Team Building with Microsoft Teams

Prompt: With our accelerated transition to a hybrid world, how can technology effectively tackle the need for collaboration to innovate remotely and create impact for a better future?

Product Design Exercise • Spring 2022

Collaboration at the Workplace

Effective collaboration is crucial for a company's success.

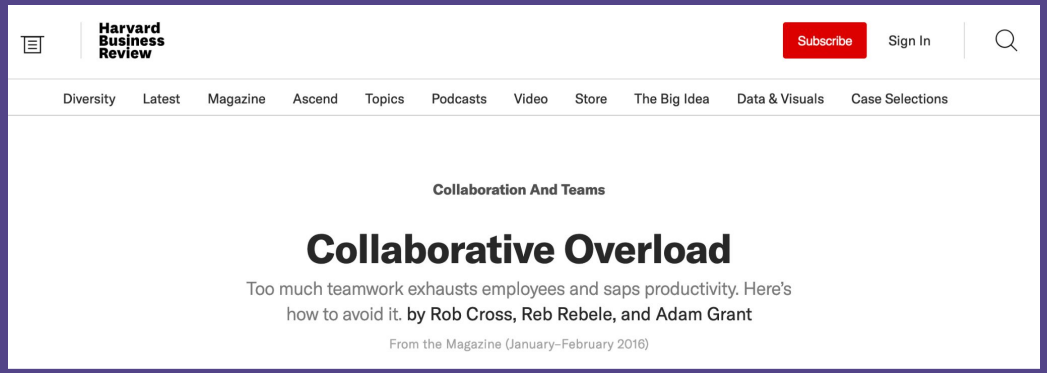
Evidence-based advantages:

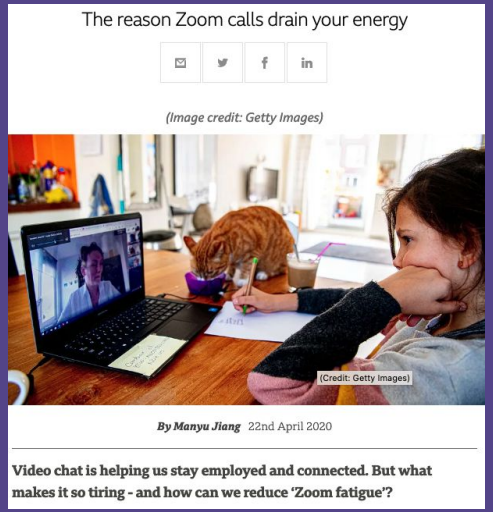
- Groups innovate faster, notice and correct mistakes faster and find more innovative solutions to problems.
- People working in groups report higher job satisfaction.
- Collaboration results in increased profitability.

However, more collaboration ≠ more effectiveness

More than 75% of an employee's workday is already spent communicating with colleagues.

Furthermore, remote collaboration introduces more challenges.





NARROWING DOWN

How can we optimize collaboration in hybrid/remote settings?

As the time employees can spend collaborating is limited, there needs to be a way to uncover insights about how people work together and apply these insights to make collaboration more effective.

Optimizing an individual's performance is not as effective as optimizing how people work *together* as part of a team.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In this era of hybrid and remote work, how can the tools we use to collaborate also help facilitate building more effective teams?

DEFINING INTENDED USER GROUPS

Collaboration is a life-skill

Although employees at all levels would benefit from the proposed solution, the impact will be highest for early-career professionals working in hybrid settings, who are still developing their collaboration skills.

Having access to the right data will allow them to ask the right questions and develop the necessary self-awareness as well group-awareness skills.

USER PERSONA

Yogendra Singh, 21

Agra

Needs, Motivations and Aspirations

Yogendra recently accepted an offer to join a global tech company as an Interaction Designer. He will be starting his role remotely and his colleagues will be from diverse backgrounds. He is excited but also apprehensive about how he'll fit into the team.

He wants to perform well in his job and wants to know what the rest of team expects out of him, as well as understand how he's contributing to the broader goals of the company.

What makes a great team great?

Why do some teams seem to “click” effortlessly while working in others result in painful experiences?

In a large-scale study, it was found:

- A mix of specific personality types, skills or backgrounds did not matter.
- Socializing outside work was also not mandatory.
- Some groups had a strong manager, and some groups operated with less hierarchy.

Understanding “Group Norms”

Unwritten rules pertaining to customs, habits and expectations for how things are done in that group.

Most often they are implied, but they a major effect on a group’s cohesiveness, and therefore effectiveness.

A company looking to maintain its competitive advantage must find ways to uncover and influence group norms to build high-performing teams.

The 2 Most Important Norms

1. Everyone gets to speak roughly equally
2. The team has high average social sensitivity, i.e. team members are skilled at intuiting how others felt based on their tone of voice, expressions and other non-verbal cues.

These traits are aspects of “psychological safety”

High psychological safety = more effective teams.

Stages of Group Development

These stages are Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjourning.

As there are common patterns of behaviours, team needs and leadership requirements associated with each stage, and knowing on which stage the team is on at any moment will allow adjusting collaborative work expectations accordingly will have a profound impact on the team's effectiveness, especially in remote/hybrid settings.

PROPOSED DESIGN SOLUTION

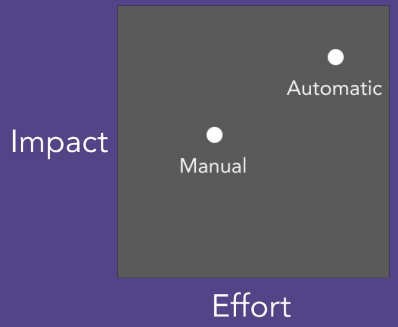
Creating and Integrating a rubric for building and maintaining high performing remote groups within Microsoft Teams.

1. Tracking Team Development Stages

The team development stage can be tracked in two ways:

- Manually: through questionnaires and self-reporting
- Automatically: by applying Natural Language Processing on team communication (chats, emails, online meetings)

Impact vs Effort Matrix



Manual tracking: prone to more bias so likely will have a lesser impact, but it will also be significantly easier to implement, hence this is the chosen approach

2. Quantifying Psychological Safety

1. Tracking how many minutes each person speaks during a meeting
2. Surveying team members about their perception of the team's average social sensitivity.

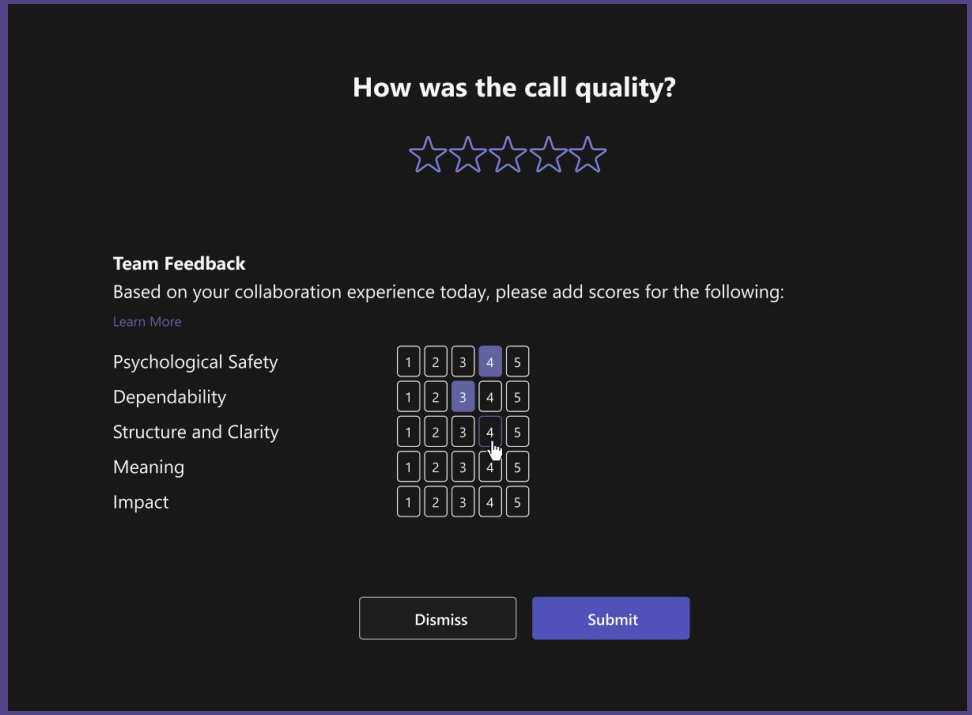
These two metrics can be combined to create a "Team Score" which allows team members and managers to gauge the current and future effectiveness of their team.

PROPOSED FEATURE #1

Adding Team Development Feedback Forms

At the end of the last meeting each day, team members are presented with:

- 5 thought-provoking questions about their collaboration experience.
- A summary of how much time each participant spoke during the meeting(s).

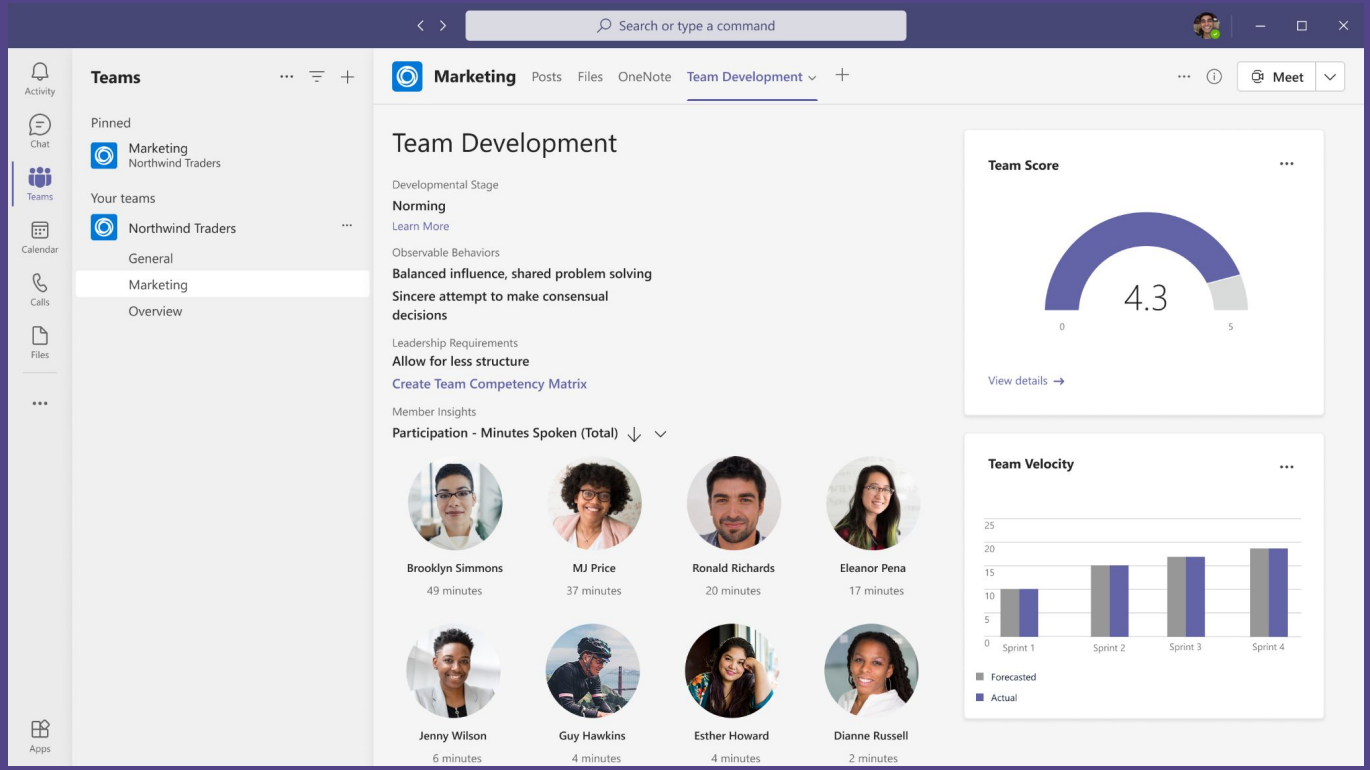


High-Fidelity Mockups made in Figma

PROPOSED FEATURE #2

Team Development Summary Tab

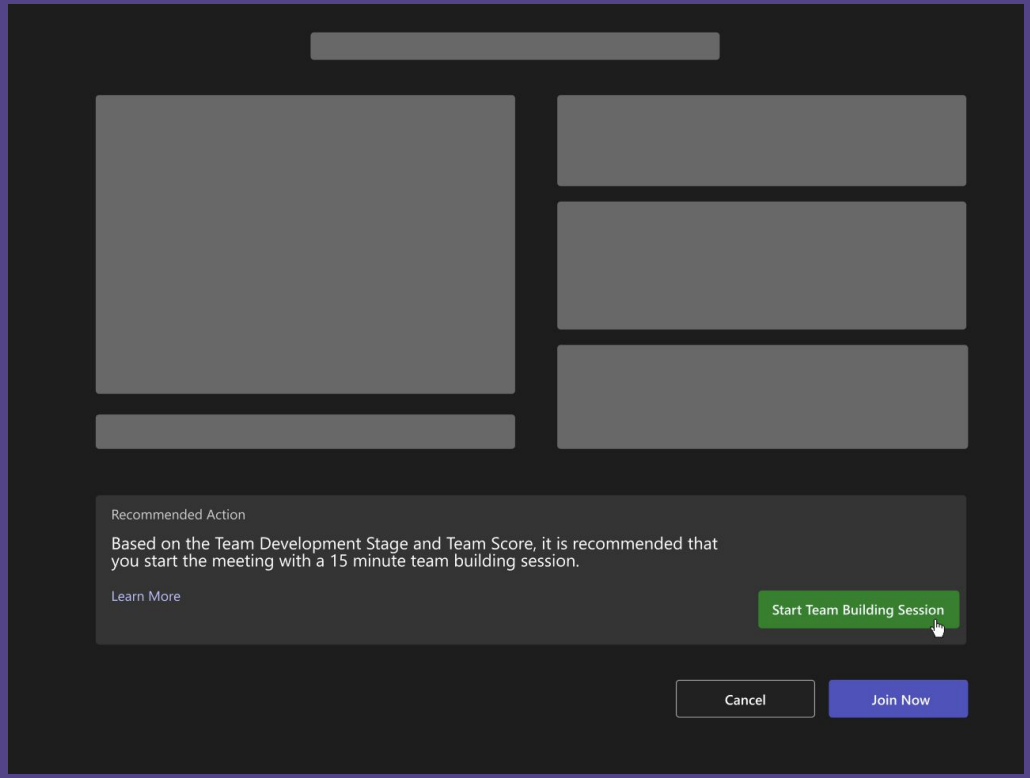
Tracking minutes spoken and group development



PROPOSED FEATURE #3

Recommended Actions when meeting starts

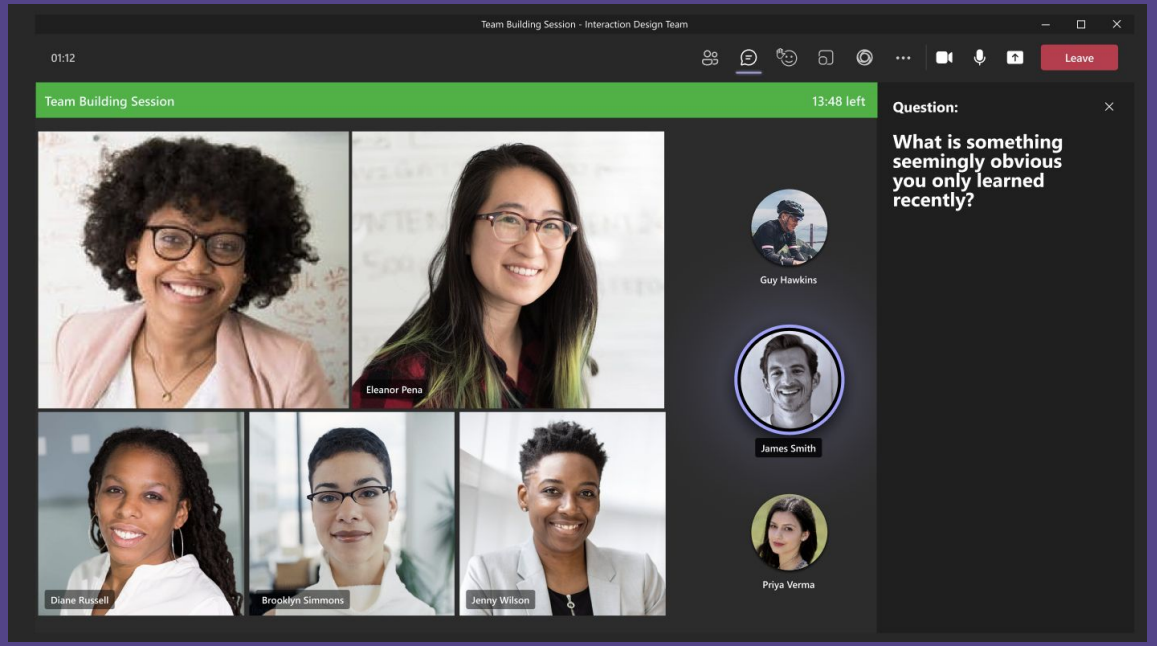
If the Team Score is low, recommended actions are shown at the beginning of the meeting, encouraging members to engage in virtual team building activities facilitated by the software itself which provides questions and prompts.



PROPOSED FEATURE #4

Team Building Prompts

During Team Building Sessions, prompts will be shown in the chat window. This will encourage discussions and will help increase team cohesiveness.



IMPACT

“What gets measured, gets managed” - Peter Drucker

- Results from these surveys will let all the members know the health of their team and encourage them to take adequate measures to address the issues in subsequent meetings.
- Team members will also have the right vocabulary to address the issues.

IMPACT

Higher Visibility → Timely Corrective Actions

- Managers can also use these insights and conduct team-building activities, or if required change the members of the team so that the right balance is achieved.
- Managers will also get to know their own effectiveness as a leader and get the opportunity to make necessary adjustments