

Developing a High-Performing EA Team

Published: 15 September 2016

Analyst(s): Jack Santos, Marcus Blosch

EA teams are central to both IT and business success. Yet Gartner research has discovered that there is a wide disparity between how well EA teams perform and, ultimately, how successful they are. What strategies and techniques can an EA leader use to improve the performance of the EA team?

Key Challenges

- Enterprise Architecture (EA) teams are not aware of, and do not take advantage of, techniques exhibited by other high-performing teams.
- EA is often equated with technological excellence: standards, practices and product selections. Yet the success of EA programs depends on skills that are often overlooked and that affect the EA team's performance.
- Many EA team leaders have only a basic and cursory understanding of some of the potential performance strategies that they can use to create a high-performing EA team.

Recommendations

- Adapt your leadership style to the needs of the team that is situational, take into account individual needs, and tie leadership to your personal intent and the organizational culture.
- Recognize emotional needs during team formation and throughout. Don't just think technology and technology skill. Value nontechnical and soft skills, and help team members develop those.
- Establish a vision for a high-performing EA team. Help create an environment that provides a safe space to question basic assumptions. Focus on such Gartner concepts as vanguard versus foundational EA, business-outcome-driven EA and capability modeling.
- Follow Gartner's five strategies and ten simple rules that will help EA leaders achieve a high-performing EA team.

Table of Contents

Introduction..... 2

Analysis..... 3

 Accelerate the Team Through to Become High-Performing..... 3

 Strategy 1: Adapt Your Leadership Style to the Needs of the EA Team..... 4

 Strategy 2: Think in Terms of Action-Centered Leadership..... 5

 Strategy 3: Recognize Emotional Needs During Team Formation and Throughout..... 7

 Strategy 4: Establish a Vision for a High-Performing EA Team..... 9

 Strategy 5: Use These Simple Rules to Achieve a High-Performing EA Team..... 10

Gartner Recommended Reading..... 10

List of Tables

Table 1. Adapt Your Leadership Style..... 5

Table 2. Emotional Intelligence..... 8

List of Figures

Figure 1. Stages of Team Development..... 3

Figure 2. Fulfill Team Needs in Three Areas..... 6

Introduction

New Zealand's rugby team, the "All Blacks" (so named for their all-black uniforms), are the most successful team in the sport and have been at the top of world rugby since 1904. The All Blacks bring together talented individuals and build a high-performance team with their focus on the vision and values of being an All Black and the dedication to the team as a family. This is just one of many examples of high-performance teams, from medicine to emergency services, each bringing together talented individuals and forging a team. This leads us to the questions, "what is a high-performing team?" and "how can EA teams be high-performing?"

High-performing teams are the holy grail of management. Often regarded as a unique mix of personalities, drive and background, high-performing teams achieve recognition for:

- 1. The business contribution they make to the organization
- 2. Their ability to consistently exceed the goals that measure those business contributions
- 3. Their establishment of a pattern of effective collaboration, common vision and self-sustaining behaviors
- 4. Their knack to innovate and adapt in order to reach new and often unexpected goals

High-performing teams, by definition, are good for the organization. From an individual perspective, being part of a high-performing team is an exercise in self-actualization. High-performing teams are often examples of high levels of employee engagement and satisfaction.

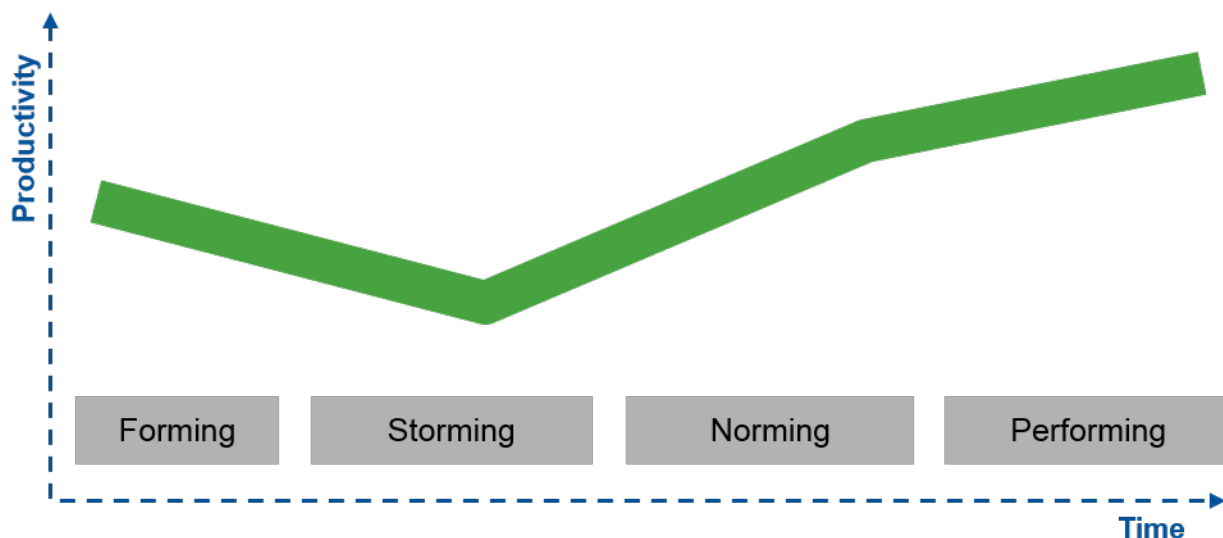
Recognizing the hallmarks of achieving a higher level of performance and determining how to get there are helpful for the IT department, the business and the EA team. Success at business-outcome-driven EA relies on creating a cross-functional, collaborative team from across business and IT. EA is a team sport! Understanding how to create a high-performance team is an essential part of delivering business outcomes.

Analysis

Accelerate the Team Through to Become High-Performing

High-performance teams don't happen by chance. There are deliberate strategies to achieve them. The first of these is to understand that a team is more than the sum of the individuals in it, and that it requires a vision and way of working together. The most commonly used framework for a team's stages of development was developed in the mid-1960s by Bruce W. Tuckman.¹ Teams don't gel overnight, but come together in four stages.

Figure 1. Stages of Team Development



Source: Gartner (September 2016)

Tuckman's descriptions of Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing (and later, adjourning) provide a useful framework for the development of a team (see Figure 1).

- *Forming*: When purpose, structure and rules are uncertain. Members gain their first impressions, look for signals to help position themselves relative to others and pay particular attention to the leader.
- *Storming*: When turbulence and conflict occur and emotions run high. Performance drops as roles and norms of behavior get sorted out.
- *Norming*: When turbulence gives way to stability as cohesiveness develops.
- *Performing*: When performance rises as roles, norms of behavior, familiarity and trust finally solidify.

Some leaders expect their teams to reach the performing stage before the earlier stages have been fully worked through. It's just not going to happen. Emotions have to surface and settle at each stage before a team can move on. Plenty of techniques such as varying leadership style and running team-building exercises exist to help leaders achieve this goal. These are all aimed at getting the team used to working together and getting to know each other.

This is particularly true for EA teams that are starting or restarting. Often, architects are brought in from different IT areas, and they may already have a predisposition for norms and ways to interact. Those norms may not always be the same as your norms. Even when EA is federated, or distributed (as in dotted line relationships), the same level of group dynamics will occur.

Strategy 1: Adapt Your Leadership Style to the Needs of the EA Team

Your leadership style can be adjusted to fit the situation and context. The leader that can nurture a high-performing team will need to take advantage of each of these styles given the appropriate situation. Situational leadership approaches also recognize individuals' receptiveness; are they committed to the goal, or have they achieved competence at what they do? A new team member who does not understand the objectives of the group and has not been sufficiently trained in core technical competencies should be communicated to with a different style (coaching) than a team member who understands the goal, is committed and has shown competence (democratic or even full-on delegation of responsibility).

Table 1 provides a guide to the different types of leadership styles, when they should be used and the effects they may have.

Table 1. Adapt Your Leadership Style

	Commanding	Pacesetting	Visionary	Affirmative	Coaching	Democratic
The leader's modus operandi	Demands immediate compliance	Sets high standards	Mobilizes toward a vision	Creates harmony	Develops people for the future	Forges consensus
When the style works best	In a crisis, to kick start a problem	To get quick results	When changes require a new vision	To heal rifts in a team	To help an employee improve performance	To build buy-in or consensus
Impact on team climate	Negative	Negative	Most strongly positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
Cautions	Least effective in most situations; use only rarely	Destroys morale over time	Avoid using when working with experts	Avoid using alone	Unsuitable when team is reluctant to change/learn	Avoid when team is immature or in crisis

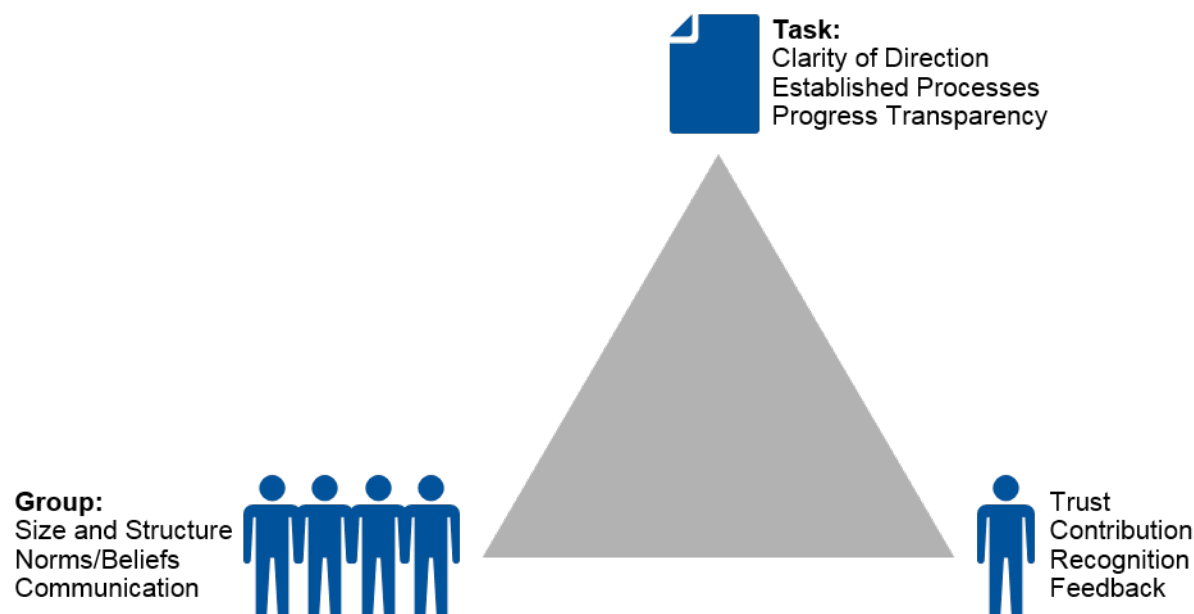
Source: Gartner (September 2016)

Strategy 2: Think in Terms of Action-Centered Leadership

The Action Centered Leadership model² shows that team performance depends on fulfilling three kinds of team needs (see Figure 2):

- Task, including direction and challenge
- Group, including structure and communications
- Individual, including contribution, trust and commitment

Figure 2. Fulfill Team Needs in Three Areas



Source: Gartner (September 2016)

To fulfill *task*, focus first on clarity of direction

Of the many factors that affect team performance, clarity of direction (goals and objectives) is the most important. Executive team leaders often assume there's no need to provide direction. "These are smart people and I don't want to insult their intelligence," captures a widespread attitude. That's a big mistake. People want to do the right thing, but they can only do so when they know what the right thing is. Direction should be clear, quantified where possible and understood by everyone.

Direction should stress ends rather than means. It's an important distinction. Direction should also be *challenging*. Challenge is a powerful motivator, as long as it's attainable. In addition to direction and challenge, teams have other task needs that require satisfaction. One is *appropriate procedures* — for instance, to review and prioritize objectives, set time-scales and replan when necessary.

Within EA, direction frequently gets exhibited not only through words and actions, but also through the development of the EA charter, principles and business outcomes. Establishing business outcome statements that lead to solid capability models and roadmaps can exhibit clear direction not only for EA team members, but for business areas as well

Roadmaps and scorecards are examples of task-oriented procedures that support and clarify a team's direction. Roadmaps graphically portray how departments and specialist teams link to core objectives, so staff can see at a glance how their work fits in. Scorecards set personal annual goals. They clarify expectations and link daily activities to goals. Another task needed is *evidence of progress*: milestones passed, results achieved and targets met.

To fulfill *group or team* needs, smaller really is better

The foremost of several group needs are *size, structure and coherence*. Senior leadership teams have a habit of growing, often to seven, eight or even more. That's no surprise. Delaying (which widens spans of control) and a desire for full representation (as a consequence of outsourcing, for instance) are the main causes of creeping organizational growth. Each additional team member adds capability, of course, but at the expense of "process loss" — coordination problems and the myriad inefficiencies that occur when people work together, from late starts to personality clashes.

Process loss increases with team size at an accelerating rate. Productivity generally declines beyond about five members.

Strategy 3: Recognize Emotional Needs During Team Formation and Throughout

Emotional intelligence is a term coined by Daniel Goleman of Rutgers University to explain the soft issues of leadership. The term gained prominence following the publication of his book *Emotional Intelligence* in 1995. Emotional intelligence is the capacity to recognize our own feelings and those of others. It's only one aspect of leadership, of course (others include cognitive and technical capabilities). But according to Goleman, emotional intelligence accounts for 90% of the difference in profiles of leadership at the highest level.

The business case for emotional intelligence is convincing. Time and again, leaders strong in emotional intelligence have been shown to outperform their weaker counterparts in the workplace. This is particularly true where people skills count — as they do, for example, in management, sales, service, teamwork and leadership.

Today, emotional intelligence provides an explanatory framework for the soft issues of leadership in the form of 20 competencies. The competencies are grouped into four clusters called dimensions (also known as components and capabilities), as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Emotional Intelligence

Dimensions	Competencies
Self-awareness	Ability to read, understand and realize the impact of your emotions
	Realistic self-evaluation
	Strong self-confidence
Self-management	Ability to keep emotions under control
	Honesty/integrity
	Manage you responsibilities
	Adjust with change
	Readiness to try new things
Social awareness	Takes an active interest in others
	Organizationally adept
	Service-oriented
Social skill	Visionary
	Knows how to use influence
	Is able to deliver feedback and guidance
	Is good at listening and delivering messages
	Initiates new ideas
	Manages conflict
	Has ability to manage relationships
	Builds team, collaborates, promotes cooperation

Source: Gartner (September 2016)

Gartner has observed that technical expertise and knowledge is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for high-performing EA teams. Clarity of purpose, group norms, styles and behaviors are significant factors in trying to enable and sustain a high-performance team.

The success of your EA team hinges not only on technical expertise, but also on the ability of enterprise architects to manage others, even though those who do not report directly to them. The effective use of EQ competencies is a keenly needed skill in most EA teams.

Strategy 4: Establish a Vision for a High-Performing EA Team

To achieve levels of high performance in an organization, EA needs to be viewed as more than a "technical group." Focus on business outcomes and use business terms for everything that you do. Tailor your communication for the audience so that what EA contributes is adjusted depending on whether you are speaking to the executive team or to the front-line IT staff. Use examples that your audience can relate to. Act like a business consultancy to achieve your EA goals (see "Rethink EA as an Internal Management Consultancy to Rapidly Deliver Business Outcomes").

The high-performing EA team will share a common vision that includes addressing *foundational* EA tasks that address standards and roadmaps, and *vanguard* EA tasks that focus on business value, emerging technology and new revenue opportunities.

Address EA opportunities through capability modeling, both in terms of a future capability vision and mapping current and missing capabilities to the business vision and business outcomes (see Use IT Capability Modeling to Build a High-Performing IT Organization).

The high-performing EA team must be visionary, and it must rely on influence. Individuals, working as part of the team, need to continually develop their emotional quotients — including social awareness — and collaborative skill to achieve success across the organization.

High-performing EA teams can question basic assumptions by actively avoiding cognitive predisposition and confirmation bias. How? One way is to use Darwin's technique:

I had also, during many years, followed a golden rule, namely, that whenever a published fact, a new observation or thought came across me, which was opposed to my general results, to make a memorandum of it without fail and at once; for I had found by experience that such facts and thoughts were far more apt to escape from the memory than favorable ones.³

Warren Buffet elaborated on this technique, and limited the "at once" to "within 30 minutes," pointing out that this is the "flaw in our makeup that bears on what happens during secular bull markets and extended periods of stagnation."⁴

High-performing EA teams need to work at creating an environment where every opinion can be voiced safely, questioned respectfully and acted on promptly. This is true for EA team members, the extended EA team, and all IT and business peers that are involved in architectural and technical decision making.

Engagement is a critical component of any high-performing EA team. One measure of engagement that some organizations use is a survey. A Gartner Peer Connect⁵ discussion included these key factors in measuring engagement:

- How much staff SAY good things about working here
- How much staff want to STAY here
- How much staff STRIVE to go above and beyond what is normally expected of them

Engagement surveys that are commercially available and useful in measuring employee engagement include Aon Hewitt's talent solutions⁶ and the Gallup Q12 Employee Engagement Survey.⁷

Strategy 5: Use These Simple Rules to Achieve a High-Performing EA Team

Every member of the EA team can affect the team's performance, and is integral to achieving high performance. Keeping in mind these simple rules will help:

1. Value flexible processes, and be open to different styles and behaviors.
2. Foster effective communication among members, especially open and safe communications of new ideas.
3. Encourage respectful dialogue when challenging ideas and suggestions. Emphasize candid and clear discussion of what people are thinking and feeling, without judgments.
4. Encourage empathy, not only to develop EA consulting skills, but as a way to promote collaboration among team members.
5. Recognize those emotional needs that surface during team formation; don't shy away from challenges in team cohesion.
6. Establish a clarity of ownership and self-empowerment; value entrepreneurialship, self-management and organization.
7. Look for assignments that are interesting and a stretch for both yourself and your team members.
8. Avoid a metric mentality — focus on what's right for the customer or the outcome.
9. Act quickly, but fairly, on weak or incompetent team members.
10. Finally, be aware that, as a manager or peer, you can't just push or prod people into becoming a high-performance EA organization. They also have to commit to get there individually.

Gartner Recommended Reading

Some documents may not be available as part of your current Gartner subscription.

"Leading From the Heart: The Art of Leading High-Performing Teams"

"Simple Principles for High-Performing Sourcing Teams"

"CMO Insight: Seven Strategies of High-Performing Digital Marketing Leaders"

"Use IT Capability Modeling to Build a High-Performing IT Organization"

"Overview of How to Plan, Recruit, Develop and Retain a Skilled IT Workforce"

Evidence

¹ ["Bruce W. Tuckman — Forming, Storming Norming and Performing in Groups,"](#) Infed.

² J. Adair. "Action-Centered Leadership." Gower Publishing. 1979.

³ C. Darwin. ["The Autobiography of Charles Darwin."](#) Collins. 1958.

⁴ ["How Warren Buffett Avoids Getting Trapped by Confirmation Bias,"](#) Forbes.

⁵ [Gartner Peer Connect](#)

⁶ ["Employee Engagement,"](#) Aon.

⁷ ["Gallup Q12 Employee Engagement Survey,"](#) Gallup.

GARTNER HEADQUARTERS

Corporate Headquarters

56 Top Gallant Road
Stamford, CT 06902-7700
USA
+1 203 964 0096

Regional Headquarters

AUSTRALIA
BRAZIL
JAPAN
UNITED KINGDOM

For a complete list of worldwide locations,
visit <http://www.gartner.com/technology/about.jsp>

© 2016 Gartner, Inc. and/or its affiliates. All rights reserved. Gartner is a registered trademark of Gartner, Inc. or its affiliates. This publication may not be reproduced or distributed in any form without Gartner's prior written permission. If you are authorized to access this publication, your use of it is subject to the [Usage Guidelines for Gartner Services](#) posted on gartner.com. The information contained in this publication has been obtained from sources believed to be reliable. Gartner disclaims all warranties as to the accuracy, completeness or adequacy of such information and shall have no liability for errors, omissions or inadequacies in such information. This publication consists of the opinions of Gartner's research organization and should not be construed as statements of fact. The opinions expressed herein are subject to change without notice. Although Gartner research may include a discussion of related legal issues, Gartner does not provide legal advice or services and its research should not be construed or used as such. Gartner is a public company, and its shareholders may include firms and funds that have financial interests in entities covered in Gartner research. Gartner's Board of Directors may include senior managers of these firms or funds. Gartner research is produced independently by its research organization without input or influence from these firms, funds or their managers. For further information on the independence and integrity of Gartner research, see ["Guiding Principles on Independence and Objectivity."](#)