



## Google's Biggest Secret to Team Effectiveness: How do YOU Create Psychological Safety?



**Here's a link to the short article Google recently published about the extensive research they conducted to uncover the secrets to team effectiveness.**

Google spent a great deal of time and resources to find out what creates the most effective teams. The results aren't what they expected. It isn't teams who are comprised of the best and the brightest. It isn't teams with a clear pattern of characteristics. It is ntangibles around group norms that have the biggest impact and psychological safety is the frontrunner of those norms.

**What creates psychological safety for YOU?**



**To create it, you must first define it.**

So give it some thought. What do you need from others to feel safe, free to take risks, free to ask questions and put out crazy ideas.

Being encouraged to think out loud, to dream, to create, to think outside the box, to envision a

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### Here are the top 5 norms of effective teams:

1. **Dependability** – Team members get things done on time and meet expectations.
2. **Structure & Clarity** – High performing teams have clear goals and have well-defined roles within the group.
3. **Meaning** – The work has personal significance to each member.
4. **Impact** – The group believes their work is purposeful and positively impacts the greater good.
5. **Psychological safety** – Everyone is safe to take risks, voice their opinions and ask judgment-free questions. There is a culture where managers create air cover and create safe zones so employees can let down their guard.

And the research showed that **Psychological Safety** stood out from all the rest. So how do you create a culture in your team of psychological safety?

- **Have a team discussion around the topic.** Ask everyone what creates safety for them and allows them to take risks, ask questions and make suggestions? Ask them in a group or ask them separately. Each method has its advantages. Separately, people may be more candid and really tell you what they need. You may also hear from them about the behaviors that are prohibiting them from feeling safe. In a group, everyone will hear the discussion and it can actually help the group think about the culture they want to have and how each of them contributes to the culture.
- **Model the behaviors you want others to demonstrate.** When someone asks a question and another person makes a comment or gesture that is negative, step in and thank the person for the question and talk about why that's an important

different future, to want something more is all good and healthy.

### We are creative beings.

There is an innate desire for more that I believe we were all born with. Remember the old saying, "Necessity is the mother of invention"?

Life itself and everyday circumstances encourage us as humans to look for the next solution or the next idea.



It's why there is a patent office. It's why we have evolved. So why not create the culture of psychological safety that fosters that creativity?

OSHA – Occupational Safety and Health Administration – provides rules for safety in the work place (hard hats, safe working procedures and rules to keep workers safe). If there were an OSHA for workplace culture, what rules would you want there to be?

question to ask. When someone makes a suggestion and the response is negative one way or the other, make a point of saying how important every suggestion is. Negative reactions shut people down and discourage them from contributing in the future. It is often the dumbest or craziest idea in the world that has no chance of succeeding that gives someone else the idea that becomes the real champion of ideas. It's a creative process and all ideas have value and build momentum in the brainstorming process.

- **Talk about the culture you want and why.** When others violate that culture by behaviors that negatively impact others, quietly pull them aside and talk with them and point out how their comment or behavior can negatively impact the team and ask them to respond in ways that are more positive.
- **Reward contributions that sound crazy.** I recently sat beside a sales manager on a plane and we were discussing this topic. He said his company has a CEO who not only comes to their meetings, but facilitates the meeting and asks people to come forth with the craziest ideas they can. He actually tells them that he values the not-so-good ideas more than great ideas because great ideas are things everybody already knows will work, but the not-so-good ideas are the ones that challenge their thinking and cause them to create new products, methods, tactics, etc.
- **Throw out some crazy questions or ideas yourself and watch how people react.** Challenge their thinking. See where the discussion goes and find the value in that discussion and then point out what the team got out of it.
- **Give credit to all contributions – not just the great ones.** Give praise of course for achievement and motivation, but give credit as well to those who contribute in different ways. When you see value coming out of something no one recognized, bring it back around at a future time to show how that




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Will your culture and team environment allow the ideas that don't create echos - the ones that leave the room silent rather than filled with voices jumping to echo in agreement?

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progressed from something crazy, small, insignificant or not a well-liked idea at the time.

- **When others contribute, thank them for the idea.** If it doesn't sound great, ask for more information. Ask how they see it working, why they thought of that or what impact they see it having. They may be thinking more than they're saying. Dig a little deeper.
- **If you shut down ideas that are presented with phrases like, "We tried that before and it didn't work", "that's crazy", "That won't work because", "We'll never get that past the higher-ups", "We don't have the resources for that", etc. then the people who put those ideas out there will stop contributing any ideas.** What if instead, you said something like, "We tried that once – what did we learn from that so we can try it again more successfully?", "I don't see how that will work, so tell me what you're thinking.", "How can we present that idea in a way that upper management will get excited about it?", "How can we get the resources for that?", etc.

**Psychological safety is a group norm – which means the group creates it with their behaviors. It is a work culture issue and if culture is not deliberately created, then you get what you get. Be a leader or team person who deliberately creates good culture by talking about it and modeling it!**

Encouragingly,



Would you like some help to create a work culture that helps everyone succeed.

Contact me and let's have a conversation!

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