

[Prof. Stew Friedman](#)

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Organizations are dedicating immense resources to building team effectiveness (see [this recent NYT cover story about Google's efforts](#), for example). This 0.5 credit course teaches some of the science on which these efforts are based and how to apply it. Our goals: provide the conceptual understanding and behavioral skills required to improve team effectiveness. One student said, "I've been on good teams and bad teams, but I had no idea why they were good or bad. This class gave me a structured framework for assessing a team's effectiveness, as well as the toolkit for actually bringing about change. Undoubtedly one of the most valuable classes I've taken at Wharton."

The case material for applying course concepts will be teams you and your classmates know from observation and experience; you choose a team you are currently on (or a prior team if you are not currently on one) to study. Using Richard Hackman's model as the organizing framework, you analyze the design of your team and how you can improve it. Using Roger Schwarz's ideas and tools, you practice the behaviors that make teams work. In your final assignment, you develop a practical guide for your future action on teams. Expect to leave this course with new knowledge of how to diagnose and intervene – as leader, member, or consultant – to improve the performance, sustainability, and impact on the members of any team in any setting.

Course Materials

There is one required book: Hackman, J. R. (2002), *Leading Teams* (Harvard Business Press). Other readings and course materials are available as files on Canvas posted by Prof. Friedman, in Study.net, as free online links, and in handouts. Students are encouraged to share relevant articles, links, and videos. Assigned readings must be done completely before class. Follow up with Prof. Friedman about anything we don't cover in class that is of interest to you.

Schedule

October 27 **The Challenge / Real Teams / Eight Behaviors for Smarter Teams**
Understand the five conditions that foster team effectiveness: be a real team, have a compelling direction, have an enabling team structure, be in a supportive organizational context, and use expert coaching. Start seeing real teams; task, boundaries, authority, and stability over time. Understand the core values and assumptions of Schwarz's approach and the eight behaviors for smarter teams. Learn and practice these behaviors.

Read [Hackman, Chs. 1 and 2](#)

Read [Schwarz, R. Eight Behaviors for Smarter Teams. \(Article on his website.\)](#)

Assignment 1 [Team Effectiveness and Real Teams](#)

November 10 (AM) **Compelling Direction and Enabling Structure**
Grasp the benefits of a good direction (it energizes, it orients, and it engages) and choices about clarity and completeness of goals, degree of challenge, and alignment with organizational purposes. Understand the main elements of team structure: work design, norms that guide and constrain team behavior, and team composition.

Read [Hackman, Chs. 3 and 4](#)

Assignment 2 [Compelling Direction and Enabling Structure](#)

Case Presentation [Compelling Direction or Enabling Structure](#)
Half the students will present on November 10, the other half will do so on November 11. Your assignment for either one will be set on October 27.

November 10
(PM, both sessions) **The Impact of Hierarchy**
Experience the impact of hierarchy on team behavior via an in-class simulation.

Read [Hackman, Ch. 5](#)

November 11 **Supportive Context and Expert Coaching**
Examine the organizational conditions that support teamwork: the reward system, the information system, and the educational system. Understand how to apply coaching as interactions with a team intended to help members use their collective resources well – their effort, performance strategies, and knowledge and skill – across the task cycle.

Read [Hackman, Ch. 6](#)

Assignment 3 **Supportive Context and Expert Coaching**

Case Presentation **Supportive Context or Expert Coaching**
Half the students will present on November 10, the other half will do so on November 11. Your assignment for either one will be set on October 27.

December 8 **Psychological Safety / Imperatives for Leaders**
Learn to create psychological safety in teams and what effective leaders can do to enhance the five conditions that promote team effectiveness. Understand obstacles to creating these conditions and what must be done to overcome them.

Watch [Edmundson, Building a psychologically safe workplace \(TED talk\).](#)

Read [Hackman, Ch. 7](#)

December 9 **Better Conversations, Smarter Teams**
Teach lessons learned from trying to implement the eight behaviors for smarter teams.

Assignment 4 **Lessons Learned From Enacting the Eight Behaviors**

December 13

Final Paper **Synthesis and Applications for Future Teams**
Draw practical insights for how to continue to build your capacity for having a positive impact on teams as a leader, member, or consultant.

Reward System

The reward system for this course – aka grading – is designed to help you learn and apply the concepts so you can use them. The four assignments are worth 10% each toward your course grade (40%), the final paper is 30%, and contribution to our class community (including your case presentation) and check-ins are 30%.

Assignments

Detailed instructions for completing and posting each assignment can be found on our Canvas site. You will receive feedback from either Prof. Friedman or our TA, Michelle Rajotte, on your assignments. For the sake of fairness, a grade reduction will be applied to late assignments.

On Canvas for each assignment are instructions in MSWord files that you download, rename, complete, and submit. Assignments are due by class time, except if otherwise noted, and must be on time to earn full credit; 25% grade reduction applied for each day late, starting at due date.

Performance criteria: Demonstrated grasp and application of course concepts to observations about your current (or former) team, depth and clarity of analysis, creativity and insight, and organization. Do multiple drafts and use single-space (unless otherwise noted), 12-point font, and 1” margins all around. Name your assignment files according to the instructions in the assignment files on Canvas. Note: **You will need a Google account** to post on shared (among class) Google Sheets.

Contribution to Our Class Community and Check-ins

Attendance is required for all classes. Please be on time, in fairness to your classmates, and do not leave during class except for emergency. Turn off phones, laptops, and other electronic devices.

Positive contribution involves being (a) fully prepared to accurately discuss relevant course material, (b) curious, and (c) respectful and compassionate in interactions with others. Contribution is also affected by your performance on your case presentation (on either October 6 or 8, depending on which date you’re assigned). And contribution is not limited to the classroom, for there is opportunity to participate online by posting to Canvas.

Each class session starts with a written check-in (in which you write brief responses to a couple of questions) that informs Prof. Friedman about what students are taking from our readings and serves as way to take attendance. You will hear back from Prof. Friedman if and only if your check-in responses either do not meet expectations *or* exceed expectations; most students meet expectations.