

## GREAT Team Learning Process

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

This document is one of a series on team learning based on the BASIC, SMART, and GREAT Team Development Framework. It provides a path to resources on [theleadershipwall.com](http://theleadershipwall.com) website designed to facilitate the building of SMART Teams. Relevant resources in each phase of the four phases of professional learning can be accessed by holding Control and clicking on the link of interest.

As noted in other documents, [The Four A's to Mastery](#) 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 SMART 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 SMART briefly describes the five key characteristics of a [GREAT Team](#):

#### **GREAT Team Characteristics**

**G**roup results are powerful  
**R**esponding to personal growth  
**E**nabling shared leadership  
**A**cting collaboratively  
**T**eam trust very high

Team members can discuss the GREAT Team acronym and consider some of the key features of teams that are operating at this very high level of development. Reading the document entitled [“Developing GREAT Teams”](#) can provide more details on the

## GREAT Team Learning Process

main features of such teams. Team members can then discuss whether they are currently a GREAT Team or they may consider what they need to do to become one.

**Attempting:** As with individual skill learning, teams need to consider how they will go about acquiring or improving their skills. As noted in related documents, some of the possible approaches might include:

- ✓ Observing and discussing teams that are recognized as being very effective.
- ✓ Taking the time for team members to complete the [GREAT Team Development Questionnaire](#) and then reflecting on the extent to which they are operating as a GREAT Team.
- ✓ Reading some of the [Selected References on GREAT Teams](#) provided in the document on Developing GREAT Teams.
- ✓ Using the Internet to retrieve ideas on specific processes and strategies that might be enhance their effectiveness as a team.

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 personal or team skills usually involves increased attentional focus and deliberate practice. Hence, receiving encouragement and supportive feedback during the learning process can be especially beneficial. In the case of moving towards SMART Team performance, where new or unfamiliar group processes or strategies will be employed, it is especially important for team leaders to remind the members of the team that they must be willing to take risks and appreciate that initially their performance may be negatively impacted as they acquire these new skills.

Team leaders may also find it useful to consider the strategies in the [Leading GREAT Teams](#) document and try to employ them as they see fit. Team leaders should try to ensure that the professional learning environment is one that facilitates optimal team learning. In trying to ensure that the learning environment is actually an effective one, team leaders may find it useful to complete the [Professional Learning Environment Checklist](#). In addition, they may also find it useful to complete the [GREAT Team Leadership Questionnaire](#) and identify their areas of strength and areas in which they may wish to improve.

**Adapting:** As the effectiveness and efficiency of the team improves, further progress can be made by discussing, learning and using other leadership skills that have been

## GREAT Team Learning Process

included on this website. For example, team leaders might wish to consider how to improve the way the team makes collaborative decisions. In doing so they may find it useful to review the document on [Collaborative Decision-making Methods](#) or the related one on [Consensus Decision-making](#).

**Mastering:** The final stage of mastery is reached when one can perform a skill relatively automatically. In the case of GREAT Teams, this means acquiring a variety of sophisticated group processes and skills designed to effectively meet the shared goals of the team. However, it goes beyond this level to the development of a high degree of collegial trust, which is the glue that binds a GREAT team together and makes it such a powerful force within any organization. Quite simply, GREAT Teams are not formed over night or by just talking about their characteristics; rather, team learning at this stage requires a significant amount of time and ongoing commitment.

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# **GREAT Team Learning Process**

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