

How can our team excel?



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Learning Teaming
Barbara Waugh

How Can our team excel?

Hi, I'm Debra Chin, I work in Mechanical Engineering (say this however you want) and I'm going to walk you through how your team can excel.

Photo from New Product Development class exercise (don't need to mention that).



A survey by the Manufacturing Performance Institute showed that only 14% of responding companies rated their teams as highly successful.

So how can you ensure that your team will excel?

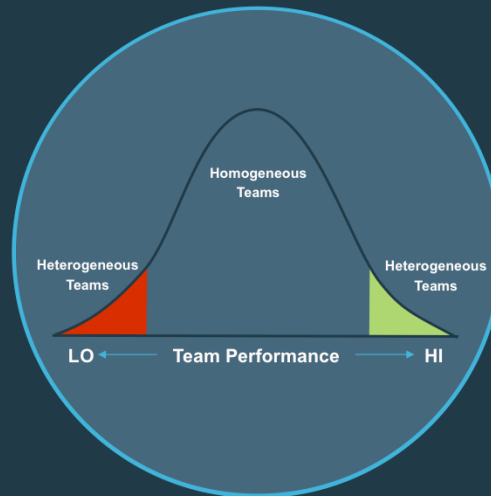
A team that establishes its goals, roles, processes and relationships will most likely accomplish its goal. But to excel requires more.

Edmondson, Amy. *Teaming: How Organizations Learn, Innovate and Compete in the Knowledge Economy*. 1st ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012. p26.

Diversity and Team Performance

If you were to draw a bell curve of performance, you'd find the more diverse teams at the two tails of the distribution: either the very high end, or the low end. Homogeneous groups occupy the middle.

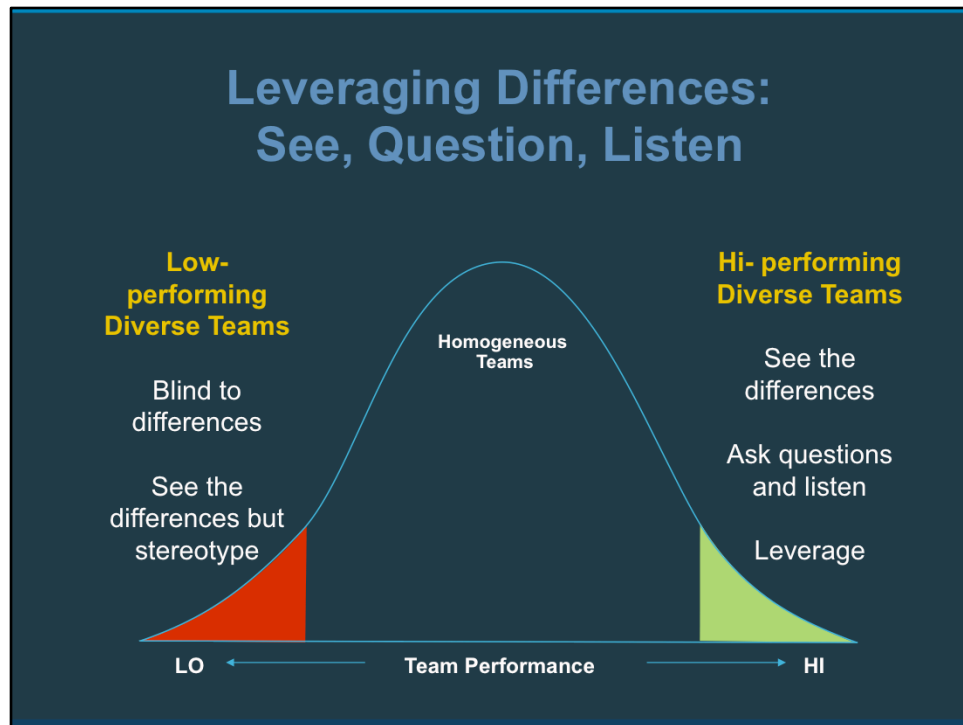
David Thomas, Harvard Business School



Recent studies made a startling finding: Diverse teams fall at the two tails of the performance Bell curve: either at the very high end, or the low end.

Where do you think the teams you've been on at Cal fall?

What is the difference between teams at the two ends? And if you're in the low end, how do you move to the high end?



Low performing teams fall into one of two traps:

- The first trap is to be blind to differences. “We’re all undergrads, we’re all MEs, we’re all the same.”
- The second trap is to see the differences and assume you know what they mean. For example: “Oh, there’s a woman on the team. She should be our facilitator because women are good at that!” (before you even learn that there’s a guy on the team better at it who wants the job!) or “He speaks English as his first language – he should make our presentation” (failing to learn that he’s pathologically shy.)

On the other end of the spectrum, high-performing, diverse teams are successful because they notice their differences and explore them, asking questions, listening, going more deeply.

Choose “Listening to Learn”	
Automatic/Binary Listening (for agreement with me)	Listening to Learn (beyond what I already know)
» Right / Wrong (Stupid)	» How might that be possible?
» Win / Lose	» What could come from this?
» Agree / Disagree	» What could that allow us to do?
» Fit / Doesn't Fit	» How can that contribute?
» Good / Bad	» What commitments could that idea advance?
» Either / Or	» Say more about that...
» Realistic / Unrealistic	» What do you see that I don't see?

Based on distinctions from 2013 Institute for Women's Leadership, Inc. www.womensleadership.com

Teams that excel have mastered the fine art of listening to each other to learn. This listening differs radically from the way most of us listen, which is automatic and binary.

Instead of listening in order to judge who’s right or wrong or smart or stupid, they ask, how might this be possible?

Rather than hear something as a win-lose option, they ask “how might we all win even bigger if we took this in?”

Instead of outright agreeing or disagreeing, they try to imagine “what that could allow us to do?” Instead of judging something as a fit, or not a fit, they ask “how can that contribute?”

Rather than see something as good or bad, they ask “what commitments could that idea advance?” Instead of either-or, they ask “tell me more about that”

And instead of judging things as realistic or unrealistic, they try to

Discern Strategically Relevant Differences

The Leveraging Difference Matrix

	»	»	Strategically Relevant Difference	»	Not Strategically Relevant Difference
»	Attend to Difference	»	Innovation	»	Diversion
»	Fail to Notice Difference	»	Opportunity cost	»	Remember for potential relevance in future

Adapted from Davidson, Martin N. *The End of Diversity as We Know It: Why Diversity Efforts Fail and How Leveraging Difference Can Succeed*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2011. 122.

Teams that excel discern what might be strategically relevant and then use it, AND DON'T GET DISTRACTED BY DIFFERENCES THAT ARE NOT STRATEGICALLY RELEVANT.

They ask, how might this difference on our team change the way we define our Goal, or the Process we'll use to accomplish it, or the Roles we'll assign ourselves or the Relationships we'll establish?

For example, a team designing a better wheelchair might have strategic advantage if a team member has a child in a wheelchair – but only if the team discovers and leverages this inside knowledge. A team designing a game might design differently for children in high poverty schools known to one team member than for kids in the private schools the rest of the team assumes are typical.

Discern and apply differences and EXCEL!