



The July–August 2005 issue of the *Harvard Business Review* was devoted to “the high-performance organization,” with articles both old and new. First published in 1993, “The discipline of teams,” by Jon R. Katzenbach and Douglas K. Smith, remains relevant today, since teamwork is a highly regarded way to increase the productivity of any organization and smart executives actively encourage it. Although there is no “one way” to ensure that teams perform well and work productively, eight points were recommended by the authors.

- 1) Establish urgency, demanding performance standards and direction. The entire team must believe that its project is urgent and meaningful. Teams perform best in a compelling context, which is why companies with “strong performance ethics” depend on them.
- 2) Select members for skill and skill potential, not personality. Teams often decide which skills they need after formation. Managers should choose those with existing skills, or strong potential to develop them, to get the job done.
- 3) Pay particular attention to first meetings and actions. First impressions are important; someone who takes a phone call mid-meeting sends the wrong signal.
- 4) Set some clear rules of behavior. Come to an agreement on attendance, confidentiality, timely completion of individual assignments, freedom of discussion, and not assigning blame.
- 5) Set and seize upon a few immediate performance-oriented tasks and goals. Identification of challenging goals that can be achieved quickly helps meld the team and emphasizes the importance of performance results.
- 6) Challenge the group regularly with fresh facts and information. Not all necessary information resides in the group. Conduct research, consult others working in different areas, and view problems from fresh angles.
- 7) Spend lots of time together. Successful teams allow time to become and remain teams. Insights often come when ideas are “batted around” a meeting table. e-Time and phone calls count, too, especially later in the project.
- 8) Exploit the power of positive feedback, recognition, and reward. There are many methods to reward team performance other than monetary, from direct feedback from senior executives to group awards. Satisfaction shared in its own performance may be the most powerful reward to a team.