



Hairballs & High Points: Looking at the Whole Story

Part 2 - A reflection exercise for your team

If you read part one of my three-part series, you know I shared self-reflection questions from *Getting Things Done* by author David Allen. Now I'm listing questions for you and your team below. Next, I'll give you an exercise you can do with your friends and family.

A practice I regularly use with my teams (sometimes quarterly, sometimes monthly, but definitely at least once a year) is to ask the team to list all the accomplishments, high points, and most proud moments of the year. Ideally, we're in a room and we have giant sticky notes and big black markers so as we write one accomplishment per sticky note, we can post them on a wall, read them out loud, and take pictures so we can share, compare, and celebrate over time.



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Getting Started

Ask everyone to write down as many moments on stickies as they can in about seven minutes. If you can, ask everyone to post their items on a wall, cluster them in like categories if you feel the need to organize, step back, and take it in.

Invite the team to comment on what they see, sense, and feel looking at all the highlighted moments. I'm always inspired by how much a group accomplished and should feel proud of as time goes by because we forget all that's been done.

Round Two

Ask everyone to do the same, but this time write all the biggest bumps, bruises, pain points, hairballs, disappointments, and failures that the team experienced. Give them about five minutes to write all these down, one recollection per sticky note, and then use a different wall (ideally the opposite wall) to post all of those for viewing. Take time to reflect, and allow people to respond to how they feel and what they see and sense as they look at this wall.

Round Three

We know that lessons should be repeated until they're learned. What lessons are dying to be learned when we look at the two walls as a whole story? We often focus just on what didn't go well and simply plan on improving, but in doing so we miss half the picture if we don't capture what precisely worked well and what factors contributed to it going well. Take time to reflect on two or three of the biggest lessons dying to be learned by a group as you head into the next phase or year.

If you have teammates who work remotely, the above exercise can easily be done using a variety of shared-document technologies; you can simply open a shareable document and invite everyone to contribute in real time.

