external customers, influencers) and ask them, for example, "What do they most value about this team's work?" or "What do they want more of/less of from this team?"

Listen and learn
as if your team members
are genuinely the most fascinating
documentary mystery
you have ever seen!



What are you surprised by?
What questions or insights arise?
What opportunities are surfacing?

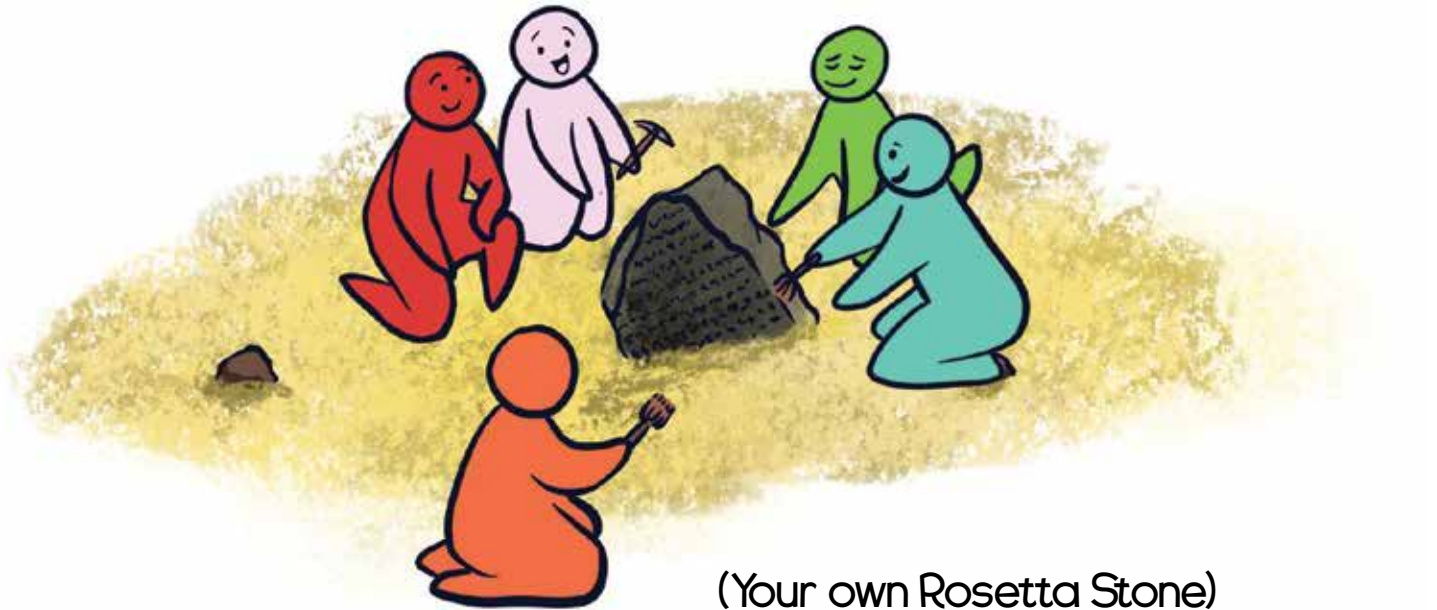
Ideally, share your findings with the team
before you come together.

Why individually first?

You want to gain clarity of where each team member is without the influence of anyone else's input.

This step enables the team member to be heard fully. Very often team members are not asked their opinion. The opportunity to be heard often has an incredibly positive impact.

Then, as a team, collectively explore the biggest themes that emerge from the individual responses.



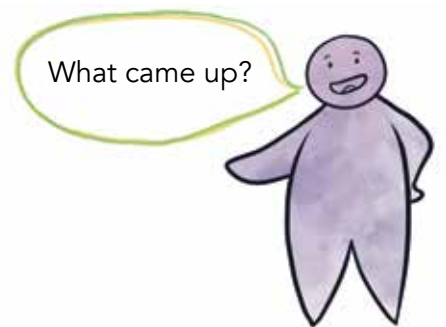
You don't need to come to any agreements at this point. Simply listen to each other to identify major themes.

The focus here is on creating a shared understanding of how the team sees the world both individually and collectively.

All you have read and done so far is the fodder to create your unique team purpose statement.

Recap & Notes

- Understanding that each team member enables greater inclusion and commitment.
- Themes begin to emerge, enabling faster alignment and agreements later on.
- You only need to open the dialogue at this point and don't need to decide anything.
- The main focus is to simply understand everyone's unique point of view.



Chapter 4

Redefining Purpose



Purpose Redefined

Most people think purpose simply answers the question of “why are you here?” or “what is your mission?” But the new way of defining purpose is so much more.

PRIDE

(Secret ingredient)
What will make us proud?

MISSION

Why are we here?

PURPOSE

VISION

What is our ideal
future state?

MAGIC

(Positive energy!)

VALUES

What important beliefs do
we hold to be true?



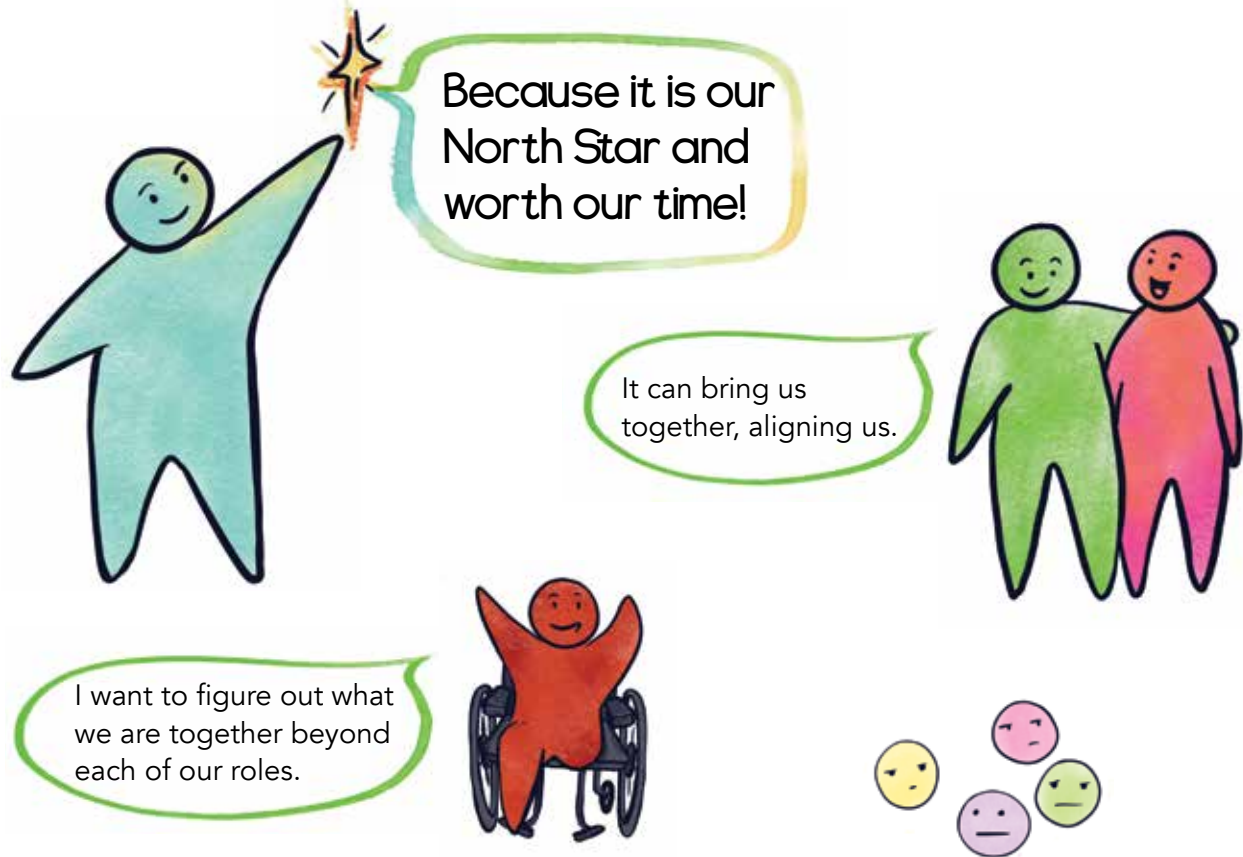
The fairy dust knowing
things can be better :)

Unlike a vision statement that gets created by a marketing department and gets put on posters or mugs



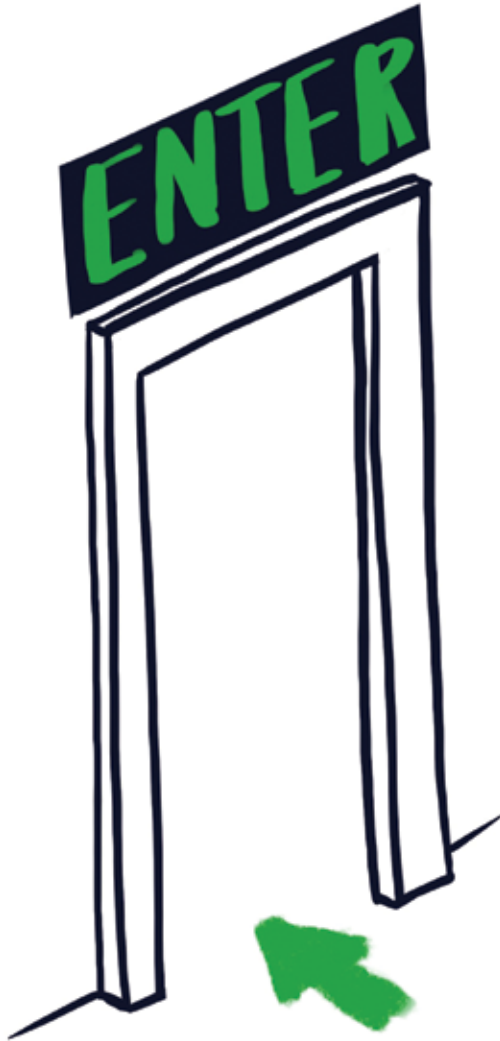
This is all about the dialogue and exploration of similarities and differences, then landing on where you align.

Why bother with exploring the purpose of our team?



If the majority of the team doesn't think it's worth their time, don't.

Cool note: If you have at least two team members who are passionate, hopeful, or feel this process is worthy, your chances of success increase by 70 percent.



A way to enter into thinking about your team's purpose is by asking yourselves and sharing your response to the following questions.

Team Purpose Statement

Key Components & Process

Ask your team:

- What might be the value of creating a team purpose statement? (a.k.a. Why bother?)
- What do we hope to accomplish by having a purpose statement?
- What will happen if we have a team purpose statement and do not fulfill it?

The ultimate goal is creating a “blue jeans,” less formal version; a statement that uses words unique and special to the team.

Be wary of statements that use generic corporate words that you think others will approve of.



Remember the statement is for you and your team only. You can decide later if you'd like to share it, but that is not the focus now.

Team Purpose Statement Examples:

- Help improve the health of our customer.
- HR Easy
- Together we don't need name tags or org charts — we work as a trust-based team to unleash the potential of all our teams and create a positive environment to advance our members' mission!
- We will feel proud of our leadership team when we collectively lead with purpose and clarity and develop an organization that is rich in culture and deep in talent, that engages, excites, and brings joy to our customers.
- We will feel proud of our Board three years from now by creating the world's best operations team, the core engine of Company ABC, driving extraordinary impact on the business, people, communities and the planet!

Recap & Notes

- Purpose includes mission, vision, values and pride.
- Use the unique words of each team member. Their words create ownership and connection to the dialogue that creates the statement.
- Exploring the purpose of purpose enables those who think it is hog-wash to say so in a safe way.





Chapter 5

Creating a
Meaningful Foundation



The foundation for creating a team purpose statement continues with the team exploring three critical questions ...



What was your
most meaningful job?

What was it about that job
that made it so meaningful?

How did it make you feel?



It can be the role you are in now ...

OR ...

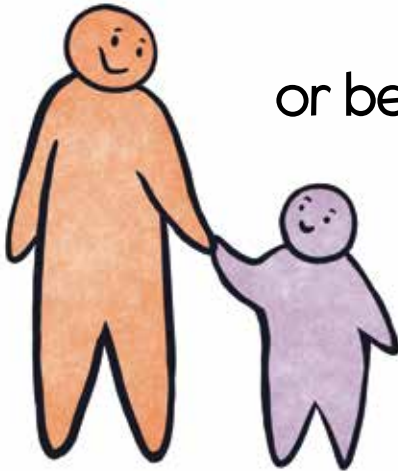
when you were coaching
a soccer team ...



or serving ice cream



or being a parent ...



SPOILER ALERT:

Don't turn the page until
you sit with and answer
these questions.

What makes a job meaningful? Common responses may include:

Caring & Connecting

Helping

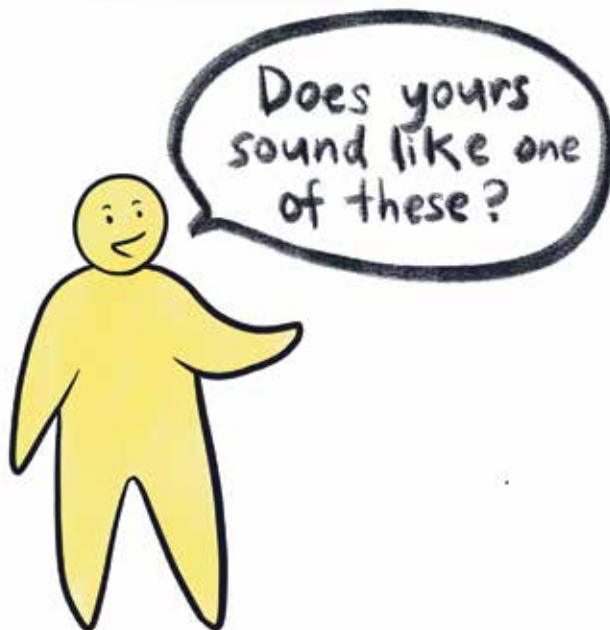
Seeing others grow

Giving back

Shifting how others think

Saving lives

Developing &
Nourishing Others



Making a difference

Teaching and helping
others grow

Developing others

Mentoring

All of these
have a common
theme...



Sharing expertise

Remember:

The core of creating a team purpose statement is all about influencing and impacting others positively. This process is meant to connect to the most meaningful, heart-filling roles we have had.

These insights connect the team more deeply to the work that matters most and will be an essential bridge to the team's purpose statement.



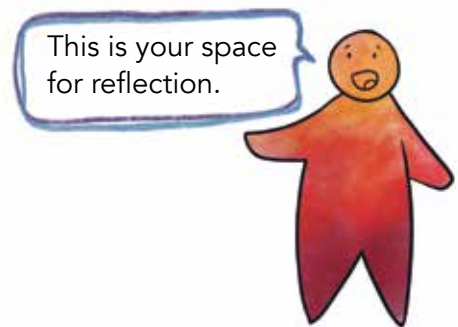


It is not about individual achievement or process improvement for the sake of improvement. It's about WHO the work is impacting and influencing.

IMPORTANT NOTE: A small and persistent percent will focus on their own individual achievements. That is OK for the purposes of this exercise if some of the team members share their own achievements. However the critical focus is about influencing and impacting others.

Recap & Notes

- Understanding what makes a job meaningful helps lay the foundation for an emotional connection with the team's purpose.
- Infusing emotional connection throughout the process creates greater buy-in.
- Meaningful work is less about the job itself and more about how the work impacts others. This is the source of a purpose statement.



GAME PLAN

Our Purpose ✳ You are here!

Key Milestones

Key Paradoxes	Key Milestones					Key Results/ Outcomes
	30-60-90 Days	Q1	Q3	Q4	Next Year	
↓						
Problem Statements						

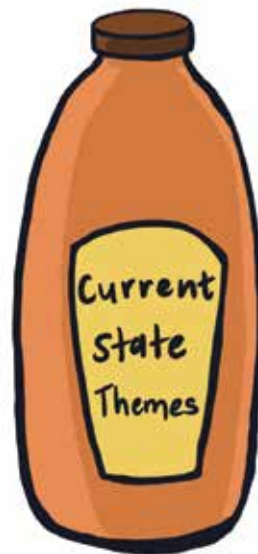
What is at stake?

Chapter 6

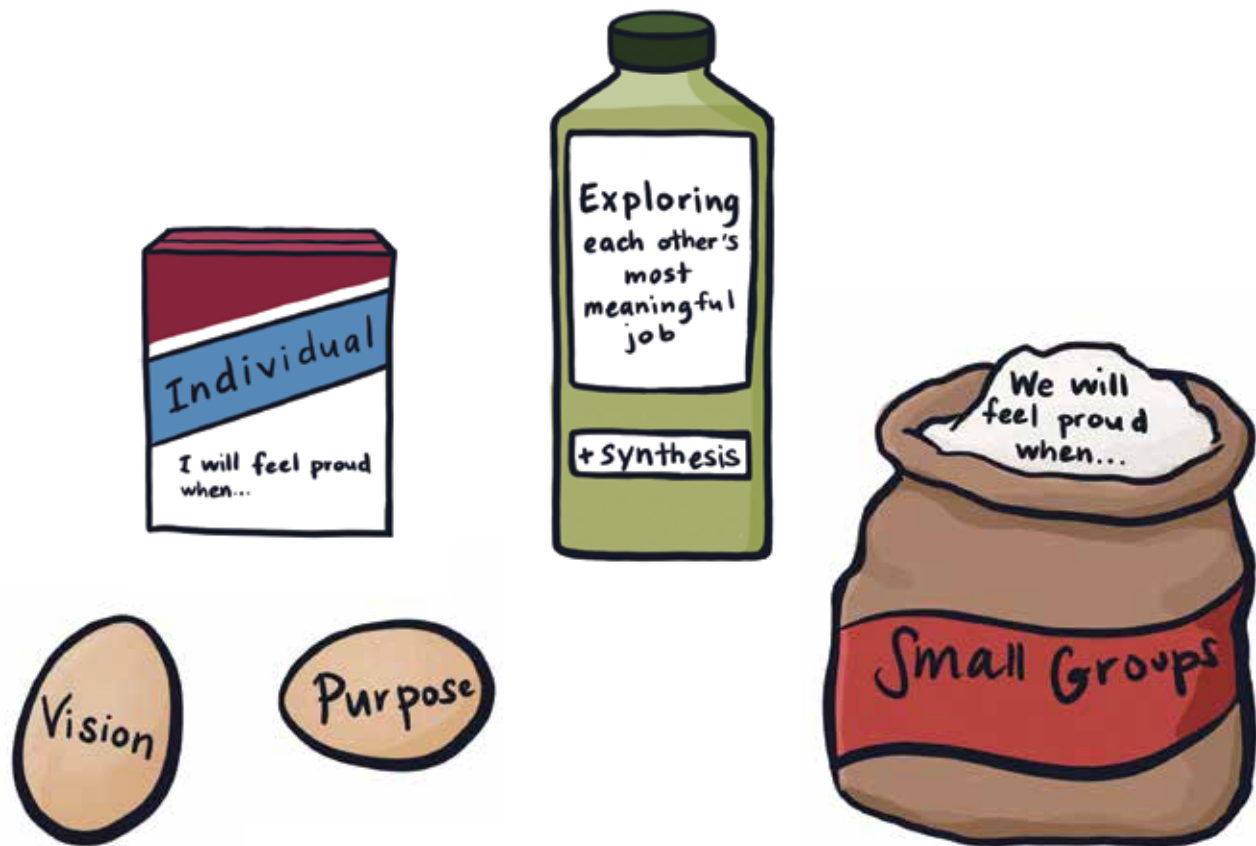
Drafting Your Team's Purpose Statement

Advancing from "I" to "We"

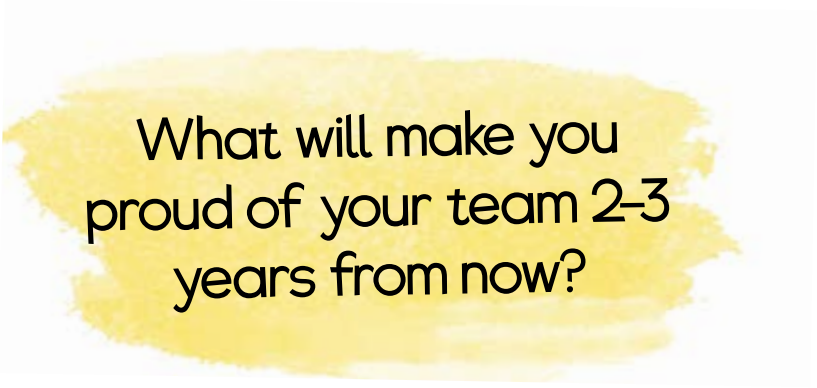




Now you have all the ingredients for creating your team purpose statement



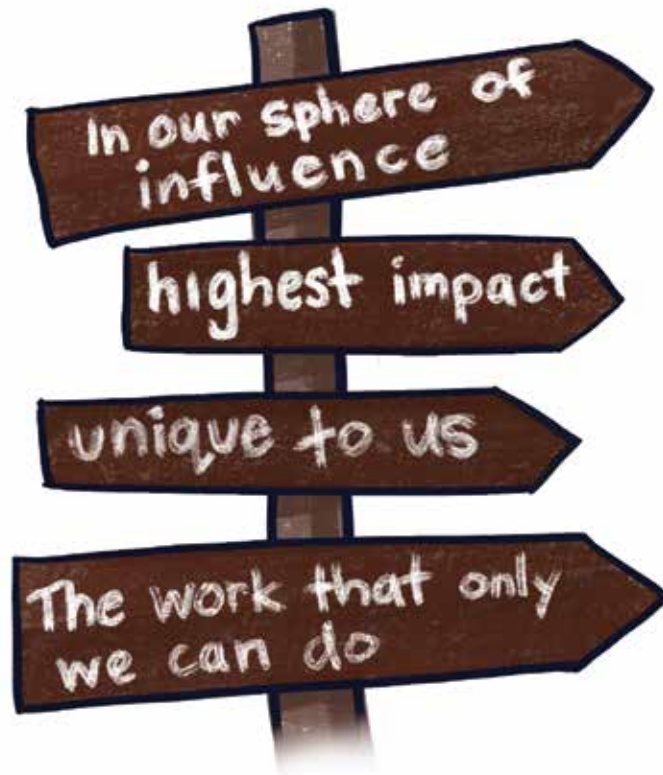
Counterintuitively, drafting your team purpose statement will begin with you and each individual team member working independently. Each person creates their own draft team purpose statement by answering the question:



What will make you
proud of your team 2-3
years from now?

Have your statement start with, “I will feel proud of my team 2-3 years from now when ...”

Consider integrating the following criteria when you are drafting your purpose statement



Pro Tip: Don't overthink this. Have these words come from your heart. Allow what wants to surface to flow out with ease. Use words that matter to you.

Examples of components that make up Team Purpose Statements include:

Students are excited about their futures and bold in their creative endeavors!

We have a culture of collaboration, sharing, information, power, and credit.

We are the world's best operations team and making extraordinary impact on business, people, and this planet!

Our team fosters a culture of inclusion.

We drive profitable sales by creating a unique treasure hunt experience.

We unlock the potential for our team to advance our mission together.

Unlike in school when you weren't supposed to take someone's idea . . . here you'll need to do that.

Here's how:

1

Each team member shares their individual draft statement.

2

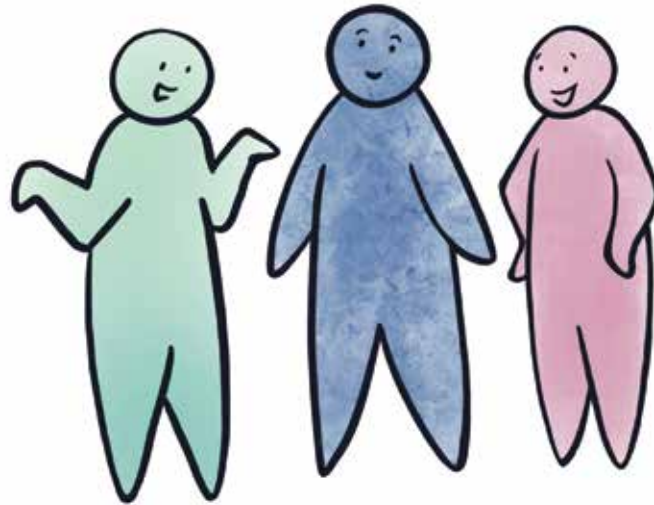
Listen for what you  about their statement.

3

After everyone has shared their statement, rewrite your statement, integrate the best of what you heard.

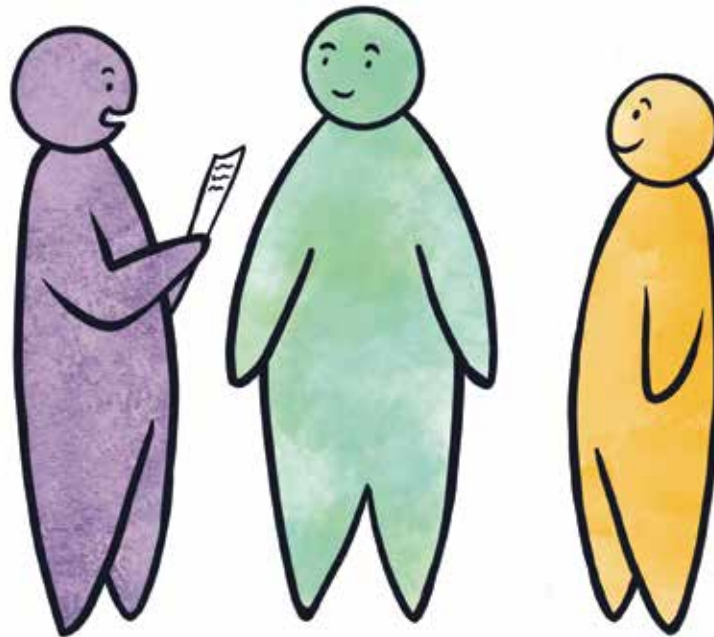
If your team is more than 6-7 people, self select into small groups (minimum of 3-5 people) and draft your small team purpose statement starting with:

“We will feel proud of
this team 2-3 years
from now when ...”



Note: Capture the small group drafts in a shared document or flip chart. Once your small groups are done drafting their team purpose statements, share the drafts with the larger group.

Next, one person from each group reads out loud their small group statement.



Underline what you  about their statement.

Step back and notice what just occurred...

- Did one group just nail it and share a purpose statement that everyone loved?
- Are there two statements that the group loves that you can combine in some way?
- Is there no one statement but certain keywords that most of the statements include?

Start there to build a base...

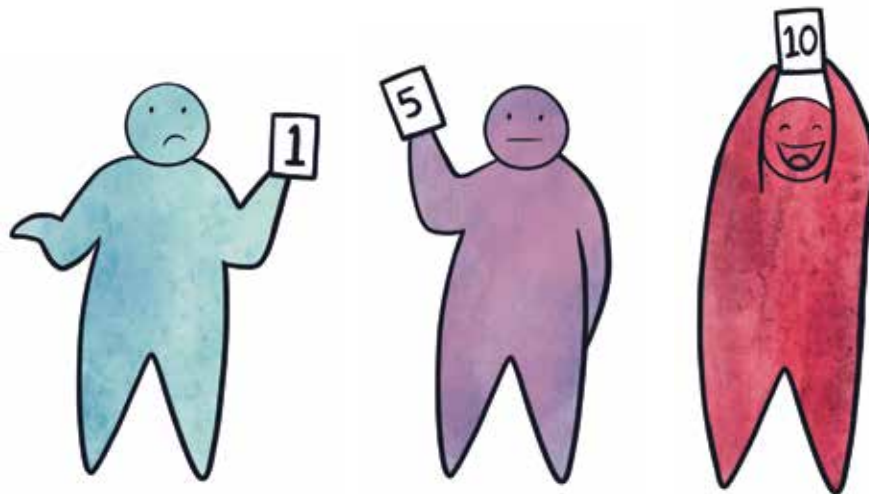


Spend at most 20 minutes or so seeing if you can, as a team, land your purpose statement.

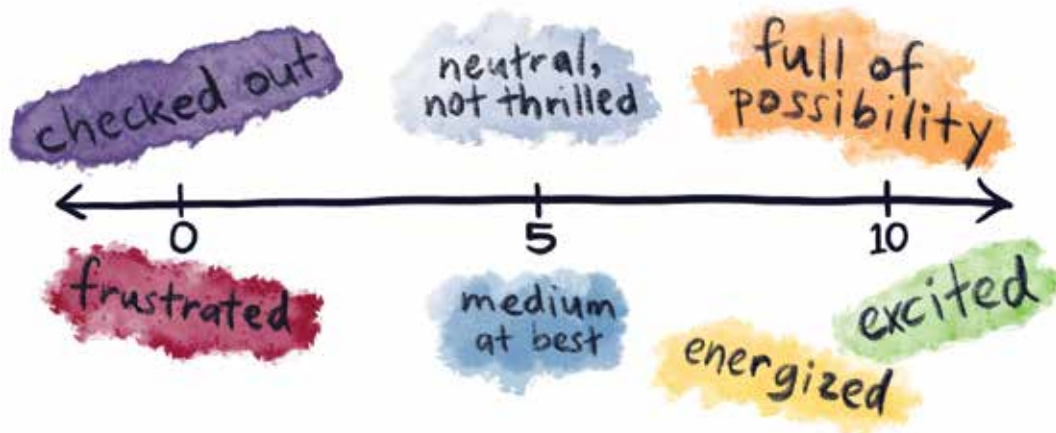
Take a pulse of everyone's "digging it" level. If team members are at least responding with excitement, pride, and energy you've got it for now!



If you are sensing fatigue or frustration, now is a time to pause. Identify 1-3 people who have energy and give them a shot at drafting one statement.



Pro Tip: Ask the individuals who are not “feeling it” and rate the current statement as a 5 or below, “What would have to change about the statement to increase the score?” Then deeply listen, and revise as necessary.



Congrats! You now have a statement that reflects both the dialogue and what you can agree on. The team's dialogue reflects all the nuances that no one statement ever will.

Your Team Purpose Statement
does not have to be perfect.

It is about



not perfection!

This process is more about the dialogue that
goes into creating the Purpose Statement
and what it represents rather than
the actual words of the statement.

Even if you don't all agree, you still have enough important alignment to continue. Put aside the statement to move to the next important step ... but pause to



This is a big deal! You now have a sentiment, a statement that creates impact and meaning. It is a beacon for your future.

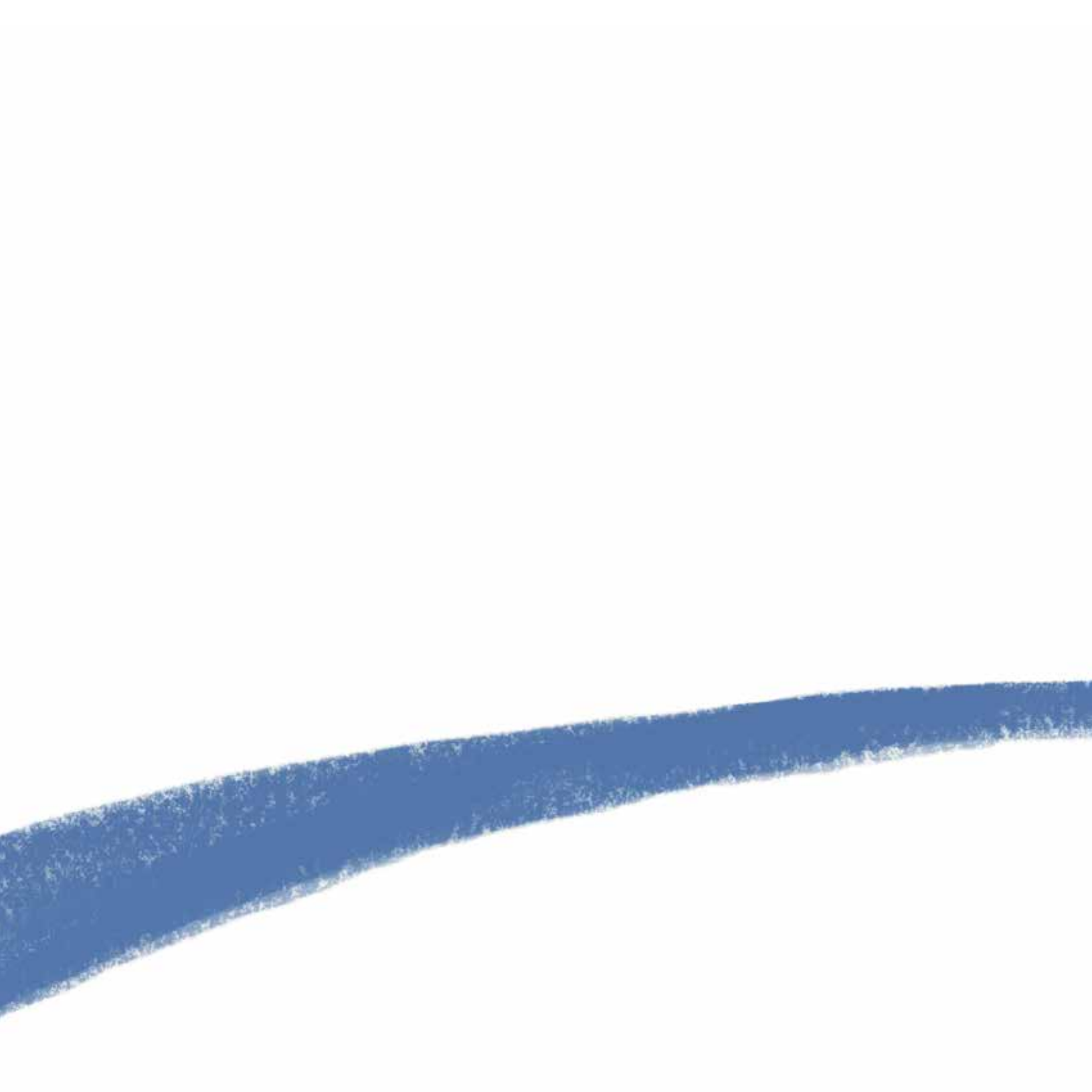


Recap & Notes

- Have each team member consider and write down what would make them proud of the team (2–3) years from now. They should do this on their own before sharing with others.
- Keep in mind specific criteria — what is in your sphere of influence? What would make the highest impact? What's unique to your team and is work that only your team can do?
- Remember, there is no one way to create your team's purpose statement.



- Allow for a bit of magic and intuition to help the statement emerge where the team's energy and excitement take it.



Chapter 7

The Power of Paradox



Now that we have a draft purpose statement that scores at least an eight or above, we can move onto the next critical phase ...

Paradox!



Working through paradoxes and tensions to make decisions is the most critical role for a leader and a leadership team.

This next section will help manage the differences and align on the agreements. Then you can make progress faster together toward your desired outcomes.



How are we defining Paradox, and what does it have to do with our purpose statement?

It is common for each team member to have different ideas and approaches. Inherent tensions exist when there are differences.

This process focuses on seeing all the different dimensions together to help explore, understand, and decide how to proceed.

When most people use the word paradox,
they mean holding onto opposing situations
at the same time.




The way we use paradox is slightly different ...

We add opposing emotions into the mix.



Why?

The ability to name our emotions facilitates access to a powerful part of the  (brain)¹⁰ ...

It enables us to better articulate a problem or opportunity with greater clarity and specificity.



We simply use emotions
to help guide us.



And by the way, if it
doesn't help you, don't
worry. Paradoxical
thinking is natural for
only about 1/3 of us!

Pro Tip:

Exploring opposing emotions creates better results, increased trust, and credibility.”

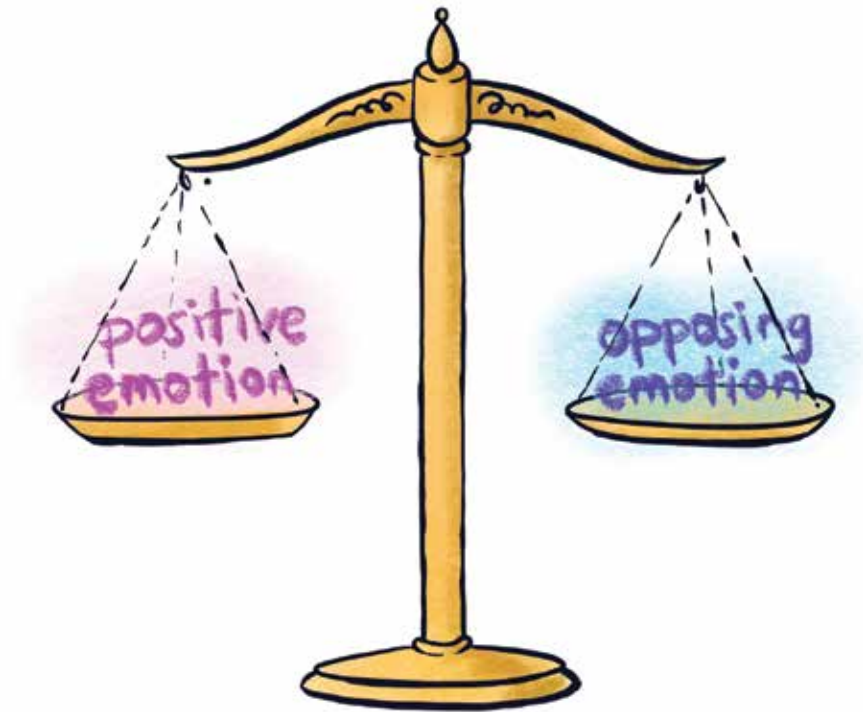


Here is why: If a leader only addresses the positive, they can be perceived eventually as naïve or overly optimistic and not in touch with reality.

Conversely, a leader who only focuses on the risks and downsides will be considered like Eeyore, “it will never work.” And no one wants to follow an Eeyore!



This is why we need balance.



Considering a range of emotions
(vs. just one side) increases our ability to see
and explore a broader circumstance.

This exploration will also help unlock the team's potential by surfacing immediate hopes and concerns that don't get discussed in the room...



... which then creates resistance to change, wastes precious time and energy, or raises roadblocks to implementing what is needed to make the team proud.

Recap & Notes

By exploring the paradoxes that arise from team purpose we can:

- Bring up relevant topics objectively
- Address tensions that are inherent in the purpose
- Plan best how to realize and fulfill the team purpose
- Understand the range of emotions the team feels about their purpose
- Help focus the team on a shared accountability of success



Chapter 8

Creating Paradox Statements

A path for a breakthrough thinking



How does this paradox concept work?

A quick start example:

Mail service used to be either slow and inexpensive or fast and expensive.

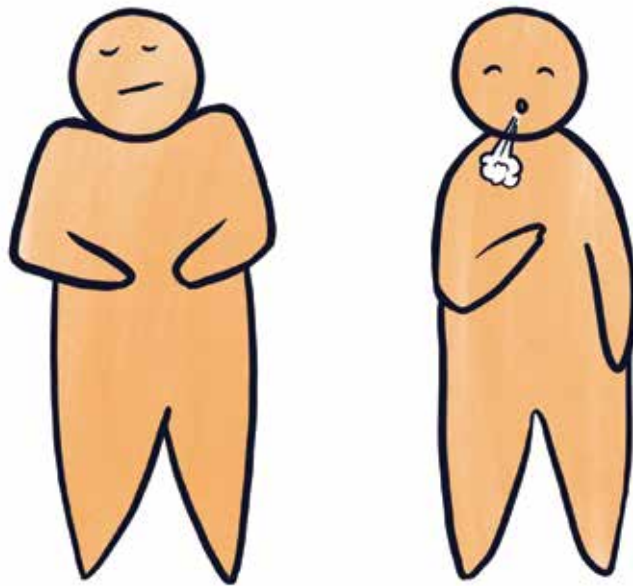
Fred Smith, the founder of FedEx, evolved the dilemma to a paradox.

How can we have mail service be both fast and (relatively) cheap?

We move from seeing the world from



Seeing the opposing situations together,
enabling an inclusive path forward.



Ideas, concepts, and challenges are no longer pitted against each other, but rather are seen together.

Like breathing: inhale and exhale.¹²

(You can't only inhale, there is the other side ... exhale.)

There is no one right way to brainstorm paradoxes.

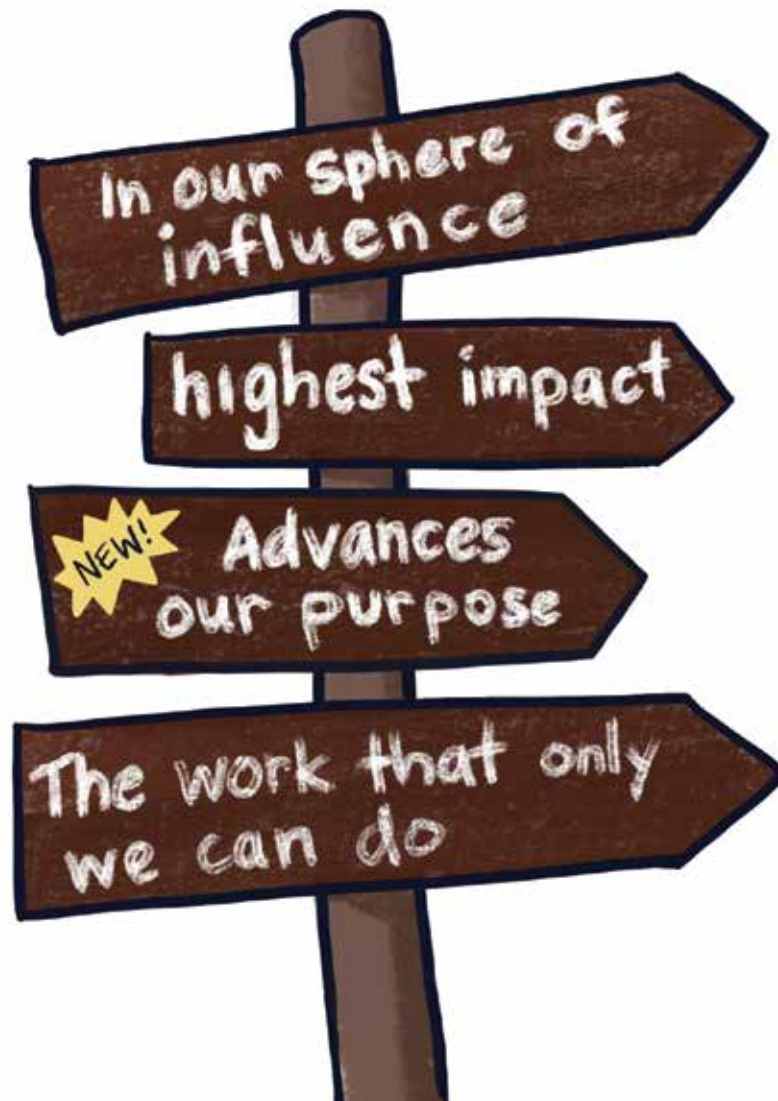
What is most important is that each team member is given the space to be heard and understood. The paradox process helps to surface what worries them about the purpose or being able to name what niggling thought they can't let go of that is causing agitation.

It doesn't mean that all paradoxes will be acted on. Some paradoxes are outside the sphere of influence and can't be resolved at this time (or ever!) Topics like weather, government, or finances are too ambiguous and out of scope unless you work in those areas.

To help you, here are a few criteria we are building on .

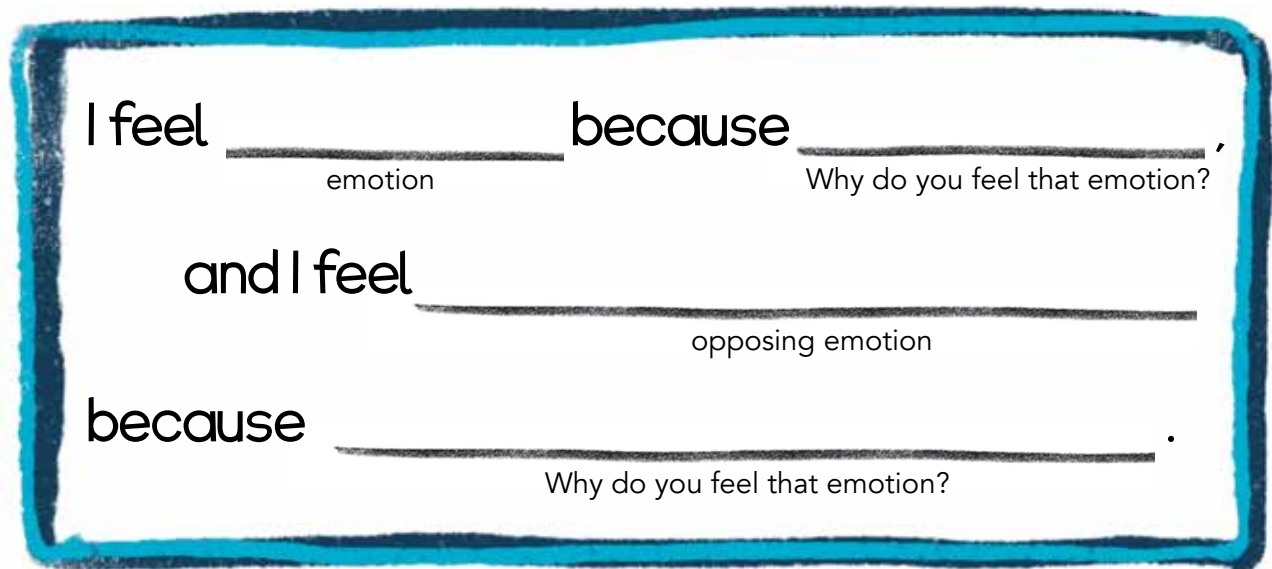


Paradox Criteria



Now let's layer back in the emotions. Some of us see the world through a range of emotions. If so, use the following "Paradox Mad Lib" to create your paradox statement based on the range of emotions that arise when you read your team purpose statement

Paradox Mad Lib



I feel _____ because _____ ,
emotion Why do you feel that emotion?

and I feel _____
opposing emotion

because _____ .
Why do you feel that emotion?

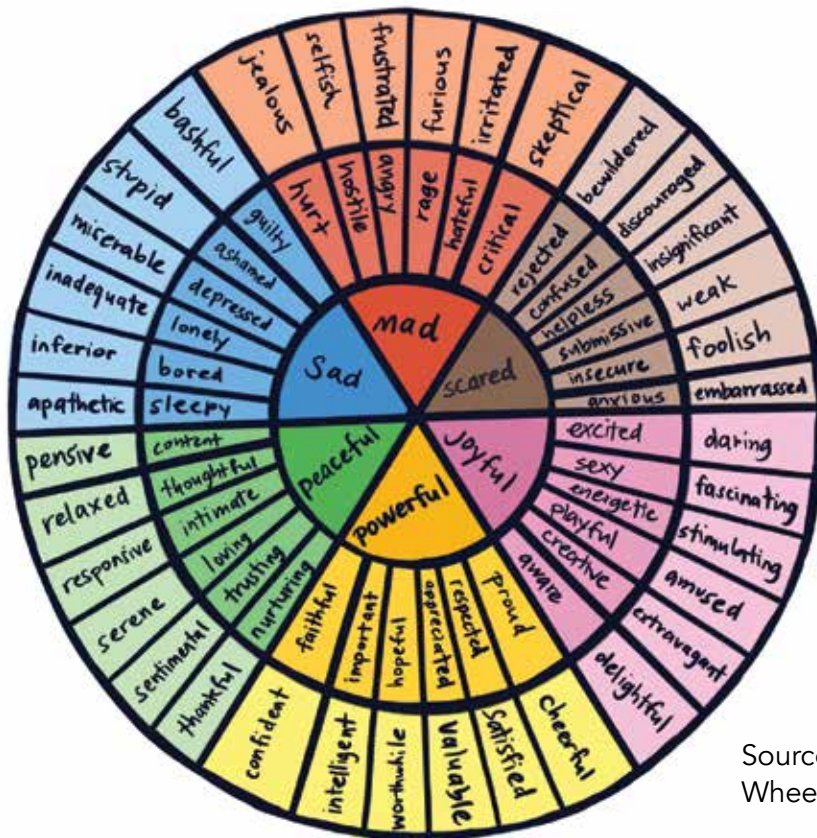
Examples

I feel enthusiastic because we have landed on a purpose statement that should unite us, and I feel worried because we may not have discipline over the long run to say “no,” which will fragment our resources.

I feel proud because we are focused on health outcomes, and I feel nervous because business opportunities may drive us into other directions based on financial need alone.

I feel excited because our team will have more say in the larger initiative when it is integrated in the other department, and I feel concerned because we are entering unfamiliar territory.

For those of us who don't see the world through an emotional lens or may appreciate accessing a greater range of emotions, see the emotion wheel below. This will help you get more specific to draft your paradox. The more specific you are, the better the results. Perhaps you have heard of GI-GO. Garbage in, garbage out. Same applies here.



Source: Brené Brown's
Wheel of Emotion¹³

Give everyone time to think about 2–3 paradoxes and then share them with the team. If you have a larger group (8 or more) consider working in small groups first to vet them. Then return to the whole team with your top 3–5 paradoxes for each group.

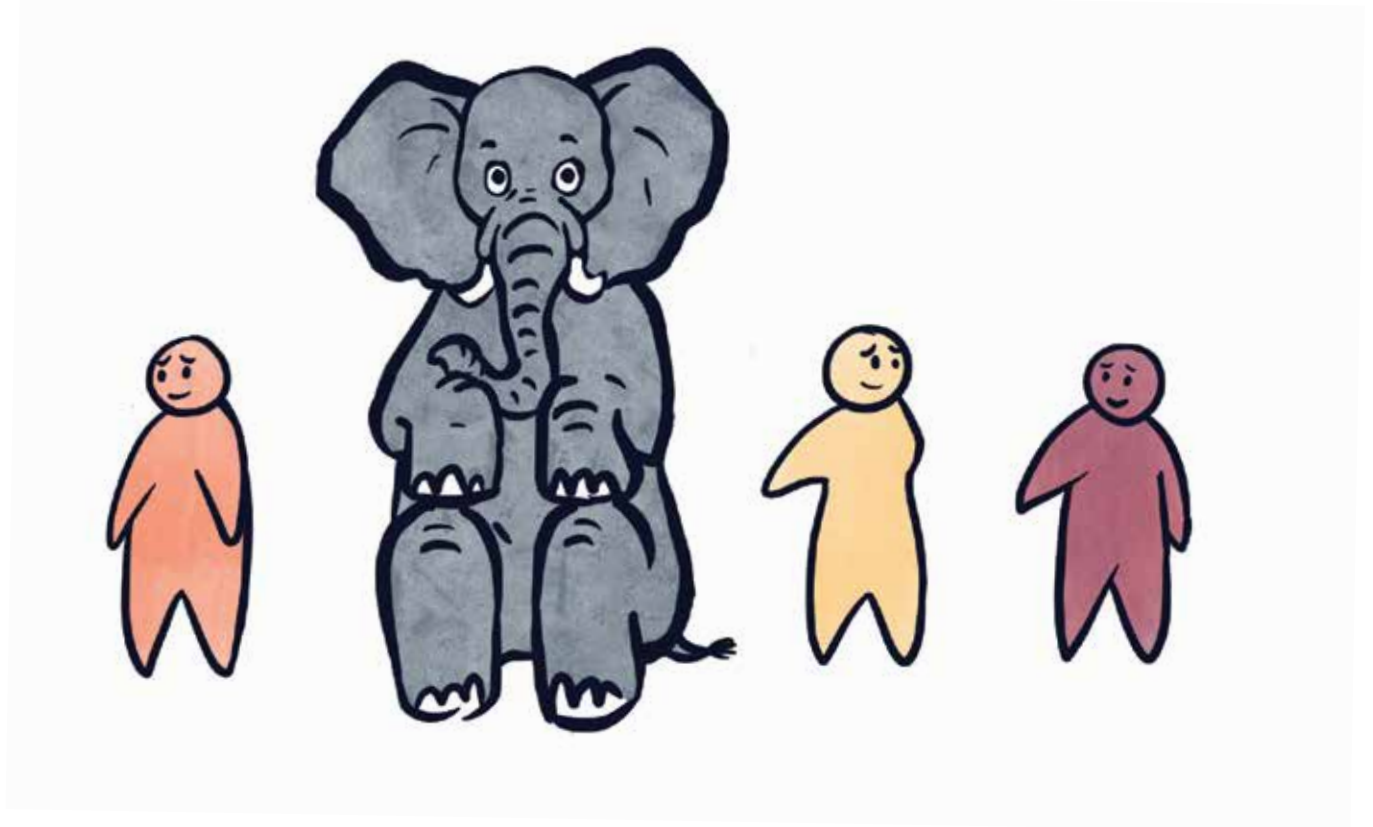
Review all your paradoxes to ensure everyone understands them and to eliminate duplicates.

Stand back and give time (7–8 minutes) to the team to advocate (without deciding) which paradoxes are rising to the top.

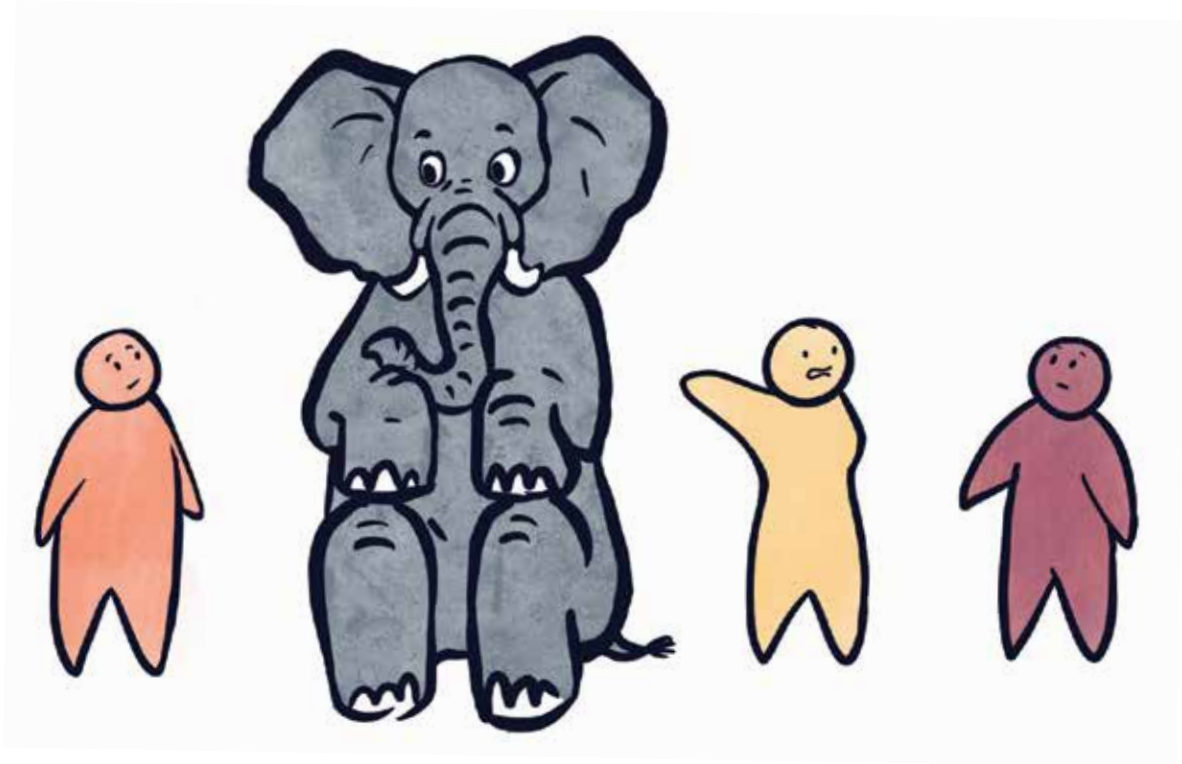


Usually by this point your team is becoming clear about the paradoxes that require shared accountability. This is important to the success of the team.

Sometimes however, there is an elephant in the room.



The elephant can be a topic that is so big, uncomfortable, or taboo that no one wants to bring it up.



However, sharing the paradox of the issue can be a way to access and discuss difficult topics.

The goal now is to agree on your top paradoxes. You might pick one because it's so big and trumps all.

Or you might realize 2-3 must be completed in tandem because of their interrelatedness.

Only you all will know.

Lastly, you may not be able to do all the work at the same time, and some items will need to be staged at a later time.



Congrats on making it this far!

This work dramatically increases
your odds for success.

Want to increase them
even more?

Keep reading!

Recap & Notes

- The exploration of paradox focuses the team on the fewest, most essential areas that must be addressed in order to advance the team's purpose.
- Emotions are the guidance system to help articulate the challenges and opportunities to realize the team's purpose.
- The elephant in the room may be THE focus for the team.
- The exploration and alignment on the key paradox(es) increases the likelihood of the team's success.



GAME PLAN

Our Purpose					
Key Milestones					
30-60 Days	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Next Year
Key Paradoxes					
Problem Statements					
Key Results/Outcomes					
What is at stake?					

You are here!

Our Purpose

Key Milestones

Key Paradoxes

61

Q3

94

Next

Key
Results/
Outcomes

Problem Statements

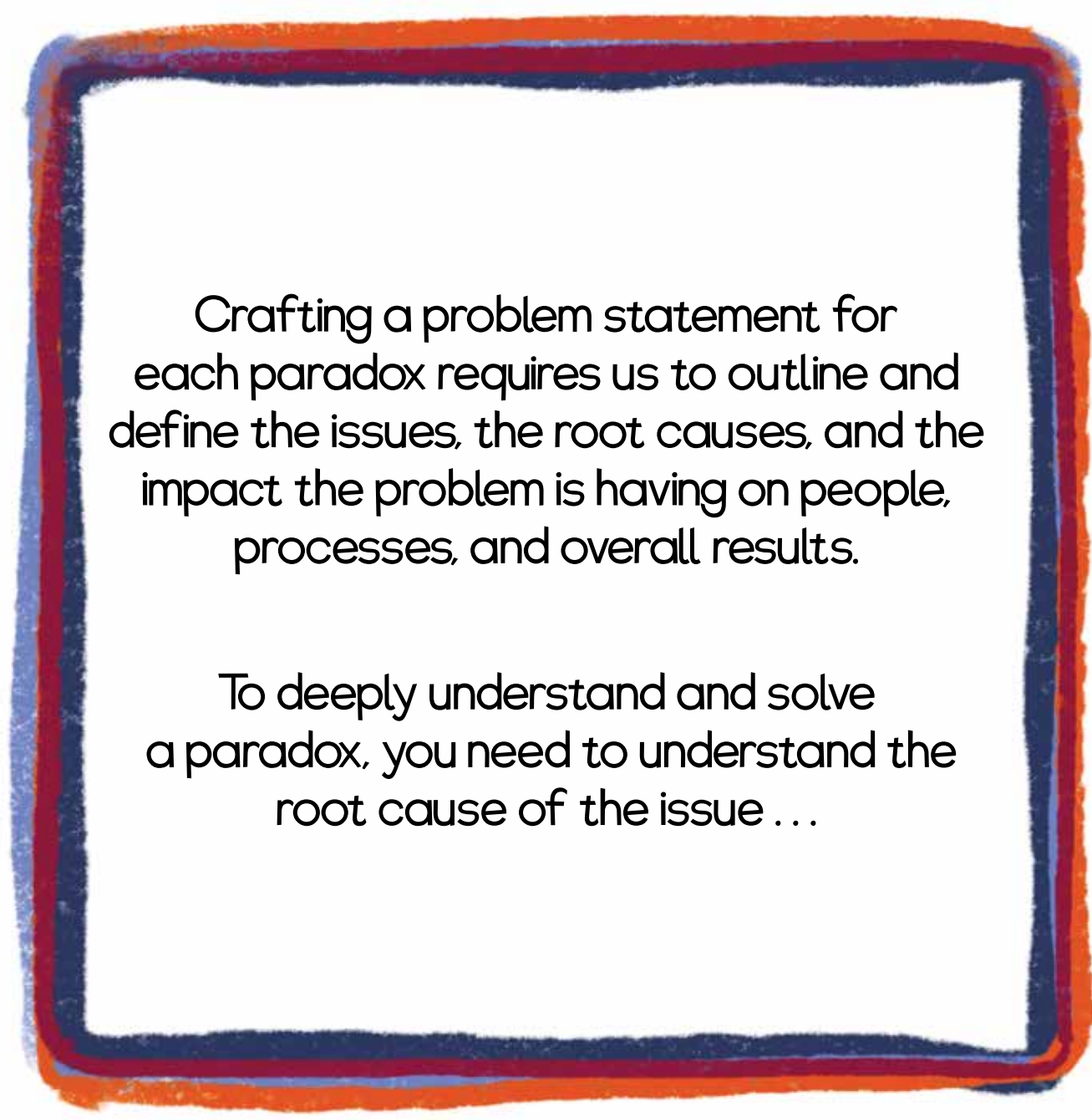
What is at stake?

Chapter 9

A Good Problem Statement is Hard to Find

(But fairly easy to create!)





Crafting a problem statement for each paradox requires us to outline and define the issues, the root causes, and the impact the problem is having on people, processes, and overall results.

To deeply understand and solve a paradox, you need to understand the root cause of the issue ...

Defining the problem.



Ever noticed that certain issues never seem to get resolved or keep resurfacing over and over again? The complexity of these issues can cause inaction, frustration, and even divisions among team members.

Many times, teams jump into action and address the symptoms without exploring the root causes. They scratch the persistent itch without understanding what is causing the itch...

Prior to taking action, planning is required to ensure you are solving the correct problem. Then you will not have to rework the solution.

The following process helps to leverage different team members' points of view. Overall it saves an immense amount of time, conflict, and headaches. It also increases the likelihood of success in solving the right problem the first time.

Most teams do the following:



Instead, you're going to do this:





How do you
create a great
problem statement?

Start by ...

Asking each other the following questions with no blame, judgment, or accusations:

- How do you each see the problem we are trying to address?
- What are the relationships and/or intersections of these components?
- What might be causing this issue?

Think of each person's view as a precious treasure . . . to be openly held, observed, and understood.

Just open up, and deeply listen.



What are the biggest areas of friction?

Name the dynamics and implications as an observer.



By investing just a bit of time here you can save hours, days, or weeks later on...

Pro Tip: Be careful that you don't mistake hidden solutions for problems.

Give yourselves an hour...



Watch out for statements that include the following phrases:



- Less than ...
- Lack of ...
- If we had better ...
- More of ...
- Improve ...

If you are using these words, go deeper to uncover why you are using them.

Example:

Before

Negative feedback is focused on orders slowing down and poor communication. We lack a fulfillment process and have communication gaps. We should prioritize improving the customer experience, but the cause needs pinpointing.

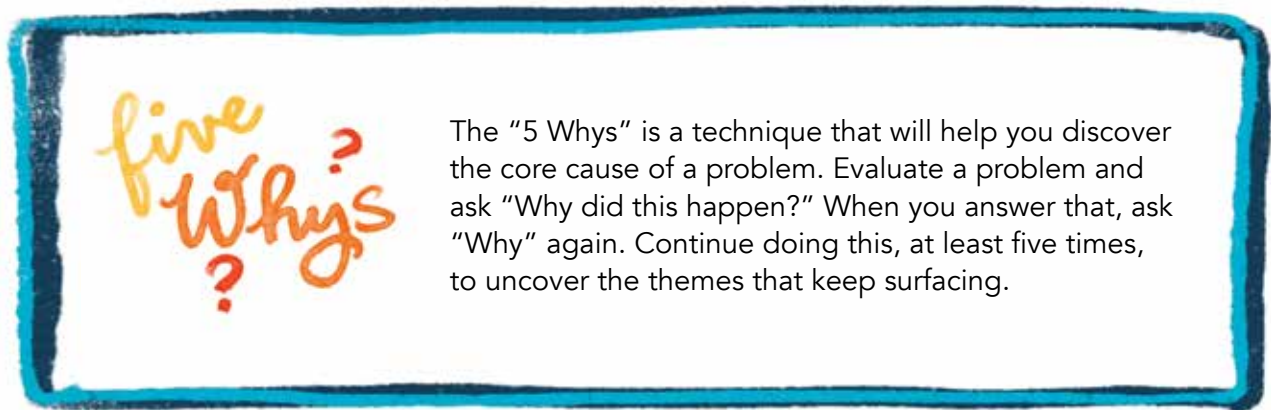
After

Customer satisfaction scores related to order fulfillment have dipped by 10% in the past quarter, with customers specifically reporting delays in shipping and difficulty tracking orders.

Continue to ask yourself, “What do we need to solve for?”
The goal is to understand why problems are problems . . .

Consider using the 5 Whys Method.¹⁴ This will help you explore both the breadth and depth of an issue.

This process will help to surface multiple dimensions. By the time you are done, you should have a few paragraphs that give insight to the root cause.



Great News!

The process of drafting a well-crafted problem statement generates ideas for both the longer-term desired results as well as milestones to achieve them.



Which is our next step ...

Recap & Notes

- The process of drafting problem statements ensures the team aligns on the most important problem, at the same time, in the same way.
- Defining the problem up front saves a lot of time, resources, and frustration later on.
- Watch out for hidden solutions (lack of, less than) and explore the root cause.
- A great problem statement creates clarity for the key results (the next step in the process) so you know when the problem is solved.



GAME PLAN					
Our Purpose					
Key Milestones					
Key Paradoxes	30-60-90 Days	Q1	Q3	Q4	Next Year
↓					
Problem Statements					
What is at stake?					

Key Results/Outcomes
★ You are here!

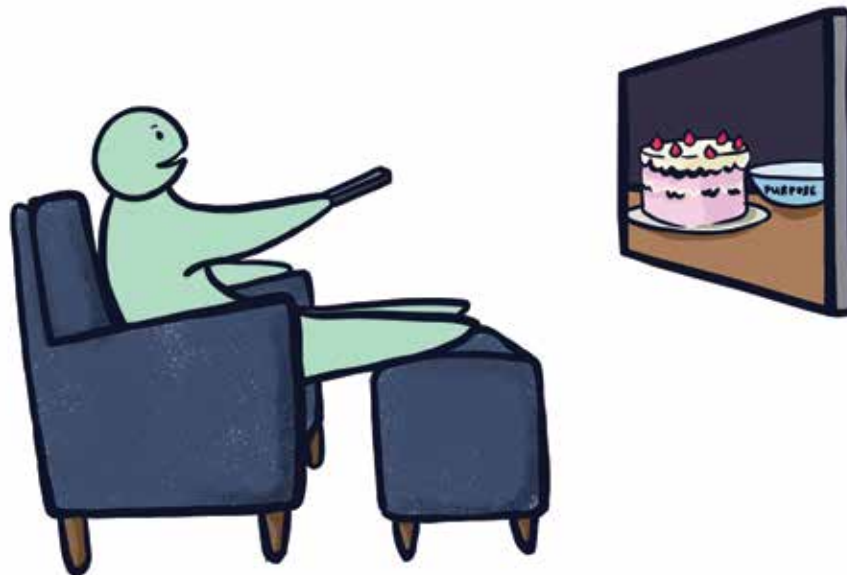
Chapter 10

Key Results:
Keeping the End in Mind



The fun part ... for some ...

Thinking and dreaming about the future ... what might be the outcomes of solving the problem?



Pretend you can watch the movie of the team achieving their purpose two years from now ... what would be on the screen?



Define the desired results as though
you can see them completed.

What will success look like?

How will you know you all have been successful?

What will be different? Better? Improved?

Provide just enough specificity and leave room for some magic to happen.



The intention is to provide just
enough direction and clarity to see
your teamwork realized.



Recap & Notes

- Defining key results requires the right amount of tension – enough to stretch the team and not too much that overwhelms them.
- Think about what will make the team proud (2–3 years from now) so that they can see and feel success.
- The key results may need to be refined along the way.

GAME PLAN

Our Purpose

You are here! ★

Key Milestones

Key
Paradoxes



Problem
Statements

30-60-90
Days

Q2

Q3

Q4

Next
Year

Key
Results/
Outcomes

What is at stake?

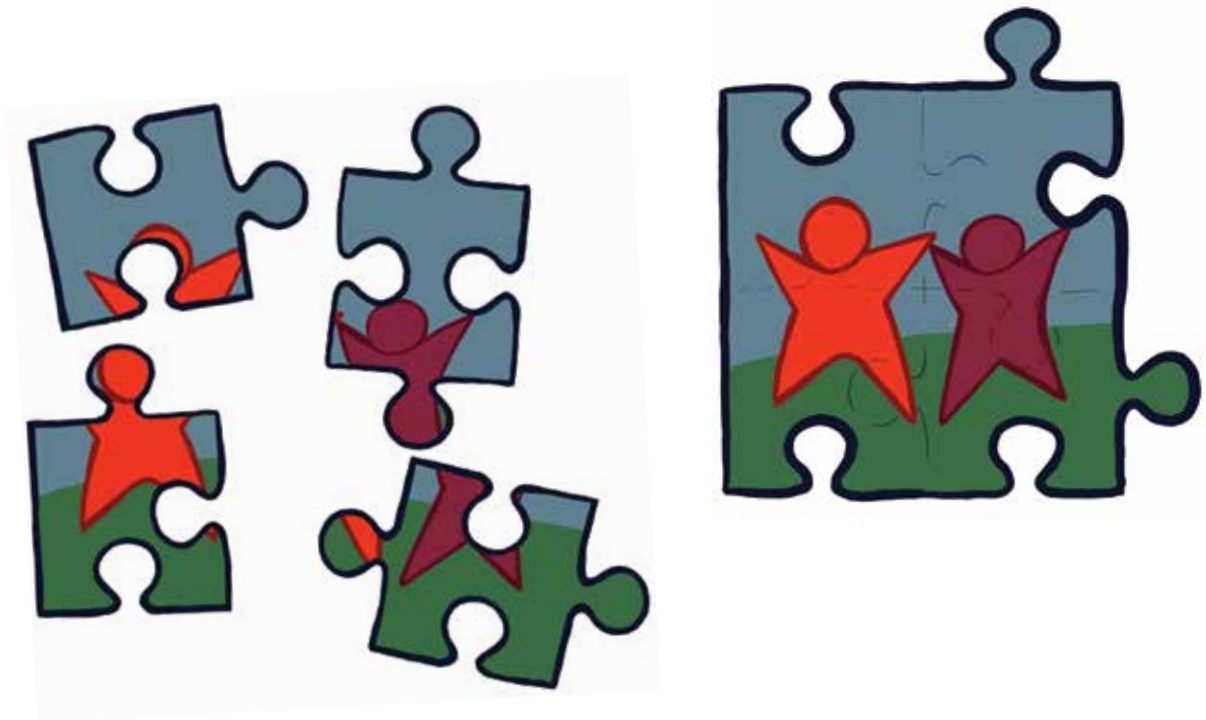
Chapter 11

Milestones: A Way to
Celebrate Progress,
Understand Setbacks
and Adjust Course



Milestones

The last piece of the game plan puzzle
is staging the work.



Creating achievable milestones are essential to the journey.

Milestones mark progress and help you define deadlines that create just enough pressure to make progress.



“Pressure makes diamonds.”

- General Patton

Too much pressure can overwhelm the team
or break their momentum.

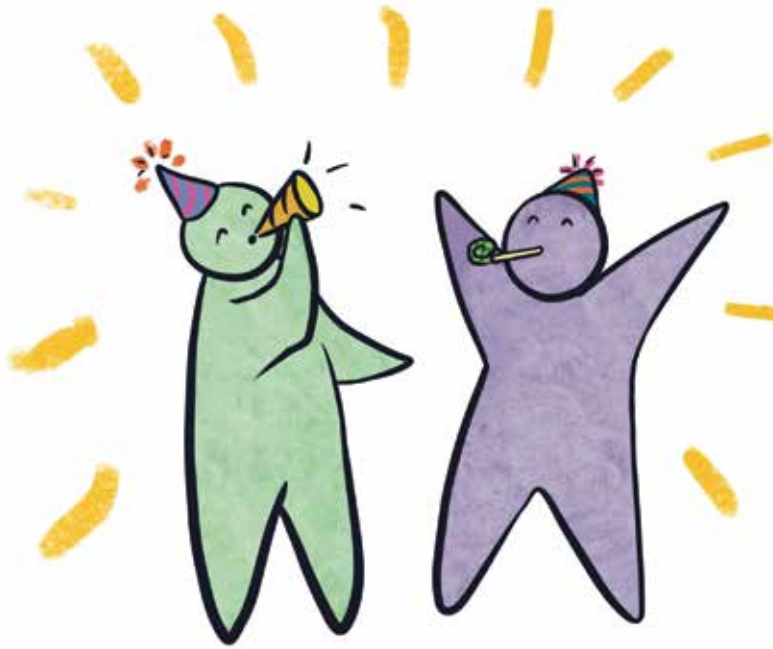


Excitement and hope are the key!



Given no one knows all the steps to success, start with where you are and decide what would be possible and amazing to accomplish in 90 days.

What would begin to address your key paradoxes and problem statement? What would best advance your purpose toward your (two-year) desired outcomes?



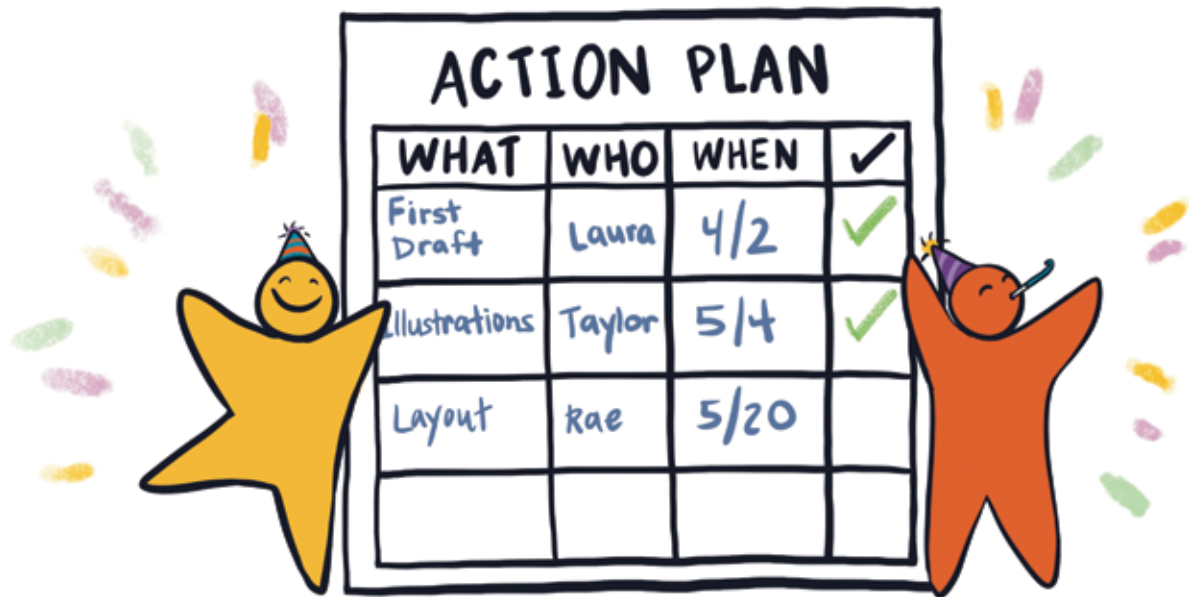
Agree on a mini outcome or milestone that would excite the team and bring relief, pride, and potentially something to celebrate three months from now.

Then DECIDE

Who will do

What by

When ...



Keep following up on your action plan.
Celebrate little wins.

Pro Tip:

Reality Check

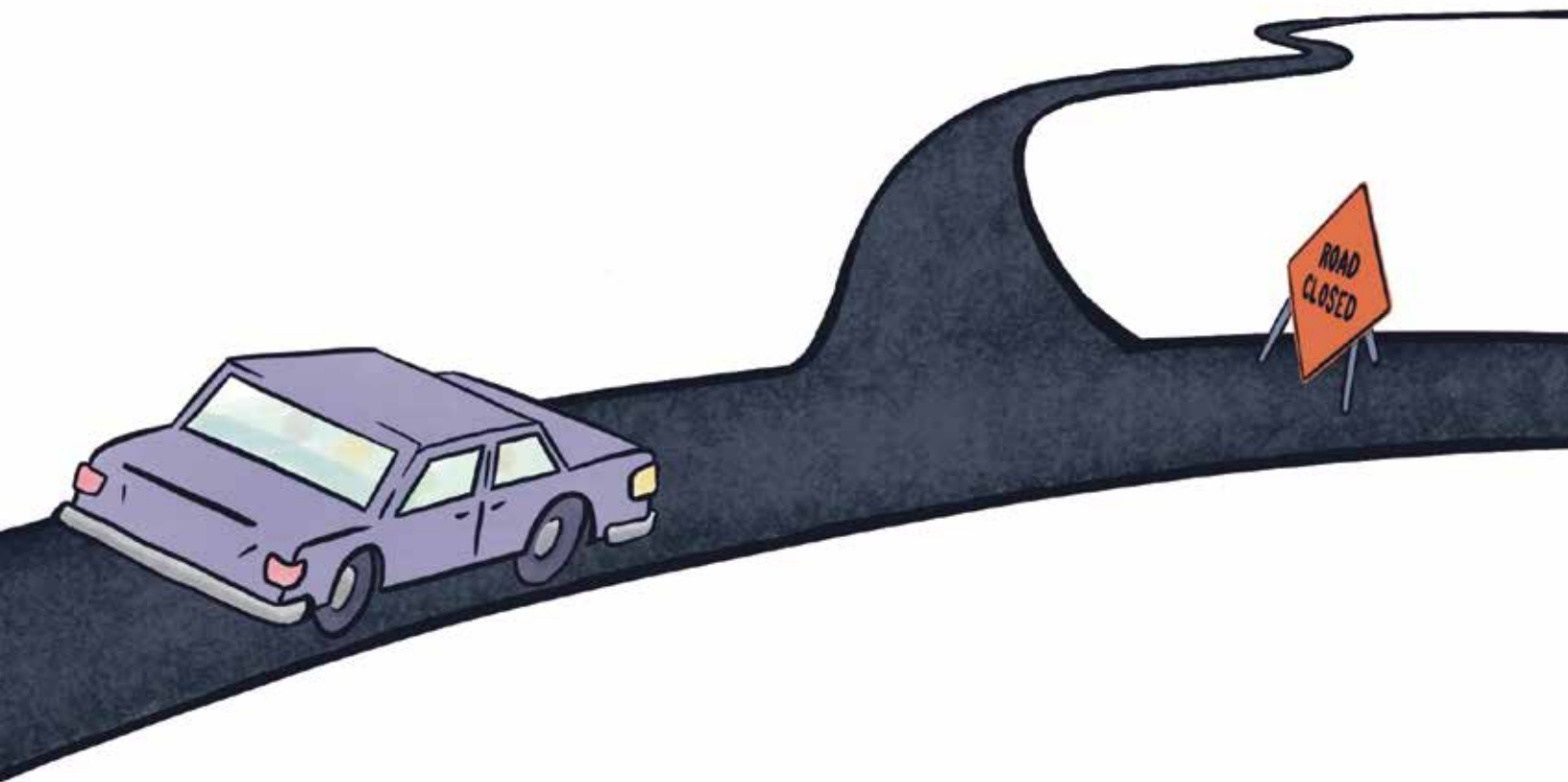


What might get in the way of progress?

This critical question will help mitigate potential challenges.¹⁵

This conversation is essential.

Teams can increase the likelihood of success by 2x just by discussing and addressing the obstacles that may lie ahead.¹¹



Recap & Notes

- Create milestones that are celebration-worthy.
- Ensure these milestones are outcome-based so that all will know when the successful result is complete.
- Specifics of the whos, whats and by whens are essential.
- Discuss the obstacles that could impede progress.



★ GAME PLAN ★

Our Purpose

Key Milestones

Key
Paradoxes



Problem
Statements

30-60-90
Days

Q2

Q3

Q4

Next
Year

Key
Results/
Outcomes

What is at stake?

Chapter 12

Maintaining Progress:
The Fun Just Begins!



Words of Wisdom & Watch Outs



Now what?

Set regular checkups to:

- Celebrate and monitor progress
- Reflect on learning and insights
- Honor and understand failures
- Decide what the next milestone is and who is doing what by when.





Revisit the team's purpose statement and explore the following questions:

- Does our team purpose still resonate?
Does it need any tweaking?
- How has the world (or company, or function) changed?
- Do we need to pivot, shift, or evolve our focus or direction?

Now that you have landed your purpose as a team and created a game plan of the work that only you can do ...

... What mindset, skills, and upgrades need to be addressed in the coming months?

... How will you engage others who were not part of this work that this work will impact?

Remember ...



Follow Through is Queen

Follow through will be essential. You also must be clear on who the team needs to be at this moment in order to deliver on their purpose.

Given that purpose statements create tensions (as referenced in the previous chapter) part of the tensions now include raising the bar for this team's performance.

There is no going back;
you can't unscramble eggs!



All this means:

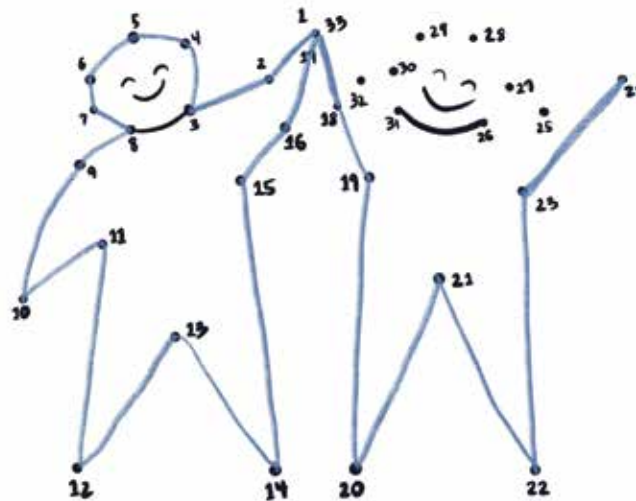
The team is required to elevate who they are, how they work collectively with the newfound clarity of shared accountability, and how they lead their own team.

What has changed?

The team is leveling up and doing more strategic work.¹⁵ This takes time, and requires the team to let go of certain tasks and delegate¹⁶ more in order to free themselves up to do the work that only they can do.

Change Requires

1. Honoring of the past
2. Clarity of future
3. Understanding your own purpose¹⁷
so you can connect the dots



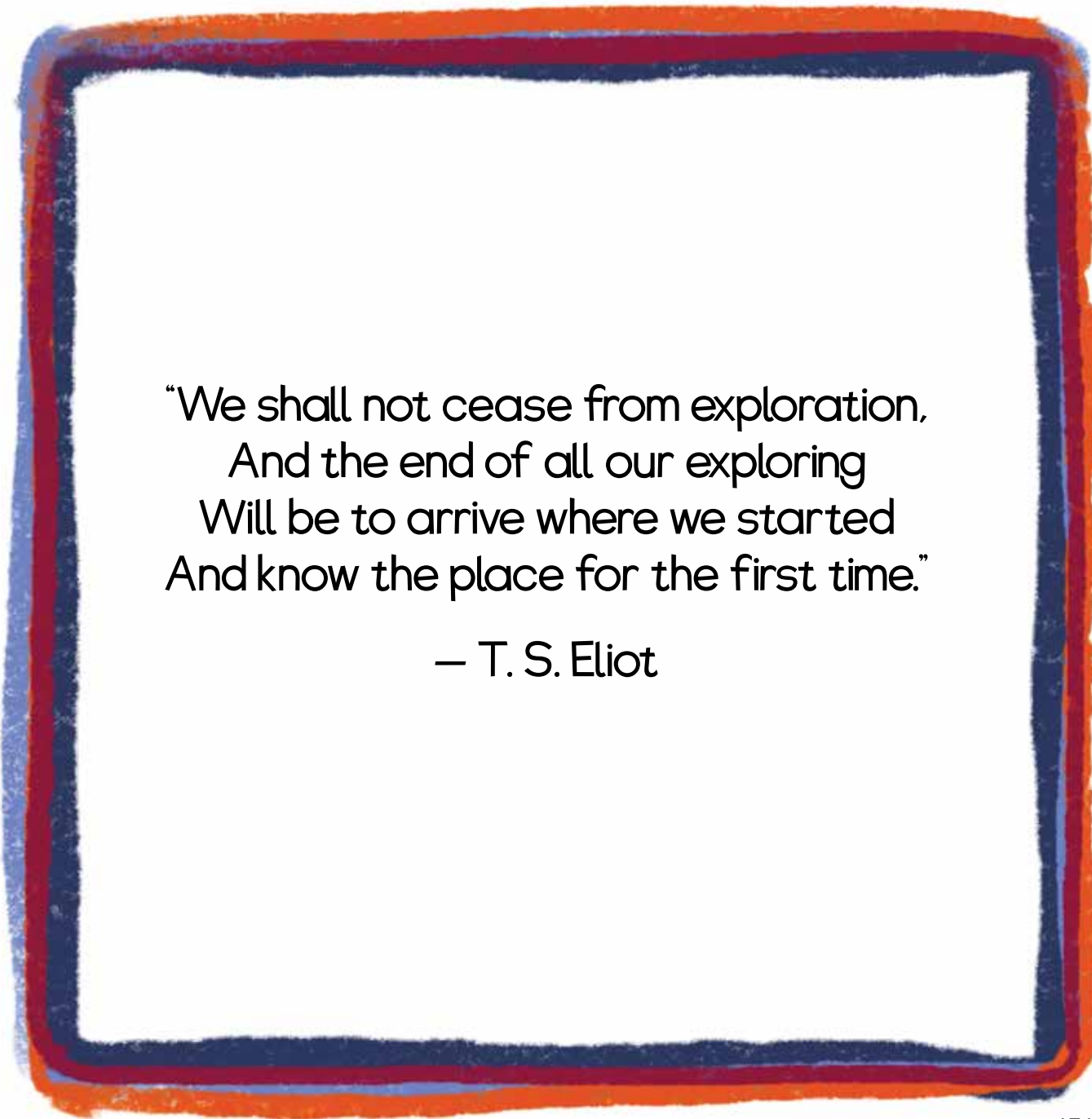


Bring Purpose Alive

This is just the beginning.
Now that you have your team's
purpose-driven plan, well done!

Celebrate all that you have
accomplished and will be creating!





“We shall not cease from exploration,
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.”

— T. S. Eliot

Recap & Notes

- This process requires regular strategic focus. It is not a one-and-done process; it's just the beginning!
- Know that purpose statements and all the elements of your game plan will evolve over time and require tweaking depending on what is changing and evolving in your unique environment.
- Identify the skills that need to evolve (like letting go and delegating, coaching and stakeholder management¹⁸).
- Enjoy the journey and don't take yourselves too seriously since you are not doing brain surgery ... unless of course you are!



Want more?

**The following are programs to take what we have covered in this book
and bring to life with your team and company:**

The High Performance Accelerator™
Team Purpose to Performance™
The Rapid Performance Process™
The Inclusive Leadership Series™
The Self-Lead-Meant Series™

Products

Seat Differently™ Card Deck

Digital Programs

Accessing and Advancing Your Purpose™
Team Purpose to Performance™

Keynote Speaking

**Please visit www.LauraStone.com for additional support and
free resources to help you on your path!**



If you were inspired by something in this book,
please share your stories with us or as
an Amazon testimonial for they may
help someone on this journey!

To contact Laura, you may reach her
at laura@laurastone.com.

For programs, speaking, coaching and
consulting engagements,
please email: contact@laurastone.com

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Gratitudes

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About the Author



Laura J. Stone partners with executives, emerging leaders and their teams to amplify their strategic impact and strengthen stakeholder connections. She equips them with the skills to focus on what truly matters, fostering high-performing teams, enabling meaningful careers, and results that make them proud. A partial list of her clients includes Danone, TJX, Bacardi, Unilever, CVS, Iron Mountain, IBM, Pfizer, Fidelity Investments, Toyota, and Kimberly Clark.

Stone received her bachelor's degree in English literature and French from the University of Wisconsin and the L'Institute D'American in Aix-en-Provence, France as well as energy medicine studies at The Four Winds. She is a former licensed 50-ton U.S. Coast Guard Captain and a former contributing editor to HRO Today.

Stone was included in the Women Worth Watching List by Profiles in Diversity Journal. Stone calls Rhode Island home after a lifetime in Boston. She enjoys spending sacred time with her husband Jorge, her cool kids — Sophie, Jackson, Isa, Diego, Miyako, friends, and family.

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