



10-minute books

How to improve your team's performance

2 – Relationships in team and psychological safety

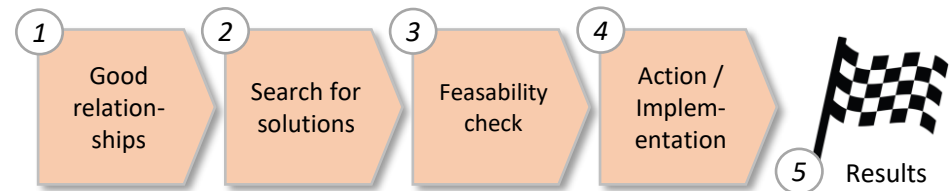


The greater the challenges, the more essential the quality of the relationships within the team!

If you ask your employees what was the most important success factor of a high-performing team in which they participated, they will certainly answer "the quality of the relationships in the team "¹⁾.

This experience is confirmed by research: Psychological safety – the belief shared by all members that it is possible to suggest ideas, admit mistakes and take risks without fear of negative reactions from the group – is the element that best characterises high-performing teams at Google.

Psychological security is the opposite of "live and let live" or a comfort zone: It is about commitment, taking risks and being able to deal with difficult issues in a constructive way.



A team in which good relationships are built seeks solutions and uses the *collective intelligence and energy* of its members. A focus on finding solutions and helping each other to implement them are, in my experience, the best indicators of a high-performing team.

When relationships are not good enough, members first look at feasibility and the reasons why something is not possible (the "yes, but ..." syndrome). Above all, they use their *protective intelligence and energy*; the solutions proposed or their implementation are not up to the challenges.

¹⁾ See the 10-minute book « Success factors of a team »

Maturity degrees of the quality of relationships in a team

This table describes the maturity degrees of the quality of relationships in a team and will enable you to better identify in which relational areas your team needs to evolve to become even more effective.

How can you improve relationships and psychological security in your team?

I have developed or am using proven approaches. The most effective ones - which can be practised by the team without the help of a coach - are presented in the following pages.

	Initial	Defined	Performant	Excellent
Relationship management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quality of relationships is left to chance Belief that "it is not possible to improve the quality of relations". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quality of relations is essentially managed on a bilateral basis Resignation about the quality of certain relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness that active management of the quality of relationships is an essential element for the team's performance Adapted approaches and methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quality of relations is addressed systematically Belief that "there is always room for improvement"
Sense of belonging and mutual support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every man for himself Achieving personal goals is more important than those of the team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entente cordiale: "Live and let live". The team is late in helping members in difficulty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Together Sense of belonging It is easy to ask for help to secure the team's results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One for all, all for one Very strong feeling of belonging to the team Strong reciprocity between team members
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absent or destructive discussions, or even toxic Essentially protective intelligence: Fear of being judged or perceived as ignorant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult issues are not addressed, low energy: Fear of disagreement Feasibility oriented discussions ("yes, but ...") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult topics are addressed Lively, constructive and solution-oriented discussions ("yes, and also ...") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intelligence and collective energy are fully utilised Optimism dominates
Trust and recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team members do not trust each other They don't believe others are capable of success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited confidence in the ability of other members to do their work to the best of their ability, within deadlines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confidence in the ability of the other members to do their work to the best of their ability, within deadlines Mutual recognition actively expressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very strong mutual trust Mutual respect Mutual recognition is a strong source of motivation for members
Attitude towards mistakes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Fear</i>: Members are afraid of making mistakes or being perceived as incompetent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Acceptation</i>: Mistakes are recognised and corrected but are only perceived as negative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Learning</i>: Mistakes are researched, discussed and used as a source of improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Source of development</i>: Belonging to the team is understood as a continuous learning process

Increasing team spirit and recognition: "Two good things and who I am grateful to"

To create a cohesive team relationship, members need to get to know each other. Rituals are a simple and effective way to bring about meaningful change. They accelerate collaboration, creativity and trust and, above all, ensure that good team relationships are maintained. Consistency is essential!

- A very effective ritual that I have developed from individual positive psychology exercises is to start the team meeting **every fortnight** by asking for



– *What are my two successes or positive highlights of the last two weeks?*



– *Who am I grateful to?*

Each member writes their answers on three Post-it® notes and presents them in less than a minute. The ritual usually lasts less than ten minutes and generates several very important effects:

- The team no longer focuses only on the problems to be solved, but also, and this on a very regular basis, on the successes ("we are a team that works")
 - Each member has a better understanding of what others are working on and what motivates them
 - Very often, recognition is expressed towards another team member (although this is not an obligation) and the effect of a public "thank you" is particularly powerful for cohesion. Lack of recognition is one of the most common criticisms in teams, so it is an important point!
- In a more traditional way, it is also useful to regularly invite the team for coffee or to organise a **monthly** "breakfast" in the office. This is simple but often effective.

Actively manage relationships

The quality of a relationship – both within the team and with other stakeholders – can and should be managed. I recommend that team members think about the following questions that they rarely ask themselves. The answers often bring significant improvements:

- What is a good relationship for me? What do I expect from the relationship (of course in the professional context, where the aim of the relationship is to achieve results)?
- How much of a % do I live each of my professional relationships as I wish?
- What prevents me from improving it? What can I do about it?

Improving bilateral relations: "Speed dating"

Even in well-functioning teams, relationships sometimes tend to deteriorate: Small disappointments, resentments, irritations that accumulate in the heat of the moment do not disappear on their own. They need to be addressed, resolved, even forgiven in a setting that ensures a constructive approach.

One exercise that I recommend to the teams I coach is to do a "speed dating" **every six months**. Each team member talks one-on-one for 12 minutes with each other (about an hour for a team of six people) with the aim of improving their relationship. The exchanges take place in parallel and are timed. A sound indicates the need to change partners, even if the discussion is not over.

The discussions are structured around the following four themes. The intention is always positive: to improve the working relationship.

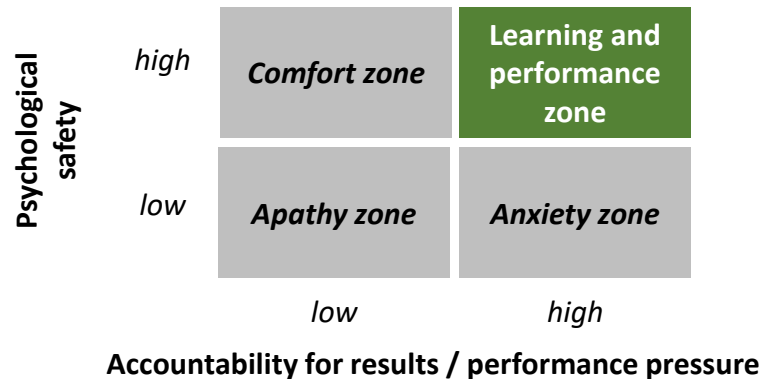


- *What I like about you*
- *What you need to know about me*
- *What I expect from our relationship*
- *What I would like to discuss with you*

Creating an atmosphere of trust and learning from mistakes

If mistakes are accepted and seen as a source of learning, it encourages participation, generates more innovative ideas and better decisions.

For Amy Edmonson, who developed the concept of psychological safety, this attitude is the only one that allows the team to reach its learning and hence performance zone:



It is the manager's daily actions that define the quality of the team's psychological safety. Here are some approaches you can use:

- Define team work not as an execution issue but as a learning issue
- Make sure that the team has solution-oriented discussions, not just feasibility discussions (the "yes, but ..." syndrome)
- Invite team members to clearly express their demands to others. Often they have never structured or expressed them!
- If some members are not participating enough, practice progressive collaboration: start working alone, then in pairs, then in fours, then in groups. The "1-2-4-All" is perfect for brainstorming and feedback sessions

Good luck with the development of your team!

Contact

Do you still have questions? Teams to develop? A transformation to manage? Do not hesitate to contact me.



Pierre Frot

pierre@frot.de +49 179 703 17 85

Pierre Frot (MSc., MBA, Dipl. Psych.) is a coach, team coach and expert in change management and transformation.

Based in Munich, Germany, he works on assignments in English, German and French.

You can find his detailed career path and skills on LinkedIn or Xing.

LinkedIn **XING**

Find and download all my 10-minute books on my website **www.frot.de**

