

Douglas Miller

brilliant

Teams

What to know, do
and say to make
a brilliant team

 2nd Edition



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Douglas Miller

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About the author

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Brilliant Teams is his sixth book.

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Introduction

We have two hands. One is for helping ourselves and the other is for helping others.

Audrey Hepburn

Any organisation – a business, a not-for-profit ‘enterprise’, a sports team or a club – depends on great teamwork for its success. It is at that moment – the moment of ‘success’ – when we can truly say we were, or are, a ‘brilliant’ team. This book shows how you generate high-performance, results-focused, successful teams no matter what environment you operate in. Not only does it show how to grow brilliant teams but how you can play your part.

The word ‘team’ is often misused. When people use the word ‘team’ what they really mean is a collection of individuals or a working group or party. Think of the sports team near to relegation, underperforming and less than the sum of its individual parts. The manager announces the ‘team’ for the next game. What the manager is actually announcing is a group of individuals who he or she hopes might become a team.

You are probably working in a team of some kind right now. But are you really a team? Is there something missing? Do you have a gut feeling that you could achieve more but are not sure how? Are you just ‘treading water’ rather than stretching out? If you feel any or all of these things apply to you and your group, and you want your group to become a great team, then this book can help you.

This is a book that will help you and your team be better regardless of whether you lead the team or are a team member.

The aspiration – being a brilliant team

So, who *doesn't* work in a team? Teams are the beating heart of any successful organisation and everyone who works in them. But teams, like people, come in many different shapes and forms and make differing demands

on the people that work in them. The nature of the work that the team undertakes will affect the way in which individuals in those teams

there are 10 universal factors that apply to almost any team

need to operate. However, there are 10 universal factors that apply to almost any team in any situation and which, if they are followed, can help you become a brilliant team.

Your team will become brilliant when you:

- 1 Commit to a shared, agreed goal – the desired ‘result’.
- 2 Are clear what the team has to do to achieve the ‘result’.
- 3 Have a shared desire to overcome problems and challenges.
- 4 Understand how the team relates to the world beyond.
- 5 Maximise opportunities.
- 6 Create a culture of mutually beneficial feedback – so that performance standards get systematically raised.
- 7 Learn and develop as a team – so that performance standards get raised.
- 8 Achieve more as an individual than you could if you were acting alone.
- 9 Get the ‘results’ the team desires.
- 10 Don’t sit back when the team achieves its goals – the team moves on to the next goal.

If you aspire to be part of a brilliant team then these 10 factors will help you to do so. This book will help you and your team colleagues to meet your collective aspiration.

Why be part of a brilliant team?

Imagine that you decide to look for another job. You trawl through the internet, newspapers and magazines for ads that interest you. You notice one thing that is common to all of them. The phrases ‘good team worker’ or ‘good team player’ are the common currency of nearly all job advertisements. But while a prospective employer wants great team workers, nearly all of us rightly ask the ‘*What’s in it for me?*’ question. In fact there is a lot ‘in it for you’. Being part of a brilliant team has fantastic benefits for you personally:

- Brilliant teams are successful teams – they deliver results. Being associated with success is so much more exciting than failure or mediocrity.
- Brilliant teams form the bedrock of any successful organisation. Without brilliant teams the organisation rapidly becomes far less than the sum of its parts and a soul-destroying place to work. Sadly many people accept this as a reality of working life for many years when it doesn’t need to be that way at all.
- Brilliant teams help you as a team member to develop and grow as a person and a performer.
- Brilliant teams help you to do so much more than you ever could alone.
- Brilliant teams maximise the potential of all individuals – including you.
- Brilliant teams can provide the essential energy and support for your own ideas.

- Brilliant teams make the working day fly by. Bad working atmospheres create long, depressing days. Great team environments create fast-moving, fun, productive places to work. Being part of a brilliant team opens up the possibility that you might just look forward to the alarm clock going off in the morning.

How is this book structured?

This book comes in two parts. Part 1: How to be a brilliant team examines the universal factors involved in building a brilliant team such as team composition, team leadership, generating goals and having dynamic, productive meetings.

In many places in this book the emphasis is firmly on you, the team member, and the part you can play in building a brilliant team. What are the personal qualities and approaches required from individual team members to make teams succeed? Chapter 1: It starts with YOU is the starting point for the answers to this question. However, the book will often also talk to you collectively as a team and how you can collaborate to create a great team. Chapter 5: Setting team goals is a good example of this.

While all brilliant teams share some universal characteristics that take them from not so good to good to great, there are also certain characteristics that will propel specialist teams in this same positive direction. First, all organisations have various kinds of specialist teams operating within them. Second, every team has to be adaptable: at different times your team at work or in your leisure pursuit may have to be creative, take a project-based approach or adapt when the team is dispersed. You may need to be all of these things at the same time. So at different times your own team will need to be adaptable in its working practices and as team players you, as individuals, need to show flexibility of approach.

every team has to be adaptable

Part 2: Brilliant team types offers advice for teams doing particular kinds of work across three shorter chapters:

- Chapter 10: Creative and problem-solving teams – where a more creative approach is required from a team to drive the organisation forward or to solve particular, perhaps long-standing, problems.
- Chapter 11: Project teams – where a team is working on a specific ‘one-off’ piece of work.
- Chapter 12: Remote teams – where the team and team members are located away from the central ‘hub’. Sales teams and teams operating internationally are such examples.

Team working ‘zeitgeist’

Studies about what makes great teams, alongside technological advances, are changing the ways teams operate. These changes have influenced the ‘tone’ of this book. The book acknowledges that team members are increasingly empowered to take the initiative, make decisions and communicate vertically and horizontally without going through approved channels. Over the past 10–15 years the following trends have become clear:

- Technological advances are changing communication methods in the team. Both in America and Europe, for example, social networking is increasingly used as a way to problem solve among team members. Traditionally those team members may have gone to their manager or team leader for advice. Now they bypass the leader.
- The ‘net gen’ (born after 1977) communicate in ways that more senior managers may not understand. This means that this group – and you may be one of them – have to ‘self-organise’ to get the job done.

- It's recognised that we respond best to team goals when we have input into their setting. This has been the case for many years but it has taken time for senior management to learn the benefits of 'letting go'.
- The breaking down of organisational hierarchies has meant that teams can make decisions quicker and therefore act faster.
- Teams are often 'self-managed' – less likely to be reporting upwards through a rigid hierarchical structure. They have a greater degree of autonomy than ever before.
- Even if team members work at different levels in an organisation they will often meet as equals. Everyone's views and opinions are lent equal weight.

While some of you may not recognise this in your own team – '*Who are you trying to kid Doug!*' – many of you will at least be moving in these directions if you look at where you were say 10 years ago. Chapter 12: Remote teams is the last chapter of this book and is designed to help you if you are working in teams that are adopting these twenty-first century approaches.

Great people = Great team?

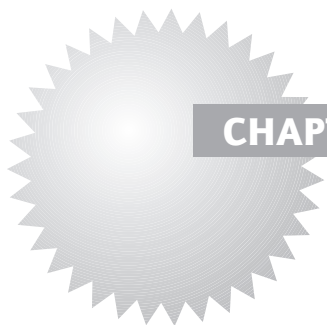
It happens a lot in music and sport. In the 1970s great individual rock musicians came together to form 'supergroups' but the end result was self-indulgent, bloated and formulaic music. In sports such as football (global version) we see managers being thrown lots of money by indulgent club owners and signing great players but the end result is frequently not the desired one. There are, of course, many exceptions to this. And it works the other way too. Plenty of sports teams with few outstanding players have performed beyond the level of the individual talents of the team, as though one plus one can make three. And in music too we see moderate musicians combining to produce a stellar sound.

So, do we create a brilliant team by bringing the best people together? There is plenty of evidence to suggest it is not quite as simple as that. The best may mean the brightest, the most naturally talented and/or those that have met with great success in the past. But somehow ‘the best’ come together and seem not to match up to or exceed the sum of the parts. It’s a bit like baking a cake where the best ingredients are assembled and yet the end product seems flat and uninspiring.

Your team leader (perhaps that person is you) has a responsibility to get the best out of the team, but in the modern world we have moved a long way from this responsibility being in the hands of one person. That is why the first section of the first

your team leader has a responsibility to get the best out of the team

chapter of this book doesn’t look at team working at all but at the attitude and energy you personally bring to the team. A brilliant team starts with *you*.



CHAPTER 3

What's in a
brilliant team?

A team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.

Katzenbach and Smith, *The Wisdom of Teams*

If you are to be part of a brilliant team you need to be clear about the role you perform in delivering team goals. You also need to be clear about, and value, the roles that other team members are performing. This chapter is divided into four sections that will help you and your team colleagues do this. These are:

- 1 The core roles that need to be performed in any successful team – *Team roles*.
- 2 How you can perform your ‘role’ better – *You and your team role*.
- 3 How you can work better with team members who are performing particular roles – *Working with other ‘roles’*.
- 4 A short case study that illustrates how clearly defined roles can deliver a brilliant team performance – *Team roles and brilliant performance*.

Team roles

brilliant teams are
not created in
laboratories

Brilliant teams are not created in laboratories and just occasionally they come together by chance. But putting some thought into what roles the team needs to perform makes ‘chance’

redundant. Lots of research has been put into what it takes to build a brilliant team. Perhaps one of the best attempts to assess team roles was by business thinker and writer Peter Honey. He came up with four

universal roles that he felt needed to be performed in a successful team. The four are:

- 1 Leaders.
- 2 Doers.
- 3 Thinkers.
- 4 Carers.

You may want to add to this list by thinking of roles that relate to the individual circumstances of your own team. You could also add a fifth role – ‘achievers’ – because none of the roles above, in themselves, guarantees achievement. However, I feel that all four of these roles have achievement written into their DNA if the roles are performed well, in that a high-performing team needs all of the roles to be performed to succeed. The doers may be the obvious achievers but there is no guarantee that they ‘do’ the right thing.

Although Peter Honey has expanded and amended his initial four roles, and other thinkers such as Meredith Belbin have developed their own, these four are a very sensible base point from which to start.



brilliant definitions

Here are the definitions of these four critical roles.

Leader

Leaders create vision, direction and purpose and are decisive when they need to be. The leader or leaders in the team may well not just be the designated leader (the manager of the group) – others may perform leadership roles. Team leadership is covered in the next chapter of this book.

Doer

The doers are committed to action. They see the ways to do things first before considering the pitfalls (if they consider the pitfalls at all). This positive spirit can be infectious. When the team sees someone in the team getting things done, team members get inspired to follow, although for others it has the opposite effect (reminding them, so they erroneously believe, of their own inadequacies).

The 'can do, will do' people are essential if the team is going to achieve anything. The team relies on them to run with the team's ideas. So doers get stuff done. However, I believe there is a subcategory of 'doer' – achiever. Doers get stuff done but achievers get the right stuff done.

Thinker

The thinkers are the idea generators and the potential problem solvers in the team. They may be voluble but it is more likely that they are quiet and contemplative. The thinkers can act like a 'team helicopter', hovering above a situation, making an assessment of that situation and considering a range of possible alternatives to deal with it. They often also act as a valuable counterweight to the energetic doers.

Carer

The carers generate team cohesion through growing strong relationships within the team. The carer's role is often a subtle,

less obvious one. But it is a critical one. Teams need emotional glue – a bind that keeps them together through the challenges, the conflicts, the disagreements and the stresses of day-to-day working.

Because the carers are concerned with relationships they are also essential in building the bonds that must exist between the team and those that the team serves. This role is so important because all teams have a purpose that transcends an internal function.

Human beings are complex. Teams rightly identify the need to have ideas and put those ideas into action. But when human beings are involved things are not as straightforward as this. The 'carers' are able to understand the complexity of interpersonal relationships and get to the core of what makes a harmonious working environment.

You, the team and team roles

This section looks first at you and the role or roles you perform ('What am I?') and then at team roles from the perspective of the team as a whole ('What's in a team?').

What am I?

It is likely that you are already thinking about the role you perform in your team. Leader, doer, thinker or carer? Perhaps you are saying to yourself that you perform more than one of those roles regularly? Or the role you perform depends on the nature of the work being done. As you consider these roles in your own work you may find the following points useful.

More than one role?

You are unlikely to perform one of these roles to the exclusion of the others. If you were to allocate 100 points across the four roles, as you assess your work in the team in its totality, how many would you allocate to each of them?

Can I offer more?

Widen the range of what you can offer to the team. You probably have a disposition to perform a particular role but in certain situations you may well assume other roles too.

What have I done in the past?

Think about teams you have been part of in the past and consider the roles you have performed in those teams. Use the four as a base point but do expand on them for your own purposes. Getting an idea about how you respond in different circumstances can be useful in helping you to understand what performance roles you might take on as the team undertakes its work.

'I am as I am'

You may be performing a particular role because you or others have assumed that you have a particular character trait. For example, you may be a quieter, more reflective type and therefore behave according to that self-perception in a team environment. But there are plenty of 'quiet achievers' around –

there are plenty of 'quiet achievers' around

people who go about the team's business with the minimum of fuss and get the job done. Challenge the assumptions that you and others may be making about yourself.

Room for growth

The roles of the team should be based on the skills and capabilities of team members. But capabilities in this case can also refer to 'capabilities yet to be developed'. You can learn to think better just as you can learn to lead and learn to develop stronger relationships. So even though the history lesson says you tend to perform a particular role within a team, do not limit yourself for ever to that role.

What's in a team?

This section looks at roles in the team as a whole rather than your own individual roles.



brilliant tip

To help you think about how these roles apply, take a team with which you are familiar but not a part of – a sports team you support, a society perhaps or a team at work in another section or department. Who performs the four key roles in those teams? (Note: don't make the assumption that the team manager/co-ordinator performs the leadership role all of the time – see the next chapter.) Does the team perform well? If it doesn't is it because one of the four key roles isn't being performed well? If the team is a good one what can you learn from the way they work?

Assumption challenging

You cannot always make assumptions that certain people will take up certain roles because they normally do. For example, there are plenty of doers who get on with the job but who seem to become paralysed when a high-pressure or crisis situation develops. It may well be that in a crisis other members of the team emerge who seem able to get stuff done when the crisis situation demands it. Don't therefore underestimate the capacity of others in the team to perform in ways that pleasantly surprise you.

'Role dumping'

Saying 'Ed is always great in a crisis' is not particularly fair on the 'doer' Ed if all Ed gets to deal with are serious problems. Ed may quite like this flattery for a while but may begin to wonder why he is seen only as a crisis problem solver. Just as Ed needs to grow into other areas of the team's work, other people in the team need to be able to operate in Ed's traditional territory too. Remember the gruesome 'London Bus' scenario: 'What would we do if Ed fell under a London bus tomorrow?'

Team balance

If your team isn't working as it should be, the reasons may be complex – Chapter 9 refers to a number of key reasons why teams can fail. However, it may just be because the functions associated with these four core roles are not being performed. Perhaps team harmony is not as it should be because there is no one assuming that caring role. Maybe the team is stagnating because not enough new ideas are coming out. Maybe your meetings are great talking shops but no one really does anything afterwards (very common). With those common problems comes a solution – serious consideration of the 'balance' of the team and the roles that need to be performed to create that balance. Do not underestimate them.

You and your team role

This section covers three of the four roles (doer, thinker and carer) and is devised to help you perform each of these roles better. The fourth role, leader, is covered in Chapter 4.

When you are a 'doer'

Does it deliver the team goal?

Make the connection between what you are doing and what the team is trying to do. Random actions can be damaging. Action that directly connects to the goals of the team gets the results the team desires. Getting stuff done is not the same as getting the right stuff done.

random actions can
be damaging

Learning to pace yourself

It can be frustrating when others do not operate at the same speed as you. Sometimes that frustration may be justified, but do ask if they are offering an invaluable counterweight to your own ill-considered haste.

**brilliant tip**

Festina lente or 'make haste slowly' was the old mantra of the Fabian Society in the nineteenth century. Sometimes we need to slow down to let people or events catch up with us.

Sharing the credit

Doers are the people who may get more credit than the rest of the team because they are the obvious achievers in the eyes of others. Those reading this who have the doer's disposition must be prepared to share the credit – even if you are in the limelight. Both the team members and the team's leader should value the contribution of all team members. The doers didn't do it all by themselves.

Ask for help

Because 'doers' are associated with action and activity they may not admit they are struggling. There is no prize for heroic failure when the help others could have given was not asked for or utilised. Sometimes doers need to suppress ego if it means that the job is going to get done.

*When you are a 'thinker'**Make a contribution*

Potential contributions to team discussions that remain in your head are pointless. Be prepared to make a contribution. If you don't value your thoughts and ideas it is not reasonable to expect others to do so.

Be positive in your contribution

Thinkers are also good problem forecasters and this can be a valuable defence mechanism against ill thought out action

(often initiated by the doers). But you do need to strike a balance between sounding out warnings and killing off the energy and vitality in the team. Saying 'we can't do this because' all the time sucks the life out of the team. While there are bad ideas and actions that should be avoided you may often find that, on closer inspection, it is only 20 per cent of an idea that needs to be tweaked to make it workable rather than just confining an idea or suggestion to the dustbin.

Use your 'thinker' skills to make refinements rather than dustbin confinements.

Welcome the challengers

Don't be put off because others disagree with your thoughts and ideas. Ideas become stronger with rigorous debate.

Learn to collaborate

If you feel that your thoughts and ideas might meet resistance seek out possible allies first. Perhaps get others in the team to introduce your ideas first so that the team sees a wider base of support.

When you are a 'carer'

You are the 'glue'

You provide the emotional glue of the team – recognising the value of strong relationships within the team and cementing them. You repair relationships and bonds. You recognise that a harmonious team is a healthy team.

Conflict can be good

As a 'carer' you will have a disposition to ease conflict. However, recognise too that managed conflict and disagreement is a necessary instrument of deeper insight and ultimately change. The key here is to be happy with disagreement but not with a disagreeable approach that others may use when they disagree.

Use your ‘emotional intelligence’

<hr/> <p>use the skills that come naturally to you</p> <hr/>	<p>Use the skills that come naturally to you – mediation, empathy, listening and questioning, for example – to ease personality clashes, to listen to team members with problems and to repair long-standing wounds in the team. These skills come under the umbrella of what we call ‘emotional intelligence’ – see Chapter 2.</p>
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Working with other ‘roles’

Working with ‘doers’

These are some of the challenges that doers in the team *may* present to the rest of the team. Do not assume this about doers *per se*. Plenty of doers focus and channel their actions clearly and directly. These are some of the things that *some* doers can be inclined to do *some* of the time. Certainly not all doers – and certainly not all of the time either.

Keep the doers focused

- *The challenge:* While the doers get things done, do they get the right things done? Are they like the pumped up balloon which, when its gas gets released, fires randomly around the room and then expires on the floor? Or, the driver of the car who keeps driving even when they don’t know where they are heading and haven’t got a map?
- *A solution:* Make sure the team has clear goals and objectives that doers understand, agree with and can act on. This is not just the role of the designated team leader. We all have a responsibility to keep the ‘rightness’ of our direction.

The boring stuff needs to be done too!

- *The challenge:* Doers don’t necessarily like bureaucracy. This can be good because they have a mindset that seeks to look

at breaking bureaucratic systems. But it can be counter-productive if critical 'process-based' work is being missed. Safety and legality are two such examples.

- *A solution:* There are, of course, plenty of action people who recognise the need for systems and procedures. But there are plenty who aren't the best at the administrative side of things. In this situation the team needs to take an important call. Will it stunt the energy of the doers to push them into a more procedural direction? Do we have people in the team who can and are willing to pick up the administrative shortfall?

Everyone in the team needs to understand where the administrative/procedural rules can be stretched a little and where the rules must be followed to the letter. As mentioned earlier, safety and legality cannot be violated and neither can business ethics and morality.

Keep the doers flexible

- *The challenge:* The doers can be inflexible and see their way as the only way. They go ahead and do it anyway without considering the possibility that there are alternatives or that sometimes to 'make haste slowly' is best.
- *A solution:* Team meetings should contain rigorous debate and a clear think through of the key issues before actions are *agreed*. If you feel that the team is not discussing the issues properly you can take on the role of challenger – though this must be done non-confrontationally.

Keep the doers active

- *The challenge:* Doers are active people and may create activity where none exists. This includes starting fires so that they can get busy putting them out.
- *Some solutions:* Doers need action to keep them interested. Keep the doers active, keep their horizons broad, keep their goals challenging. Doers like to be stretched. But be sure

that the actions of the doers are in line with the goals of the team. Are the doers clear about where they have freedom to act and where they need to act in a more controlled manner?

Doers often do stuff even if nobody is watching anyway.

This is great (as long as the actions are not destructive) – it creates a sense of energy and vitality round the team.

Doers can be terrific team ambassadors because they are high profile – they are your tendrils out into the world beyond the team. But be sure that what the doers are saying and doing are the things that the team wants the doers to be saying and doing.

Working with 'thinkers'

Opening up the thinkers

- *The challenge:* Thinkers may 'live in their head' and may therefore not be as forthcoming with their views as others in the team. Sometimes quieter team members do not get heard. Their quietness is assumed to mean they have nothing to offer. You need to open up the thinkers.
- *A solution:* Encourage the quiet – they may have insights that others have not considered. It is tempting to say that the thinkers are not being held back in your team, but how do you know?

Rigorous debate

- *The challenge:* Thinkers can however be the opposite – dominating, willing their views on the team, perhaps even taking an aggressive rather than assertive approach when they feel others aren't sharing the same enthusiasm for their thoughts.
- *A solution:* In this situation, counter-argument, rigorous talking through of ideas and getting a variety of perspectives

without quelling the energy of the dominating ideas people is key. Above all, those who are providing a counterweight to the dominant thinkers should keep their cool.

Thinking too much

- *The challenge:* Thinkers are often good at seeing ‘the bigger picture’. They can take a helicopter view of what is really going on – something they share with good leaders. However, to add a bit of healthy contradiction here, some thinkers can get locked too far into the opposite of this – the minutiae – and as a consequence struggle to break out of a limited perspective.
- *A solution:* Where analysis paralyses team momentum it is incumbent on other team members to emphasise the need for action. At some point, analysis has to stop and action begin. In the final analysis, action of any kind – within reason – will usually be better than team inertia. Analysis can often mean that we talk ourselves out of doing the right thing as well as the wrong thing.

Working with ‘carers’

As carers are likely to be the least-valued team members this section emphasises the importance of this role.

Listen to the carers

Because ‘carers’ are multi-sensory they are a good conduit to the outside world. They can intuit that relations between the team and others (with customers, for example) are not as good as they could be and are able to provide an early-warning system. Are you listening to them?

A life without the carers

If you need convincing about the value of the carers, think about the ‘carers’ in your team or in teams you have worked

in previously. What might the team have looked like if they weren't there? What would relationships have been like? Would it have been as enjoyable? Would team productivity have suffered?

Team well-being

Of all the roles this is the one that is the most underestimated (being seen by some as a bit 'soft and fluffy'). This role has the same value as the others, but it is tempting to say that 'ideas' (thinkers) and 'action' (doers) are more important because they are more tangible. The carer's role is tough to perform but essential to the well-being of the team.

Team roles and brilliant performance



brilliant example

Frankie, George, Christian, Kevin and Peter worked the hardest. Frankie would start the rolling climbs, setting a strong tempo and dropping riders. When Frankie got tired, George would pull and a few more riders would fall by the wayside, unable to keep our pace. Then came Tyler who would pick up the pace, dropping even more of our competitors. Finally, I would be left with Kevin, pulling me through the steep. In that way we whittled down the field.

Lance Armstrong, *It's Not About the Bike*

This chapter has looked at the four universal team roles. Teams also need a blend of skills based on the more specific capabilities of each team member that allow them to get the work of the team done. In the quote above the great cyclist Lance Armstrong was able to express what it was the team did to help him to the top of the toughest mountains in Le Tour de France and to ultimate victory (this writer reserves judgement on the 'legalities' connected with the performance of some of the team members!). He focused on the efforts of his team mates – 'les

domestiques' – and the roles they had to perform to propel him to the top. Their roles were defined by the skills and capabilities that each rider offered to the team.

In team endurance sports it is known that the 'front-runner' – in this case the lead cyclist – has to work harder than the rest to keep the pace up. Frankie Andreu, a sprinter by inclination, was the man whose skills were most suited to making the early surge through, as Armstrong says, setting the 'strong tempo'. The competitor riders least suited to climbing would soon be dropped. When Andreu got tired (and sprinters generally don't have a lot of stamina) George Hincapie would take over. Having not had to lead the team in the early stages he would have a bit in reserve, as would the next rider to take over at the front after Hincapie, Tyler Hamilton. Kevin Livingstone was usually the last rider with Armstrong as he had the best 'engine' for the latter part of the descent when the field was scattered. And then, finally, if everything had gone to plan, as it usually did, Armstrong would be where he wanted to be – at or as near to the front as he needed to be.

What can your team learn from the above example?

- The team was absolutely clear on its goal.
- It decided what roles needed to be performed to help reach its goal.
- It allocated these roles according to the skills and capabilities of team members.
- Team members were absolutely clear on what their role was in delivering a world-class team performance.
- As Armstrong himself makes clear in his book, much of this was done as a collaborative process between team members and with the input of the team's manager (Johan Bruyneel) who was always able to look at the bigger picture – placing what they were doing in the overall context of the race.

In high-performing teams, team members are able to perform a variety of roles. Perhaps the very best teams bring together a group of people who are able to do, think and care about the team and its activities. And, as we will see in the next chapter, high-performing teams need more than one leader. The team captain in Armstrong's team was not actually Armstrong.

high-performing teams
need more than one
leader

Neither was it the team's manager. It was the veteran sprinter Frankie Andreu – the man who got them started on the steep ascents where 'Le Tour' is usually won and lost. He set the tempo by which the rest of the team had to follow.

Goal scoring

Once a team goal has been decided and agreed, your team needs to consider what skills are needed within the team to help it realise its goals. In the Lance Armstrong example there was the need for sprinters, climbers, front-runners and cyclists who could pedal a relentless hard pace for a period of time (but not the whole race).

Once the required skills have been assessed teams then need to think about where the gaps lie, and if they can they need to fill them: What capabilities do we have and what do we need?

Questions such as these build up into a four-stage questioning process that will help the team get the right balance of skills it needs to reach its goals:

- 1 What skills do we need to reach the goal?
- 2 What are the existing skills within the team?
- 3 Is there a skills gap and if so how can we fill the gap?
- 4 Do we have 'back-up' in case of absence, illness or below-par performance from a team member?

**brilliant tip**

Teams are far more fluid in organisations than they were say 20 or 30 years ago. Where your team is working on a specific project, don't be afraid to look beyond the team for certain skills and capabilities if the requisite knowledge and skills are missing in the team.

Teams operate on dangerous ground when they have knowledge and skills in the hands of only one person. Every opportunity should be taken to share knowledge and skills (see Chapter 2).

**brilliant recap**

Here are five key points that neatly summarise this chapter:

- 1 Brilliant teams have a combination of core roles performed by the team members – leader, doer (with added 'achiever' thinker, carer).
- 2 Consider the role or roles that come most naturally to you in your team and ask what the team is looking for from you in that role.
- 3 Learn to value the roles that others perform and encourage and support them while they do this.
- 4 Recognise that a number of other roles (beyond the four identified) need to be performed by the team that will be dependent on the nature of the work being done by the team. Be sure what those roles are in your team and who is performing them. These will be based on the skills of each team member.
- 5 These additional roles should be built around the specific goals that the team has set.

This chapter has looked at three of the four key roles that Peter Honey suggested needed to be filled in a successful team. The fourth role, the leader, will be the subject of the next chapter. The best leaders may have the characteristics of the doer, thinker and carer within them, and where they don't they need to have the ability to recognise the need for those roles to be performed within the team and to champion those who do so. But, of course, it shouldn't just be leaders who do this. As a team member you should recognise the value that everyone who performs a role brings to the team if they perform it well and particularly when they offer something you don't.