

MatchUp Canvas: A Tool for Healthy Product Team Collaboration

Ellen Gottesdiener, EBG Consulting

Send questions and feedback to: ellen@ebgconsulting.com

Goal


Build healthy team interdependency by sharing and building working agreements about proactively improving personal goals. Use this activity whether you are lifting off a new team, rebooting a team with new members or troubled working relationships.

Timing


60 minutes is recommended for the activity.

Materials

- One copy per person of The MatchUp Canvas (download [here](#)). Print out on A1 size (ideally—33.1 x 24 inches) or A2 (24 x 16.5 inches) to allow for posting on walls and people to write on
- Painter-friendly tape to poster the Canvases on the wall.
- Markers to write on the Canvas

The MatchUp Canvas		Company	Team	Date	Version
Name <small>My name</small> 	My Goals <small>What I want to accomplish New learnings Opportunities I seek</small> 				
I offer... (you can depend on me for...) <small>Skills, help, knowledge, capabilities, tools I can provide Things I have that I can provide to help other meet their goals What I can offer to help us achieve our team purpose</small> 	Who needs my skills, knowledge... <small>People who need what I have to offer</small> 				
I need... (from others) <small>Skills, help, knowledge I need to be successful What will enable me to be successful, that others can provide</small> 	Who can I depend on... (from others) <small>People who can help me with what I need</small> 				

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 Download the Product Canvas at: <https://www.ebgconsulting.com/learn/canvas.pdf>
 DESIGNED BY: Ellen Gottesdiener, EBG Consulting | gsgesent | version 20.03


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Source: EBG Consulting | [Download](#) The MatchUp Canvas

Instructions

1. Introduce the activity as a means of building healthy team interdependence.
2. Complete the first row of the canvas, the “Name” and “My Goals” blocks.
Have them start by filling in their name and drawing an avatar in the “Name” block. The avatar should be a graphical representation of the individual as an alter ego or, if you dare, secret identity. Encourage people to be inventive. Their avatar might be a self-portrait, an image of yourself blended with your favorite hobby, or their favorite character cartoon character.

Each person lists his or her personal goals in the “My Goals” block. They answer the questions, “What do I want to accomplish and what new learnings or opportunities do I seek?” Encourage people to inventory their strengths and weaknesses, doing an honest self-assessment. This can include building their capabilities and knowledge in some combination of technical, business, and interpersonal skills.

3. Complete the “I Offer...” block (second row, left side). Ask participants to consider what he or she can offer the team to achieve team outcomes and contribute to what others’ might have for their own goals. By filling this out, each person is clearly communicating what the team can depend on him or her for.
4. Complete the “I Need...” block (third row, left side). Ask participants to answer the question: “What do I need from my teammates to successfully participate in reaching team outcomes and my own goal?”
5. Hang the MatchUp canvases on the wall (ideally, on a shared team wall). Doing this is publicly and transparently sharing each team members’ goals, offers, and needs. Ask everyone to stand and walk around the room to silently read each other’s canvases.

Suggest they pause and appreciate what each has to offer, as well as be clear on what is needed. This is an important opportunity to get to know each other’s learning goals, offers, and needs.

6. Now it’s time to hold the MatchUp! Once everyone has had a chance to read each other’s goals, offers, and needs, tell them it is time to find your matches. In this step, everyone moves to other canvases, and signs up for the corollary side of his or her offers or needs.

For example, Sally might *offer* domain expertise that Raj needs. Raj signs up in the “Who needs my skills, knowledge” block. Or, Mimi *offers* skills in UX design and customer research that Kayla needs. Kayla can then sign up in the “Who needs my skills, knowledge” block of your canvas.

Bart needs automated testing skills and listed this on his canvas. Amy has that, and so she signs her name to the “Who I can depend on” block on Bart’s canvas.

Depending on size of the team, allow the time to complete this MatchUp. Generally, 20 minutes should be sufficient.

7. Scan the walls with the completed canvases. Ask everyone to spend 5 to 10 minutes reviewing and assessing the completed canvases, moving around the walls to look at them as a whole.
8. Lead a retrospective of the MatchUp canvas, to help the team reflect on the story of their team skill and knowledge interdependency. Ask participant questions such as “What do you notice when they look across the canvases?”, “What patterns emerge?”, “What implications does this have for our working relationships?”, and “What implications does this have for our product outcomes.”

Be prepared to reveal areas that will benefit deeper conversation. For example, you might see gaps for someone who needs help but doesn’t have anyone to depend on. How will you address this as a team?

There may be an overload of dependencies for one person. For example, Sally is the Product Manager and her canvas has every team member’s names listed in her “Who needs my skills, knowledge...” block. Can she handle this? Are there ways to mitigate her being overwhelmed with people depending on her, while attending to all her other product management responsibilities? Are there ways the team can solve their shared need for domain expertise that is both efficient and effective?

Ask questions to help the team address findings like these.

This part of the activity conversation can take 10 to 20 minutes and worth every minute!

Notes:

- a. When using this as part of a team “liftoff” include it in the Alignment portion of your liftoff. [1]
- b. Remember: this tool is not “one and done.” Return to it periodically. MatchUps are always renegotiable. Returning to them periodically is a useful way to reignite transparency and trust.

Reference

1. Larsen, Diana and Ainsely Nies. *Liftoff: Start and Sustain Successful Agile Teams*, 2nd Edition. Raleigh, NC:Pragmatic Bookshelf, 2016.