

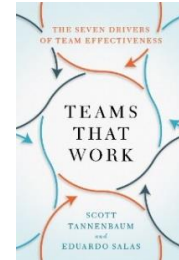
# The Science of Teamwork: What Really Matters

Scott Tannenbaum, Ph.D.

The Group for Organizational Effectiveness (gOE), Inc.

Email: [scott.tannenbaum@groupoe.com](mailto:scott.tannenbaum@groupoe.com)

LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/in/stannenbaum/](http://www.linkedin.com/in/stannenbaum/)



[www.teamsthatwork.com](http://www.teamsthatwork.com)

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## A Few Observations about Teams

- Almost all organizations need some degree of collaboration to succeed – and **collaboration requirements are increasing**. At some point we are all asked to collaborate and work in teams.
- Organizations use teams extensively, but unfortunately, **many are ineffective**. Being on an ineffective team not only hinders performance, it drains employee engagement and discourages people from collaborating in the future.
- Teamwork is not easy, but teams that demonstrate better **teamwork behaviors** are 20 to 25% more likely to succeed -- so it is worth the effort.
- The best teams are rarely great on day one. They become great by making **adjustments**.
- Behind many apparently solo accomplishments are **unseen acts of teamwork** that helped.
- Teamwork **isn't** the same as “liking” one another or it isn't simply maintaining harmony. The right type of friction can be constructive!
- You can be both a great **team player** and display **individual excellence**.
- We need to crack the code for good teamwork. Fortunately, there is a strong, growing **body of research** to help guide us.

**Team effectiveness** = Sustainable performance over time (results, vitality, resilience)

Focus attention on the **Seven Drivers of Teamwork**. Research shows that these are what really matter!

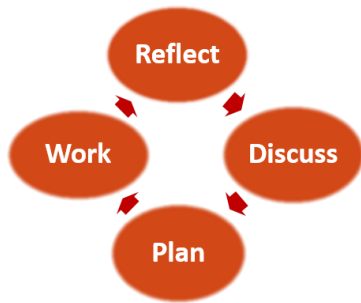
Driver	Key Question
<b>1. Capability</b>	Right <b>people</b> with the right mix of KSA's?
<b>2. Cooperation</b>	Right <b>attitudes</b> about teamwork & the team?
<b>3. Coordination</b>	Demonstrate necessary teamwork <b>behaviors</b> ?
<b>4. Communication</b>	<b>Exchange info</b> effectively with each other and outside?
<b>5. Cognition</b>	Possess a <b>shared understanding</b> (e.g., priorities, roles, vision)?
<b>6. Coaching</b>	Leader and/or team members demo <b>leadership behaviors</b> ?
<b>7. Conditions</b>	Have favorable <b>conditions</b> (e.g., resources, culture)?

From Tannenbaum, S. & Salas, E. (2020). *Teams That Work*. Oxford University Press.

## Team Debriefing: A Key Tool for Team Effectiveness

Team debriefs are a simple yet powerful technique that teams can use to make adjustments and boost performance. During a debrief, team members...

- ✓ Intentionally **reflect** upon a recent experience(s)
- ✓ **Discuss** what went well and opportunities for improvement
- ✓ Attempt to build common **understanding** (e.g., about priorities, roles, if-then)
- ✓ Establish **agreements** to ensure future success



On average, teams that debrief effectively **outperform other teams by over 20%** (Tannenbaum & Cerasoli, 2013)

A debrief can be **conducted after any team experience** (e.g., at the conclusion of a work shift, meeting, or training event; at any point during a project; during the middle of a performance period; or after any team “action”).

### Five debriefing “pitfalls” to avoid

1. Leader telling/talking too much (not asking enough questions to engage the team)
2. Focusing strictly on taskwork, not discussing teamwork issues
3. Team members feeling that they aren’t able to weigh in
4. Time wasted discussing areas of agreement and avoiding challenging topics
5. Looking backward (reflect/discuss) but not forward (action/agreements)

**Team leader tips:** (See Reyes, Tannenbaum, & Salas, 2018 for more tips)

1. During the discussion, **let your team members talk first**
  - If you respond first it can discourage their input.
2. Acknowledge a **concern you have**, a **mistake you made**, or how you intend to change
  - If the opportunity arises, doing so even once makes it easier for others to do so
3. Encourage all team members to **participate** in the discussion
  - Research shows that the best results occur when more people contribute to the conversation
4. If someone voices a concern or admits they could have done something better, **do not chastise them** – make it safe for them (and others) to speak up
  - Otherwise you discourage others from voicing a concern or admitting a misunderstanding
  - You can’t see everything, so you need your team to be willing to share their observations
5. Be sure to periodically **ask**, “Should we make an adjustment in how we do this?”

Reyes, D.L., Tannenbaum, S.I., Salas, E. (2018). Team development: The power of debriefing. *People + Strategy*, 46-51.

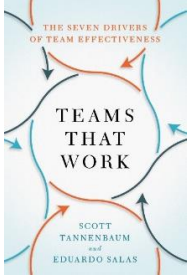
## Tips for Virtual Teams

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Remote teamwork has become increasingly prevalent. The seven C's apply both to co-located and virtual teams, but a few unique challenges can emerge in teams that have members who work remotely. Below are a few targeted tips for remote teams.

- Actively focus on establishing and maintaining a **clear purpose** and **responsibilities**. If a third-party were to interview each team member separately, would they provide similar answers about the team's direction and role expectations?
  - When a team is formed, start by focusing on the team's purpose, roles, and tasks. Don't begin by digging immediately into interpersonal items. First, set the context for the team's work.
  - It can be more challenging to maintain a shared mental model (SMM) without having a common physical workspace, so you need to pay a little more attention to SMMs in a team that works remotely.
- Be clear about **how decisions will be made**, including what types of decisions can be made locally vs. centrally. By locally, we mean by a sub-office/location or by individual team members. By centrally, we mean by the team leader/leadership or the entire team.
- Establish clear **team norms**. For example:
  - How quickly will we reply to one another? Research shows that faster information exchange in virtual teams is related to better teamwork (Brown et al., 2020), but what is most important is that team members have a common set of expectations.
  - How often and when will we meet as a team? Consider varying start times if the team has members who work in different time zones, to reduce the personal burden on one set of team members.
- Allocate time to **intentionally share** lessons learned.
  - When everyone is working in the same place some of this may happen naturally, but that is far less likely when working remotely. Schedule periodic team debriefs that include a discussion about what is working well.
- Ensure the "**conditions**" at each location are conducive to teamwork and performance.
  - If some team members are working from their home or a remote office, do they have the resources, equipment, communication tools, and access to information and people they need to be a good teammate? To complete their own task assignments? To provide and seek backup?
  - Do remote team members have ample contact with the rest of the team (i.e., not isolated but not forced to participate in endless remote meetings)?
- Conduct regular team **debriefs**.
  - Discuss taskwork (what we are doing) as well as "teamwork" (how we're working together) including how working at a distance is helping or hindering team effectiveness.
  - Be prepared to ask specific individuals for their input, as some team members are less likely to speak up during a debrief if they aren't in the room with everyone else.

**Other recommended readings and resources:**

<p>For more on the science of teamwork as described in this talk</p>  <p><a href="http://www.teamsthatwork.com">www.teamsthatwork.com</a></p>	<p>Tannenbaum, S. &amp; Salas, E. (2021). <i>Teams That Work: The Seven Drivers of Team Effectiveness</i>. Oxford University Press. Available at Amazon and other book sellers October 1, 2020.</p> <p><b>ATD Conference Participants can save 30% with promo code <b>ASPROM8</b> directly from Oxford University Press at <a href="http://oup.com/academic">oup.com/academic</a></b></p>
<p>For more details about psychological safety</p>	<p>Edmonson, A.C. (2018). <i>The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth</i>. Wiley.</p>
<p>For a scholarly look at team effectiveness</p>	<p>Mathieu, J.E. et al. (2020). Embracing Complexity: Reviewing the Past Decade of Team Effectiveness Research. <i>Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior</i> Vol. 6:17-46</p>
<p>For an OD consulting toolkit</p>	<p>gOEbase (<a href="http://www.goebase.com">www.goebase.com</a>) contains team effectiveness tools along with hundreds of other Organizational Development (OD) resource. <b>Disclosure:</b> This is a gOE Inc. product.</p>
<p>For tips on Team Debriefing</p>	<p>Reyes, D.L., Tannenbaum, S.I., Salas, E. (2018). Team development: The power of debriefing. <i>People + Strategy</i>, 46-51.</p>

## About gOE, Inc.

**The Group for Organizational Effectiveness, Inc. (gOE).** Since 1987 we have provided consulting and research services and tools to many well-known Fortune 1000 companies, mid-sized corporations, and government organizations including UnitedHealth Group, J&J, GE, BP, The Hartford, Credit Suisse, Crayola, Travelers, Frito Lay, Roche, Wells Fargo, HP, Carnival, Merck, McGraw-Hill, UBS, MetLife, Covidien, Cedars Sinai Health System, Applied Materials, Montefiore Medical Center, Chevron, Medtronic, CNA, Tiffany & Co., Progressive Insurance, MD Anderson, Honeywell, United Airlines, T-Mobile, the U.S Armed Services, NASA, and the Swedish, Australian, and Royal Air Forces. We collaborate with scholars and researchers from various universities to couple thought leadership with practical applications. Our team has published extensively and received awards for both our research and applied work.

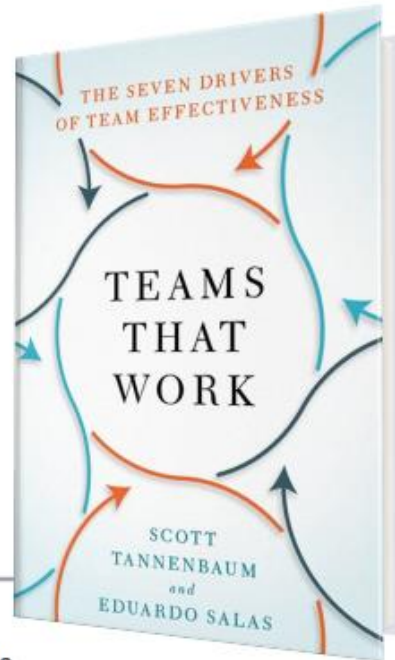
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**Scott Tannenbaum, Ph.D.**  
President  
The Group for Organizational Effectiveness, Inc.  
[scott.tannenbaum@groupOE.com](mailto:scott.tannenbaum@groupOE.com)  
LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/in/stannenbaum/](http://www.linkedin.com/in/stannenbaum/)  
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- Applies the authors' experiences advising a wide range of organizations, from corporate environments to medical, military, and aerospace

**Scott Tannenbaum** has spent over 25 years working with, providing evidence-based advice to, and conducting highly cited research on teams across a vast array of settings and challenges. As the President of the Group for Organizational Effectiveness, he has advised hundreds of organizations globally across every major business sector. He was named a Fellow of the Association for Psychological Science and of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychologists who honored him with their Distinguished Professional Contributions Award.

**Eduardo Salas** is the Allyn R. & Gladys M. Cline Professor and Chair of the Department of Psychological Sciences at Rice University. He is a Past President of the Society for Industrial/Organizational Psychology and the Human Factors & Ergonomics Society, and is a Fellow in numerous scientific societies. He was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award from American Psychological Association.

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