

## What High Performing Teams Look Like (audio transcript)

>> **Martyna:** Hey Yasaman, so today I wanted to share some really neat insights with you about teamwork. Have you ever heard about Google's Project Aristotle?

>> **Yasaman:** Hi Martyna. It sounds familiar, but tell me more.

>> **Martyna:** Ok well, as you know, a lot of the work Google does is collaboratively in teams – it's how they create and innovate. Back in 2018 Google decided that teamwork was so important to the organization that they had to figure out the secrets of their high performing teams. Obviously, teamwork can be hard and not all teams are successful, but if Google could figure out what makes great teams so great, then, they'd be onto something.

>> **Yasaman:** Interesting. So, what did they do?

>> **Martyna:** They decided that they had to conduct their own research. So, Google spent lots of time and lots of money studying over 180 teams to find the answer.

And here's what they found that's so interesting to me.

You know, typically, we think that teams that work well together are probably all great friends and get along really well, even outside of work or class, or there's this perfect mix of personalities. This was something even the researchers hypothesized, and while yes, getting along with your team and having good professional relationships with your teammates is important, researchers were surprised to find that this variable wasn't the strongest in explaining the success of high performing teams.

>> **Yasaman:** Interesting. So, if the secret isn't just about being great friends or having a perfect combination of certain personalities on your team, then what is it? What did the researchers find?

>> **Martyna:** Well, they found five key things that high performing teams had in common:

First, they found that high performing teams were dependable, they got things done on time and met expectations, they had structure and clarity, so they defined their goals and roles, the work the team completed had meaning to each person, and the group believed in the impact their work had, and most importantly, these teams were working in psychologically safe environments, where people could take risks, voice opinions, and ask questions. Together, these elements were what made these teams so great.

But what I really wanted to share with you today was some of the insights researchers shared around how these teams behaved:

On high performing teams, researchers found that at the end of the day each person on the team spoke roughly the same amount. And this was important because the way these teams communicated impacted their creativity and collective intelligence. When speaking and listening was distributed more equally, teams performed well, compared to situations where speaking was primarily done by one person or a select few. We can see here too, why psychological safety is so important then.

They also found that high performing teams practiced being socially sensitive or what we also refer to as emotional intelligence. So, researchers actually measured this by looking at a team's ability to read how others felt based on non-verbal cues, tone of voice, and body language.



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Generally, this involved having an awareness of how their teammates felt. This is something that I've definitely started to think about more when I'm on Zoom team meetings.

>> **Yasaman:** This is really helpful stuff to know, but it also feels like a lot. How do I just ask my team to start to do all of this?

>> **Martyna:** You're right, these are obviously areas that require practice and experience, and even the best leaders and teams have to continue to develop these skills. A good place to start, like I shared in my example, is to think about how you can apply these learnings to your own interactions with your team. The next time you're in a meeting with your team, practice applying these behaviours and reflect on how things go. There are also a lot of great tools and frameworks teams can use when they come together to set norms in place around how the team will work. If you want to prioritize communicating equally and making sure you set clear goals, you can include this information in your Team Charter and Project Plan, for example.

>> **Yasaman:** Great points! I definitely want to apply these insights, I'll let you know how it goes at my next team meeting.

