

Overview

What is the role of data in building, managing, and sustaining high-performing teams? This course examines this question, drawing in part on sports teams for inspiration. It explores how high-performing teams differ from their competitors across four main dimensions: management, talent, system, and culture. It also looks at how data can be used to improve decision making and performance across each of these dimensions, including defining and framing the competitions in which a team engages, identifying and developing talent, designing and implementing a team's system, and shaping a team's culture. Students will be asked to apply the lessons learned from this class to a team they either lead or are a part of currently.

Grading

This course is pass/fail. Students will earn a passing grade by doing the following:

- Attending all sessions
- Participating in class discussions and exercises
- Writing a two-page reflection paper, due on Canvas no later than January 26

Course Schedule

Day 1, January 8

MORNING SESSION: 8:30am-11:30am

Part 1: Reflections on Winning Teams

We begin our work in small groups where each student will reflect on a winning team they have been on in the past and why it was successful. Then, based on pre-work, students will share relevant context about the team they will focus on for their project in the class.

Part 2: Why Teams Win

This session examines how high-performing teams differ from their competitors across four main dimensions: management, talent, system, and culture. We explore the relationships between each of these dimensions, how they complement and sometimes contradict one another. We also discuss the range of individual and team performance data now available and the ethical considerations in data collection and use.

AFTERNOON SESSION: 1pm-4pm

Part 1: Identifying and Developing Talent

In this session we focus on the talent dimension of winning teams. We look at talent identification and development processes and how data can be used in each to result in better outcomes.

Part 2: Data Workshop: Measuring Your Team's Talent

We apply what we have learned about talent evaluation to your own team. We introduce you to techniques to measure your current team's talent base relative to your business needs. You will leave this workshop with a data-informed view of your team's current strengths, talent gaps that need to be filled, and an action plan on how to fill them.

Day 2, January 9

MORNING SESSION: 8:30am-11:30am

Part 1: Designing and Implementing a Winning System

We start the day with a focus on team systems, another key dimension of winning teams. This session explores how to design a team system that maximizes the potential of the talent on your team. This includes both strategy – choosing a system that will outperform an opponent – as well as execution – implementing an efficient and repeatable process that incentivizes team members to perform at the highest level. We also consider the importance of team agility and the ability of a team to adjust quickly and with precision to respond to an opponent's strategy. Finally, we explore mechanisms for feedback and iteration to continuously improve your team.

Part 2: Data Workshop: Measuring Your Team's System

We apply what we have learned about team system design and implementation to your own team. We introduce you to techniques to measure your team's system according to shared success metrics that align with business needs. You will leave this session with a plan to measure and optimize your team's system to win more consistently.

AFTERNOON SESSION: 1pm-4pm

Part 1: Sustaining a Winning Culture

Winning once can be achieved through a mix of superior effort and luck, but can it be sustained? In this session we turn to a final dimension of winning teams: culture. We look at the main cultural challenges to sustained winning, including handling the inevitable losses, employee turnover, bad actors, superstar egos, and crisis situations. How leaders respond to these situations can often make or break the team's culture. Finally, we consider the "winning team flywheel" and how a team's culture can attract superior talent, which leads to more winning and a strengthening of the team's competitive position.

Part 2: Data Workshop: Measuring Your Team's Culture

Can team culture be measured? We explore this critical question in our final data workshop and examine techniques to better define and optimize your team's culture. You will leave this session with a new perspective on enhancing one of your organization's most valuable assets.

PRE-WORK

Think about a "winning" team you have been on in the past. Winning is broadly defined and can be in the business, non-profit, or sports context.

Please reflect on these questions. You will be asked to share your answers in the session.

1. What was the context (industry, function, region) in which this team was operating?
2. What did this team achieve?
3. Why was the team so successful?
4. What is one thing that the team did that could be replicated on other teams?

INFORMATION ON IN-CLASS PROJECT

This elective will create opportunities to immediately apply lessons learned to your context. Please be prepared to analyze and discuss a team you lead or a part of currently. It would be helpful for you to come into the session with a solid understanding of the following:

- The members of the team – their strengths and weaknesses
- How the team works together
- The culture of the team

It would be ideal if this team were from your current job. But if that's not possible, no problem. You can use a team for your project from another context (e.g. volunteer group, community organization, or sports team).

FINAL REFLECTION PAPER

For students taking this course for credit, write an essay addressing this prompt:

How will you use data to improve team performance against common goal(s) in each of these three areas:

1. Identifying and developing talent
2. Designing and implementing the team's system
3. Building and sustaining the team's culture

When writing the essay, consider the data you have today as well as what new data you may need to capture.

The essay should be no more than two pages, single spaced. It is due on Canvas no later than January 26th at 11:59pm.