forming a functional team

Designing objectives, identifying goals and assigning roles

Alan Hargreaves

alanhargreaves.com

recharge workshop

In brief

Good teamwork adds powerful leverage to any project. If you want to get it done, it will likely be better put together, completed more quickly and implemented more effectively if a functional team is running it. In short, you alone are unlikely to have all the requisite skills to optimise any project. You may have many ideas, but someone else will add an extra one. And while you might be good at one aspect, someone else will be better at others.
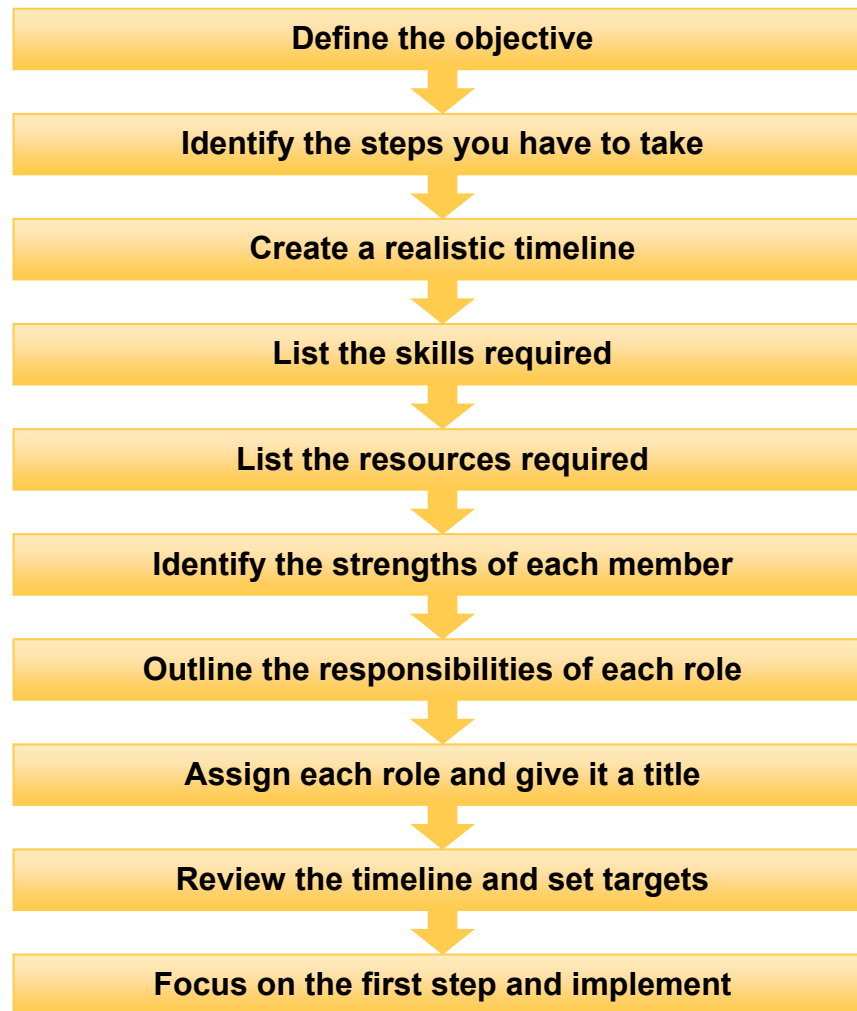
So in choosing a team, try to incorporate complimentary skill sets. Get people who will add a variety of strengths. Look outside the square. Often these strengths are not immediately related to their skill set. Adding a member who's strength is largely their enthusiasm for the project can put more momentum behind the process than simply appointing people on the basis of their training and qualifications.

Nonetheless, a team needs to be properly structured if it is to be effective. It needs a clear objective and a realistic road map of how the outcome is to be achieved. The role each member plays needs to be aligned with their strengths, and the team must have the resources required to actually complete the project.

On the next page is a simple series of steps that can form the agenda of a first team meeting. This meeting is not about starting work on the project. It is about who is going to do it and how. If you can get the structure right from the start, momentum will build. Successful completion will not only be good for business. It will be a rewarding experience for each of the members.

alanhargreaves.com

An agenda for your first team meeting

Define the objective

↓

Identify the steps you have to take

↓

Create a realistic timeline

↓

List the skills required

↓

List the resources required

↓

Identify the strengths of each member

↓

Outline the responsibilities of each role

↓

Assign each role and give it a title

↓

Review the timeline and set targets

↓

Focus on the first step and implement

recharge workshop

alanhargreaves.com

Define the objective

Be clear about what you want to achieve

Define your objective clearly. Incorporate what, which, why and by when. For example, a project to revamp the firm's website might include the following:

What: Develop a completely new site

Which: is easy to navigate, attracts customers and is simple to manage

Why: because our current site is outdated and unfriendly

When: by the launch of our summer range

recharge workshop

alanhargreaves.com

Identify the steps you have to take

Make them simple and achievable

Create a road map that will get you to your goal. The objective may be daunting at first, but break it down into baby steps that form a logical sequence. The simpler each step is, the better. It will give your team a sense of progress as each one is completed and maintain the momentum of the project.

recharge workshop

alanhargreaves.com

Create a realistic timeframe

Be clear about the target date for each step

A completion date is essential. If there is a deadline, work backwards and ensure that the project is actually achievable in the time available. Build in contingencies for unforeseen developments. Note which steps are dependent on the completion of other steps. Be realistic. There is no point in promising impossible delivery dates.

recharge workshop

alanhargreaves.com

List the skills required

Do you have them?

Identify what skills are required to complete the project. If you don't have them, work out who else you need. Is outside help required? Can you draw on the skill base of other parts of the firm which might first appear to be completely unconnected with the project. Input from other departments – accounting, marketing, product development – can often help you get to you goals more efficiently.

recharge workshop

alanhargreaves.com

List the resources required

Do you have them?

Are additional resources required? Does the project need the support of external suppliers, new software or the help of outside service providers? Do some of your team have the ability but not the training to pull it off? If so, what additional training programs would address that?

alanhargreaves.com

Identify team strengths

Choose a team with complementary abilities

Each member will be stronger in some areas than others. A creative person is often not strong in administration, and vice versa. A team of artists may create an excellent product but not be so good on implementation, or selling the idea to the firm and its customers. Ask members about their strengths. Examine how your can address weaknesses. Acknowledge the power that each brings to the table.

recharge workshop

alanhargreaves.com

Outline the roles

Who is responsible for what?

Look at the steps you have to take and decide what roles have to be filled. Each role will have a responsibility for the timely completion of specific tasks. Ensure that each one is clearly defined.

recharge workshop

alanhargreaves.com

Assign roles

Align skills and strengths with responsibilities

When assigning roles to particular people, take care to align them with the skills and the strengths they bring to the project. There is no point in assigning a particular role to someone who is not strong in that area. Make sure they are comfortable with their role and understand their responsibilities. Working out a title for each member will often clarify their input and what is expected of them.

recharge workshop

alanhargreaves.com

Review the timeline

Set targets

Once everyone understands their contribution and is comfortable with their role, review the timeline so that everyone can see their place in it. Use this process to double-check that it is achievable and to highlight steps and target dates that are mission critical to timely completion.

recharge workshop

alanhargreaves.com

Start with the first step

Start now

The project may required a long process, but if you have broken it down into easily defined, achievable steps, you are ready to start now. Identify the first step that each member must take, no matter how basic, and take action on it now. Your next project meeting will be the one where you tick the first step as having been done. Momentum is already building as you move on to the next task.

recharge workshop

alanhargreaves.com

recharge workshop

For more information, visit my website www.alanhargreaves.com

Hi, I'm Alan Hargreaves. I specialise in simplifying complex business problems. In over 35 years as a business executive, I have never found an issue that cannot be addressed through identifying the essential but simple steps required to make any problem manageable. It might be your career, your firm, your team or your strategy. It doesn't matter. All hurdles can be lowered through dispassionate analysis, and all executives can embrace simple processes to take them forward.

Using these techniques, I have helped hundreds of people through the various stages of their business or career development. It may be the challenge of taking on new responsibilities; it could be the task of managing a business you have created yourself; it may be handling a difficult team in the midst of major change. I use a straightforward combination of key principles to get results: collaboration, adaptation, simplification and action. You can contact me anytime at alan@alanhargreaves.com.

alanhargreaves.com