

## BUILDING A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE TEAM



Even when a team is assembled from the best and brightest within an organization, there's no guarantee that everyone will work together effectively. Discover the underlying factors involved and the steps to take to overcome them.



## In the Beginning

Building a team requires little more than assembling a group of two or more people and assigning them a common goal. The hard part, regardless of the members involved, is ensuring the team will achieve and even surpass that goal.

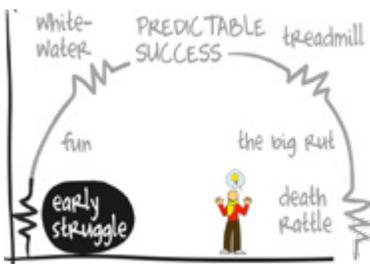
There are countless reasons why teams are formed. From start-up companies to teams created within large corporations, the list is endless. No matter the objective, there are really only two ways the formation occurs. Teams are either constructed, or they come together organically. While the tools put forth here will specifically address teams that form naturally, the principles also apply to constructed teams.

When teams come together for whatever reason, a very interesting thing happens. They typically will mimic the natural stages of growth and decline that businesses do.

## Early Struggle

The first stage of nearly every enterprise is a period of time known as Early Struggle. For an operating business, it is the period when a profitable and sustainable market is being identified. Unfortunately for most businesses, it is a race against time.

The first person present during Early Struggle is the **Visionary**. Quite often, the Visionary has a financial and/or a creative stake in the enterprise. Typical



the visionary leadership style within the first stage of the lifecycle

characteristics of the Visionary include:

- *A long-term rather than short-term mindset*
- *(Often) charismatic*
- *Good communicator*
- *Visual Thinker*
- *Creative*
- *Starter*

At their extreme, Visionaries are manipulative and highly proficient at getting people to see, as well as believe in, their dreams. Interestingly enough, oftentimes the Visionary will not embrace the Visionary moniker, even going so far as to repudiate it.

Successful Visionaries have a profound understanding of their shortcomings, namely their inability to deal with finer details. Affected by “The Shiny Ball Syndrome”, the Visionary is easily distracted by newer good ideas. In order for the Visionary to exit Early Struggle and move on to the second stage, he or she needs to find someone to work with them, a person who can deal with the details and move things forward.

## Fun

An enterprise reaches the second stage known as Fun at the point when a profitable and sustainable market has been located. While the Visionary has brought his or her ideas to life during Early Struggle, crossing over into Fun requires far more action. It requires someone who knows how to get things done. The person in question may not start a business on their own, but they are adept at the granular activities needed to accomplish the Visionary’s goals. Enter the **Operator**.

Complementary to the Visionary, here are some of the characteristics the Operator possesses:

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- *Short-term mindset*
- *Detail-oriented*
- *Action-oriented*
- *(More) literal-minded*
- *Less risk inclined*
- *Finisher*
- *Do-er*



The combination of Visionary and Operator is highly symbiotic, as well as effective. Simply put, the duo gets stuff done. This is exactly why the enterprise becomes fun. The Visionary is pushing his or her ideas and the Operator is making them happen. Success is being achieved directly because of their effectiveness. Each needs the other and they both realize it.

Small start-ups typically consist of one Visionary and one or more Operators, but in larger enterprises it is not unusual to find several Visionaries, and even more Operators. Once this combination of core styles achieves initial success, the next step becomes growth. The problem with growth, however, is that along with it comes complexity.

## Whitewater

Once an enterprise becomes complex, the ability for Visionaries and Operators to improvise their way to success begins to diminish rapidly. This is known as the Whitewater stage.

Whether it's an order that get missed, or an error in scheduling, two things are certain. The business has grown far too complex, and everyone is overwhelmed.

During this organic stage in business development, Visionaries and Operators

typically combat complexity by working harder. Realizing the company's processes need to change, they either hire someone from outside or dedicate a person within the company to become the Processor. Their job: create new processes. Visionaries and Operators may try this themselves, but they are not exactly hardwired to do so.

Processor characteristics include:

- *Short-term thinker*
- *Detail-oriented*
- *Process-oriented*
- *Works relatively slowly*
- *Risk averse*
- *Needs precision*
- *Sustainer*
- *Skeptical*



To the Processor, systems and processes are everything. In fact, if the Processor is brought in after having done this role for another enterprise, they quite often assume that new processes are ALL that's needed for the company to regain proper momentum.

## The Problem with the Triangle

Can you see the potential issues with this new VOP triangle? The Visionary is focused on starting. The Operator is consumed with finishing. And the Processor is primarily interested in sustaining. On paper it looks like the perfect combination, but the reality is the triangle is quite unstable. It is important to know this instability applies to triangles found in both organic and constructed teams.

You've seen how an organic team forms. The Visionaries, Operators, and Processors all come around at the right time. Constructed teams, on the other hand, are put together

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for any number of reasons. The process tends to move quicker, and people are typically recruited based on their knowledge or skill. As a result, a constructed team can consist of a random number of Visionaries, Operators and Processors all showing up at the same time. Regardless of how a team forms, the varying perspectives of these three leadership styles quickly begin to pose issues.

## Activity Levels

*The **Visionary** operates at 30,000 feet. They fly around with grand visions, disseminating them like an eagle swooping from mountain range to mountain range.*

*The **Operator** is down in the valley, on the runway level. They move from one place to another, as the Visionary randomly changes his or her thoughts.*

*The **Processor** works on a subterranean level, putting in the plumbing and wiring that's holding everything together.*

*Are the issues with the VOP triangle becoming any clearer?*



not. Many times, what the Processor is doing is completely hidden from the Visionary, and it starts to cause some major problems.

## The Problem of Perception

Visionaries typically see things moving 7-times faster than Operators do. In other words, a task the Visionary envisions the Operator accomplishing in one hour may actually be something that requires an entire day. On an organic team, the Visionary and Operator learn to work with this issue. The Visionary understands the Operator works slower than he or she does. In turn, the Operator learns how to cut corners and speed things up.

Once the Processor is introduced, however, strange things happen. Because of the nature of the Processor's duties, they tend to work 7-times slower than the Operator. The first issue here is since the Operator is a do-er, he or she simply wants to get things done. The Processor, on the other hand, is fixated on getting things done RIGHT.

The second and even bigger issue is the dynamic between the Visionary and the Processor. Remember, the Visionary sees things moving 7-times faster than the Operator, who sees things moving 7-times faster than the Processor. This means that when the Visionary looks at what the Processor is doing, it seems to move almost 50-times slower than he or she feels it should. You can imagine how easily frustrations build.

## The Problem of Communication

The VOP triangle also causes problems with communication between leaders. Since Visionaries are can-do people who talk to think, they typically start their communications with a "yes" mindset.

## Visibility or Lack Thereof

Despite the difference in activity levels, the Visionary and the Operator on an organic team have already worked together. While they have different strengths and weaknesses, it's important to remember they have a symbiotic and complementary relationship.

However, once the Processor comes into the mix, things get complicated. Processors working on a subterranean level are one level removed from the Operator, who is already one level removed from the Visionary. This means that while the Operator and Visionary are connecting, the Processor and the Visionary are

Processors, on the other hand, typically start with “no.” Let’s face it, this is their job. They are hired to keep things controlled by thinking of everything that can go wrong. They need to be persuaded in their decision-making, and they have to think about as well as process things before they act.

The Operator is stuck in the middle of all this. They don’t start with yes or no. They simply do. All they want is their marching orders and they’re off and running.

## Repairing the Triangle

Before we examine how to fix this, let’s take a brief look at how the idea of the VOP triangle came to be.

Les McKeown, CEO of Predictable Success, became fixated with the idea of team dysfunction over 20 years ago. At the time, Les and his partner were running an incubation business with 13 offices worldwide, and over 100 employees. Their job was to help people grow their businesses.

While the defining vocabulary had yet to exist, Les kept seeing the problematic VOP triangle over and over again. He used every team-building resource he knew, but nothing would fix the problem. Things would seem to get better, but ultimately the same problems returned. This is when Les committed himself to finding the core issues of team ineffectiveness and figuring out a way to fix them. Along his journey, Les found three reasons for team underperformance.

### **1. *Styles, not personality, dictate interactions***

Most team building tries to change perceptions

and personalities, but the truth is it doesn’t work. Core styles dictate approximately seventy percent of team dysfunction. The real problem, however, is that you can’t perform without them. Remove a Processor and most likely you’re going to replace them with another Processor.

Many times all it takes for so-called “personality clashes” to disappear is to explain the triangle model. The reason is simple. It provides a clearer understanding between parties of what each other does and the roles they fill.

### **2. *The better the performer, the more extreme the style and the more acute the problems will be***

This is somewhat self-explanatory. Simply put, the higher the performer the more “out there” they will be, and the more they will clash with the other styles.

### **3. *There is hidden “fit-to-role” tension***

This occurs when you have Processors doing Operator jobs and vice versa. It tends to happen more on constructed teams than ones formed organically, but the common result is a team consisting of very frustrated people.

## Turning the Team Around

So what turns around an underperforming VOP team and puts it on the path to Predictable Success? It’s important to note the following information, as well as the insights you’ve already received, is nobody’s invention. Rather, it is a reflection of Les’ observations of countless teams. And no observation is more important than a team’s addition of a fourth leadership style.

## Meet the Synergist

At a certain point, a team realizes it cannot keep functioning merely with the VOP triangle. Typically, a person or people within the team step up and take on the role of the Synergist.



While there are few natural Synergists, it is a style that can be easily learned and positively utilized.

Synergist characteristics include:

- *Harmonizes*
- *Interprets*
- *Negotiates*
- *Buffers*
- *Synthesizes*

It's worth noting that one does not need to abdicate his or her core style in order to adopt a Synergist style. The better news, however, is that it only takes roughly 1/3 of a team's members moving into a Synergist mindset in order for it to become consistently high performing.

## So, Where Do Synergists Come From?

Typically within organically formed teams, Synergists develop naturally. The first people who move into the Synergist mindset are the Visionaries, as their skillset is one of thinking and communicating. At the same time, many Visionaries have a financial stake in the enterprise, which adds to their motivation.

Processors would be the next group to become

Synergists. They love systems that fix problems, so it fits perfectly with their leadership style.

Operators are usually the last to adopt the Synergist way of thinking, only because their mindset is one of "show me it works" before they believe it.

## 5 Steps To Radically Accelerate The Development Of A Consistently High Performing Team

### ***1. Introduce the VOPS vocabulary and identify individual styles***

This one step can completely turn a team around. Establishing a vocabulary and identifying each of the players may be all it takes to initiate a shift in your team's thinking, putting it on the path toward Predictable Success.

### ***2. Introduce And Reinforce The Enterprise Commitment***

The Enterprise Commitment reads as follows:

"When working in a team or group environment, I will place the interests of the enterprise above my personal interests."

If it sounds simple, it is - as it addresses the core problems of most teams in one sentence. Believe it or not, a steadfast dedication to this commitment, along with following step #1, will fix most team problems and create a shift toward Synergist thinking.

If team problems continue, here are three additional steps to take:

### ***3. Check Your Aggregate Team Style***

What is the makeup of your team as a whole? Are there too many (or not enough) Visionaries, Operators, or Processors? The answer may not

only surprise you, but it may be the key to the shortcomings of your team.

#### 4. Coach Away From Dominant Styles

The styles assessment provided by Predictable Success (at [SynergistQuiz.com](https://SynergistQuiz.com)) is a free test that allows anyone to find out his or her core leadership style. Ultimately, the test will determine a set of scores. If the leading score is higher than 480, it means their style dominates them. Additionally, the individual is so ingrained in that style their tendency is to overlook solutions that lie in other styles. If this is the case, it is recommended to coach people away

from their dominant style.

#### 5. Assess “Fit to Roll”

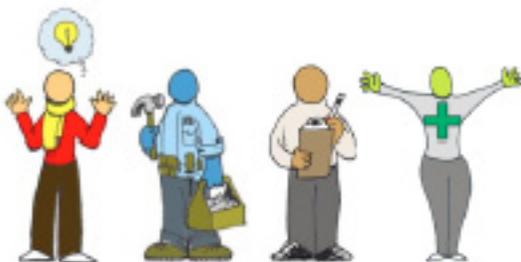
While it may prove to be a delicate subject, it is highly important to make sure people’s roles fit their core styles. Having team members in roles that do not suit them makes for an unhappy, unproductive team.

#### Conclusion

We hope you enjoyed learning about how to build an effective team. These are just the first steps toward achieving enhanced cohesiveness.

To learn how your team can achieve greater productivity consistently, access our Synergize Your Team guide here:

[TAKE ME TO THE PROGRAM DETAILS](#)



*“Only the Synergist can put aside their own agenda and interpret the language of different personalities, capture the best from each person, and put the good of the enterprise ahead of their own ego.”*