

## The Right Start Is Critical to Success

Teams are a popular approach to many business challenges. They can produce innovative solutions to complex problems, enabling organizations to be faster, more responsive, more competitive, and more successful in meeting their missions. But these kinds of results aren't guaranteed. It's not always easy for teams to deliver high performance, and the price of team failure can be very high. One of the first steps to take toward increasing team effectiveness is to pay attention to how the team is formed. You can head off most of the problems that beset teams during the formation stage by setting a clear direction, securing organizational support, selecting the right team members, building an enabling team design, developing key relations, and monitoring external factors.

Still, even if you have formed your team with those guidelines in mind, high performance isn't inevitable. A well-planned and orchestrated team launch is crucial to keeping your team moving toward success. Right from the beginning, team members have to know what their mission is, how success will be measured, and how they will work together. From the start they need to feel inspired by the opportunity to serve on a team, be confident that they will have the resources and support needed for success, and feel good about the people they will depend on to accomplish the team's mission.

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) has a long history of work with teams. In the course of that work it has become clear that four sets of activities spell the difference between a successful team launch and an unsuccessful one:

1. setting purpose and direction
2. defining roles and responsibilities

3. designing procedures and practices
4. building cooperation and relationships.

When you take on the responsibility of leading a team, you can launch your team toward success by addressing all of these elements.