

EBOOK

Where does teaming fit within talent optimization?



Optimized talent is cohesive talent

Think about the best team you've ever been a part of. What did it look like? How did it form? And what were its core values?

Chances are, those values included trust and accountability. These are essential components of any cohesive team. But striving for these ideals isn't enough—you also need a culture and mission that nurture these core beliefs.

A talent optimized organization does just that. Talent optimization is the discipline of using people data to design and execute a talent strategy that's aligned with a business strategy. The practice enables a company to adapt to change, make informed personnel decisions, and protect its most productive assets *without* sacrificing mission or values.

Talent optimized teams are resilient, efficient, and enduring. They can navigate even the most fluid or uncertain of circumstances.

That means sometimes doing more with less, but also doing work smarter. It means playing to the strengths of your people, and understanding how to motivate them based on their strongest behavioral drives.

Talent optimized teams are self-aware and empathetic, but also balanced enough to sustain themselves. They max out productivity by efficiently leveraging strengths and leadership.

In this e-book, we'll cover:

- **Understanding what type of team you have**
- **Balancing the drives of your team members**
- **Aligning team members toward common goals**
- **Keeping people accountable to those goals**

And in doing so, we'll examine how each is made easier through talent optimization.

Understanding what type of team you have

When molding a cohesive unit, you must play to the strengths of the people you have, rather than try to fit those people into a predetermined strategy.

Professional sports teams often talk about catering to their personnel. You can't build a high-scoring basketball team with a bunch of poor shooters. But, you might be able to utilize the same players' athleticism and energy to turn that group into a stout defensive unit, and still be competitive.

The same is true of business teams. Inspiring your people starts with a basic understanding of their strongest behavioral drives and tendencies. In doing so, you'll also learn how to best communicate with each personality. For example:

- Team members with higher formality drives crave order and process.
- More extraverted team members will seek opportunities to work with others.

Throw in remote work and the many rubs it can bring, and it's clear you can't manage each of these people the same way. **Use relationship guides** to personalize your messaging, but also to understand your overall **team type**. You can dig into:

- Team strengths
- Team blind spots
- Potential pitfalls resulting from these blind spots

Think about how these personalities and working styles complement each other. Is your team filled with highly dominant individuals? Are there too many people with low formality drives, and no one on hand to keep the team accountable to rules?

As you evaluate your team, **picture the intersections of these working styles**. The more spread out they are, the more cohesive your team will likely be.

Balancing the drives of your team members

High-functioning teams are intentionally constructed. They're balanced and self-aware, designed to account for and anticipate gaps, stretches, and shortcomings.

The best teams are so well-oiled that they don't miss a beat when someone (even their leader) is out. Everyone has leadership qualities; all team members are respected for their professionalism and respective crafts, and they're all given opportunities to flex these muscles regularly.

Easier said than done during times of stress, change, or uncertainty.

How do you, as a leader, balance the drives of your team members, especially when there are suddenly fewer of them and you need to do more with less?

A talent optimized team looks to balance itself based on not just behavioral drives, but leadership styles. It operates on the idea that everyone has leadership traits---they just manifest in different ways.



But it also must be able to **adapt, consider, evolve, and drive** through any circumstance.

Even teams with a high concentration of certain behaviors can be balanced. Just because two people possess higher levels of the same drive, that doesn't mean their leadership styles are the same. Find out how to balance leadership styles, and you unlock your team's full potential.

Aligning team members toward common goals

Cohesive teams trust one another. They assume good intent, and they understand that in order to evolve, they must sometimes disagree, talk things out, then commit to a resolution and hold each other accountable.

But you can't be held equally accountable unless you're all working toward a common goal. You can have a team that appears balanced on paper, but if everyone is operating in silos, your productivity and efficiency will suffer.

Your team's trust should be rooted in a mutual understanding of these objectives. Whether you're a sales team beholden to certain quotas or a development group measuring success by new users, you increase cohesion by consistently discussing and reminding people of these goals.

Encourage your team members to:

- Talk about their work to be done as it relates to team goals.
- Consider how their work might be contingent upon others', or vice versa.
- Examine where their blind spots lie.

In doing so, you're asking team members to think collectively, which promotes teamwork and fosters engagement. They're highly engaged because they have seen the commitment to certain values and objectives in practice---not just as lip service. They know that everyone throughout the organization is on the same page, practicing what they preach.



Keeping team members accountable to those goals

Striving for accountability is much easier than achieving it. You can talk about it all you like, but when it comes time to actually hold one another to the goals you've set, what does that look like?

The answer, once again, lies in trust.

If your team members trust one another, they'll also be able to engage in healthy disagreement. They'll check each other based on the goals you've established. And even when there are disagreements, a trusting, talent optimized team will understand that it must commit to moving forward. That means coming to a collective resolution, then following through, perhaps in the form of:

- Action items from team meetings
- Status checks on time-sensitive projects
- Informal group updates, periodically or as needed

If you've established a trusting team culture, none of these measures will be seen as encroachments or violations of that trust. Your team members will understand they're all being held to the same standard, accountable to the commitments you have made as a group. Cohesion is about clear objectives, but also consistency of purpose.

Your team should also trust that, if there are blockers or holdups, they can say so. No one will assume it's because they're being lazy or selfish.

Better yet, you'll be able to anticipate these snags, then shift to address them.

Optimizing the talents you have onhand

During times of change and stress, **the best teams figure out how to do more with who they have.** They also revisit roles as needed, based on the work to be done. They understand that if the goals have changed, then the work has too, and so it's worth asking: *Are these people all still suited for these jobs?*

By overlaying your team and strategy, you can discover the best avenues to productivity for your team, even as the target moves.

You might have a team that is:

Innovative, full of high-dominance, low-formality members.

Or on the flip side, your team is:

Process-focused, composed of low-dominance, high-formality people.



Each team has its strengths, but as you overlay these types with the work to be done, you uncover the best path forward. The latter team might be more risk averse, which fits well if you've reevaluated near-term goals in an effort to stabilize. If that's the case, maybe you consider redistributing or reassigning the first group.

Your goals may change, but your mission—to optimize these strengths—should endure.

Talent optimized teams are the most resilient.

Whether you're in a position to add to your teams or not, cohesion is a matter of viability and survival.

Any organization can use resilient tactics to accomplish goals without compromising its mission.

Regularly consider the work to be done. What do you need to carry out? What goals are you trying to accomplish? When market dynamics shift, your mission doesn't change, but your short-term goals may.

And as these goals do change, you'll want to reevaluate whether people are still suited for the work they're doing. A talent optimized strategy helps you identify gaps and areas of misalignment---and then make the right adjustments.

That might mean you reassess your risk tolerance---or the risk-taking habits of your people in charge. This isn't an indictment of your people or your organization.

Rather, your willingness to shift and adjust is a testament to your organization's resilience. When you optimize your team's talents, you set everyone up to be stronger and more successful over the long term.

Play to people's strengths. Groom leaders everywhere. And remember that a talent optimized group is built to withstand any storm.