

EXTREME TEAMS

Why Pixar, Netflix, Airbnb, and Other Cutting-Edge Companies Succeed Where Most Fail

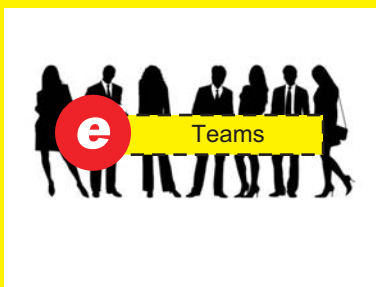
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ROBERT SHAW is managing principal of Princeton MCG, a business consultancy firm which specializes in building high performance teams. He works with business leaders in several industries including pharmaceuticals, financial services, telecommunications, defense, power utilities and consumer goods. He is also an accomplished keynote speaker. Robert Shaw was previously a senior director at Delta Consulting Group. He is the author of several books including *Trust in the Balance* and *Leadership Blindspots*. He is a graduate of Yale University.

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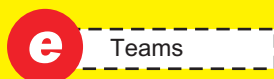
MAIN IDEA

All companies view teamwork and collaboration as good things but building a great team is a complicated task. You have to support and nurture the team the right way for it to excel and keep coming up with stunning results. It's hard to get the chemistry right and keep it that way.



However when you look at the stellar success stories of the modern business era – Pixar, Netflix, Airbnb, Whole Foods, Zappos, Alibaba, Patagonia and others – they all use cutting-edge or "extreme teams" to outperform their competitors.

These extreme teams all share five common practices which sum up how to build great teams:



- 1 Foster a shared obsession
- 2 Value fit over experience
- 3 Focus more on less
- 4 Push both harder and softer
- 5 Take comfort in discomfort

"Almost all great achievements, in business and society, are the result of small groups of people working together to achieve ambitious goals. Teams, not individuals, make the difference. There is a deep human need to bond with others, often in a risky endeavor, in the pursuit of a larger or even heroic purpose. Extreme teams provide that opportunity."

– Robert Shaw

How to build extreme teams



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Practice #1 – Foster a shared obsession among the team's members Page 2

Conventional teams view work as a job to be done professionally and competently. Extreme teams view their work as a calling bordering on an obsession. They share a passionate belief they are destined to do something which will put a ding in the universe.

Practice #2 – Value cultural fit over experience when selecting new hires Page 3

Conventional teams select people based on their past experiences or qualifications. Extreme teams look for fire in the belly and value highly the personality traits needed for the group to achieve its goals. They hire people who fit their culture and let them loose.

Practice #3 – Focus on the vital few priorities while remaining open to new ideas Page 4

Conventional teams value generalists who wear lots of hats and can do a wide range of tasks. Extreme teams fixate relentlessly on the vital few priorities which underpin success. They dedicate all their time to these priority areas and avoid distractions.

Practice #4 – Create a team culture that is simultaneously hard and soft Page 5

Conventional teams aren't too pushy. Extreme teams are simultaneously harder and softer. They drive hard for measurable results on highly visible targets but are also supportive of collaboration and loyalty in other areas. There is an interesting dynamic.

Practice #5 – Take comfort in the discomfort that comes with risk and conflict Page 6

Conventional teams try and avoid conflict at all times. Extreme teams love conflict and actively encourage it. They believe by fighting over critical issues the most robust idea will win out. Extreme teams live for big challenges and high risk situations.

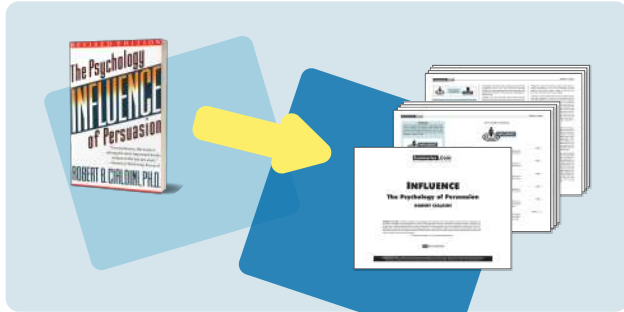
Bringing it all together – How to start and grow a new extreme team Pages 7 - 8

If you aspire to start-up and build a future extreme team, make sure you have this first:

- A compelling purpose which will attract highly passionate people.
- A willingness to hire competent people who will fit the culture.
- The right vital few priorities and success metrics.
- A good set of essential beliefs and behaviors for the group.

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