

The Collective Edge Launch Guide

The Collective Edge



"An eye-opening guide to making teams more than the sum of their individual parts. Essential reading."
—DANIEL H. PINK, author of *Drive* and *The Power of Regret*

Unlocking the Secret Power of Groups

Colin M. Fisher

The Collective Edge

Launch Guide

Prewrite, Meeting Agenda, and Charter Framework

“About 30 percent of effectiveness is determined by how the team is launched. Are the group’s goals and purpose articulated clearly? Does each member feel like they’re part of the group for a good reason—that they’re accepted and respected for their potential contributions to the group? Are the norms that promote psychological safety, clarify communication and coordination well understood right from the start? Do we leave the launch with clear next steps? The time to intervene in these areas is at the very beginning.”—pp. 219 of *The Collective Edge*

Goals for Your Launch Meeting

(Refer to Chapter 4 and “Group Thoughts on Cooperation”)

- Establish clear, important goals for your team.
- Design initial sub-tasks aligned with members’ skills and interests.
- Establish norms that support communication, coordination, and psychological safety.

1. Pework

Instructions: Appoint a Launch Captain to facilitate the meeting. This member does not have to be the formal leader.

Decide whether prework should be completed by a “Launch Captain” or by all members before the launch meeting. The Launch Captain should specify whether they want to receive all members’ prework before the meeting, or to discuss it during the meeting.

Respond to the prompts below.

Clarify Purpose and Define Goals

Prompt	Your response
PURPOSE: Why does this group exist? ¹	
TASK GOALS: What output will the group produce? Who are the “clients” of this output? What criteria will be used to assess the output?	
SATISFACTION: What should individuals gain from group membership? (e.g., learning, relationship-building, enjoyment)	
PRIORITIZATION: Are task or relational goals more important? If there are trade-offs among multiple goals, which should take priority?	

1. For ongoing groups, the “purpose” is a general statement that transcends any single task, which guides goal setting and prioritization. For instance, the 2007–2008 Boston Celtics adopted the slogan “Ubuntu,” meaning “I am because we are,” to signify that togetherness and mutual support took precedence over other goals. However, for groups that are composed for a specific task (e.g., project groups or task forces), the group’s purpose and goals may be similar or identical.

SMART Goal Setting (see Chapter 4, “Setting Your Sights: The Attributes of Good Cooperative Goals”)

Create a vivid, motivating goal using the SMART framework:

- **Specific:** What exactly are we trying to achieve?
- **Measurable:** How will we track progress and success?
- **Achievable:** Is the goal realistic given our constraints?
- **Relevant:** Why is the goal important to the team and its members?
- **Time-bound:** What are our key deadlines and milestones?

Prompt	Your response
SMART Goals (be sure to have numeric measure² and a deadline for each)	1. 2. 3.
Make your goal vivid: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What will the world look/feel like if we succeed? • Why is this important to our members and stakeholders? 	
What challenges might the team face in trying to achieve these goals?	

2. Tip: If it isn't obvious how to construct a numeric measure, members or clients can rate any aspect of effectiveness on a 1–7 scale. Poof! You have a number.

Individual Participation

Prompt	Your response
Contribution: What can you contribute to the group? What knowledge, skills, and abilities might be relevant?	
Gains: What do you hope to gain from your membership in this group? What performance, learning, or relationship goals do you personally have?	
Working with you: What should others know about you that would help them work with you more effectively?	

2. Launch Meeting Agenda

Use this agenda to ensure alignment on purpose, goals, and working norms. Launch Captain should present the results of prework to the group. Prework should be presented as a basis for discussion and amendment, not imposed on the group.

1. What is the purpose of this team?
2. Who are our members? What do they hope to contribute and gain?
3. What are our SMART goals before the next meeting?
4. What challenges might we encounter in trying to achieve these goals? Be sure to consider:
 - Areas where members may not have the skills, information, or resources needed
 - Members' other commitments and availability, given the deadlines proposed.

- Aspects of the task that require learning and creativity
 - Interactions with other groups and stakeholders that might hinder goal accomplishment
5. What initial norms will guide meetings, communication, and data sharing?
 - **Suggested Norms** (See Chapter 5 and “Group Thoughts on Conformity”)
 - **Foster psychological safety** (see Chapter 8).
 - State that you value everyone’s ideas, questions, and input.
 - Highlight aspects of the work that require experimentation and trial-and-error learning (including teamwork itself, especially if the group has not worked together before).
 - If you are the formal leader, note that you aren’t perfect and will make mistakes. The important thing is we can tell each other when things aren’t going well.
 - State that the team does better when everyone contributes their knowledge and perspectives.
 - This only works if you really mean it! Go read Chapters 5 and 8 again if you aren’t ready to mean it.
 - **Set clear communication expectations.**
Specify the kinds of information each channel will be used for and the expected response times. This may be a negotiation, as different members may have strong preferences.
 - Email:
 - Messaging: (specify platform)
 - Meetings:
 - **Propose where and how information will be stored/shared** (e.g., Google Drive, Notion, SharePoint).
 6. When will we review and reflect on these decisions? (At a minimum, schedule a midpoint check-in about halfway between launch and deadline.)
 7. When is our next meeting?

3. Team Charter Framework

Teams that write charters tend to perform better. Record your launch decisions using this structure. Update the frameworks above with what the group agrees to in the launch meeting.

Team Charter Elements

- **Purpose:** Why does this team exist? What makes us distinct?
- **Members:** Who are we? Include key skills, learning goals, and work styles.
- **SMART Goal(s):** What do we aim to accomplish, and why does it matter?
- **Challenges:** What obstacles might we encounter?
- **Norms and Strategies:** How will we operate to meet our goals and manage challenges?
- **Other information:**

Tip: Assign someone to circulate a charter summary within twenty-four hours of your launch.