

# Build a dream team in 10 steps

## takeaways from “*The Science of Dream Teams*”

A groundbreaking global movement is applying science to decisions about people. And this practice –which we call talent optimization–can make hiring, motivating, and managing people more effective than ever before. Here’s how you can build a dream team in 10 steps through talent optimization:

### 1. IDENTIFY YOUR BACK OF T-SHIRT BEHAVIORS.

Picture a T-Shirt crafted just for you. It’s covered with words. On the front is a list of everything you might tout on LinkedIn. On the back is a list of what people say about you when you’re not around. Embark on the painful and humbling hunt to discover the words on the back of your T-Shirt. Ask your colleagues, run a 360 analysis, or use assessments like Myers-Briggs, the Birkman, FIRO-B, or The Predictive Index.

### 2. RECOGNIZE THE TRIGGERS FOR YOUR BACK OF T-SHIRT BEHAVIORS –AND RESPOND TO THEM.

Now that you’ve built more self-awareness, work to keep your unproductive Back of T-Shirt behaviors in check. Recognize your triggers and make a response plan. Enlist your colleagues to help: give them a safety word, and ask them to say it every time they notice you tuning out or monopolizing the conversation (or whatever behavior you’re working to correct).

### 3. DEFINE A CLEAR AND RELATABLE MISSION.

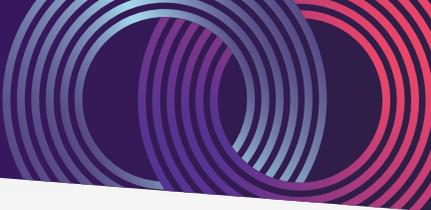
Your mission says why your company exists, and it’s at the core of what drives your company and your employees to make progress. It should be clear enough to align and motivate your teams. Circulate questionnaires about strategic priorities to senior executives to gauge alignment (or lack thereof). If there’s misalignment, meet to discuss where the differences are and how to close the gap.

### 4. UNDERSTAND THE WORK TO BE DONE.

A senior team that’s well-suited to run a hospital will look very different than a senior team that’s well-suited to run a high-growth startup. A hospital is all about protecting against risk and adhering to compliance. A startup is all about taking risks and pushing boundaries. When you understand the work to be done, you have a foundation for building dream teams with the right behavioral blend to carry out your mission and strategic priorities.

### 5. GATHER OBJECTIVE PEOPLE DATA.

Managers have a broad and fast-growing range of tools and techniques to assess human workers, including themselves: 360 assessments, engagement surveys, strategy assessments, behavioral assessments, etc. Assessments not only help you predict on-the-job performance, they can also show you how to assemble teams of people who are behaviorally suited to carry out the mission.



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### 6. CREATE A HEALTHY COMPANY CULTURE.

Settle on the appropriate culture early on, ideally from the start. It should be designed and maintained intentionally to attract the right talent and fit the mission. It is upon the foundation of a strong and defined culture that dream teams are built. Introduce your culture by communicating your core values early; reinforce your culture by talking about your core values often. Create ways for employees to recognize their peers for exhibiting those desired behaviors, and consider rewarding employees who embody those values.

### 7. DEVELOP YOUR PEOPLE.

If you want to win today, hire for experience. If you want to win tomorrow, hire for potential—and be willing to invest in employee training and development. Establish a coaching culture. Create clear career paths. Often, the key to great success is to focus on people’s Front of T-Shirt assets and help them enhance these. You might find that the candidate with one year of experience is a better fit for the role, team, mission, and culture than the candidate with five years of experience.

### 8. ESTABLISH FEEDBACK LOOPS.

A company is like an intelligent machine. A learning engine. It comes up with answers. It solves problems. It innovates. And its collective strength is that each person knows and sees things that others miss. Regard each person’s input as vital feedback loops. Look at your Glassdoor profile. If there aren’t a lot of reviews, ask employees, both past and present, to post. Every review helps. Even if it’s negative, it might point to a problem you can address. That’s one way to create a feedback loop.

### 9. TAKE EXTREME OWNERSHIP.

You can’t put your head in the sand and expect great results. You have to own it. You have to model the behavior you wish to see. Be self-aware. Be open. Be vulnerable. Be transparent. Work to keep your unproductive Back of T-Shirt behaviors in check. Say your mission more than anybody else. Live by your culture, and hold yourself accountable to it, too. Give feedback. Solicit feedback. Be you on your best day every day.

### 10. HIRE A TALENT OPTIMIZATION CONSULTANT.

If the magnitude of this list feels daunting, consider hiring a talent optimization consultant to support you in your journey. Consultants can do multiple things from helping you adopt hiring best practices to interpreting data and coming up with action plans.