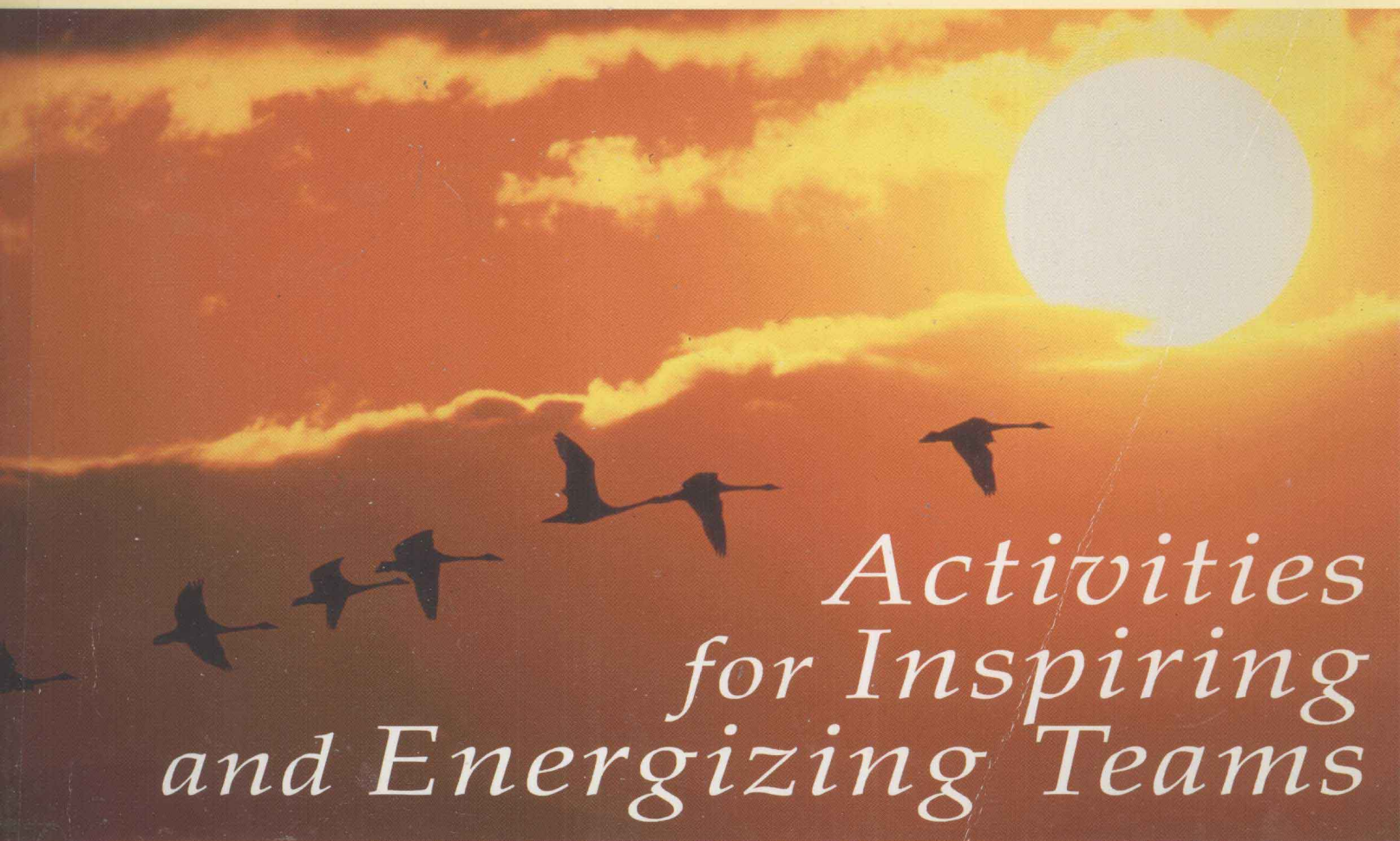


Building **TEAM SPIRIT**



*Activities
for Inspiring
and Energizing Teams*

BARRY HEERMANN



Building Team Spirit

*Activities for Inspiring
and Energizing Teams*

Barry Heermann, Ph.D.

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Acknowledgments

The week of May 8, 1993 was the start of it. The magical little community of Tiburon, California, served as the site of a seminar I co-led for Union Institute Ph.D. learners studying organization behavior and/or organization development. I wear several hats, one as an organizational development practitioner, another as a faculty member for the Union Institute. Once each year I am responsible for leading a five-day seminar for Union learners, and in 1993 that was the Tiburon seminar.

My co-leader was a Union learner, Alexandra Kovats. Alexandra is a Dominican nun who worked with Matthew Fox. Fox's eclectic approach to spirit in all of life would become an important subtext for my work in the area of team spirit. I proposed to Alexandra that we collaborate to do this seminar. I would bring my experience as an organization development consultant and my familiarity with a leading team development process (the Team Performance System, developed by Allan Drexler). Alexandra would bring her spiritual awareness and facilitation gifts from her work and affiliation with Matthew Fox. Together we would create something special: a seminar on team spirit.

Little did I know that the seminar would be such a transforming event. I had not considered how I might unite formerly separate worlds, and I was thrilled with the idea. I have always thought spirit was present in my work with groups. A mentor friend of mine in Vermont, Tony Stone, had suggested I am a "spiritual sneak." I like that idea. But something profound happened to me in Tiburon. The wonderful insight and perspective of the 18 learners, many of whom were practitioners and scholars of organization behavior, opened me to a totally new possibility—team spirit.

This book is dedicated to those Union Institute learners and to Alexandra. It is dedicated to my understanding family and my brilliant team leader and wife, Kipra. It is also dedicated to the nearly 200 certified Consultant/Facilitators of Team Spirit, and to the Consultant/Facilitators and organization clients who show up for regular meetings of the Friends of Team Spirit to discuss experiences and approaches at the intersection of spirit and team development.

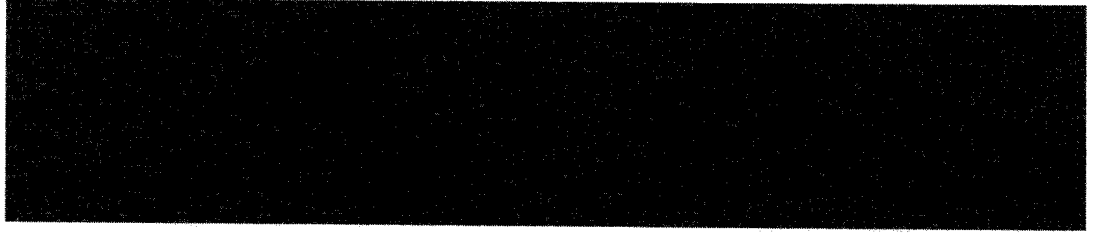
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I am especially grateful, and wish to dedicate this book, to my associate Barbara Czestochowa, who has worked tirelessly in the creation of this volume, and to Fred Bartenstein who has so generously given himself to the review of this manuscript and other manuscripts that I have written about Team Spirit. Blessings to all of you.

Barry Heermann



Building Team Spirit



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Introduction

*...issues of the heart and spirit matter to each of us.
They matter in our families, in our work, and in our extracurricular activities.
We are emotional creatures, trying through the vehicles
of product and knowledge and information and relationships to have an effect for
good on one another both personally
and through what we can do to improve the environment.
Max DePree*

This book provides practical activities and interventions that promote team spirit. All of the learning activities in this volume have been used as part of a comprehensive team development program, called Team Spirit, to enhance the spirit of teams and organizations in Fortune 500 companies, major not-for-profits, and small and medium enterprises.

The activities help teams understand and strengthen the relationship of spirit to team and organization performance explored in recent books such as Peter Block's *Stewardship*; Tom Chappell's *Soul of a Business*; Jack Hawley's *Reawakening the Spirit of Work*; David Whyte's *The Heart Aroused*; Margaret Wheatley's *Leadership and the New Science* and *A Simpler Way*; Jay Conger's *Spirit at Work*; Dick Richard's *Artful Work*; and John Renesch's *Rediscovering the Soul of Business* and *The New Bottom Line: Bringing Heart and Soul to Business*.

The learning activities and interventions offered in this book are designed for use by team leaders, organization development facilitators, human resource development facilitators, trainers, and consultants who are seeking practical approaches to nurturing high-performing teams. The outcome is a deeper level of team development that transcends individual differences and leads to brilliant service to customers.

Two introductory chapters provide background and perspective on spirited, high performing teams; the following six chapters contain learning

activities and interventions for fostering team spirit. Chapter 1 examines the forces that inhibit the spirit in teams and argues that spirit is the transforming power at the core of all team activity, establishing the relationship of team spirit to team effectiveness. Research on excellence and peak performance confirms that high-performing teams and organizations consistently feel the spirit of the organization in their work, and that this feeling is an essential part of the meaning and value that members and observers place on their work (Vaill, 1989). Chapter 1 names qualities of spirit, portraying them graphically as the Team Spirit Spiral. Chapter 2 suggests the relationship of storytelling to achieving team spirit, and presents stories of teams that exemplify each of the phases of the Spiral.

Chapters 3 through 8 are the heart of the book, with instructions for leading dozens of activities that facilitate the development of spirited teams. Many of the activities provide a platform for teams to tell their stories. The activities in each of these chapters explore the six qualities of spirit that make up the Team Spirit Spiral described in Chapters 1 and 2.

Appendices A and B describe how to use a data gathering tool included in the book, called the Team Spirit Assessment. Appendix C provides lecturettes that can be used in conjunction with several of the learning activities. Appendix D consists of a series of learning activities designed to teach teams the six phases of the Team Spirit Spiral. Appendix E explores the importance of facilitators' nurturing their own spirits and provides learning activities that support and develop the spirit of the facilitator.

FACILITATING THE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

The learning activities in this volume are designed to build the qualities of team spirit discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 and reflected in the Team Spirit Spiral. Becoming a spirited, high-performing team depends upon a variety of factors that are addressed in this book. It is the responsibility of the facilitator to heighten the team's awareness, often by having the team tell their story, and to develop skills that support team members in the process of becoming a spirited, high-performing team.

All the learning activities in this volume include learning goals, necessary preparations (room setup, materials, etc.), easy-to-follow steps for facilitating the learning activity (including timelines and reflections on what can be expected in facilitating the activity), and forms and supporting materials to be used in the presentations or handed out. Occasionally lecturettes are suggested; these are drawn from information provided in Chapters 1 and 2, the introductions to Chapters 3 through 8, and Appendix C.

David Kolb's experiential learning cycle (1984) provides the theoretical learning model that systematically moves participants from concrete experience and reflective observation to abstract conceptualization. Team participants are routinely asked to reflect on the implications of their learning, to record their reactions, and to discuss the experience as part of a culminating group process.

HOW TO USE TEAM SPIRIT ACTIVITIES WITH DIFFERENT TEAM TYPES

The learning activities in this volume are designed for use with "intact teams," that is, existing teams and work groups within an organization. There are three broad categories of intact teams, the first two being defined by their stage of maturity (start-up teams and mature teams) and a third type that is short-term by definition (task forces). A distinct form of team that cuts across these three basic categories is the cross-functional team, which is a team composed of persons who represent different functions and levels of the organization. In organizations that employ this form of team, employees may serve on several cross-functional teams for various durations and for various percentages of their time.

Start-up teams typically require work on the Initiating, Visioning, and Claiming phases of the Team Spirit Spiral during the first six to nine months, followed by work on the Celebrating, Letting Go, and Service phases later in their development.

Mature teams have needs that are reflections of their histories. Their movement through the Team Spirit Spiral is unique to their pattern of conflicts and harmony. Interviews with representative members of the mature team are recommended prior to the development of a program of learning activities. (See Appendices A and B.)

Task forces are formed to accomplish particular short-term outcomes and will disband after fulfilling those outcomes. Task forces are often organized as cross-functional teams, and because of their short duration and the diversity of team membership, these teams must build momentum quickly. Consequently Team Spirit activities can be particularly helpful to this type of fast-paced team, allowing the team to quickly and powerfully develop relationship and vision and take ownership of their work.

APPLICATIONS OF TEAM SPIRIT

Some readers of this volume will use *Building Team Spirit* as a "cookbook" for team building, selectively using activities that respond to their team's

current need to boost morale, resolve conflict, etc. Using one or two activities by themselves is what we call a tactical application. Other readers will use *Building Team Spirit* as a resource for a comprehensive team development program over a six- to twelve-month period, systematically assessing and fostering team spirit through the learning activities in this volume. We call this use a strategic application. The Appendix materials are specifically designed to support the strategic use of the book in conjunction with the activities presented in Chapters 3 through 8.

Tactical Applications

If as a facilitator you are choosing one or two activities from this volume to address a specific team need, you may decide not to introduce teams to the Team Spirit Spiral, the structure of harmonics, or the background on spirited, high-performing teams treated in Chapters 1 and 2. You may also choose not to use the context-setting learning activities in Appendix D that help teams learn the six phases of the Team Spirit Spiral.

While it is useful for the facilitator to be grounded in the model, way of thinking, and language of team spirit presented in Chapters 1 and 2, you may not have the time or may elect not to introduce these distinctions to the team. Facilitators can choose activities pertinent to the needs of a team from the six phases of the Team Spirit Spiral:

1. Initiating (Chapter 3)
2. Visioning (Chapter 4)
3. Claiming (Chapter 5)
4. Celebrating (Chapter 6)
5. Letting Go (Chapter 7)
6. Service (Chapter 8)

For example, if your objective is:

To build morale

Choose Initiating and Celebrating learning activities from Chapters 3 and 6; these chapters are focused on creating relationship and acknowledging the good work performed by the team.

To resolve conflict

Choose Letting Go learning activities from Chapter 7 that foster straight, clear, forthright communication and respond to breakdowns between team members.

To encourage new thinking or planning for the future

Choose Visioning learning activities from Chapter 4 that help teams to create future team scenarios, as well as selected Service activities from Chapter 8 that deepen awareness of the importance of serving customers and the team.

To provide constructive feedback

Choose Letting Go learning activities from Chapter 7 that explicitly treat constructive feedback.

To clarify team roles and goals

Choose Claiming learning activities from Chapter 5 that provide structures for creating ownership and alignment of team goals and roles.

To encourage festivity and fun

Choose Celebrating learning activities from Chapter 6 for encouraging team animation and celebration.

Be sure to review the Learning Goals at the beginning of the activity and the What to Expect reflections at the end of the activity to clarify the purpose and scope of each activity. Should you decide that an assessment is needed to determine your selection, consult Appendices A and B and the last activity in Appendix E for assessment alternatives.

Strategic Applications

The first steps to effective work with a *mature team* are assessing the team's needs, identifying the phase or phases of the Spiral that are key to the team's spirit and performance, and recognizing the team's unique pattern of harmonics. Strategic applications of team spirit may usefully incorporate three critical resources provided for assisting facilitators in gathering data about the team:

1. Guidelines for Using the Team Spirit Assessment and Facilitating the Feedback and Action Planning Session in Appendix A is an in-depth, one-day feedback process, drawing on the Team Spirit Assessment, and an action planning phase that identifies next steps for the team to take to enhance team spirit.
2. Guidelines for Conducting Effective Team Interviews in Appendix B is a technique for getting data from a sample of team members through an interview process.
3. The Team Spirit Assessment activity in Appendix D is a two-hour experience that allows a team to reflect on its work together and to come to consensus about actions it can take to respond to its needs.

(See the last activity in Appendix E for further information about these assessment alternatives.)

While activities in Appendix D create the awareness of team spirit values and phases necessary to gain maximum benefit from the learning activities in Chapters 3 through 8, they also provide the facilitator with valuable feedback about the team. The context-setting activities help facilitators gain a better understanding of the personalities of team members and the dynamics and spirit present within the team.

Using data gathered about the team, the facilitator can choose a sequence of learning activities that will best serve the team. Chapters 3 through 8 provide learning activities specific to each of the phases of the Team Spirit Spiral.

For *start-up teams*, we recommend that the initial work with the team draw on context-setting activities from Appendix D. This foundation work is typically followed by the facilitation of activities selected from Chapters 3, 4, and 5 (that treat Initiating, Visioning, and Claiming). Start-up teams are not ready for the more interpersonal dimensions of Celebrating and Letting Go; they are more preoccupied with developing relationships, defining their purpose, and working out goals and roles. Therefore it is recommended that the Letting Go, Celebrating, and Service learning activities be done six to nine months later for these teams.

Mature teams have their own distinct dynamics that have arisen over time, and will accordingly require tailored applications of learning activities. The design and layout of team spirit activities should be adjusted to the needs of the team based upon assessment data gathered about the team. Even with mature teams it is useful to begin by doing context-setting activities from Appendix D.

It is recommended that facilitators and the teams they support commit a minimum of one year to the process of becoming a spirited team, working together periodically throughout the year. The notion that team development can be accomplished in an afternoon workshop is misguided. Team development requires ongoing commitment and attention to the spirit of the team. Team spirit can be used powerfully as a comprehensive team development program that nurtures growth and sustains the team throughout its process of becoming a high-performing team. After the first year, a readministration of the Team Spirit Assessment should be planned. The data from this reassessment will suggest additional work in selected phases of the Team Spirit Spiral.

SCENARIOS FOR USING TEAM SPIRIT ACTIVITIES

There are many combinations and permutations of activities, and ultimately the selection of activities will depend on a team's needs. The following scenarios suggest possible combinations of team spirit activities to address various team needs. Each scenario assumes a session length of four hours. Two activities are prescribed for each four-hour session, but the actual time for each activity varies widely. The number or letter following each activity indicates the chapter or appendix in which the activity is described in full.

A Newly-Formed Team That Can Commit to One Afternoon a Month for a One-Year Program of Development Using Team Spirit

As suggested previously, start-up teams naturally appreciate the support they gain from the first three phases of the Spiral during their initial months together. As they grow in their work together they require attention to the latter phases of the Spiral, Celebrating, Letting Go, and Service (six to nine months into the life of the team). Consequently, consider the following format of activities, beginning first with context-setting activities drawn from Appendix D and progressing through the phases of the Spiral in Chapters 3 through 8:

Session 1: Spirit Sayings [D] and Characteristics of Spirited Teams [D], creating awareness about spirited, high-performing teams, first from the perspective of current thinkers in this arena and secondly from the experiences of team members themselves.

Session 2: Personal Mandala [3] and Discovering the Harmonics That Underlie Spirit [D], providing an Initiating activity that fosters connection among team members and a further, deepening awareness of the Spiral and related harmonics.

Session 3: Personal Spiral [3] and Creating a Personal Vision: Dialogue with a Wisdom Figure [4], beginning with an Initiating activity that supports team members in exploring their relationship to the Spiral, then moving to Visioning, at the level of individual vision.

Session 4: Flight of Fancy [4] and Achieving a Spirit Leap in Enhancing Customer Service [4], providing the team with two frameworks for creating and clarifying their future.

Session 5: Reflection and discussion about the implications of the previous Visioning session and Team Mandala [4], allowing the team to visually express prized team values and visions.