

FRICTION

INTERPERSONAL
Build The Felt Experience

The Experiment: The Team Design Canvas

Duration: One meeting, 60–90 minutes

Time required: 2–3 days (send prompts 24 hours ahead, allow 24–48 hours for reflection, then hold a 60–90-minute session)

Goal: This experiment uses a structured team exercise to surface what people need from one another.

What This Is Not

Before describing the exercise, it is worth naming what it is not. It is not a personality assessment, a strengths inventory, or a team-building icebreaker. It does not require vulnerability theater or enforced emotional disclosure. It is a design exercise that treats the question of how people need to work together as a legitimate organizational design problem, worth the same rigor and intentionality as any other.

Step One: Prepare the Canvas

Before the session, create a shared document or whiteboard with one section for each team member, including yourself. Each section has four prompts. Send these to participants at least 24 hours in advance so people can reflect rather than react:

1. What I bring that people might not know about or fully use
2. What I need to do my best work that I rarely ask for
3. What signals that something is wrong for me, and what I usually do when that happens
4. What it looks like when I am most fully in it

Step Two: Each Person Fills In Their Section

Give people 24–48 hours to complete their section privately. Frame this as a design contribution; they are helping the team understand how to work well with them, not performing openness for its own sake. The prompts are deliberately functional. Even people who are guarded about emotional disclosure can usually answer the question “what do I need to do my best work?”

Step Three: Run the Session

In the session itself, each person shares what they are willing to put into the room. The facilitator’s role (which can be the leader, or someone else) is not to interpret or respond to each person’s contribution, but to ask one follow-up question after each person shares:

Is there anything here that would be useful for us to hold for you when things get hard?

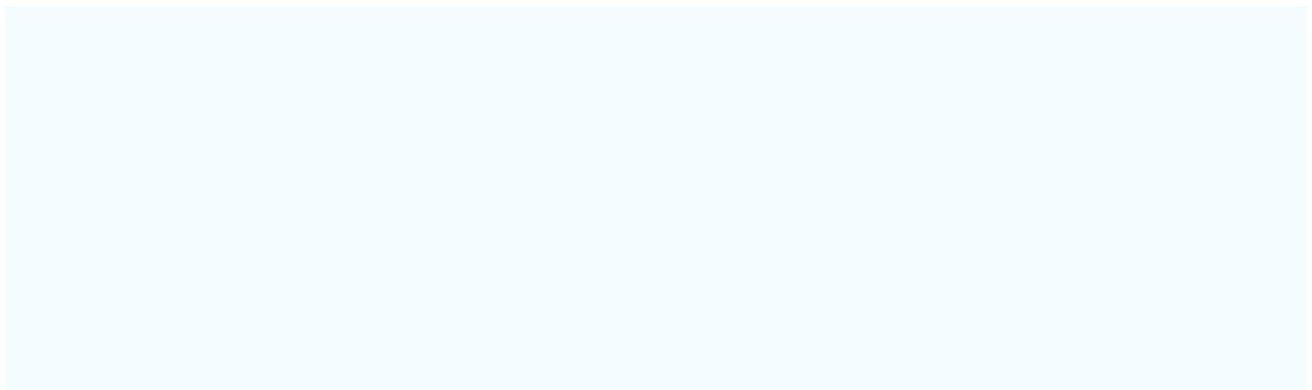
This question does the structural work of the exercise. It moves the conversation from information-sharing to active commitment; from “here is what I am like” to “here is what I am asking you to notice and hold for me.”

Step Four: Capture What the Team Is Committing To

At the end of the session, document two or three things the team has agreed to notice and hold for one another.

For example:

- When Raj goes quiet, we check in rather than assume everything is fine.
- When Yesenia says they need more context before deciding, we treat that as signal-gathering, not delay.
- When Joan says they’re good, we know to ask one more time.



The most useful moment in this exercise is what they add when asked the follow-up question. That is the information the team most needs, and it is almost always the information no one has ever asked for. Also watch for who hesitates before the follow-up question. Hesitation is often the signal that the person is deciding whether the room is safe enough to say the real thing. How the room receives that hesitation tells you a great deal about where the team's togetherness currently lives.