

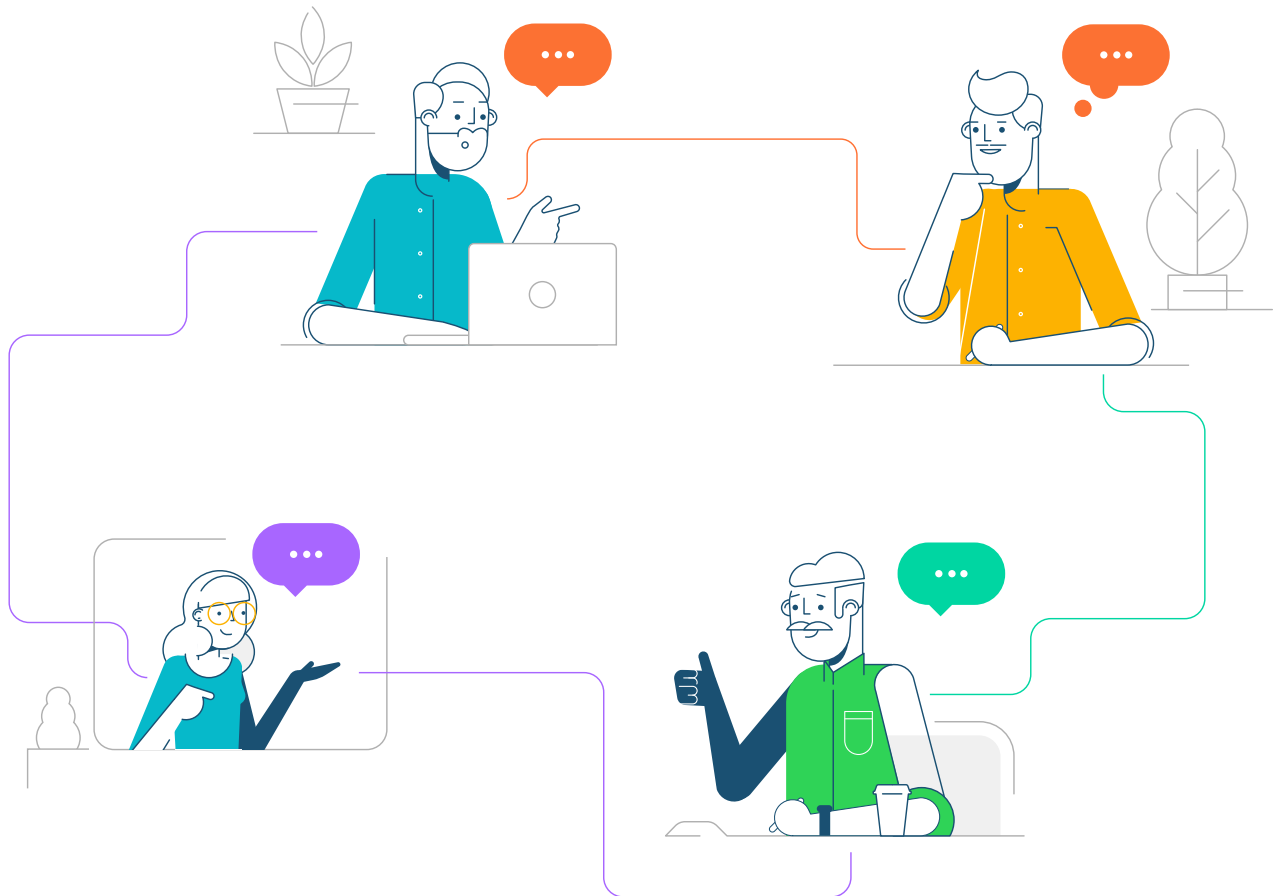
# Inspired Teams - Cisco Collaboration Whitepaper

# We believe in inspired teams

In the past, individuals have largely been attributed credit for leaps in human progress. These days, more and more of our significant advances can be attributed to multidisciplinary teams, and the reign of the individual genius is coming to an end. As certain jobs become redundant by advances in technology, solving complex tasks in multidisciplinary teams will be central to the future of work.

Your work is depending on other people, and they are depending on you. The modern workplace requires the capacity to collectively work together. The group of people working together to accomplish something is what we call a team. A team is classically viewed as a small and well-defined group of people, but it is

often more fluid and undefined, extends through your business and all the way to your end user. It should not be viewed in the classical sports context, as it often becomes a matter of “us” against “them”. In an agile organization, fleeting teams are formed, tasks completed and the team disbanded after an objective is done. What you are able to do as a team will define the quality of what you make and in this way your success. We believe that understanding and fostering teams is business critical. Through research, testing and talking to people we have developed a simple model of teamwork. By using the model to increase awareness around the process, you will be on your way to becoming an inspired team.



# Inspired teams

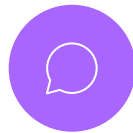
Inspired teams are brilliant together. They continuously deliver outstanding work while maintaining a healthy and meaningful work environment. These teams have the ability to connect, share and engage with each other on a deeper level.

Teamwork and meetings have been analyzed and deconstructed academically, and there is plenty of useful insights made, some highlighted later in this article. Teamwork is often portrayed in a difficult or complex light, but to us it is pretty simple. It is about finding purpose and building trust, and this happens in the interactions between people. Our model is structured around the activities or modes of interactions; where people come to connect, share and engage. We often switch between them naturally throughout most meetings and some of these modes are more prevalent in certain meeting types.



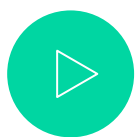
## Connect

Connecting face to face involves having meaningful conversations, building relationships and empathizing with others. When we listen to others, we expand our understanding. When someone listens to our thoughts and beliefs, we feel deeply understood. Connection is the social glue and builds trust, a necessary foundation for people to be the best version of themselves.



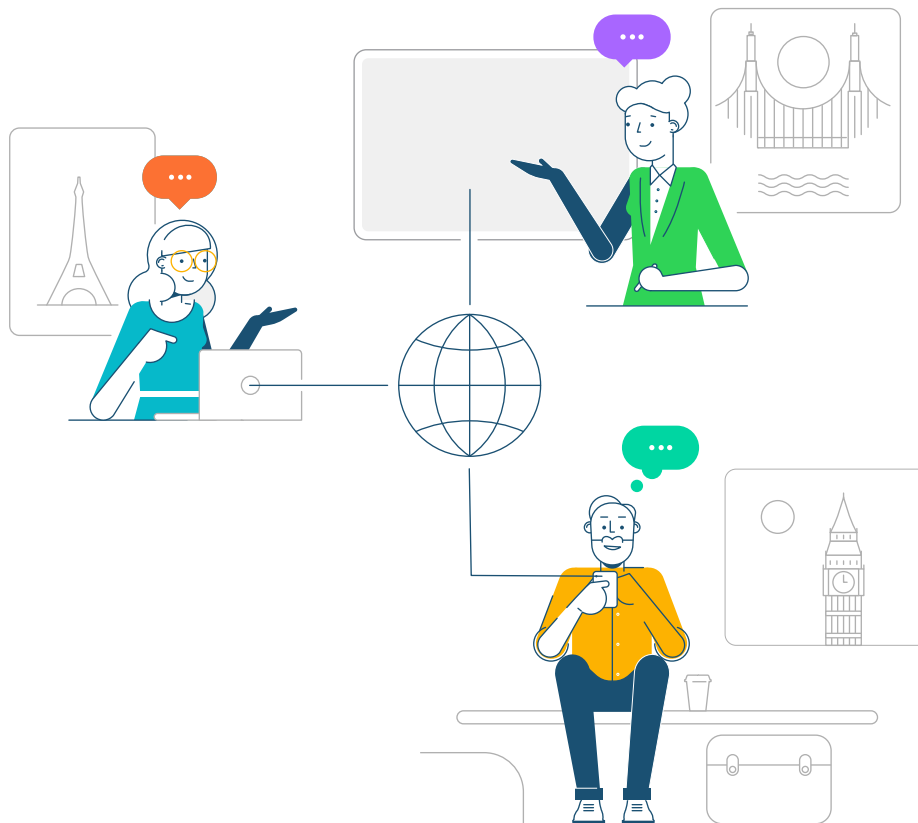
## Share

By continuously sharing knowledge within the team, we build a whole that is larger than the sum of its parts. Explaining something to others, gives deeper insight. Learning something new enlightens us. A culture of learning and sharing is core to having a robust collective team memory. An informed team is also more agile and can react and adapt quickly to the changes around them.



## Engage

Team engagement involves all the activities we do to create something together. Through ideating, building and reviewing, planning and assigning tasks, we iterate, reflect, explore and get a deeper collective understanding of our work. Being visual helps everyone in the team acquiring this collective memory. Engagement in the team makes us move forward and is at the core of creating something greater than ourselves.



# What happens when you introduce different locations?

Increased globalization leads to the prevalence of dispersed teams. Even if everyone in a team is based in the same place, there is a definite change in the expectation to how the modern work life integrates with your home life. We find that having the flexibility to work from home or when traveling is a benefit when balancing life and work. There is a shift towards molding the work around your life, where previously it was expected to adapt your life around your work.

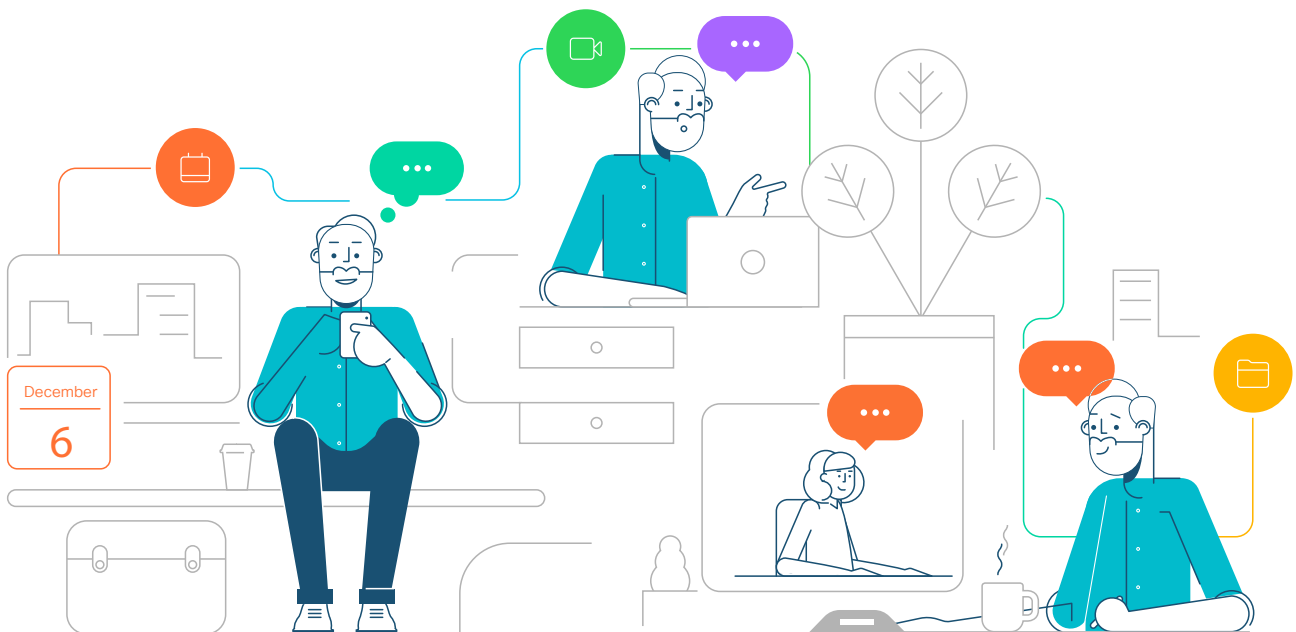
Connecting, Sharing and Engaging becomes increasingly difficult when you introduce dispersed locations within your team. Here is where technology really comes into play. The technology should do what it can to lower the barriers to

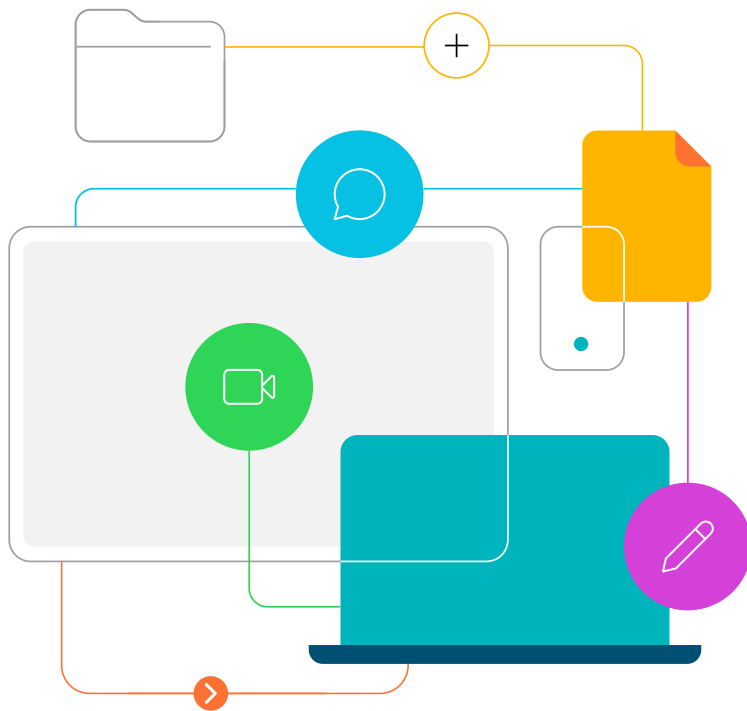
teamwork that are introduced when people are in different places. High quality video conferencing allows us to be attentive to facial expression and body language, essential to Connecting. If there is a relationship established with sufficient trust, perhaps messaging or a voice call is more appropriate in certain situations. Sharing is often seen as a separate content stream in a video call, but there are many ways of conveying and consuming information. White boarding, post-it ideation, co-creating, task delegation and annotation are all ways of Engaging. There are many digital tools that allow you to do this when dispersed, but the workflow between them is often broken.

# Work flow

Teams need tools to support the flow of collaboration. This flow is often divided into before, during and after collaboration sessions. Tools that help manage coordination and the process of team work is often segregated from the actual work.

Having tools available that merges the fragmented experience into one seamless channel for collaboration is important. No matter what device you are on, or where you work from, the goal is to make people's lives easier, by creating and supporting workflows where technology doesn't get in the way. An operating system for your teams is where everything comes together.





# Physical spaces

People want the flexibility to work where and when they want. Most knowledge workers are paid to do their jobs, not to be at work. At the same time, having a defined workplace is essential for supporting how people connect, share and engage in teams. Spaces are important. How the space is set up influences how we use it. Physical spaces affect and define how we feel and work together. We act differently depending on if we are sitting down, presenting standing up or interacting with content. Spaces are a catalyst for the feeling of togetherness and plays a strong part in defining a team culture. For example, teams in startup companies are viewed as very agile and effective and are almost always co-located.

Activity based workplaces used to be about cost reduction, hot-desking and optimally utilizing space. Now it is more having an attractive work environment, supporting collaboration, teams, learning and socializing. Related to this, biophilic design is an important concept that helps people thrive in the modern built environment. A goal of biophilic design is to create a connection to nature in the workplace.

# Supporting research

In the following we are summing up some of the research done by academia and our collaboration peers. Much of this research is what led us to develop our model and teaches us valuable lessons about what external and internal factors are necessary for successful teams. As a team member, it can often be difficult to control and change the external factors. Our model is largely focused on the internal interactions of the team, as it can empower and inspire any team regardless of external factors.

The 2017 Deloitte Human Capital Survey found that companies are racing to replace classical structural hierarchies with networks of teams empowered to take action, and that agility plays a central role in the organization of the future. 94% report that agility and collaboration are critical to their organization's success, but only 6% say that they are highly agile today.

Gartner has a vision of the Future of Work that can be summed up in a 6-point plan. First, it is about deliberately designing small and agile teams. Secondly, they believe 2/3 of jobs will be defined as non-routine, where there will be less menial tasks of doing and more thinking. The third point is about broadening horizons, innovation, disruption and moving towards a consumerized and global "pull mindset". The fourth point is how we will work in symbiosis with the smart machines and assistants. Fifth, focusing on meaning and purpose at work, there will be an increased focus on aligning your values with the values of your workplace. The sixth and last point in Gartner's plan is encouraging a flexible work-life balance, where work is integrated in your life, lines are blurred and tools will help us do this balancing act in a healthy way.



# Team Science

Research at MIT's Human Dynamics Laboratory have tracked and measured a wide range of teams with electronic badges that collected data on their individual communication behaviour. The data showed that successful teams share several defining characteristics:

1

Everyone on the team talks and listens in equally.

2

Members communicate face to face and have energetic conversations and gestures.

3

Members connect and interface directly with each other—not just with the team leader.

4

Members periodically go exploring outside the team and bring information back.

The research identified three aspects of communication that affect team performance. The first is energy, which is measured by the number and the nature of exchanges among team members. The number of face-to-face exchanges alone provides a good rough measure of energy. The second important dimension of communication is engagement, which reflects the distribution of energy among team members. The third critical dimension, exploration, involves communication with people outside their team. This can be thought of as the

energy between a team and the other teams it interacts with. They found that higher-performing teams seek more outside connections and that scoring well on exploration is most important for creative teams, such as those responsible for innovation. It turns out that exploration and engagement, don't easily coexist, because they require that the finite energy of team members be put to two different uses. Successful teams, oscillate between exploration for discovery and engagement for integration of the ideas gathered from outside.

In Project Aristotle, Google spent 2 years studying 180 teams and found 5 traits that were shared by the most successful ones. It turns out that you cannot achieve the best teams by simply assembling the best people. By viewing the results through a lens of team behaviors that magnified the collective intelligence of the group, the researchers found that what really mattered was less about who is on the team, and more about how the team worked together. In order of importance, the 5 traits were:

### 1 Psychological safety

Teammates feel safe to take risks around their team members and aren't afraid to seem as ignorant, incompetent, negative, or disruptive. Offering a new idea is welcomed and admitting to making a mistake is accepted.

### 2 Dependability

Members are reliable and deliver great work on time.

### 3 Structure and clarity

Each member's role and the teams short- and long-term goals are clearly defined and should be specific, challenging, and attainable.

### 4 Meaning

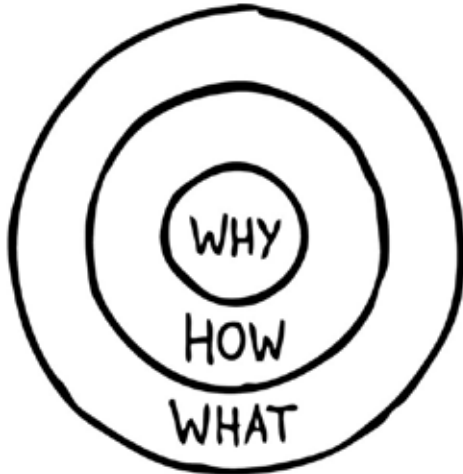
Understanding the "why" of the team and having a sense of purpose is important for team effectiveness.

### 5 Impact

Sensing that the work making a difference and contributing to the organizations goals.

Collective intelligence is actually not strongly affected by the individual intelligence of team members. Conversational turn-taking helps evenly distributing talking time across group members, a tendency of teams with a higher collective intelligence. Decision making is improved in teams with a higher collective intelligence. Teams that share a lot have an inherent redundancy. Since the team knowledge and memory is strong, the setbacks of losing a team member may not be as debilitating as in teams where members guard their functional "role" closely.

# The Golden Circle



## What

Every organisation on the planet knows WHAT they do. These are products they sell or the services.

## How

Some organisations know HOW they do it. These are the things that make them special or set them apart from their competition.

## Why

Very few organizations know WHY they do what they do. WHY is not about making money. That's a result. WHY is a purpose, cause or belief. It's very reason your organisation exists.

**“ When you think, and communicate starting with the Why, you can inspire others.”**

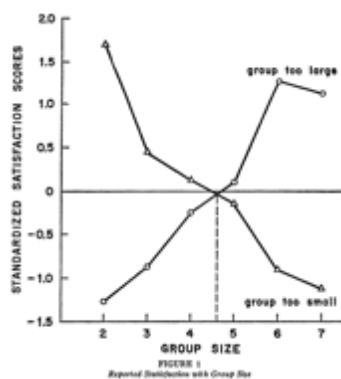
Simon Sinek

Google's research into teams are not only about effectiveness, but really describes a holistic experience of work. This is something that strikes a chord with author and TED speaker Simon Sinek, who believes in a world where we wake up inspired to go to work, feel safe at work and are fulfilled by the work we do.

Flattening organizations by enabling teams is a win-win situation. From an individual's perspective, they form teams thinking they'll be able to accomplish more complex tasks due to the complimentary skillsets of their peers. Organizations as a whole benefit from team formation by reducing the need for management.

# Optimal Team Size

A number of studies and leaders in the field indicate that an optimal team size is between 4 and 7. Michael Lopp, author of *Managing Humans*, takes into account how much time you could be committed to in 1 on 1s with everyone on your team and ends up with the formula  $7 \pm 3$ . Jeff Bezos, CEO of Amazon.com, is known for the “2 Pizza Rule”, where the maximum team size is dictated by how many can be fed by two pizzas. Research by Hackman and Vidmar (1970) showed that 4.6 was the optimum group size for member satisfaction. Google's average team size is 7.

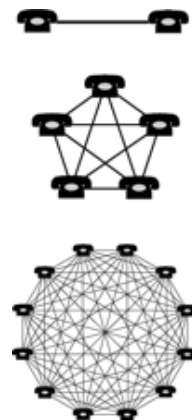


One interpretation of Metcalfe's Law shows that the number of communication lines within a team increases geometrically as the team grows, we can derive that the amount of quickly becomes difficult to handle when the team exceeds 10 people. Smaller teams tend to reduce communication overhead, improve focus and produce more.

Big teams can be fine in situations where tasks can scale and require little

Tomas Tunguz, a VC at RedPoint Ventures, discusses the “span of control” metric, measured the product manager to engineer ratios, and found that it varied greatly between teams at Google. It turns out that the ratio varies greatly with the experience and maturity of the team, something taken into consideration in Peter Drucker's complementary concept, “span of managerial responsibility” - the extent to which teaching and assistance is needed. Tunguz then goes on to recommend Google's average ratio of 1:7 as a good starting point.

In general, small teams are more aware of their common goals. They also know each other's personalities, work roles and communication styles.



coordination. An experienced and well-established team where the members know each other well and have a clear process, can also get away with a larger head count. They can actually be at an advantage when success depends upon the need for a wide range of skills or external factors like the size of their collective networks and access to resources.

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