

# Building a Team

**SUBMITTED BY:** Nina Hoe, University of Pennsylvania

**GRADE LEVEL(S):** 9, 10, 11, 12

## ≡ OVERVIEW:

In this lesson, students read a Knowledge@Wharton article about team size and composition. Students are asked to reflect on their own experiences working in teams, focusing on their size and effectiveness. Students answer questions directly related to the article and then in a scenario, strategize team breakdowns and sizes within a larger company. The lesson finishes with students reporting back on their scenarios, justifying all decisions and constructively critiquing each other's models

## ≡ RELATED ARTICLES:

- [“You Must Be Joking? From Physics at Harvard to Comedy Writing for The Simpsons”](#)
- [“Teamwork with a Marshmallow on Top”](#)
- [“Is High School Killing Your Creativity? Rajat Bhageria Has a Remedy for That”](#)
- [“Is Bossy the Other “B” Word?”](#)
- [“Innovators Must Master the Art of Brainstorming”](#)

## Standards:

Leadership – Building Team and Culture

## Common Core Standard(s):

RI.9-10.1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

SL.9-10.1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**Objectives/Purposes:**

- Students think about size as an important component to effective team building.
- Students reflect on their own experiences, and use them as context to better understand this aspect of leaderships.
- Students fictionally create teams within a larger company setting, identifying goals at all levels.

**Knowledge@Wharton Article:**

[“Is Your Team Too Big? Too Small? What’s the Right Number?”](#)

**Wharton Global Youth Program Article:**

[“Teamwork with a Marshmallow on Top”](#)

**Whole Class Discussion (5 mins)**

1. What is a “team?”
2. In your own experience, does the size of your “team” affect the dynamics?
3. What types of teams have you worked on or been a part of?
4. What was the size of these teams?

**Small Group/Pair Activity.****Student Worksheet**

Have students read the Knowledge@Wharton article [“Is Your Team Too Big? Too Small? What’s the Right Number?”](#) (5 mins)

(10 mins)

1. Develop an outline of the three considerations when putting together an effective team described by professor Mueller.
2. Generate a list of all of the teams you have been a part of (academic, athletic, work, etc).
3. Using the framework provided by Mueller, deconstruct a few of the teams of which you were a part.
  - What were the task(s) you were asked to perform?
  - What was the composition of the team members?
  - How many team members were there?
4. Analyze whether you felt these teams were effective.
5. How were team members supported? How did you support one another?
6. Were these teams diverse? In what ways? (i.e. experience, gender, age, race, etc.)
7. How did the diversity affect the way in which the team functioned? (i.e. Was their strife? Social cohesion? Unbounded ideas?)
8. What is a team mental model?
9. What is a numerical minority?
10. How does Mueller suggest mending a broken team?

*(10 mins)*

11. Scenario: Have students brainstorm an idea for a company of 30 employees (i.e. an advertising firm, a clothing retail company, etc).
  - What are the goals of the company?
  - What tasks need to be preformed to meet the company goals?
  - Create teams within this company to address these goals. Students will select the number of people on each team and the purpose/function of each team (i.e. marketing – five people, accounting – six people, customer service – five people, etc.). Make sure to clearly articulate the goals of each team.
  - Describe the ideal composition of each team in terms of diversity and leadership. What are the team mental models? How many leaders per team?
  - Make sure that you can clearly explain and justify the decisions you make, as you will be asked to share with the class.

### **Tying It All Together: (10 mins)**

1. Have students report back on anything of particular interest that they would like to share from questions 1 – 11.

2. Have groups report back on their scenarios from question 12. Instruct students to clearly justify their decisions. Allow other groups to ask questions and be constructively critical about other groups' models.

**Practice Outside of the Classroom:** Notice the dynamics of different sized teams you might encounter. How do small teams compare with larger teams? How are teams affected by diversity?

**What Worked and What I Would Do Differently:**

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