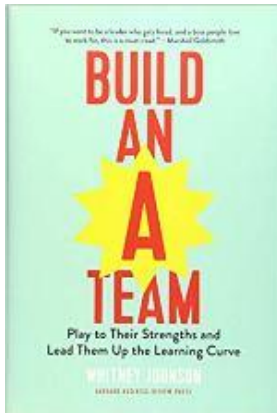


## PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Build an A-Team: Play to Their Strengths and Lead Them Up the Learning Curve***

Author: **Whitney Johnson**

Publisher: Harvard Business Review Press

List Price: \$28.00      Format: Hard cover, 208 pages

Publication Date: 2018      ISBN: 13: 978-1-63369-364-7

Reviewer: **Shauna Skolnick**

Review Date: September 2019

---

### Introduction

“Build an A-Team” is an easy read with a logical step-by-step process to developing high performing, engaged and productive teams.

Embracing personal disruption and employee disruption is a simple strategy anyone can ace focused around learning, an innate desire for which we are all wired.

### Overview of Book’s Structure

The book is presented in a user-friendly manner, taking a tough and often intangible subject like employee engagement and productivity and presenting an easy solution not often considered by management.

Real world company examples of culture, development and hyper-growth make the concepts more tangible to grasp and tips on how to implement this process and adhere to designing jobs around people’s skills, abilities and propensity to master new roles.

### Highlights

In an ever-growing gig economy where tenure, loyalty and company culture continue to erode, managers need to get more creative on how best to maintain positive work environments and group dynamics that limit unwanted attrition one of the biggest attributing factors preventing hyper growth.

Hiring on the S Curve is a breakthrough concept and if balanced correctly can lead to high performance teams fully engaged in daily responsibilities and committed to a common goal. It is genius in its simplicity!

Learning prevents stagnation; applying this easy step-by-step process will help maximize employee engagement and contribution, no matter the role or level of expertise. Great bosses develop great teams, and this is a “must know” for those committed to excellence!

### **Highlights: What I liked!**

I realized for the first time with clarity the role management has played in watching so many top producers turn over due to “burnout.” We have placed the blame on the employee, attributing losses to diminished drive or lack of will to continue the daily grind. It is clear now that these top producers are masters, and even masters get bored of constant achievement if they are not stimulated or motivated by learning something new.

Always striving to be a better leader, I will incorporate this S Curve hiring process and team cultivation to achieve better success, both for the company and each individual contributor. Attrition costs millions in loss revenue and profit, yet here is a simple, manageable method to build teams and identify what kind of shift needs to be made.

I love numbers and ratios! Understanding the proper percentages required along the S Curve in order to maintain strong group dynamics makes managing teams less about emotions and personalities and more about ratios and logic. Developing the correct learning pathways for employees will evoke gratitude and loyalty, effort and engagement. It’s like having a magic formula for building the perfect team!

The S Curve is a logical approach and simple mathematical plan to hiring and managing successful teams.

### **Who might benefit from the Book?**

Anyone responsible for building strong functioning teams will benefit from the tips in this book. The S Curve is a logical, cerebral way to look at group dynamics, tenure and growth. Applied correctly, this could catapult teams and companies that have struggled with junior level teams, complacency or high turnover.

Anyone managing more than a few people should read this book and incorporate the wisdom behind S Curve hiring methods.

### **Conclusion**

The best leaders today are always looking for new ideas on how to best develop teams and individuals. Building high performing teams that continue to grow without setbacks and crippling attrition seems to be an anomaly only enjoyed by a few. Perhaps they have figured out this logical method to represent the natural human psyche and the never-ending cycle of needing to grow, enjoy and teach. This is one valuable and motivational tool to stick in your tool belt for sure!

For more about this book, go to: <https://store.hbr.org/product/build-an-a-team-play-to-their-strengths-and-lead-them-up-the-learning-curve/10154>

*Editor's note: This book review was the result of a partnership between the publisher, PM World and the [PMI Dallas Chapter](#). Authors and publishers provide the books to PM World; books are delivered to the PMI Dallas Chapter, where they are offered free to PMI members to review; book reviews are published in the PM World Journal and PM World Library. PMI Dallas Chapter members can keep the books as well as claim PDUs for PMP recertification when their reviews are published.*

*If you are an author or publisher of a project management-related book, and would like the book reviewed through this program, please contact [editor@peworldjournal.com](mailto:editor@peworldjournal.com).*

---

## About the Reviewer



**Shauna Skolnick**

North Texas, USA



**Shauna Skolnick** is a Technology Staffing Industry leader with 20 years of experience managing high-volume critical business operations. She is focused on National Accounts Resource Planning & Delivery, Customer Relationship & Account Management, Talent Acquisition / Team Training, Performance Management & Metrics.

Her employer, GDH has been awarded the Best of Staffing award by Technical Talent and Clients once again, making both lists for 5 consecutive years and therefore earning us the coveted "Diamond" status! The Strategic Delivery team excels in providing technical resources necessary to support Fortune 100 clients and Federal Government Secret/Top Secret Cleared engagements. Her success is attributed to delivering top talent via contract staff augmentation, SOW project resource delivery, RPO engagements, and direct hire.

Shauna can be contacted at [sskolnick@gdhinc.com](mailto:sskolnick@gdhinc.com)