



The *Fit to Flow* Framework

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Teams have become central to the work of many organizations to meet the business demands for responsiveness, agility, and speed. Despite their increasing importance, most team leaders struggle to build teams that reach their full performance potential.

Most team development models focus on “becoming a team”, emphasizing cooperation and conformity¹. While collaboration is important to team effectiveness, the reality is that a team can excel at collaboration but still fall far short of delivering on performance results.

Through our work with dozens of teams, we developed a diagnostic assessment that measures the extent to which team practices enable individual team members to perform at their best. When every team member excels, teams reach their top performance potential.

The Talent Optimization Index (TOI™) measures the six team practices impacting team member performance. We tested our assessment tool extensively and found TOI scores linked directly to team performance results.²

The TOI is a powerful diagnostic tool; our goal was the development of an actionable, impactful framework utilizing the TOI insights to focus teams on improving the practices with the greatest ROI.

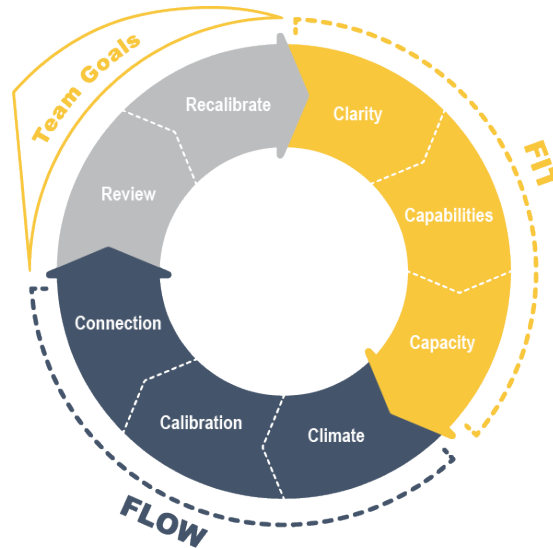
Our experiences and insights working with dozens of teams informed our *Fit to Flow* framework. The framework is sequential; each practice builds on the next one. First, fit together the talents needed to accomplish the team’s work. Then, establish practices for the team to flow talents together.

The Fit to Flow Framework

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Then, establish practices to flow talents together.

Review. Recalibrate. Repeat.



0. Team Goals

A business problem is identified, an innovative solution is envisioned. Business leaders discuss the challenge and decide to assign the work to a team. Far too often, the problem is handed off to a team with the mandate to “fix it”. The team often fails. Sometimes miserably.

While teams can achieve amazing results, they need more than “an idea” of what to do.

There is one critical element of work to be done before applying the framework to build a team that optimizes every talent: Defining Team Goals. This step is Ground Zero.

Business leaders need to address several questions before assembling a team designed to optimize the time, talents, and energy of every team member:

- Why is this work important? What is the expected outcome? What is the impact to the business? What will happen if we do nothing?
- Who are all the key stakeholders? Who will benefit from this outcome? Is there anyone who will not benefit from this outcome?
- Does this challenge require a team of individuals with diverse, complementary talents and capabilities?

The answers to these questions should clearly define the work to be done, the outcomes and measures of success. From this information, the team sponsor and team leader can define the talent capabilities needed and resources required to achieve the goal.

First, Fit the Talents Together

Teams that optimize every talent operate in ways that are like a sports team. Each team member plays the position that leverages their strengths and together, team players leverage each other to play their best game. The coach supports, guides, mentors, and develops individual team members and the entire team.



Applying the Fit to Flow Framework, the Team Leader needs to build a diverse, dedicated team of individuals with the time, energy, and complementary talents required to accomplish the work of the team.

The Team Leader meets with each prospective team member to discuss the work of the team and, together, the Team Leader and the individual assess their “fit” to the team goals. This discussion focuses on Clarity, Capabilities, and Capacity.



Clarity

First, the Team Leader needs to describe the team’s goal – the “what”, “how”, and “why”. The prospective team member is asked about their personal view of the work required and the value the team will create. If the individual views the goal as important and impactful work, the conversation continues.



Capabilities

The Team Leader and prospective team member discuss the critical talents and capabilities required to achieve the goal and how the individual’s capabilities “fit”. Is this work a strong match with the individual’s strengths and abilities?



Capacity

The Team Leader needs to clearly articulate the time required of the prospective team member so that the individual can assess their capacity to participate fully. Team members that cannot devote the time and energy required, negatively impact the productivity and performance of every team member.

Assembling the Team

The Team Leader selects team members with the right balance of capabilities and complementary talents to accomplish the work of the team. The key is making sure that each person selected knows why they have been chosen, how they will add unique value, and has the capacity to participate fully.

Then, Establish Practices to Flow Talents Together

Climate, Calibration, and Connection are the team practices that enable the team to flow talents together.



Climate

Climate is the “how” of accomplishing the team goals. The team members learn about each other’s capabilities and understand why each person is a part of the team. Team members learn which talent capabilities complement their own strengths and learn how to tap into those complementary talents to achieve more impactful results.



Calibration

Calibration is the “what” of accomplishing the work of the team. Team members align on the team’s goals, the plan of work, progress measures and team performance metrics. Individuals learn how to track their own productivity, obstacles, and contributions. The cadence for check-ins and reviews is established.



Connectedness

The team establishes the processes, technology, and tools to share information effectively within the team and with their networks outside of the team.

Review, Recalibrate, Repeat

The foundation of the Fit to Flow framework is the regular cadence of progress reviews. The team recalibrates and rebalances the time and energy of talents, adapting to changing priorities and resource demands throughout the life of the team.

Weekly Review The team reviews how productive they have been, the speed in which they are getting the information they need from resources outside of the team, and time wasters, such as rework or redundancies. Each individual team member assesses their productivity and value of their contributions as well as their personal time wasters and blockers.

Recalibrate The recalibration meeting is used to address gaps, obstacles, and determine how best to re-balance and re-align team resources. The Team Sponsor attends the recalibration meeting as well to review the team’s progress, obstacles, and blockers. The Team Sponsor also communicates any changes in stakeholder needs and supports the team in re-prioritizing the work to be done.

The weekly re-calibration meeting also addresses changes in team members; as team members enter or exit the team, the time, talents, and energy of all team members is reassessed and re-aligned

Repeat The Team Leader may repeat the “Fit to Flow” steps when teams that undergo significant shifts in priorities, resources, or team members.

We have found that administering the Talent Optimization Index assessment is most effective after the team has conducted a few Review/Recalibrate/Repeat cycles.

Measuring the Team's Talent Optimization Index

Teams need to respond to continuous changes in the business environment. Today's teams are dynamic, diverse, dispersed and rely on networks of other teams to achieve their full performance potential.

Many teams get off to a great start, then seem to get "stuck" – or absorb so many changes they may feel like they are back to "square one". By measuring how every team member is doing at regular intervals with The Talent Optimization Index (TOI™), teams can proactively address obstacles before they become blockers to individual and team success.

Each individual team member completes the TOI assessment, describing how the team's practices are impacting their time, talents, and energy. The Team's Talent Optimization Index score is calculated by combining the scores of the individual team members.

Team leaders and team members receive a report of the team's overall average scores on the TOI factors and individual team member's scores (which are reported anonymously).

Each team member receives their own report, benchmarked against the average scores for the team, with actionable feedback supporting ongoing learning and growth.

To learn more about the Talent Optimization Index visit our website: www.optimizingeverytalent.com

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References

1. Tuckman, B. (1965). Developmental sequence in small groups. *Psychological Bulletin*, 63, 384-399.
2. Wagner, M. (2021). Development of the Talent Optimization Index (TOI™): Methodology, Findings, Validation and Next Steps. *Optimizing Talent, LLC*.