

Best Team You've Been On

- This exercise is one we recommend doing very early with a team. At the end of this section of the manual you will find two draft timelines for delivering a debrief with a team and you will notice it is one of the first things on the agenda.



This is an exercise that comes from Appreciative Inquiry. The structure is quite simple:

1. Ask team members to recall “the best team you’ve been on.” It could be a work team; it could be this team; it could be a team from school or a volunteer organization, a sports team, a music or theater group — even your family or an informal group. The best “team” you’ve been on. Take a few minutes and bring that team back to mind. What does it feel like to be on a team like that? What are the qualities of a team like that?
2. You might want to make a few notes about the qualities of that team. What set it apart from other teams? What worked?
3. Let each person describe their “great team” experience. Ask people to keep the story brief — what are the highlights? As facilitator / coach, help evoke the emotional field, the feeling state; also harvest the special qualities of that exceptional team. Amplify without overdoing it.
4. On a flip chart — use two flip charts and two scribes if necessary — harvest those best team qualities.
5. When all team members have told their story, ask the team, “What were the themes? What did these teams have in common?” Circle these special characteristics on the flip chart.

As facilitator your objective with this exercise is to:

- Create a positive energetic field — the spirit of successful, high-performing teams imbues the air; the feeling is contagious. You are creating Positivity in the meeting room. The first person to tell their story will typically be the one with a great, heartfelt story. Even if there are others who are resistant or having difficulty finding a story, they will be infected by the energy.
- You are capturing qualities that you can point back to throughout the day, especially when it comes time to describe the Productivity and Positivity strengths. Most if not all will be somewhere on that flip chart — different words perhaps, but the qualities will be there. Everyone in the room already knows what it’s like to be on a high-performing team. You are igniting the motivation to create that same feeling on THIS team. These are also qualities the team may want to include in their team contract.
- You set the tone for the day — a container in which people tell personal stories. They are positive stories of personal success and yet they are about a team so people are less likely to feel shy or self conscious. In fact they are talking about a system experience not a personal one. And yet in the process of telling the story they are being personally vulnerable which also builds intimacy. Because the stories are positive it is safer to share from their personal experience.