THE TEAMWORKING POCKETBOOK

3rd Edition
Ian Fleming

Drawings by Phil Hailstone

"Clears the fog in team dynamics and makes teamwork enjoyable as well as essential."
Director of Leisure and Community Resources

"There are very few truly high-performing teams; this book provides practical tools and tips to help you ensure that the teams you belong to join the few."
Operations and Service Director

"A very reliable and practical guide for team leaders at all levels."
Training & Development Manager

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INVOLVE OTHERS

Make sure that the team knows what it has to achieve. If you are clear in your own mind about what is required, then this will enable you to:

- Have a reference point, the basis for a common purpose and vision to share with others

- Start planning an effective way of working and consider what information is needed from the beginning

- Have a basis against which to measure both performance and progress

However, you still have to get this across to your people. So, give some thought to your first meeting and how you will do this. **After all, here is your first chance to inspire people and make them want to be part of what is on offer!**

For practical ideas and suggestions please see *The Teambuilding Activities Pocketbook* (Paul Tizzard, Management Pocketbooks).

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INVOLVE OTHERS

VARY THE METHOD

Bear in mind that we take in information through each of our senses – sight, hearing, touch. Some people have a preference for:

- **Pictures and visual images**
  In which case try using a picture, drawing or cartoon

- **Sounds**
  Explain what you are trying to achieve, encourage discussions and invite questions

- **Feelings**
  Give them something to touch or hold (notes summarising the points you are making)

As the first meeting is often crucial to a team's future success, hold it in a different (off site) venue, where the environment is more appealing and you will not get disturbed.

Tip: publish your vision and make sure that your own team as well as your 'customers' have a copy. Pin it on the wall for all to see.

Remember, that to have a vision or mission is fine up to a point, but this still has to be translated into objectives and steps to follow.

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IDENTIFY SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES

In an ideal world, effective teams should have a balanced mix of both skill and experience. In practical terms, however, the challenge for many of today's leaders is to blend the best of what they inherit, often within limited timescales.

It will help the group to form if time is spent at an early stage getting members to talk about:

●   The skills they have developed, at work and elsewhere
●   Their achievements (this despite most people tending to be naturally modest)
●   Their experience of working in teams and what they have learnt
●   How they prefer to operate, and what they value in others
●   What they think they can contribute to the task
●   Their interests and what they regard as a worthwhile challenge
●   Any initial concerns they may have

Jumping straight into work methods and action planning will be of little value unless you know what is available in your team.

FROM VISION TO GOALS

The secret is not necessarily to have a series of well-written technically correct goals or objectives.

What is needed are statements that capture the imagination and energy of those involved, whilst helping to achieve the vision.

Give some thought to what these ought to be before you meet with your team. However, aim to get buy-in and accountability, rather than impose your own views.

Don't be afraid if team members challenge suggested goals, as this could stimulate debate.

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GIVE PEOPLE ROLES

In teams that work well:

- Individuals are clear about the part they are expected to play
- Roles may overlap but they don't conflict
- The mix of roles and skills is sufficient for the task in hand

It is easy to become over concerned with research into team roles, but most leaders do not get the luxury of hand picking their people.

In practical terms, you need people to be flexible if and when circumstances alter. Identifying people's abilities and preferences at the initial team meeting can be helpful both in allocating roles and in times of change.

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HOW TO BUILD A TEAM

FIND THE BEST METHOD

Within the group there is likely to be a great deal of experience of how not to do things. You will, no doubt, recall:

- The meetings that overran their planned time
- The group that never made a decision
- The time it took to get approval for even the simplest items

Encourage people to share their experiences, so that as a group you can work out the best way to organise yourselves. Suggestions may include:

- Keeping things simple and not over complicating matters
- Not over planning (things can – and inevitably will – change)
- Breaking down large tasks into manageable sections with their own timescales
- Encouraging flexibility and openness to new ideas and methods
- Constantly looking at what you are doing and how (are there easier ways?)

Work on the basis that the fewer rules the better, as rules reduce freedom and responsibility.

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TEAM MEETINGS

Give particular thought to running your team meetings. Consider:

● The purpose of holding meetings in the first place
● How often you need them
● The practicalities of getting people together
● The option of rotating the chair at meetings, as a way of getting everyone involved

Use a system for solving problems and making decisions. Consider:

● Creativity techniques for those problems that aren't routine
  ('The Creative Manager's Pocketbook' will show you how)
● How decisions will be made, eg by the leader or by consensus
● What levels of authority people will have (Who will have the power to decide and on
  what issues?)
● How you will communicate any decision
● How you will judge the success of your meetings

Finally, consider ways you can make team meetings inspiring and stimulating.
(36) (For practical advice read 'The Meetings Pocketbook' by Patrick Forsyth.)

REVIEW PROGRESS

It is often difficult to find the time to review progress, when caught up in the day-to-day running of a business. However, if you want to be successful, you need to take time out and examine:

● Progress against the goals and objectives that have been set
● How the team is functioning:
  – Openness to people and ideas ('Ah yes, but ...')
  – Co-operation; is it happening?
  – Meetings; productive or a waste of time?
  – Communication; are there gaps?
  – What have people been grumbling about?
  – Conflict; constructive or harmful?
  – Skills and talents; is the team making best use of them?
  – Are we our own worst enemies?
  – Are the real issues being tackled or avoided?
  – What lessons can be learnt?

Try and take time out to reflect – it will pay dividends in the long run.

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HOW TO BUILD A TEAM

HAVE FUN!

Sometimes work can be all too serious.

Teams operating in even the most difficult circumstances still manage to have fun. You can tell this from:

● The 'buzz' and energy about the place

● The smiles on people's faces; they actually look as if they are enjoying their work (How often do you see that?)

● The way they celebrate success

What can **you do** to make work more enjoyable and exciting, and people more enthusiastic?

About the Author

Ian Fleming, MA, DMS, DipEd
Ian worked as a coach with individuals and teams helping them achieve results by raising their level of performance and confidence.

This book is one of six written by Ian in the series.
The others are: *Coaching Pocketbook; Developing People Pocketbook; People Manager's Pocketbook; Time Management Pocketbook* and *Virtual Teams Pocketbook.*

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To the many teams I have worked with over the years, and colleagues for their input.
Written in memory of Pat – together we were a team.