Creating Intrinsically Motivated Teams

Alyssa Finley & Anne Cunningham

Alyssa Finley
with Avatar Ridley

- **ILMxLAB.** *Sr Producer*
- **Telltale.** *Executive Producer/Director of Production/Creative Director*
- **2K Games.** *VP Production/Executive Producer*
- **Irrational Games.** *Project Lead*
- *Former Technical Director/Programmer, Sewist, Worm Keeper & Feral Cat Friend*

Anne Cunningham
with Avatar Pigeon

- **Netflix.** *Interactive Innovation Producer*
- **Telltale.** *Executive Producer*
- **Riot Games.** *Senior Development Manager*
- **USC.** *Instructional Designer*
- **Leapfrog.** *Producer*
- *Tarantula Feeder, Grad Student, Painter, Writer, Chili Enthusiast*

How to set up your team to **maximize innovation & efficiency** in 4 easy steps:

1. **Understanding Motivation**
It's the secret sauce!

2. **Diagnostics for leaders and teams.**
Finding your starting point

3. **Solutions for aligning your team.**
Defining shared goals, values and ownership via chartering
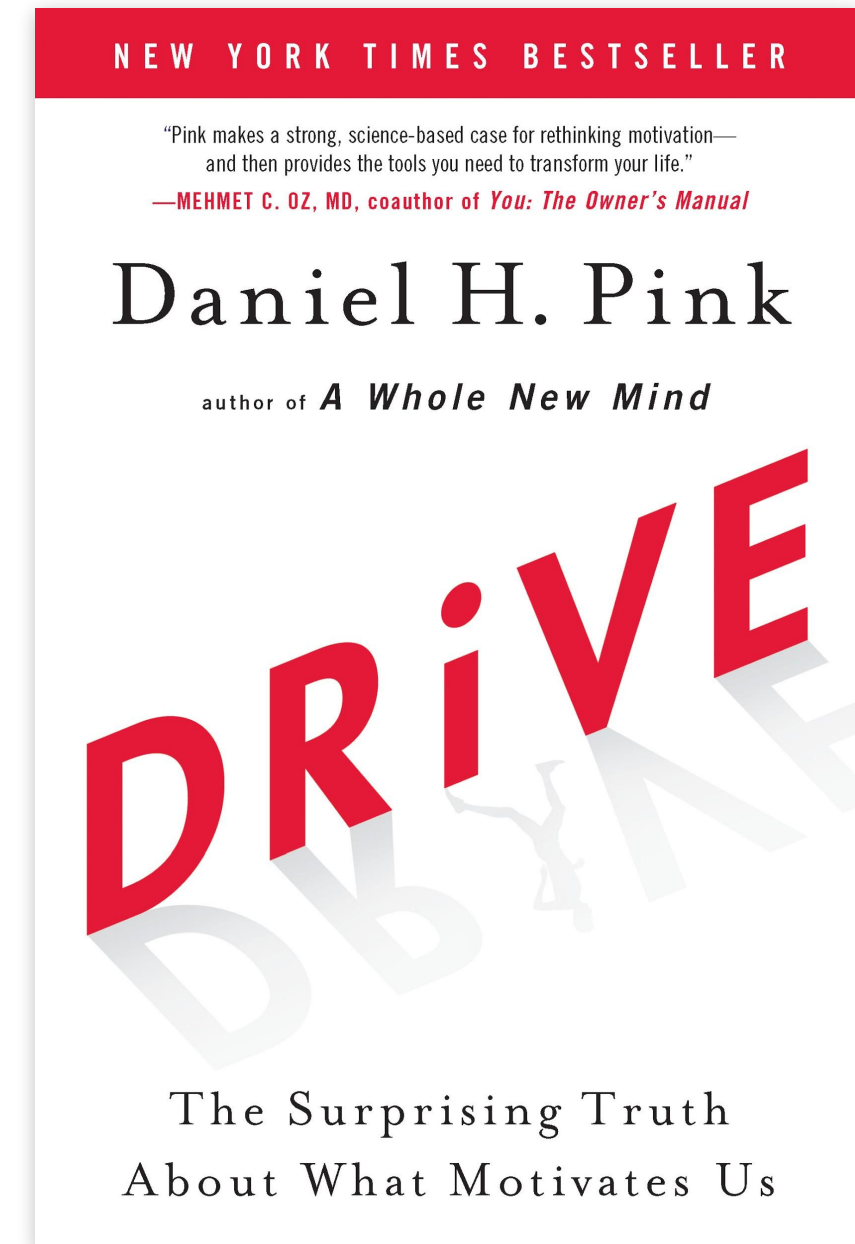
4. **Debugging the process.**
Key outcomes & measuring results

Motivation: Why?

Key Motivating Factors:

1. **Autonomy.**
   Exercising choice, being self directed

2. **Mastery**.
   Leveling up

3. **Purpose**.
   Acting with meaning and import

Drive, by Daniel Pink

Motivation: Pick Your Path

The Sequel

You have 26 months, a tiny team, and a whole lotta work to do.

OR

Wolves Among Us

New engine? No engineers? No problem!

The Sequel

Problem:
So much to do, so little time!

Solutions:

1. Value/Goal Alignment

2. Targeted Tech

3. Parallel Tracks, Minimum Dependencies

4. Trust, Responsibility And Authority

Problem:
Missing a Key Discipline

Solutions:

1. Role & Responsibility Definition

2. Owning Limitations

3. Everything Is Throwaway

Wolves Among Us

Motivation: Pick Your Path

OR

The Lane Swap
You've got a talented team of devs who love making games—and you're asked to make a port.

April Fool's Day
Your team is moving from publishing into making DLCs, and you need 1,500 spatulas.

The Lane Swap

Problem:
Changing Expectations

Solutions:

1. Translating Vision into Passion

2. Trusting with Ownership

3. Investing in Each Other

Problem:
Competing priorities, experimental goals

Solutions:

1. Refining Goals in Context

2. Acknowledging our Strengths & Limitations

3. Owning the Weird

April Fool's Day

Motivation: In Practice

What do great teams have in common?

Clarity of purpose, efficiency, ownership, collaboration.

*"If the folks know why they're doing something,
I don't need to taskmaster them."*
— Anne Cunningham

Motivation: In Practice

Dilemma:

How to control something intangible?!

Solution:

Don't control, instead guide.

Motivation: Limitations

SERENITY
to accept the things
I can not change
COURAGE to change
the things I can and
WISDOM to know
the difference

Diagnostics

Diagnostics: Leadership Styles
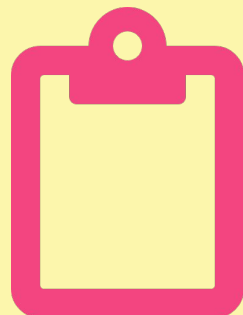
COERCIVE

"Do it because I said so"

PACESETTING

"Do as I do."

AUTHORITATIVE (VISIONARY)

"Focus on the bigger purpose."

DEMOCRATIC

"Let's work it out together"

AFFILIATIVE

"People come first."

COACHING

"Let me help you develop."

*The New Leaders (*Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee)
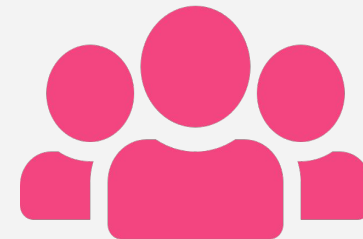
Diagnostics: Leadership Styles

AVOID **USE WISELY** **LEAN IN**
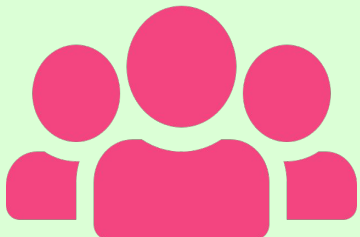
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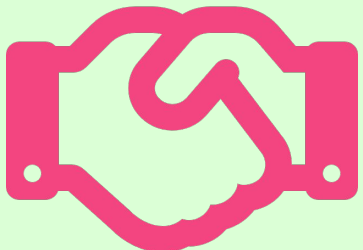
"Focus on the bigger purpose."

DEMOCRATIC

"Let's work it out together"

AFFILIATIVE

"People come first."

COACHING

"Let me help you develop."

Chartering: Starting Point

The leadership trait that I can most rely upon is:	
The leadership trait that I want to improve upon is:	
My team's symptoms of misalignment are:	
The company/project values that most affect my team are:	

Diagnostic: Emotional Intelligence

Key Traits *(on a scale of Always to Never)*	Rank yourself	Rank your boss	How would your team rank you?
Self-Aware Understands personal impact on others			
Self-Regulated In control of disruptive emotions and impulses			
Motivated Driven to achieve			
Empathetic Considerate of others feelings			
Communicative Able to influence and persuade others			

Daniel Goleman, Emotional Intelligence

# Diagnostic: Misaligned Teams

Lots of meetings, but lack of clear decisions.	
Unclear what success looks like or how it is measured.	
Priorities differ between groups on the team.	
Lack of accountability ("not my problem").	
Information isn't shared, groups are siloed.	
Team members feel disempowered.	
Team members question why this project, why this team?	

Diagnostic: Company/Team Values
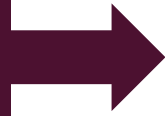
Studio Level	Product Level	Team Level
Innovation →	Risk Tolerance →	Prioritization
Talent Retention →	Work/Life Balance →	Scope Targets
Sales Goals →	Quality/Cost/Time →	Comparable Targets

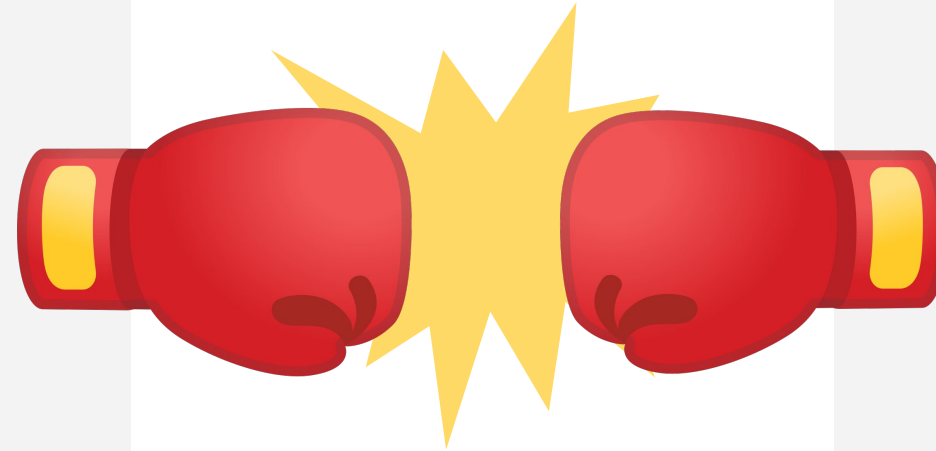|		
Fewer Better Games →	Play Not Watch →	Actions > Words

Diagnostic: Dissonant Values & Actions

PROJECT LEVEL
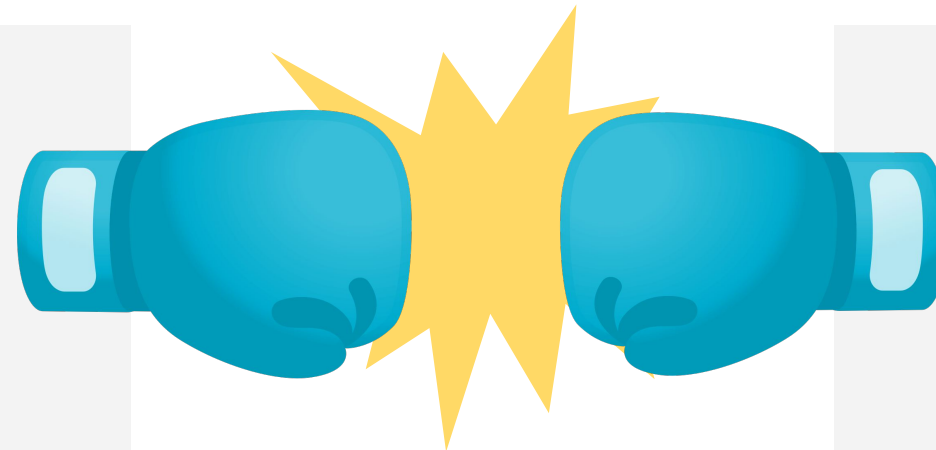"We need everyone to go all out!"

TEAM LEVEL
"The animation team is on track to deliver and doesn't need to crunch"

COMPANY LEVEL
We're doing fast-follow sequels!

PROJECT LEVEL
We're aiming for GOTY!

Culture is the Behavior You Reward and Punish (Jocelyn Goldfien)

Chartering: Starting Point Example

The leadership trait that I can most rely upon is:	• **Self-regulation.**
The leadership trait that I want to improve upon is:	• **To be communicative and persuasive with my team.**
My team's symptoms of misalignment are:	• **Team members feel disempowered.**
The company/project values that most affect my team are:	• **Lack of Work/Life Balance affecting Team Morale.** • **Desire for more team autonomy conflicting with teamwide mandates.**

Solutions

Solutions: Chartering

Chartering lays groundwork for Intrinsic Motivation.

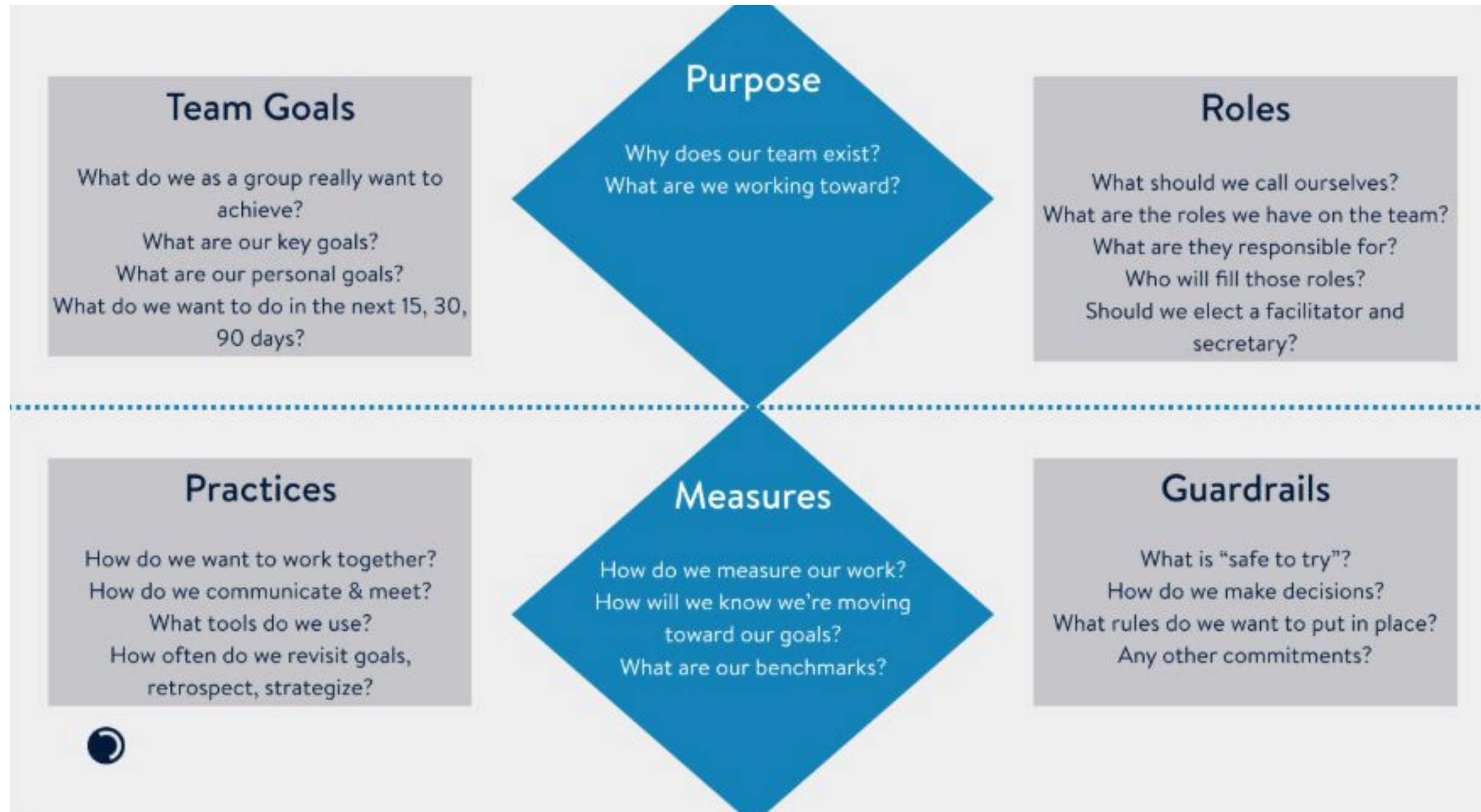- **Team Chartering**
- **Product Chartering**

Chartering focuses on ALIGNMENT

Chartering: How-To

- Carve out time.

- Include writing or drawing input so everyone participates.

- Design for collaboration.

Solutions: Chartering Template

Team Goals

What do we as a group really want to achieve?
What are our key goals?
What are our personal goals?
What do we want to do in the next 15, 30, 90 days?

Purpose

Why does our team exist?
What are we working toward?

Roles

What should we call ourselves?
What are the roles we have on the team?
What are they responsible for?
Who will fill those roles?
Should we elect a facilitator and secretary?

Practices

How do we want to work together?
How do we communicate & meet?
What tools do we use?
How often do we revisit goals, retrospect, strategize?

Measures

How do we measure our work?
How will we know we're moving toward our goals?
What are our benchmarks?

Guardrails

What is "safe to try"?
How do we make decisions?
What rules do we want to put in place?
Any other commitments?

From *A Practical Guide to Cross-Functional Work* by Alison Randel

Chartering: Many Questions

Product Chartering

- What is the problem we're trying to solve (or opportunity space, purpose, goals, mission, player value, hypothesis, etc)?
- What do have we learned from previous efforts in this space?
- What will we deliver? What is the Minimum Viable Product?
- What resources will we need to deliver this product?
- What is our timeline?
- What are our major dependencies?
- What are our assumptions?
- What are our major risks?
- What does success look like and how will we measure it?
- Who are the stakeholders and what do they need to approve/when?
- What is our definition of "done"?
- What is in scope? What is NOT in scope?
- What other titles are in this space? What are they doing well/poorly?

Team Chartering

- What is the chain of accountability?
- Who are the stakeholders and when are they consulted?
- What is each team member's role on the team?
- What is the team's role in the company?
- What does success look like for the team? How is it measured?
- How do we work through problems? What is the escalation path?
- What is the team's mission statement?
- What are the team's values?
- What are the rules of conduct? What is not okay?
- What is our process - how do we plan? What are our mechanisms for delivery, review, and evaluation of team performance?
- What is our extended ecosystem/who do we rely on and for what?
- What do we need to succeed? What tools and resources will we need? What are our major dependencies?
- What will be our biggest challenges and risks?

Chartering: **Strategy**

Focus on your team:

- What problems are they having and where are they winning?

- How big is your team? Is it cross-functional or discipline based? Is it a persistent team or ad hoc?

Chartering: **Strategy**

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

Adjust your approach:

- Is this a two day offsite or a 15 minute whiteboard exercise you can repeat as needed?

- Will this result in an illustrated poster or a collection of evolving post its?

- Does the full team participate or leads only?

Spot fixes can work!

Chartering: Big Teams

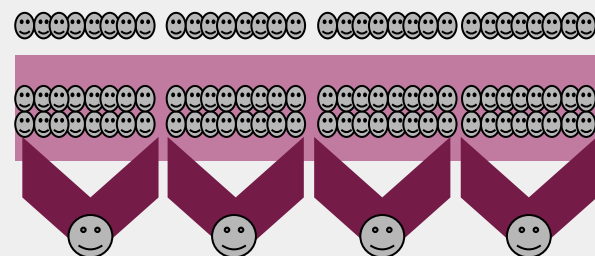**For teams over 30 people, a "scrum of scrums" model can help.**

1

PROJECT LEAD works with small team to pre-define product vision + metrics.
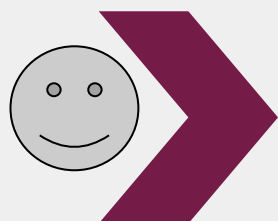
2

FUNCTIONAL TEAMS relay their ideas to a Project Lead.
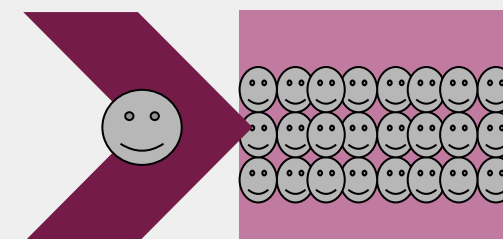
3

LEADS hold product chartering, clearly documenting the outcome.
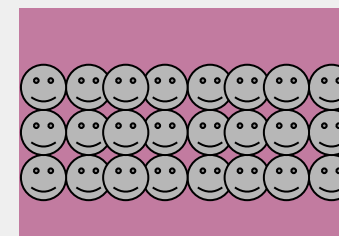
4

LEADS review product charter with their Functional Teams.

5

FUNCTIONAL TEAMS hold team chartering.

Chartering: What

Goals

Accountability

Values

Chartering: **What**

Goals	Accountability	Values

Short, Clear & Simple!

Chartering: Fundamentals of Goals

What is our goal?

Goals should be:
1. Aligned
2. Recitable

Chartering: Fundamentals of Goals

What does success look like for the team/product?

How is it measured?

Success should be:
1. Demonstrable
2. Measurable incrementally

..but manifest broadly

Chartering: Goals

Chartering: A Caution on Goals

⚠️ **Our goal is to increase player spend by 10% by releasing a DLC every quarter while reducing development costs by 5%.**

Does the goal prioritize the ends over the means?	Is the timeframe achievable?	Are there too many goals bundled together?	Is the player at the forefront? Does it inspire the team?	Is there room to innovate and make good decisions?
Unethical behavior	Crunch	Confusion	Demotivation	Constraints

Chartering: Improved Goal

⭐ **Our goal is to give players a memorable, shareable way to explore our world.**

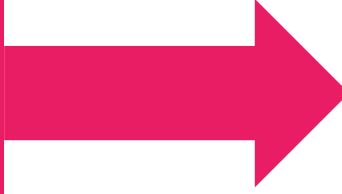| Does the goal prioritize the ends over the means? | Is the timeframe achievable? | Are there too many goals bundled together? | Is the player at the forefront? Does it inspire the team? | Is there room to innovate and make good decisions? |

Chartering: Accountability

What is each person uniquely responsible for?

→

Responsibility is:
1. Distinct
2. Accountable

Chartering: **Accountability**

Who are your Stakeholders?

→

Stakeholders are:

1. Clearly defined
2. Few in number
3. Available

Chartering: Accountability

When and how do we escalate?

→

Escalation path:

1. Steps to remedy an issue **within** the team

2. Reasons for escalation outside the team

3. Stakeholders to escalate to
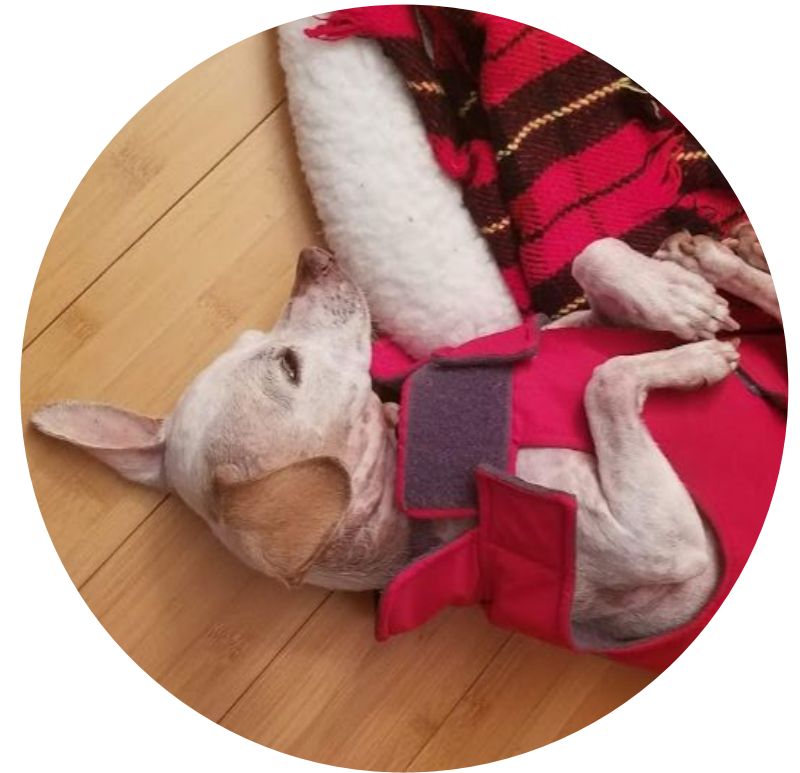
Chartering: **Accountability**

- Clarify who owns what

- Practice accountability scenarios before you need them

Chartering: **Accountability**

- Get people talking to each other

"What did they say when you told them that?"

Chartering: Values

What are our values as a team? →

What are our boundaries? What don't we do? →

Values and boundaries are:
- Best case
- Informed
- Clear, and specific

"We value the team's working time and focus."

"Work from home time is approved and communicated in advance."
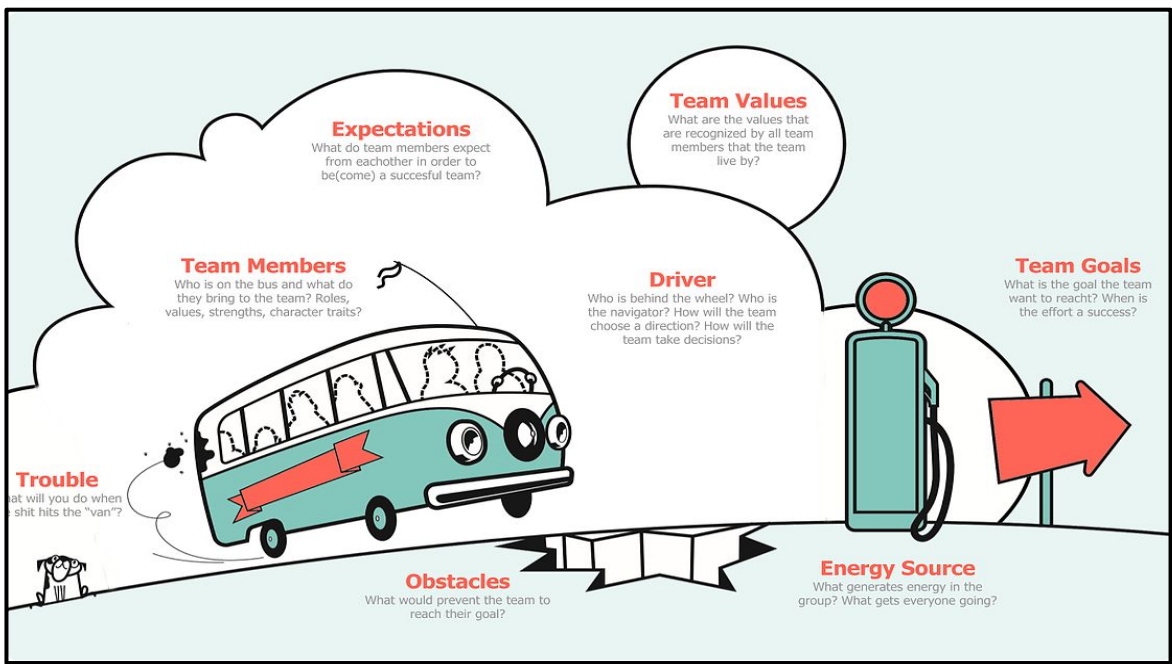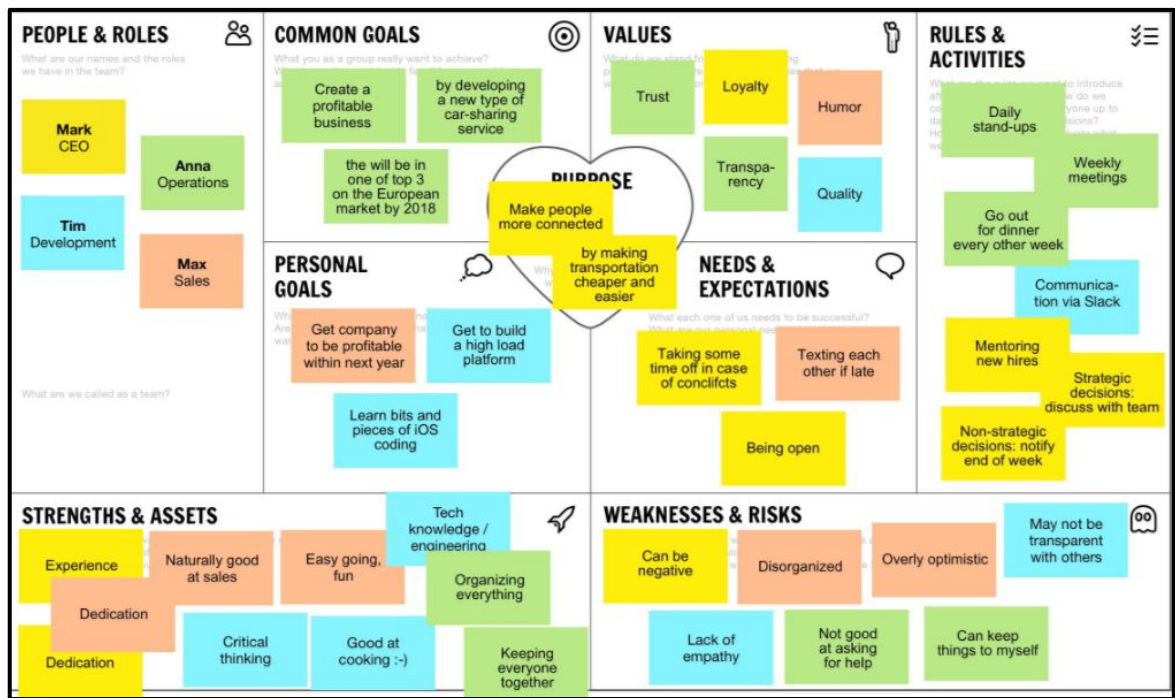
Chartering: Values

How do we communicate?

→

Communication methods are:
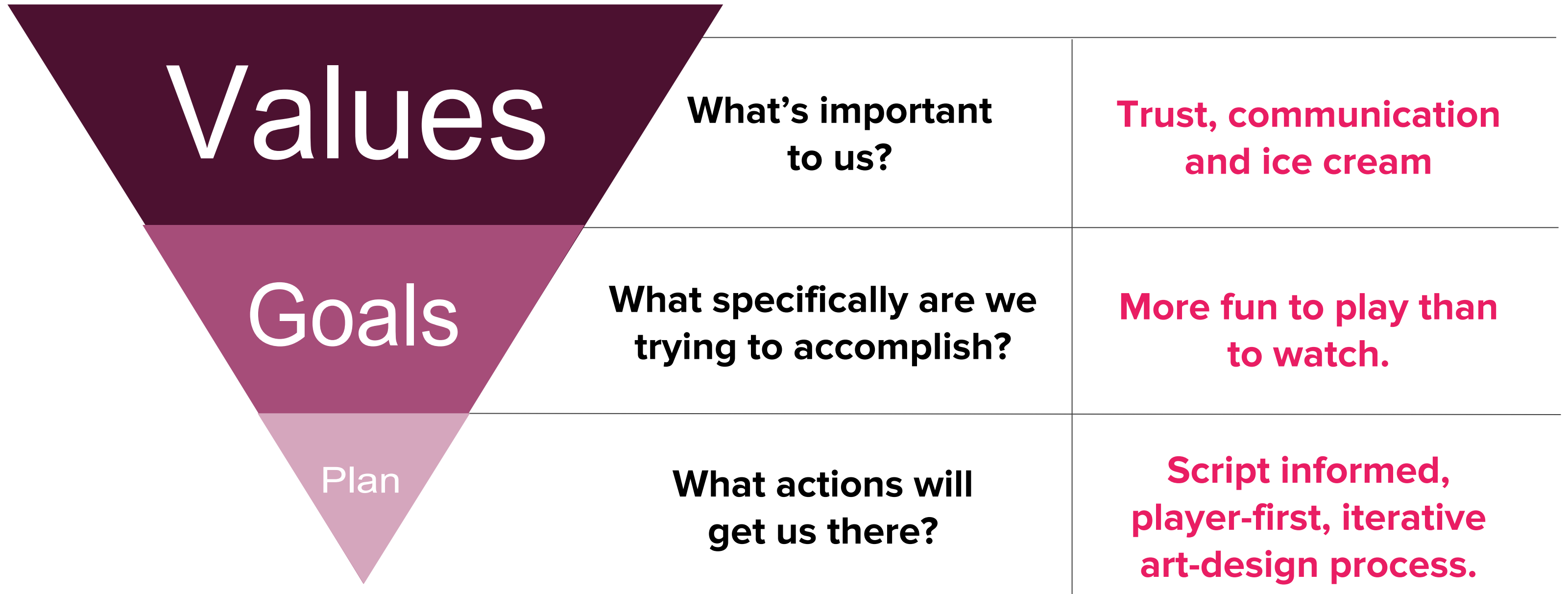- Strategic in purpose
- Tactical in usage

"Report bugs using Jira, for tracking!"

Chartering: Putting it all Together

Sources: Plays In Business, Design a Better Business, How to create your team

Key Artifacts **from One Project Charter**

Values	**What's important to us?**	**Trust, communication and ice cream**
Goals	**What specifically are we trying to accomplish?**	**More fun to play than to watch.**
Plan	**What actions will get us there?**	**Script informed, player-first, iterative art-design process.**

Solutions:
Planning with your Intrinsically Motivated Team

- Share immovable objects
- Identify success criteria
- Discuss concerns/challenges
- Strategize mitigations
- Broadcast agreed upon goals

Solutions:
Growth Goal-Informed Planning

Include individual goals in planning:

- Xavier slated for future lead role
- Yoshi needs work on reliable estimation
- Zephyr wants to move from art to design

(As appropriate for the project, but if it's not appropriate, yellow flag on that goal)

Putting It In Practice

Debugging the Process:
Diagnostics

- **Measuring Progress**
  - Can the team recite their chartered goals?
  - Do the deliverables reflect the goals? If not, why?

- **Warning Signs/Success Signals**
  - What kind of questions are coming up?
  - Where are the solutions coming from?

(The cat judges)

Debugging the Process: Actions

- **Regular & Transparent Check-ins**
  - Sharing Progress
  - Celebrating Success
  - Acknowledging Failures

- **Applying Continuous Improvement**
  - The Art of the Retrospective
  - Team Postmortems

"Not everything will go according to plan."

Key Outcomes, Measured Results

- **Onboarding Materials**

- **Stakeholder Metrics**
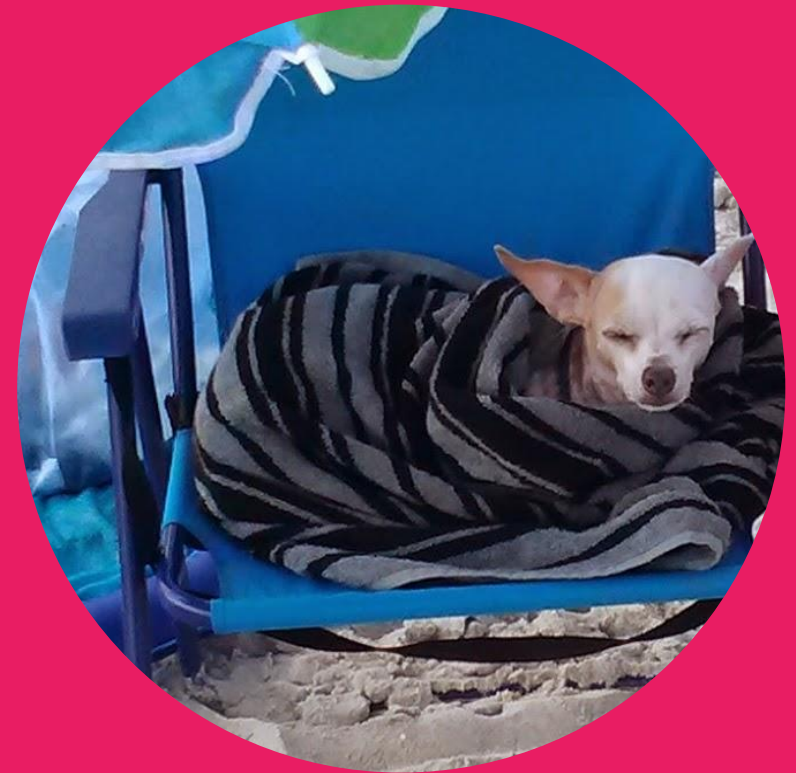
- **Onscreen Results**

= Demonstrable Progress

"Hell yes."

Summary

- Great teams are fueled by **intrinsic motivation.**

- Chartering provides **context** and **alignment** for your team.

- Context is made up of **Values and Goals,** which unlock the ability to make **Plans.**

- **Aligned plans** maximize team potential.

The End

Any Questions?

Contact us at **@dangerdonkey** and **@inertialspeed**