

---

# We Are Here To...

## *A Team Purpose Exercise*

### ***A little bit of context:***

High performing teams have a strong sense of the purpose or mission of the team. They may never have articulated that purpose but it is now in the team DNA. This compelling purpose is a compass that helps team members know when they are on course and when they are not.

It is different from the corporate mission — it is the mission or purpose of this particular team. There is a mission that this team is meant to accomplish and if the team does not, the organization will be missing an important piece.

The goal of this exercise is to create a short, powerful purpose statement in about 30 minutes. The words do not have to be a perfect, word-smithed final. It is more important that the essence is captured in a way that taps into the commitment team members feel when they are “on purpose.”

This statement is for the team, not the world. If they want to share at some point that’s fine of course, but the intention is that this is just for the team.

### ***Set Up:***

A circle of chairs. Set the chairs close together so it is easy to hear each other and there is a sense of intimacy. In addition to one chair per team member there is one extra, open chair. This is the “team chair”. When people sit here and speak they speak the voice of the team.

**Instructions:**

1. The exercise begins from the team member's personal position. Complete the sentence, out loud, "I am here to..." and complete the sentence.

Everyone on the team adds their own unique perspective, completing that sentence. People can pop randomly, like popcorn, or you can go around the circle in order.

Team members will begin to hear common points of view.

2. At some point one team member will have a sample for the team purpose. That person leaves their personal chair and sits in the Voice of the Team chair. The team sentence is:

***We are here to...***

After offering a version of the team purpose, that person returns to his / her individual chair as the team discusses that first offering. Some may say, "I love the part that says..." Others may say, "Here's the piece I think is still missing."

Continue this exercise until the team has a purpose statement — a statement that is short, clear and has energy behind it.

3. Some people will take notes during the discussion and some will not. It's a personal choice. Inevitably someone wants to start writing on the flip chart these sample ideas.
4. The coaches job is to just listen and observe, keeping in mind the words, "How a team does anything is how a team does everything." This will be another example of the team in action.

One place you (coach) may need to intervene is when the team begins struggling to have the perfect words or to include everyone's suggestion. The process becomes a grinding analytic experience instead of an inspiring, creative one. Also — shorter is better. 15 words or less would be a good target. You may need to remind the team that this is just for the team's use. Some things don't need to be written into the purpose statement because everyone on the team knows it is included.

Action words are best.

Examples:

- *"We are here to innovate, communicate, collaborate."*
- *"We are here to empower change."*
- *"We are here to learn, practice and lead."*