

Teams do not succeed by talent alone.

Jeff Janssen
Author, *Championship Team Building*

2.4 Team Chemistry and Team Culture

Often the difference between successful and unsuccessful teams is an elusive element called “team chemistry,” which boils down to how well team members work together and support each other to achieve their goals.

Team chemistry can seem mysterious – a team has it or doesn't, and there isn't much anyone can do about it. But Colleen Hacker, sports psychology consultant to the U.S. National Women's Soccer team for two World Cup championships, says, “Team chemistry is a verb, not a noun.” It doesn't just happen, and it requires constant tending, ideally by every member of the team.

Good team chemistry depends on team members believing they will benefit if the team succeeds. When individual players feel valued and recognized for their contributions, they work hard to help the team succeed. However, on many teams, most of the credit goes to star players while important contributions of others are overlooked. This can lead to resentment, factions, and a breakdown of team chemistry.

With a focus on making teammates better, Triple-Impact Competitors are ideally suited to help build good team chemistry.

■ The Qualities of Winning Team Culture

The key to team chemistry is the kind of culture a team has. Culture is simply, “The way we do things here.” The habits a team develops are the backbone of its culture and determine whether it develops good team chemistry or not.

In *Championship Team Building*, Jeff Janssen identifies seven qualities of successful teams – elements that breed and result from great team chemistry. Teams with these qualities typically win more, and team members have more fun and memorable experiences. Here are Janssen's qualities, along with specific actions you can take to support each.

Common Goal: Successful teams have goals everyone agrees on. **Action:** Remind teammates about team goals and share your commitment to reaching them. If you are not clear on your team's goals, ask your coach privately about them.

Commitment: Players have a strong work ethic, and tough times are met with determination to work harder. **Action:** Embrace the ELM Tree of Mastery. Focus on effort, learning, and rebounding from mistakes. Be on time and work hard to make yourself and your teammates better.

Complementary Roles: Team members understand and embrace the roles they need to play for team success. **Action:** Become a “superstar at your role.” If you are not clear on your role, ask your coach privately about it. Go out of your way to recognize the contributions of everyone, not just the stars.

Communication: Communication is clear, honest, and effective. Players and coaches listen to each other, even in the heat of competition. **Action:** Listening is the communication skill most often lacking on unsuccessful teams, so take time to listen and understand what is important to your teammates.

Constructive Conflict: Team members deal with conflict constructively and openly and don't talk behind each other's backs. Conflict never carries into competition. **Action:** Use your “Double Vision” to balance competing and cooperating with teammates.

Cohesion: Players like being together. They respect each other and help teammates who are struggling. **Action:** People like being with others who fill their

Emotional Tanks, so relentlessly look for opportunities to fill teammates' and coaches' E-Tanks.

Credible Coaching: Caring, competent coaches provide an environment that helps achieve team goals. **Action:** For Triple-Impact Competitors, leadership is for everyone. Step up to lead or follow depending on what the team needs in the moment.

■ Triple-Impact Competitors Make Good Chemists

There's a direct link between Janssen's qualities of successful teams and the mindset of a Triple-Impact Competitor. That's why teams with Triple-Impact Competitors have a leg up in developing great team chemistry. While ordinarily the responsibility for team culture is placed on the coach, on the best teams many members work to create and perpetuate the culture. By focusing on making teammates better – through acts of leadership, filling E-Tanks, and displaying Double Vision – Triple-Impact Competitors actively work to create and maintain great team chemistry.

Use Exercise 7 on the following page to assess your team's culture and consider how you can contribute to building great team chemistry.

Exercise 7: Team Culture Survey

In *Championship Team Building*, Jeff Janssen identifies seven qualities that contribute to success. Teams with these qualities not only typically win more, but they have more fun together.

Where is your team on these seven qualities? What can you do this season to promote these qualities on your team?

Team Culture Assessment

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly Agree

- _____ 1. **Common goal:** Our team has common goals that everyone embraces and works hard to accomplish.
- _____ 2. **Commitment:** Team members are committed to our team's success as shown by our work ethic and effort.
- _____ 3. **Complementary Roles:** Team members embrace their roles on the team and try to fill them to the best of their ability.
- _____ 4. **Communications:** Team members and coaches communicate clearly, honestly, and effectively.
- _____ 5. **Constructive Conflict:** Team members deal with conflict constructively.
- _____ 6. **Cohesion:** Our team is cohesive and likes to be together.
- _____ 7. **Credible Coaching:** Our team has credible coaching, and team members demonstrate positive leadership to support coaches' efforts.

What I Can Do to Improve Team Culture

The most important actions I can take to improve team culture are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



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