

# Self-Correcting Teams

Teams that are able to act independently allow leaders to reach their highest levels of excellence. **BY SARAH LEVITT**

**H**igh-performing teams are over-rated. Rather, they're given more due than they're worth. Because if you're running a company, a region or a business unit, you don't need a high-performing team. You need a self-correcting team.

Why? Because high performance is the bare minimum for the kind of success that organizations need in today's business climate. High performance is baseline. And if you truly want to be competitive in your market, you need more than baseline.

There are four key components to a self-correcting team, described below. When a leader has them in place, he or she is able to hold and maintain a strategic focus for the future. Without them, that's unlikely to happen.

**A self-correcting team functions well without you.** You are a reference point and resource, a safety net and a guide. They know when they need to come to you, when there's a red flag for key deliverables and milestones that need your input.

You are able to delegate substantial responsibility to members of the team, and they're able to execute on those deliverables. They relieve you of matters that keep you in the weeds. They report in to you on the matters that you need to be availed of, and they keep you out of those that you don't.

**There is little infighting on a self-correcting team.** Healthy competitiveness? Yes. But you are not playing referee. That means you're not spending your time settling disputes or squabbles or territorialism. There aren't mini-silos that interrupt execution and delivery on a self-correcting team.

Instead, the team members are able to focus on their top priorities, and you're able to focus on the most important key

strategic initiatives that require your vision and thought. And if you're not playing referee, you can put more of your time and attention where it matters.

**A self-correcting team anticipates problems and makes critical decisions within the scope of their responsibilities and roles.** Members know what the key mile markers



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are for their responsibilities, and they're able to look down the road and not just right in front of them.

They're able to see problems before there's a derailment, thereby keeping the train on the tracks. If they see a problem that they need your input on, they know it and they'll involve you. They think and act strategically and rather than focusing on one fire after another. And they're able to learn on the go so that the same problems don't continue to present a challenge.

**Effective teams use discretion and judgment. They have both the capacity and**

**the freedom to think and problem solve.** Self-correcting teams understand their parameters, roles and responsibilities and have guidelines. So they're trusted, by you and by those who interact with them.

That means that they make good decisions with or without you, the kind of decisions you would want made in your absence. That gives both the self-correcting team and you, as their leader, the freedom to generate new ideas and innovations, find solutions to problems that might not have been thought of before, and provide clients and customers with great products and great service.

As their leader, you don't have to wade into the deep end every time there's a problem. Your self-correcting team has the discretion and good judgment to figure things out. Their freedom to use their discretion gives you freedom to use yours for the critical issues that do require your involvement.

If you don't have a self-correcting team, you can't be the visionary, strategic leader that your organization needs. A self-correcting team liberates you.

You might think that there simply isn't time to build a self-correcting team with all that's on your plate, that you don't have the bandwidth to put the right people in the right seats, to delegate effectively, to establish clear guidelines and guardrails for your team members.

But the better question might be how will your time be used if you don't?



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