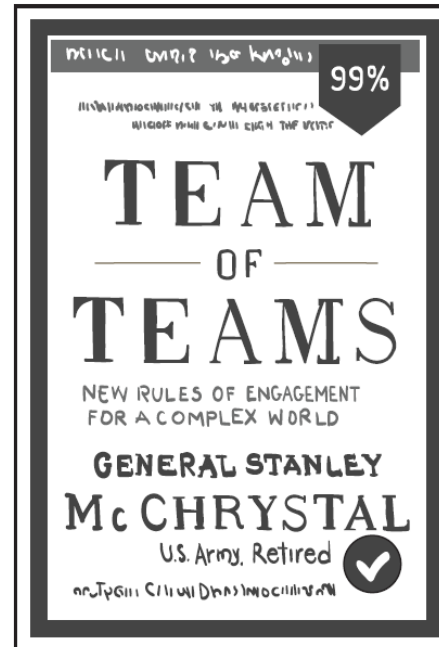


# Tool: Teams

- The growth of the importance of Teams is also a characteristic of our era. My favorite book which depicts the new way teams can achieve success being fluid, versatile, trust based is the “Team of Teams” book by Stanley Mc Chrystal. I would encourage you to read it.



*A preview by Shawn Callahan, August 10, 2017*

The five things that transformed and made the teams of the US four-star General Stanley McChrystal successful when arrived in Iraq to head up the Joint Special Operations Task Force with the mission to disrupt and disable Al Qaeda:

- **Have a common purpose**
- **Foster shared consciousness**
- **Build trust**
- **Leader as gardener**
- **Empowered execution**

## **Common purpose**

Everyone knew their mission: to disrupt and disable Al Qaeda in Iraq. And, as McChrystal says, everyone was on board: ‘... the common denominator of the professionals with whom I served was an almost mystical devotion to mission accomplishment’.

Yep, but it doesn’t happen as often in corporations. I’ve seen that level of clarity of purpose in a few businesses – Mars Pet Food springs to mind – but many haven’t realised they need a purpose that goes beyond shareholder returns.

A strong, commonly held purpose is an amazing leg-up for a transformation. If you don’t have a common purpose, you need to find it. I say ‘find’ it because you can’t just craft it. It’s a mistake to think you can go on an executive retreat and logically craft your purpose.

## **Shared consciousness**

Each morning, McChrystal conducted a 90-minute briefing via teleconference to 7,000 people across the world. He advocated extreme information transparency: everyone could know whatever they wanted. In the past, security classifications and compartmentalisation had hampered the free flow of information, which slowed them down. McChrystal changed that, and his morning briefing was a major tool in this.

## **Trust**

The teams within the task force had tremendous trust. McChrystal was working with some of the best teams in the business. But trust between the task force and the many partners supporting their work, such as the CIA, FBI, Department of Defense and so on, was another matter. So they instituted an embedding program where they sent their best people to spend six months at a time inside their partner organisations.

McChrystal says, 'When asking for nominations to fill critical positions, we used two criteria: (1) if it doesn't pain you to give the person up, pick someone else; (2) if it's not someone whose voice you'll recognise when they call you at home at 2:00 a.m., pick someone else'.

At first, the embedded person was seen as a spy. But then stories started to emerge about how these new players were making a big difference, bringing a new perspective and providing new connections and capabilities. Eventually the partners started to reciprocate by sending their very best to the task force. The network was getting better connected.

## **Leader as gardener**

With decision-making distributed and teams getting on with the job, the role of senior leadership changed from commanding to cultivating the culture of the organisation. McChrystal and his senior team devoted their time to ensuring the processes for getting things done worked, and knocking down barriers. They saw their role as akin to gardening: pulling out the weeds, planting new seeds, watering them, and generally ensuring the garden got what it needed to thrive.

**Empowered execution**

McChrystal worked the night shift and slept during the day. He often would be woken up by his team to give permission for a deadly strike against the enemy. He would listen to the briefing, add his thoughts, and give the go-ahead. Then it occurred to him that he wasn't adding much value because there was no way he could understand from a short briefing the nuances his team understood. So he made the decision to empower everyone in the task force to make the decisions they needed to make as long as they weren't immoral or illegal.