

# Team Culture and Retention Toolkit



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Experiential Learning Hub  
Faculty of Applied Science

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# What is Team Culture?

## Your brand

A team culture consists of the values, beliefs, behaviours and attitudes shared by a team. It defines the dynamics within a team and teamwork, specifically how members work together towards a common goal and how they treat one another.

## Relationship between team culture and member retention

Considering culture is shared, all team members play a role in shaping the team culture. More importantly, team leaders are responsible for correctly steering the team culture. If fostered incorrectly, the team culture can be toxic, and uninviting, resulting in low member retention. However, a positive team culture can propel a team towards increasing member engagement, productivity and success.

# Factors Influencing and Shaping Team Culture

- 1 TOP LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES**  
The values and philosophies that the leadership of an organization embodies will trickle down and set the precedent for how the team should behave, regardless whether these values are positive or negative.
- 2 VALUES AND BELIEFS**  
The team's values and beliefs guide the behaviours and attitudes of a team and significantly determine the team culture.
- 3 RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION**  
The recruitment process members to be part of your organization is essential in affecting, enhancing and supporting the team culture; creating a thorough and well-thought recruitment process that is representative of your team culture is fundamental.
- 4 RESOURCES AND SUPPORT**  
When team members are provided with support and resources to successfully complete their work and grow both professionally and personally, the team culture positively shifts; when team members do not feel supported, they can become frustrated and disgruntled with the organization, leading to low member engagement and retention.
- 5 WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT**  
The physical and emotional safety of your team's work environment plays a critical role in cultivating your team's culture and thus affecting your member engagement and retention.
- 6 EXCITING CHALLENGES AND AUTONOMY**  
Ensuring team members are continuously challenged by their work and are able to freely explore solutions, shapes a team culture of trust and thus increasing members to advance in your organization.

# Main Dysfunctions of a Team

Based on the business book "The Five Dysfunctions of a Team", to create a positive and supportive team culture, you must identify the main dysfunctions that could be present within your team.



## Assessment Questions:

To determine whether or not these dysfunctions are present within your team, ask the following questions to your team leaders and team members.

### QUESTIONS FOR YOUR TEAM LEADERS:

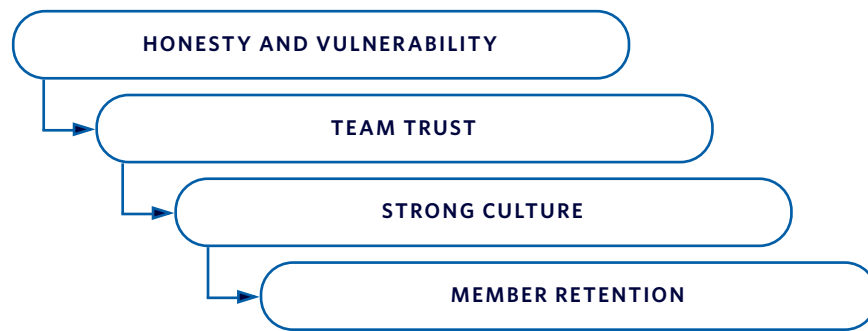
- Do the people care about the work that is done here, or do they do it just for the experience?
- Do you have any "problematic" team members who are unpleasant or undermine the team?
- Do you praise your team and acknowledge when there is a job well done?
- Does your team go the extra mile for you? Do you often ask them to do so?
- How do you encourage your team?

### QUESTIONS FOR YOUR TEAM MEMBERS:

- What does it feel like to be a part of this team? Exciting? Comfortable? Boring?
- Do people feel valued and respected?
- Do people socialize together outside of work?
- What part of working here do you enjoy most?
- What one thing, if changed, would make the biggest difference to your life on the team?
- Have you considered leaving due to atmosphere that affects you negatively?
- What is the best and worst thing about the team?

# Building Team Culture

Honesty and vulnerability build team trust. Trust creates strong culture. A strong culture makes people stay.



## Exercises for building team culture

TEAM CULTURE EXERCISE	DESCRIPTION	BENEFITS	SPECIFIC EXAMPLE
Defining the Team's Values and Mission	Within your team, facilitate a session where all members are participating in defining and outlining the core values and mission of your team	Allows the input of all members with a bottom-top approach; agreed upon values and mission are clearly communicated for everyone.	A workshop where team members individually identify core values, share as a team and organize/shortlist key values. Check out our Strategic Planning toolkit!
Creating Traditions	Build traditions representative of what your team enjoys to do while ensuring all members are included and comfortable.	Provides opportunities for connection and friendship between team members.	A monthly social after meetings. Some teams also have a mascot to represent their team energy!
Executive Leadership Team Bonding	When the executive team is recruited, consider organizing a team bonding session where vulnerability and honesty are encouraged.	Builds trust within the executive team which is then perceived and trickled down to the remaining members of your organization.	A weekend camping trip consisting of icebreakers and team building activities. Having team lead check-ins help coordinate with each other.
Member Orientations	Following member recruitment, conduct an orientation for all the new members to receive support and resources.	Provides members with the necessary skillset to succeed in their roles, while fostering relationships between the new members and existing members of your organization.	An orientation where senior members provide insight about their experience, present information about the organization, etc.
Workplace Community Agreement	A consensus between all your team members in order to achieve safety, support, openness, productivity and trust.	Facilitating a community agreement for the team's workplace is a fundamental step in creating emotional and physical safety in your team culture.	An activity discussing topics such as, conflict resolution, teamwork, traditions, use of the space, etc. and documenting and sharing the agreement within the workplace. Often encouraged during the beginning of the year.

# Retaining Team Members

## Exercises for Member Retention

A key component of increasing member engagement and member retention is building a strong and positive team culture. However, as your team culture is developing, there are strides your team can take to increase member retention.

MEMBER RETENTION EXERCISE	DESCRIPTION	BENEFITS	SPECIFIC EXAMPLE
Celebrations	Celebrations are an excellent way to show gratitude and implicitly show which behaviours, attitudes and values are favored within the team.	Incentives members to continue excelling, engaging and advancing within the organization while strengthening team identity.	Plan a year-end appreciation event presenting awards, recapping the year, etc. You can even set up fun titles such as most regular member, most neat member etc.
Succession Planning	Identify key positions within your organization and increase the information sharing channels between these roles and possible future candidates.	Ensures the longevity of your team by encouraging information sharing, preparing for the future and easy transition into leadership roles.	Provide training, implementing processes such as transition reports and mentorship opportunities. Plan a session with a potential candidate early into the term.
Support and Resources	Following member recruitment, continuously provide opportunities for members to receive support and resources tailored to the interests of your team.	Members are more likely to stay and advance within your organization should they receive personal and professional growth from their membership.	Host workshops on resume building and specific programs such as AutoCAD.
Opportunities to Advance	Allow members to have opportunities to be challenged beyond the responsibilities of their role by delegating more challenging tasks to members who are keen to grow.	Builds trust and develops a stronger sense of purpose and identity with the organization, which will yield higher member engagement and retention.	Create mentorship and shadowing opportunities, delegate more senior tasks to junior members, create senior and leadership positions within your team.

# Resources

## Still have questions?

You can book an advising appointment with Minoli Navaratnam ([minoli.navaratnam@ubc.ca](mailto:minoli.navaratnam@ubc.ca)) in APSC Professional Development. We can:

- Review your notes or the content of this module.
- Discuss any questions you may have.



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