

# BASIC Team Learning Process

## BASIC Team Learning Process: Applying the Four As to Mastery

This document provides a path to resources on [theleadershipwall.com](http://theleadershipwall.com) website designed to facilitate the building of BASIC Teams. Relevant resources in each phase of professional learning can be accessed by holding Control and clicking on the link of interest.

[The Four A's to Mastery](#) Document on the [Leadership Theory](#) Page, describes the following stages in the professional learning process:

- **Awareness** of the need to develop a new skill
- **Attempting** to learn or improve the skill
- **Acquiring** the skill through deliberate practice
- **Adapting** skills by using them in increasingly more difficult environments
- **Mastering** skills so they become relatively automatic

Let us consider how an understanding of the above stages can be applied to the BASIC Team learning process.

**Awareness:** As noted earlier, the first stage in the team learning process is becoming aware of the main characteristics of an effective team. The acronym BASIC briefly describes the five key characteristics of a [BASIC Team](#):

### **BASIC Team Characteristics**

**Building a shared purpose**  
**Acting on common objectives**  
**Starting to work as a team**  
**Identifying member strengths**  
**Commitment to team growth**

Team members can be introduced to the BASIC Team acronym and discuss some of the key features of groups that are moving towards becoming an effective team. Reading the document entitled "[BASIC Team Characteristics](#)" can provide more details on the main features of groups that are on the road to becoming teams. Team members can then discuss whether they wish to go on to the next stage of trying to become a BASIC Team.

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**Attempting:** In the early stages of team learning, it is important to consider how one might actually go about learning a particular skill. For example, some of the possible approaches might include:

- ✓ Observing and discussing teams that work effectively and efficiently.
- ✓ Taking the time for members of the “team” to complete the [BASIC Team Development Questionnaire](#) and then discussing the strengths and areas that might need to be addressed.
- ✓ Reading some of the Selected References on teams provided in the document on BASIC Team Characteristics.
- ✓ Using the Internet to retrieve ideas on how to improve teamwork skills.

The key point is for the leaders of the team and its members to set aside some time to assess where they are in the team building process and then plan how they are going to proceed. See the document: [Developing and Leading BASIC, SMART, and GREAT Teams.](#)

**Acquiring:** The acquisition of a personal or team skill usually involves deliberate practice. Identifying a set of skill cues that can guide the learning process has proven to be very helpful, especially in the early stages of learning. Receiving encouragement and supportive feedback during the learning process can be especially helpful. Hence, in team learning situations, it is important for the team leader or leaders to establish a supportive learning environment in which new skills can be practiced with minimal criticism but with helpful feedback.

The [TEAMWORK acronym](#) provides a useful set of skill prompts that can help a group learn to become an effective BASIC Team. Sharing the TEAMWORK acronym and discussing its content with team members has proven to be a helpful team building strategy.

### **TEAMWORK**

**T**ake time to develop a common purpose

**E**stablish a set of common goals

**A**llow everyone to contribute

**M**onitor the product and process

**W**elcome new ideas

**O**penly address problems

**R**eview progress to ensure accountability

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The above acronym-based set of phrases is only one example of the types of skill cues that one can use to enhance the BASIC team learning process. For example, reflecting on the items in the [TEAMWORK Questionnaire](#) can also provide other ideas on ways one can enhance the team learning process.

Team leaders can also refer to the strategies in the [Leading of BASIC Teams](#) document and try to implement them during team meetings. The team leaders should try to ensure that the professional learning environment is one that facilitates optimal team learning. In addition, they may also find it useful to complete the [BASIC Team Leadership Questionnaire](#) and identify their areas of strength and areas in which they may wish to improve.

**Adapting:** As the competence and confidence of the team improves, further progress can be made by discussing, learning and using other leadership skills that have been included on this website. For example, team leaders might wish to consider how to improve the way that they plan meetings by referring to the [PLANNING acronym](#) or decide to review the [CHAIRING acronym](#) to identify ways to improve how meetings are managed. They might also wish to review the [pros and cons of different decision-making methods](#) and decide to improve how they make group decisions. The key point is that as the team faces different challenges they can decide to access and learn different leadership skills, which can enhance their work together. Of course, identifying and learning new skills, especially group or team process skills is the first step towards becoming a [SMART Team](#).

**Mastering:** The final stage of mastery is reached when one can perform a skill relatively automatically. In the case of learning to be a BASIC Team, mastery in this case simply means being ready to move on to SMART Team learning processes. The path to mastery varies in length but the above four stages of professional learning are usually involved. Moreover, it is important to recognize that team members should expect to experience some performance dips on the journey so that they are ready to deal with them in a positive and realistic manner.

### Selected References

- Hackman, J. R. (2002). *Leading teams: Setting the stage for great performances*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Hackman, R & Wageman, R. (2005). When and how team leaders matter, *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 26, 37-74. Retrieved [http://groupbrain.wjh.harvard.edu/jrh/pub/JRH2005\\_3.pdf](http://groupbrain.wjh.harvard.edu/jrh/pub/JRH2005_3.pdf)
- Solansky, S.T. (2008). Leadership style and team processes in self-managed teams. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, 14(4), pp. 332-341. Retrieved <http://www.sagepub.com/northouse5e/study/articles/pdfs/11-Solansky.pdf>