

# Team Start Up

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## **Overview**

The Team Start Up guide has been prepared to give some guidance to team leaders and/or facilitators working with newly-formed teams. These steps have been used successfully, in part and in their entirety, with different types of teams, including labor-management partnership teams. For best results, we recommend that a block of time be set aside for this activity when a team first begins meeting.

This Start Up guide will take a team through the first step of its process in which the goal is “Defining the Project's Purpose and Scope”. The Start Up will also establish a healthy foundation for the team’s work. Products of this stage include:

- a clear and common understanding of the team’s charter,
- ground rules and operating procedures,
- defined roles,
- identification and understanding of the team’s interests,
- a vision of the desired outcome,
- a mission statement, and
- a draft work plan.

By the completion of this stage, each team member should correctly and confidently be able to answer the following questions:

- What is the project's purpose?
- What problem or "gap" is the team addressing?
- What impact will closing this gap have on customers?
- What other reasons exist for addressing this gap?
- How will the team know if things are better?
- What is the team’s plan for this project?

Throughout the Start Up **the team** establishes how it will tackle and resolve issues and practices doing so. Trust, common understanding, and “teamness” begin to develop among team members.

The use of a facilitator is not required during the Start Up. However, when a facilitator partners with the team leader(s), the **team leader(s)** has an opportunity to practice his/her team leading skills with the support of a facilitator. While the **facilitator** serves to introduce the use of meeting skills and model appropriate meeting behaviors during the Start Up process.

Special notes to facilitators are italicized throughout the Team Start Up Guide.

*Note that the Team Start Up is intentionally a **very structured process**. Because the facilitator is teaching tools, techniques, and modeling behavior, we are trying to show the “text book” way things are done. As the team gets to know each other better, use of the tools and techniques will become less formal. If we begin by using the tools and techniques very loosely, the team may not learn them properly, or believe in their importance.*

## **Planning the Start Up Meeting**

If a facilitator is to work with the team, the team leader(s) and facilitator should meet in advance to discuss the team, its make up, and its tasks. Be sure to inform each other of any potential problem areas or sensitive issues that the team is to tackle and discuss how you might handle them.

*The facilitator should begin by asking, “tell me about your team”, or “tell me about your project” to gain a sense of what the leader requires.*

Review this package together and explain what you expect to do. Based on your discussion, develop and select the questions for the data gathering exercise.

Discuss the agenda regarding methods, tools, and responsibility for materials, set-up and leadership. And, of course, the facilitator and leader(s) should establish ground rules for how they will work together.

*When meeting with the team leader/sponsor try to learn about the project, the team, its history, its members, and potential problems.*

*Try to learn about the team leader/sponsor. How clear is s/he in understanding the charter? What is his/her leadership style, what is his/her confidence level?*

## **Room Preparation**

The Team Start Up requires a space large enough to hold the team and several flipcharts and allow team members to move around freely. As the team will be working from a number of flipchart pages at a time, the room should have adequate wall space on which to tape flipchart papers.

The following materials are needed:

- Flipcharts and lots of paper (at least 4 flipcharts)
- Plenty of water-based markers in a variety of colors (water-based markers do not bleed through paper)
- Tape, for posting flip chart pages
- Name/Tent cards (optional)
- Copies of the team's charter or other documentation which explains the teams' task and/or provides background information.

Prepare and post flipcharts pages for the data gathering exercise. You may need additional blank pages for some of the questions. Fold and tape the paper to cover the question until it is time to conduct this exercise.

Post a "Parking Lot" for potential solutions, future action items, and other concerns.

If your agenda requires the group to break into small groups, prepare break-out rooms/areas complete with flipcharts, markers, and tape.

## **The Team Start Up Meeting**

At this stage all players introduce themselves, the team members learn what is expected of them, support personnel explain their relationship to the team, and general housekeeping is done.

### **Welcome Remarks by Team Sponsor/Team Leader/Facilitator**

At least one of the above should introduce him/herself, and warmly welcome the team.

### **General Housekeeping**

The team leader or facilitator should provide a quick review of necessary information such as:

- Handouts everyone should have, such as a copy of the team's charter.
- Name/tent cards to be completed and displayed.
- Rosters or forms group members need to complete.
- Start time, stop time and break times.
- Location of cafeteria and rest rooms.
- Location of phones for participants' use.
- Shuttle information.
- Hotel information.

## **Introduction of Team Members**

The team sponsor, team leader, or facilitator should ask each person present to introduce him/herself. The purpose of the introductions is to not only learn each others' names, but to bring out common interests to help promote "teamness". We suggest having team members state names, components, and some personal comments about themselves. For example:

- Tell us about a hobby or special interest you pursue outside of the workplace.
- If you could be doing anything in the world at this moment, having unlimited resources, what would it be?
- Tell us something surprising about yourself, something people in this room might not guess about you.

In new teams, especially in labor-management partnership teams, it is important to stay away from introductions that reveal a person's job or role. The goal at this point is to introduce COMMON ground and have members get to know each other before they reveal their own, or their organization's, positions.

## **Discussion with Chartering Body Member(s)**

If possible, a member, or members, of the chartering body should meet with the team to explain the history of how the team became chartered, show support (*smile a lot*), provide encouragement as they start their work, and provide any documentation or other resources the team may need. The chartering body member(s) should answer any questions team members have, especially regarding the charter, and, if possible, remain on call during the team's first meetings to help clarify issues or concerns that may arise.

## **Introduction of Facilitator**

If a facilitator will be participating, s/he should explain his/her role (as agreed in the initial meeting with the team leader(s)). Mention that training will be "Just-In-Time" and team members will learn by working through their tasks.



## **Explain Parking Lot**

Explain that during team discussions, issues may arise that are important, but inappropriate for the current discussion. These items will be posted on the Parking Lot and reviewed periodically for appropriate action. Other Parking Lot items include questions and concerns that need to be brought to the attention of people outside the team and ideas for potential solutions/recommendations that arise during team meetings.

## Getting Started -- Gathering Data

Explain that the purpose of this exercise is to bring out information, ideas, and opinions that the team will use to develop the products of the first stage of the team process. (A clear and common understanding of the charter, mission statement, ground rules, defined roles, vision statement, interests, and draft work plan.) This exercise also gets all team members mentally and physically participating in the team process.

Read each question aloud as you reveal the pre-posted flipcharts with the following statements, or other statements that better apply to the team. The purpose behind each question appears in parentheses, do not write these on the charts.

I believe our team has been tasked to . . . (*mission*)

I volunteered for this team because . . . (*interests and commitment*)

It's important to me that this team succeed because . . . (*interests*)

The concerns I have about this group and/or our tasks are . . . (*interests, issues to be addressed*)

We'll know this team has succeeded when we see or hear . . . (*vision and criteria for success*)

During meetings I hate it when . . . (*ground rules and operating procedures*)

I expect our team to complete it's charter in \_\_\_\_ months. (*operating procedures, mission*)

I can spend \_\_\_\_ hours, per week, doing our team's work . . . (*mission - how much can the team take on*)

The skills, knowledge and experience I bring to this team are . . .  
--include your name (*tasks, data collection*)

Tasks I prefer to perform as a team member include . . . -- include your name  
(*tasks, data collection*)

The best thing about \*name of project\* is . . . (*appreciative inquiry, used to break open negative paradigms and set a positive tone at the outset*)

In today's meeting I hope this team . . . (*agenda*)

Ask each team member and team leader to grab a marker, go to the flipcharts, and complete each statement. This is an individual activity that is performed in silence. Let them know that if the idea has already been recorded by another team member, simply place a check mark next to it. Note that there will be some people who are reluctant to leave their seats. Your preparation and encouragement for their participation will help this.

*In order to get the team members up and writing, during the initial meeting, arrange for the team leader and others in attendance to enthusiastically get up and begin writing when you ask the team to do so.*

During the exercise occasionally remind everyone to complete all statements and read all answers. Enforce the silence rule. Be sure to allow enough time for all participants to complete their statements and read all completed flip charts.

*Group members usually take their seats when they have completed the activity.*

When all statements have been completed and all flipcharts have been read, ask and discuss, "what can we learn about this group from the data we see here? Are there common themes that appear throughout?" Record the themes on a flipchart.

*During discussion be sure to ask the team for their opinions and refrain from giving your own. If you identify a common theme the group did not discover and believe it needs addressing ask a question such as "I noticed XYZ mentioned in several places. How might this affect your team and its work?"*

The purpose of this brief discussion is, again, to look for common interests and understandings. Try to keep the discussion in a positive light, as this discussion sets the tone for the team's time together.

Ask the team to note flip charts that show potential problems, such as conflicting ideas. Note that these will probably be areas for more rigorous discussion.

Review the answers to "Why I volunteered..." If it is answered, "I didn't", initiate a discussion of how this effects the team.

Review the answers to "In today's meeting I hope this team ..." to affirm the expectations which will be met, and to identify items outside the scope of the day's activities.

## **Explain Consensus Decision Making**

The purpose behind introducing consensus decision making (Appendix A) at this time is

three-fold. First, some teams need to establish ground rules about what they will do in situations where consensus cannot be reached. Second, the team will use consensus decision making to discuss and accept the ground rules they are developing. Third, by using formal consensus decision making during the team start up, the team gets practice in using the technique on “smaller” issues so that the use of the decision-making technique becomes “automatic” when dealing with difficult issues.

Explain consensus decision making and entertain questions about it. Consensus is used to ensure that everyone has a part in the decision-making process and all issues are addressed before conclusions are drawn. It ensures that all team members can support the team's decisions and have ownership in them.

*Get the team into the good habit of formulating questions for consensus by having **one person** clearly state the question while the recorder writes it on a flip chart. Ask another team member (usually the one that appears to understand the least) **what** s/he believes the question means. Ask the team if that is correct. If it is not, get clarification from the team, and again have **one person** clearly state the question while the recorder posts it. When the team reaches consensus, acknowledge this by writing “agreed by consensus” and the date next to the item on the flipchart.*

## **Establish Ground Rules and Operating Procedures**

The purpose of establishing ground rules and operating procedures is to establish roles, responsibilities, meeting schedules, logistics for future meetings, etc. There are a number of ways to accomplish this; some ideas are suggested below.

Use the flipchart, "During meetings I hate it when . . .", and explain that the team can establish ground rules to help prevent these things from occurring. Work down the list, asking the group to propose rules that might prevent each one. (Some rules may handle more than one hated event.)

Ask the group, "In your experience, what kind of rules have worked for you?"

Ask the team if they understand each rule, and have team members clarify those they don't understand. Ask the team to combine duplicate items, if applicable.

*Be careful; there may be a tendency to answer the questions yourself, but try to resist this temptation. Keep in mind that the goal is to ensure that the team members have understanding and ownership. They gain this by working through the issues themselves.*

Encourage the team to determine when they meet, for long, and how often. Also, to define team roles, as appropriate, such as: Meeting Leader, Team Leader, Minute Taker, Time Keeper, Recorder, and liaison to the chartering body. Ensure they develop and understand the responsibilities of each role, who will serve in that role, and term of office. It is also very helpful to brainstorm on what should be included in the team's minutes.

Check for consensus on all rules and roles and discuss until consensus is reached. Hint: If there is no consensus on ground rules as a whole, try to gain consensus on each rule individually, starting with those they most easily agree on. This approach reveals areas of common understanding and isolates those that require more discussion.

Ask the team to post the ground rules at all team meetings.

## Establish the Team's Interests

Establish what is important to team members by bringing out their interests and getting them away from positions. This process develops common understanding, commitment and trust and helps focus the team's work. The output may be used as criteria for testing the team's solutions.

If defining the team's interests is done well, this exercise alleviates much of the anxiety people can bring to the group. They may experience these emotions because they are afraid that their concerns and fears will not be addressed. Because the activity promotes listening and understanding of team members' deepest concerns, they learn that they will be heard. Their fears are allayed. This allows all team members to focus on the team's issues.

Explain that we will try to bring out concerns about this team and its work in this next step. Begin by explaining the difference between "interests" and "positions" by telling the story below.

Two students were studying across the table from each other in a library. One went over to a window, opened it, and returned to his seat. After a few minutes, the other student got up, closed the window, and sat back down. Looking rather annoyed, the first student rose, re-opened the window, and took his seat. The second student, once again, got up, and closed the window.

After several minutes of watching this battle continue, the librarian walked over to the table and confronted the two. "What is going on here?" she asked the first.

"I want to feel the fresh air," the student replied.

The second asserted, "But when the window is open, my papers blow around. I want the window closed."

The librarian went into the next room and opened a window. This allowed the first student to enjoy the fresh air, without causing the second student's papers to blow around.

WHAT someone wants, like having the window open or closed, is their POSITION. WHY someone wants it, is their INTEREST. **Interests define the issue or problem.** For every interest there are several positions that could satisfy that interest. Behind positions lie shared interests as well as conflicting ones.

By addressing positions, the students in the library were in a win-lose situation (When I win, you lose). But, by addressing INTERESTS, not POSITIONS, the librarian was able to provide a WIN-WIN solution.

For more information on interests and positions, refer to the book, Getting to Yes, by Roger Fisher & William Ury.

Explain to the group that it's important for us to understand our interests so that we can work to develop solutions and recommendations that are win-win.

Later, refer to the story of the window when you hear a position statement. This simple story serves as a reminder to work from interests, and not from positions.

### **Identifying Interests -- The Process**

1. Review, with the team, the flipchart pages that reflect interests or positions:

"It's important to me that this team succeed because . . ."

"Concerns about the tasks and/or team . . ."

2. Brainstorm for more ideas. You may have to ask several different questions to stimulate thinking. Such as:

"What are your concerns about this project?"

"Why is it essential that we solve this problem or make good recommendations?"

"Why is this team's work important to you?"

"What are your concerns about this team?"

Record the ideas on flip chart paper as they are presented.

3. Ask the team to clarify the brainstormed items, if appropriate.
4. Ask the team to combine like or duplicate items. Don't waste time searching for a word or phrase that captures all the ideas. Just "clump" these together.
5. Encourage full discussion on each interest grouping so that each team member has the same understanding of the interest and what it means to the team.

Based on the discussion, and with the team's help, list the underlying interests. Since some of these interests may be similar, ask the group if they see common themes and combine them, with the group's permission.

6. Have the team members multivote on which interests are most important to them.

As a rule of thumb, divide the total number of items by 3; this is the number of votes each person is given. For this exercise, allow team members to place more than one of their votes on an item if they feel strongly about that interest.

Using different colored markers, chart the results in a Pareto Diagram. By multivoting and Pareto-ing the interests, all can clearly see what is most important to the team. This will help the team later if they must chose a path that can address one interest, but not another.

7. Discuss the Pareto diagram. Check consensus by asking the group if they agree that these are the team's interests. After all the work and lengthy discussions, there should be consensus.
8. Post the “Interest Pareto” at all future meetings as a reminder and guide. Refer to it during future team meetings, as appropriate.



## Create a Vision

A vision is a clear, concise, colorful statement that paints a vivid picture of an ambitious, desirable future state that is connected to the customer and better in some important way than the current state. Visions are seen as a stretch, and source of inspiration to teams. A vision provides a pulling force that can impel a team toward a new realization of its possibilities.

Most important, a vision, by appealing to people's longings and capturing their imaginations, taps a motivation for work that surpasses contractual obligations and makes the work its own reward. Doing what you are told often breeds mere compliance. Pursuing a vision engenders involvement and commitment.

Read the answers on the flipchart,

"We'll know this team has succeeded when we see or hear..."

Ask the group what this means to them. Ask for more ideas and add them to the list as they are expressed. Ask the group energizing questions such as:

"If we did a great job, what would we have done?"

"If we did a great job and overheard someone talking about our project, what would they be saying? Who would be saying it?"

"What did we do to cause people to seek out our group to congratulate us on our great success?"

"If someone printed a front-page story about our great accomplishment, what would it say?"

Record each answer on the flipchart.

*Creating a vision should be energizing and invigorating. Encourage the group to stretch their imaginations. Be sure to smile and offer your own energy when leading this exercise.*

When the brainstorming is exhausted, ask the group to summarize their vision for their task. This raw data can serve as a rough vision statement or a reminder of the discussion, or, if time allows, you may assist the group in developing a formal vision statement.

## **Review the Charter**

In preparation for developing a mission statement, ask the team to review their charter for clarity and understanding. List any unresolved questions or concerns on flipchart paper. When the list is complete, a member from the chartering body should come in to address the questions/concerns.

## **Develop a Mission Statement**

A mission statement is used to articulate the team's purpose to its members and for others. It also forces the team to set the boundaries of their project.

Explain that the next step in the process is to discuss and answer the following questions by developing a mission statement.

- What is our purpose?
- What is our scope? What will we take on, what won't we take on?
- How much time can we devote to this project per week?
- When do we want to present our formal findings to the chartering body?
- How often will we present our interim findings to the chartering body?
- Do we have all the skills and resources we need?
- If this team were successful, what would we see?

Discuss flipcharts relating to time commitments and how this relates to the team charter. Have the team discuss and agree on when they expect to complete their project.

Ask the team members to review the flip charts representing ALL of the work the team has accomplished so far.

Distribute the Star Trek mission statement (Appendix B) and ask each team member to silently develop a mission statement for the team. Remind them to consider all of the work the team has done to date and also time and resource constraints. Have team members write their mission statements on sheets of flip chart paper and post them on the wall. Ask the team members to stroll around the room and review all the mission statements.

Based on the multiple mission statements, have the team develop a combined team statement. Ask the group if there is one mission statement that captures most of the team member's ideas. If there is, then modify it with the team's suggestions. If there isn't, ask the team to identify the key words/phrases in each mission statement. As they do, mark or circle the key words/phrases. Next, assist the team in organizing the key words/phrases to create a fresh mission statement.

Ensure that the team agrees to the mission statement by using consensus.

Ask the team to post the mission statement at all team meetings.

*Note: Some teams will not be able to complete the mission statement at this session. If it appears this will be so, ask for one or two volunteers to develop a draft mission statement that the team can discuss at their next meeting.*

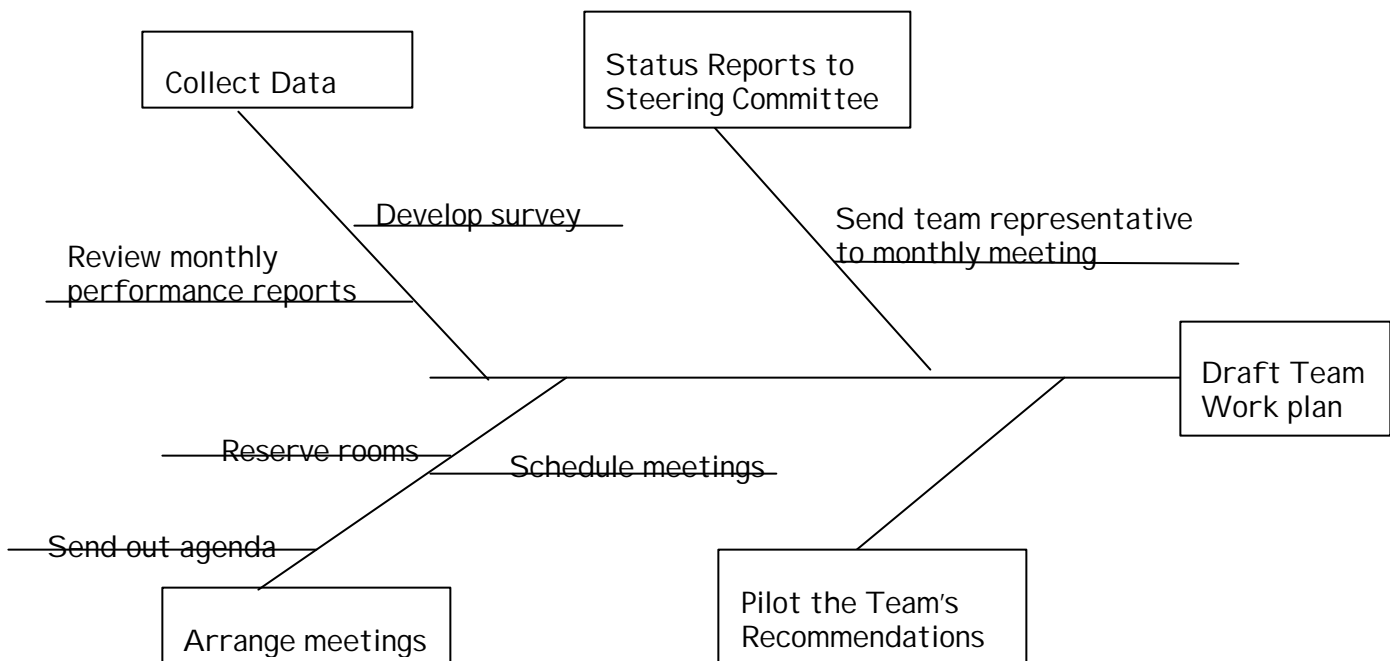
## Draft a Work Plan

A work plan is developed to identify tasks that need to be carried out by the team, and to assign responsibility and schedules for each of these tasks. The plan can only be considered a draft at this early stage of the team's development, but as the team progresses, the plan should be revised to include additional tasks and details.

Several methods can be used, but the following method is quick, easy, and works well with a large group. It uses the format of an Ishikawa or Fishbone diagram. Post a very large (6 - 10 ft long) sheet of flipchart paper on the wall (or several pieces of regular flipchart paper placed together so they appear as one large sheet). Draw the "bones" of the fish.

Ask the group to brainstorm what **categories** of products or tasks would appear on the work plan. Examples include, reports to the chartering body, data gathering, making arrangements for meetings, and piloting solutions or recommendations. Clarify items and combine any duplicates.

Place one category of product or task on each bone of the fishbone diagram. Ask the team what tasks need to be accomplished for each category, filling in the fishbone as they offer ideas. Ask the team to identify any missing tasks. When the diagram is complete, request volunteers to further develop and format the work plan after the team meeting.



## **Plan for the Next Meeting**

Assist the team in planning the agenda and logistics for the next team meeting.

*It is a good idea to establish this habit now so that it is repeated at every meeting.*

## **Process Check**

It's a good idea to conduct a process at the end of each meeting. This allows the team to identify areas that need to be adjusted in their meeting process.

Ask the team members to brainstorm on what's going well or what did you like about today's meeting (+), and what did not go well or needs improvement (- or ?). Record each item on the flipchart. Then briefly review each list and asks the team what can be done to improve the items on the what did not go well/needs improvement list.

## **Closing**

Congratulate the team for all their hard work, and wish them well on their task.

Be sure the flip chart pages are recorded for the team's reference and that pages to be posted at future meetings are prepared for the next meeting.

## Consensus Decision Making

Consensus is group decision making at its purest. It means arriving at a decision each member of the group can accept and support. The decision may not be everyone's first choice. It may not even be anyone's first choice. But it's a choice everyone can live with.

### In consensus —

- All members of the group fully participate in the decision-making process.
- The group arrives at a decision that every member can accept and support.
- This may not be the outcome each person favored, but each person — based on logic and feasibility — decides he or she can accept and support it.
- When each member of the group has reached this point, the group has reached consensus — “100% buy-in.”

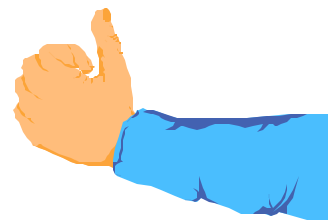
Good consensus decision making takes conscious effort and practice. Understanding group process and effective communication skills helps enormously.

### Steps for Reaching Consensus

1. Clearly define the topic.
2. Discuss the topic. Put all ideas on the table; focus on interests, not positions; put forward all ideas without criticism; discuss each of the ideas, considering pros and cons; and use decision making techniques, such as prioritization and multi-voting, to ease consensus and speed the process.
3. Test for consensus. Can each group member live with the decision?
4. Make the decision.

### Keep in Mind

- Allow sufficient time for active discussion and participation by all panel members.
- Maintain an open mind and demonstrate skills in providing feedback, listening and conflict resolution.
- Use a visual sign, such as “thumbs”, to clearly demonstrate group members' preference on the issue.



## MISSION STATEMENT DEVELOPMENT

*[An excerpt from the book, "All I Really Need to Know I Learned from Watching Star Trek" by Dave Marinaccio.]*

While decision-making processes are important, clearly identified corporate goals are more important. In my experience, the best-run companies have a basic philosophy that the people in the company know and understand. Sometimes this philosophy is formalized in a mission statement. Here is the best mission statement I have ever heard.

**"These are the voyages of the Starship Enterprise. Her five-year mission: to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no man has gone before."**

Crew members of the Starship Enterprise know exactly what they are supposed to do. Suppose you are the dumbest person on the ship. How long do you think the mission will last? Five years? Very good. And suppose you encountered a strange new world? What should you do? Explore it, perhaps. There is even an emotion telling you how you should go about exploring it. Boldly.

Now try a simple test. Ask a number of colleagues at your place of work, "What is the single most important thing our company is trying to accomplish?" I've done this myself. Chances are you will receive many different answers. If you run a company, this exercise can be extremely enlightening.

Now ask yourself, if your business encounters a strange new world, what would your dumbest employee do? What if your company encounters a strange new opportunity? Without a basic philosophy, even a business's smartest employees have to improvise when they meet a new or challenging situation.

We could do worse than rewriting the Star Trek mission statement for whatever venture we are on. **A simple statement. One that spells out who we are, what we are doing, and how we would like to go about doing it. Maybe even deal with the question of why we are doing it. Make the language exact, the goal specific**, and even your worst employee will make you proud.

## References

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