BRITE: REDEFINING TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

Leadership Circle

LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

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GREAT PEOPLE DON'T GUARANTEE GREAT TEAMS.

Do you remember Quibi? It was a short-form mobile-native TV app that was the brainchild of Jeffrey Katzenberg (co-founder of DreamWorks) and Meg Whitman (former CEO of eBay and HP). At first glance, Quibi had everything going for it: legendary leaders, billions in funding, and some of the brightest minds in tech and entertainment. But within six months, it was gone. Despite early wins, including nearly 380,000 downloads on launch day, company leadership failed to act as a cohesive team. Content decisions were tightly controlled, the high-cost model clashed with user behavior and market realities, and strategic misalignment between founders undermined the startup's agility. Brilliant individuals and big ideas never gelled into a true team capable of evolving together.

And this isn't just a startup story. The recent Boeing 737 MAX crisis revealed how even world-class organizations can falter when teams lose alignment, transparency, and shared purpose. The aircraft had a troubled safety history—two fatal crashes, followed by a third incident in which a door plug blew off a brand-new 737 MAX 9 at 16,000 feet, the result of missing bolts in the panel. A subsequent Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) audit uncovered widespread quality control and manufacturing failures. The reputational and financial consequences were severe: Boeing's ability to certify its own aircraft was curtailed, regulators and airlines lost confidence, and billions of dollars in charges and losses followed. Despite extraordinary engineering talent, vast resources, and high stakes, the company's leadership and teams failed to operate as a cohesive, finely tuned system. The result wasn't just technical failure—it was a collapse of collective responsibility.

The fact is these stories aren't rare. They're reminders. We've seen it across industries and at every level of leadership: exceptional individuals don't automatically form exceptional teams. When leaders treat team effectiveness as a byproduct of individual development, they miss something vital.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. Because the first thing anyone interested in team development needs to do is understand what a team actually is.

For us, a team isn't just a group of high performers. It's a living, dynamic system—with its own patterns, blind spots, strengths, and potential. When we talk about a team, we mean a group of three to 20 people who meet regularly, share a common goal, and whose dynamics shape how work gets done. But team effectiveness doesn't emerge on its own. It must be cultivated—intentionally, systematically, and with a focus on how the team works together.

In short, great people aren't enough.

As we thought about this issue, we knew teams needed a way to see themselves clearly—not just as collections of individuals, but as living systems with their own patterns and energy. For years, we searched for an assessment that could reflect those dynamics in a way that was both honest and actionable. We couldn't find one.

So we built it.

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THE PROBLEM

CEOs and HR teams invest heavily in individual development—executive coaching, leadership training, talent programs—and then put those individuals together and expect magic. But more often than not, they don't get magic. They get middling.

A Harvard Business Review study of 95 teams across 25 leading corporations found that nearly 75% of cross-functional teams are dysfunctional, failing in fundamental areas like adhering to a budget, goal alignment, and project timelines. And this isn't limited to cross-functional teams. In our own work, we've seen dysfunction play out across virtually every type of team at every level, including service and delivery teams, production teams, research and development teams, academic and nonprofit teams, ad hoc and intact teams, and leadership teams.

For example, in one global manufacturing company we worked with, the executive team was composed of 10 highly capable leaders. Individually, their profiles showed strength, ambition, and expertise. But when we looked at the team dynamics, our BRITE assessment revealed major energy drains in the very places where strong teams thrive—trust, alignment, and connection. Despite the talent in the room, the team was stuck.

Energy drains can show up as team dysfunction in myriad ways:

- Meetings exhaust team members instead of inspire them.
- Goals compete instead of align, pulling people in different directions.
- Discussions generate more noise than clarity.
- Team members disengage because they've come to dread working together.
- Conflicts linger and erode trust.
- Leaders know their team isn't reaching its potential but don't know how to change it.

Sound familiar? We've all been on teams like this—where a single eye roll derails a whole conversation, the loudest voice drowns out the best idea, and cliques form faster than consensus. Where the meeting *after* the meeting carries more weight than the meeting itself, and where tension shows up as delayed decisions, duplicated effort, wasted resources, and mounting frustration. One breakdown leads to another, until the team stops moving the business forward and starts holding it back.

And the higher you go, the greater the cost. A Bain & Company study of 1,250 executives shows a clear correlation between a company's performance and a strong executive team—but only one in five of those teams were high performing. Which means four out of five executive teams are leaving significant performance potential on the table.

The reason is simple: you can't coach a team by coaching individuals. Real progress requires addressing how energy moves through the team as a whole. Because at its core, team dysfunction is an energy problem. When collaboration stalls, accountability slips, or decisions drag, the flow of energy between people slows or stops altogether. BRITE reveals these blockages—showing where energy is being drained, where it's pooling unproductively, and where it needs to move to bring the team back into flow.

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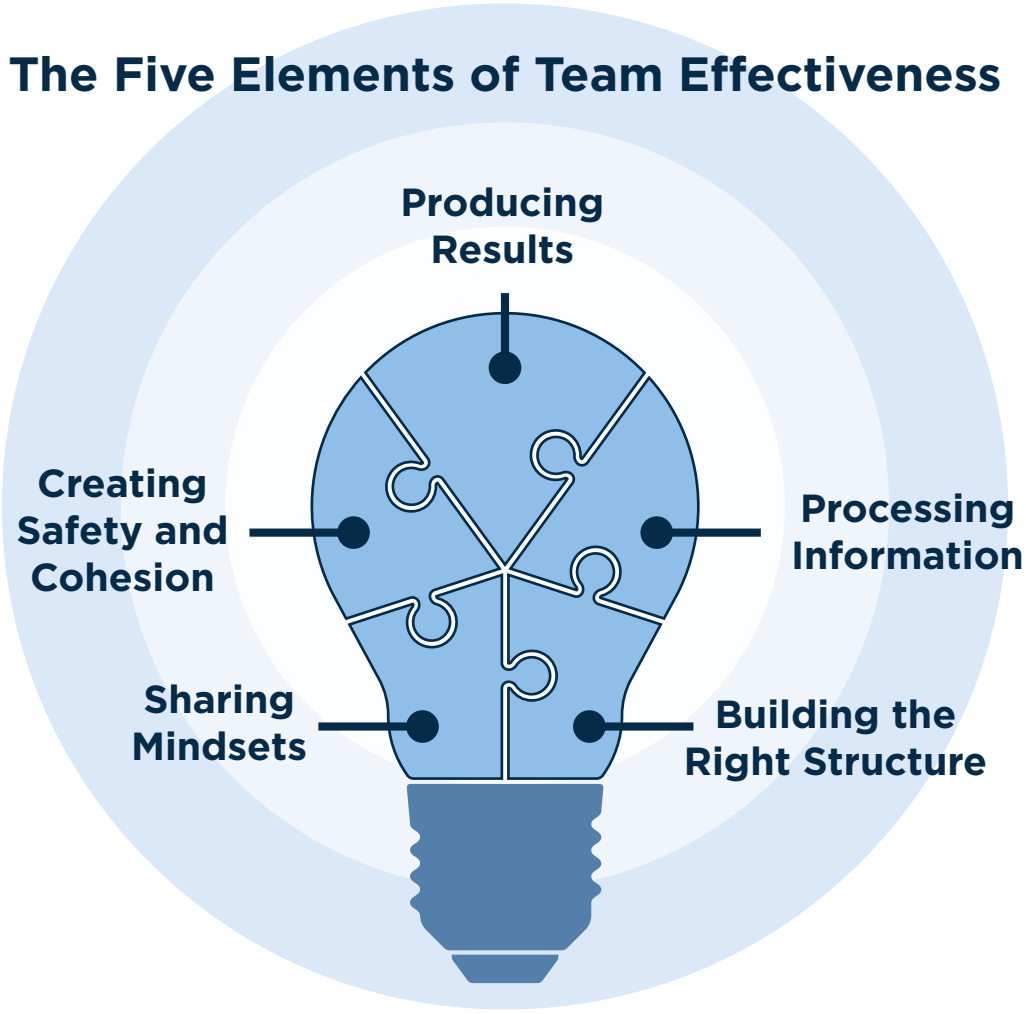
A NEW MODEL FOR TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

Treating a team simply as a collection of individuals ignores a fundamental truth: the moment a team is formed, a new entity is born. Suddenly, the way members interact and how they work in concert—or in conflict—takes precedence over any one individual's behavior. It's the energy created between and around team members that determines effectiveness, productivity, and even happiness.

Energy is the invisible current that runs through every team. It's the combination of motivation, cognitive effort, and collective momentum that determines whether a team is aligned and accelerating—or fragmented and stalling. Energy shows up in every interaction, every decision, every moment of collaboration. It's what turns individual contribution into collective impact.

We've found a way to surface, capture, and quantify this energy.

The **BRITE team assessment** illuminates what makes a team thrive, not just in theory but in practice. It helps teams reflect honestly, see clearly, and grow collectively. Because when a team aligns, trusts, and communicates with purpose, everything changes—not just potential, but performance.



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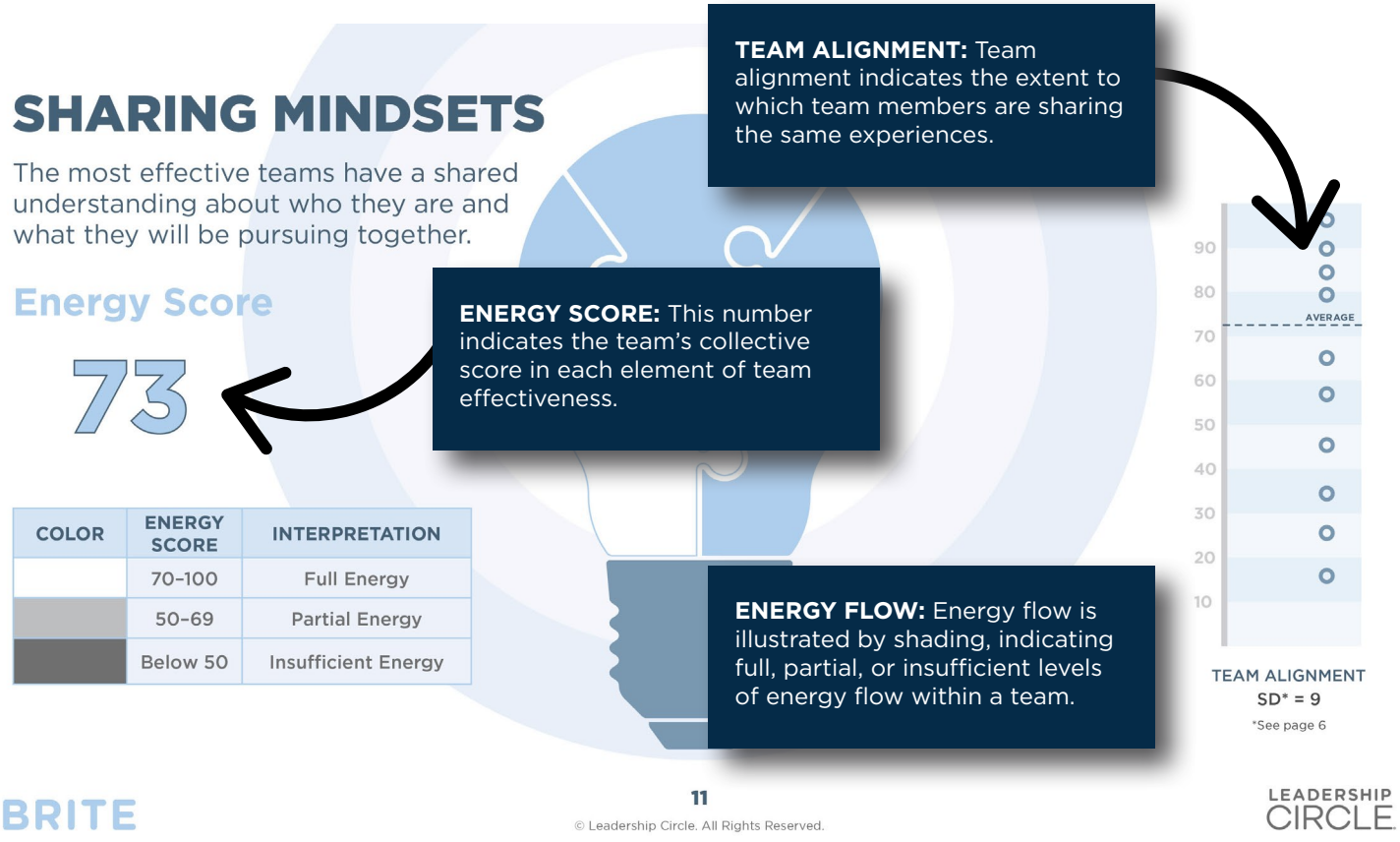
Through our research with more than 26,000 teams around the world in nearly every industry, we've identified the five critical elements that distinguish the most effective teams:

- **Sharing Mindsets:** The most effective teams have a shared understanding about who they are and what they will be pursuing together.
- **Building the Right Structure:** The most effective teams are structured to ensure a thriving team culture.
- **Creating Safety and Cohesion:** The most effective teams have created an environment where members feel safe to take personal risks, actively support one another, and hold a "we-ness" attitude.
- **Processing Information:** The most effective teams process information through quality interactions, in which all team members actively engage and where new ideas emerge.
- **Producing Results:** The most effective teams are agile in performing tasks and ensure collective accountability for outcomes.

Put simply, effective teams think together, structure together, trust together, learn together, and deliver together.

Teams need a mirror that allows them to see the group as it really is. We designed BRITE to be that mirror. Each assessment produces a clear, accessible report that highlights the team's energy score for each element of team effectiveness, along with insight into how well team members align around each element. BRITE creates immediate awareness and a shared language for exploring team dynamics and energy flow.



Sample page from the BRITE report

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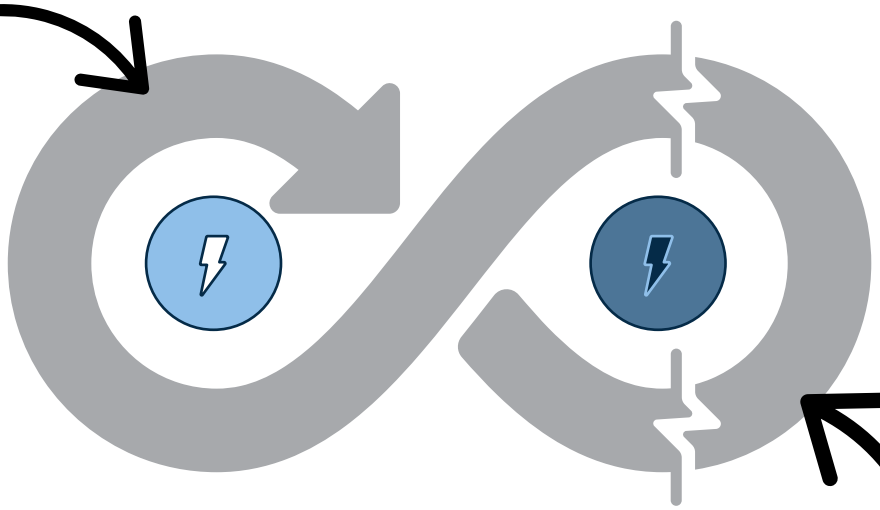
Additionally, the report spotlights key energy generators and energy disruptors—the factors that our research tells us most significantly impact each element of team effectiveness.

ENERGY GENERATORS: Energy generators increase energy flow within a team; the higher the generator score, the more energy is flowing in the team. Examples include belief in team efficacy, clear roles and responsibilities, team emotional intelligence, open information exchange, and collaborative problem-solving.



ENERGY DISRUPTORS: Energy disruptors diminish energy flow within a team; the higher the disruptor score, the more team energy is being drained. Examples include silo mentality, transactional team leadership, distrust, unmanaged conflict, and groupthink.

What BRITE reveals is not just where a team stands, but what it costs to stand there. Every disruptor carries an energetic price—friction that drains momentum, erodes trust, and saps motivation. Every generator, by contrast, adds energy into the system, fueling clarity, cohesion, and progress.

Think of it like this: a team is like a bucket that holds water—its collective energy. If the bucket is empty, there's nothing to fuel progress. If it's full of holes, the energy leaks out. When the leaks are large—or the inflow too small—the team stays drained. What matters isn't just how much energy a team has, but how well it retains and channels it. BRITE helps teams see both sides of that equation: where energy is being generated, and where it's being lost.

The dynamics often invisible in everyday interactions become concrete in the BRITE report, helping teams see their generators and disruptors clearly—perhaps for the first time—and pinpoint exactly what steps to take to save energy, re-channel it productively, and strengthen the team overall.

BRITE IN ACTION

So, what does this look like in the real world? Here are a few stories of what happens when teams see themselves clearly.

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Immediate Win

One of our global consulting partners used BRITE with a cross-functional team of 12, some of whom rarely worked together in person. Within a single debrief session, the team was able to surface and prioritize nine critical issues, align on three top actions, and commit to concrete next steps. The coach reported that BRITE not only gave the team clarity, but also the momentum to move forward immediately.

> ***"Within one debrief session, the team identified nine emerging issues, prioritized three, and turned them into clear actions. BRITE gave us the structure and language we needed to align quickly and leave with a sense of momentum."***

Deeper Shift

An international business school integrated BRITE into its School of Founders program, a 10-month accelerator for startup leaders. Their faculty reported that BRITE gave participants an accessible, intuitive framework that unlocked conversations they had previously struggled to have—turning vague tensions into clear, actionable insights.

> ***"The concept of energy generators and disruptors went down extremely well. It was very intuitive. People got it, particularly when they looked at their own results, so we had a lot of sharing in sessions. The idea of energy being blocked, energy flowing—that resonated really well. This was probably one of the biggest wins: the ability to, not just in our program but going forward, be able to talk about these things."***

Retake Momentum

At a financial tech company, one senior leadership team used BRITE to establish a baseline, then retook the assessment four months later. The first report highlighted low scores in Creating Safety and Cohesion and Processing Information. By the retake, both areas had climbed significantly, reflecting sharper focus, stronger accountability, and improved performance. The team didn't just feel the difference. They could see it, measure it, and build on it.

> ***"[Team meetings] are much better now, with fewer missed discussions. We have increased the level of trust on this team by focusing on a culture of respect."***

The more light you shine on your team, the easier it is to see the path forward.

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NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

You've got great people, and you know they're capable of great things. But a team isn't just a group of talented individuals—it's a dynamic energy system. And you can't develop that system the same way you coach or train individuals.

When teams thrive, they don't just hit goals—they build momentum that lifts the entire organization. BRITE helps teams get there by making the invisible visible, shining a light on how team members work together, and pointing the way forward.

If you know your team has more potential than it's realizing, BRITE is a powerful first step.

LET'S START THE CONVERSATION

Visit leadershipcircle.com to learn more or contact us to explore how BRITE can light the path for your team's growth.

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