

150+ Reflection Questions for Teams

**All the prompts you need to
kick off your best year yet**



RANGE

Introduction

The end of the year is a time for pause and reflection. A time when work often slows just enough to sit back, take a deep breath, and ask yourself: “wow, where did the past year go?”

It’s also a time to chart out where you’re headed. Whether through a personal ritual, like setting a New Years resolution, or a team or company one, like planning for the year ahead, ‘tis the season for reflection—and we’re here to help.

As we all gear up to close out the past year and ring in a new one, let’s take some time to celebrate all that’s been accomplished, look back on what you’ve learned, and plan how to put it to good use in the year ahead.

In this ebook, you'll find a collection of prompts designed to help you and your team refresh your annual reflection rituals, run planning & reflection sessions that are frictionless and fun, and connect the dots between personal and team goals.

Why make time for reflection?

“Reflection gives the brain an opportunity to pause amidst the chaos, untangle and sort through observations and experiences, consider multiple possible interpretations, and create meaning. This meaning becomes learning, which can then inform future mindsets and actions. For leaders, this ‘meaning making’ is crucial to their ongoing growth and development,” Jennifer Porter writes in “Why you should make time for self reflection. (Even if you hate doing it)”

While looking back on our past failures and triumphs doesn’t always come easy, reflection is a key part of growth. It helps build self awareness and confidence, and shows us just how far we’ve come. When we take the time to reflect on what’s working and what isn’t, we start to recognize patterns in the way things work and gain a powerful understanding that helps us make better decisions in the future too.

Reflection can also give us a broader perspective around our actions and other things that happened in the last year. It allows us to zoom out and see the whole picture instead of just one piece of the puzzle—perhaps approaching situations that were once muddled with details or emotions with a new clarity.

Reflection also helps facilitate deeper learning and understanding. When we take a step back after completing a body of work and reflect on it before moving on to the next thing, we’re more likely to retain learnings and information around it.

Reflection doesn't always come easy though, because many of us have a bias towards action. It's hard to sit still and reflect when there's so much we could be "doing". In her [HBR article](#), Jennifer Porter shares this example: "Like soccer goalies, many leaders have a bias toward action. A study of professional soccer goalies defending penalty kicks found that goalies who stay in the center of the goal, instead of lunging left or right, have a 33% chance of stopping the goal, and yet these goalies only stay in the center 6% of the time. The goalies just feel better when they 'do something.' The same is true of many leaders. Reflection can feel like staying in the center of the goal and missing the action."

Reflection can also feel overwhelming or even a little scary. Where do you even begin? What are you supposed to think about? How long should it take? All these are valid questions. (Stay tuned, we'll answer them later on). Our inner critic can come on strong during moments of reflection too, and you might find that you dwell really heavily on failures and weaknesses rather than celebrating your wins and strengths. Reflecting can lead you to valuable insights, but it can also spark feelings of discomfort, vulnerability, and defensiveness.

Reflection and planning go hand in hand

December and January are big planning months for most teams and companies. You're probably writing your individual OKRs, creating a quarterly plan for your team, or setting the company's focus areas right about now. Maybe deep reflection is already a part of your process here—if not, it should be.

Using reflection to inform how you create a team, individual, or company plan is proven to make it more impactful. Research shows that, by taking the time to learn from experiences accumulated in the past, you can augment future outcomes and that reflection is actually more powerful than doing, in many cases. Meaning, you actually learn more (and get better) by stopping to reflect on a task you've been doing, rather than using that time to get more practice doing the task over and over again.

According to another study, while some type of reflection practice is common on many teams (think: sprint retros, quarterly look-backs, review cycles), actually putting those learnings into lasting change happens a lot less often.

Where planning for the year can go wrong

- **Gaps in understanding:** To create an effective plan for the year, folks need a solid understanding of how things are going in the first place. This baseline knowledge makes it easier to identify gaps to fill, opportunities to seize on, and themes for growth — and is why thoughtful reflection (and asking yourself the right questions) is critical to the process.
- **The all-consuming time-suck:** Planning should help your team hit the ground running come January, not slow it down. Many teams get stuck churning through weeks of planning, likely because their planning process lacks guidance and it's unclear what “done” looks like.
- **Not involving the whole team:** Planning should be a highly collaborative process that involves everyone from individuals to top-level leadership. If it's too top-down, you won't have buy-in from those charged to execute the plan. If it's too bottoms-up, goals might not match business realities.

- **Unrealistic goal-setting:** One of the biggest mistakes teams make in planning is committing to too much. Fewer and focused is generally better — not only will this guarantee you have the resources available to allocate to them, but it also helps build team-wide momentum around a few key initiatives.
- **Being stuck in your ways:** For your plan to be successful, you've got to be willing to challenge the way you did things in the past. The questions in this ebook will help anyone on your team, from leaders to ICs, foster a stronger growth mindset and challenge existing ways of thinking about progress and failures.
- **Lack of accountability:** Plans get forgotten—especially if there aren't structures in place for regularly checking in on them. As other priorities creep in throughout the year, you'll want to be able to reference the plan you created to understand where you can shift focus versus where to stand the line.

How reflection can help

While it may feel counterintuitive, taking the time to slow down and reflect before diving into planning can help you solve many of the challenges outlined above. Reflection can help you understand what is and isn't work, notice patterns that are helping or hurting your team, hone in on a few highly impactful goals, and create a plan that optimizes for all of it.

Thinking beyond metrics

Metrics are an important part of understanding how your team's doing, but they're only one piece of the puzzle.

Reflection should include harder to measure inputs too — like how people feel, what gives them energy, and where they feel most connected to the work. These key emotional indicators let you see how your team is doing and are linked to improved outcomes. According to research, positive emotions are consistently associated with higher performance and quality of work.

You're going to get out of planning what you put in, so being thoughtful and taking time to reflect can help inform a plan that will actually have an impact throughout the year — and be one that the team is fired up about working towards.

Reflection questions to plan for the new year

How to use them

The questions in the following sections are separated into three sections: personal reflections, team reflections, and reflections for leaders. Each section will explore different themes for reflection and help you create an actionable plan to grow in the year ahead.

We recommend starting with personal reflections (it's why we put them first) because what you learn about yourself there can help you better understand your past actions and experiences, and what you might want to take on in the new year as a part of the team too.

Structure

In each of the sections below, we'll ask questions to help you look back on what happened in the past year and uncover learnings and themes from these experiences. From there, we'll use what you find to help inform an actionable plan for the year ahead.

Some tips

- **You don't have to answer everything:** Start with one or two themes you want to work on most. These questions are meant to ease the feeling of overwhelm that reflection and planning can sometimes cause—not create more of it.

- **Embrace vulnerability and honesty:** If something isn't working—speak up. (Here are some [tips for giving constructive feedback](#).) If a project you worked on didn't go as well as you'd have hoped, own it and be kind to yourself. Failure is necessary to growth, let's normalize talking about it.
- **Go with your gut:** Try not to spend too much time on any given question. If you're having a hard time coming up with an answer, try thinking back to things that happened each quarter to jog your memory. When something comes to mind, go with your first instinct rather than deliberating over it for ages to find a “perfect answer”. Oftentimes, your knee-jerk reaction is the one that will have the deepest learnings to unpack.
- **Think big and small:** Not every answer has to be about something huge or life-changing. Small examples and behaviors can help us learn a lot about ourselves and our teams too. For instance, a new routine you developed in the past year might be doing a [10 minute daily planning exercise](#) each morning or it could be as simple as building a habit around charging your laptop before bed so you're ready to roll the next morning.
- **Carve out dedicated time:** You and your team should prioritize time for reflection in the same way you carve out time for working on projects. When you do, you'll want to give yourself enough time to relax into the process and not feel rushed. That might look like carving out an hour or two twice a week to work through reflection and planning, or dedicating a full day for self and team reflections.
- **Be gentle with yourself and others:** Good reflection forces us to be vulnerable, and can bring up some difficult and uncomfortable feelings. As you go through, be kind and gentle with yourself and others. Nobody's

perfect, and failures are a positive thing because they're how we learn and grow. It can also be easy to dwell on what isn't working, and forget to give credit to all the successes along the way. Remember, you're your own biggest critic. Simply embarking on the reflection process is a huge win for self awareness and growth. We've tried to balance out the questions in this ebook to encourage equal parts celebration and learning, so you can see for yourself just how far you've come.

The questions

Self reflection

Use these to celebrate how far you've come and lean into personal growth in the new year.

Your outlook and mindset

Look back at what happened	Connect the dots
1 On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the past year?	Would past years get a higher or lower score—why?
2 What was a time this past year when you felt that you were at your best?	Why does this stand out compared to other moments?
3 Describe your low point for the year.	Name 1-2 things you learned from it.
4 Name 3 things that gave you energy and 3 things that drained you.	Do you notice any themes or commonalities in what you listed?
5 What's something you changed your mind about this past year?	What contributed to this shift?
6 Name 3 things you're grateful for this year — work-related or not.	At what points during the past year did you feel most grateful for each of these things? Why?

Create your plan

- What are some ways you can carve out more time to focus on the things that energize you?
- What do you want to do more of in the new year? What will you do less of?

Your goals and accomplishments

Look back at what happened	Connect the dots
7 What achievement are you most proud of?	Why do you think you chose this example?
8 Name something you faced head on and something you shied away from.	What do you notice about these things? Why do you think you approached those situations differently?
9 What was a goal that you followed through on, or partially followed through on?	Who or what made it possible?
10 Were there any goals that you ended up letting go of this past year?	Was there a reason you moved away from these goals? What, if anything, got in your way?
11 Share an example of a personal risk you took this year that paid off.	What worked about this particular risk? How might you apply what you learned from that experience to future situations?

Create your plan

- Write out 1-3 goals for yourself in your work this year. For each one, what are 1-2 things that can help you get there?

Your learning and development

Look back at what happened	Connect the dots
12 What's a new discovery you made this year?	What impact has that discovery had on your day-to-day life and work?
13 What's a skill you have gained confidence with in the last year?	From your perspective, what was the source of that growth in confidence? Was it internal or external? A shift in your mindset or actions? A combination?
14 Share an example of a time this past year when you tried something that didn't work out, but the process of trying it moved your thinking forward in a helpful way.	What were your takeaways from the experience?
15 If you could give yourself one piece of advice last year at this time, what would it be?	What thematic threads are you noticing within that piece of advice? Why do you think those themes are meaningful to you as you reflect on the past year?

Create your plan

- Pick a book, podcast, or course to check out in the new year to support you in your daily work.
- What's something new you'd like to learn or try in the new year? Name 1-2 ways you can hold yourself accountable to this goal.
- How can you continue to grow and nurture the skills you picked up last year?

Your relationships

Look back at what happened	Connect the dots
16 What's your most enjoyable relationship at work? What about one that causes you stress or concern?	How might your own actions and mindset be affecting those work relationships?
17 What was something you asked for help with last year that you're glad you did?	What about that experience worked for you? Timing? The people you looped in? Anything else?
18 Share an example of a misunderstanding you had in the past year.	What helped you resolve it?
19 What's the most useful piece of feedback you received this past year, in or outside of work?	How'd you put it to use?

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| <p>20 Were you a mentor or mentee to anyone?</p> | What did you learn from that experience? |
| <p>21 How would your teammates describe your collaboration style?</p> | What's working about it? What could be better? |
| <p>22 How did you help your teammates achieve their goals? How did you hinder them?</p> | Are there any common threads you're noticing? What might this tell you about your own strengths and opportunities for growth? |
| <p>23 What would make you feel more fulfilled in your work relationships?</p> | What do you need to get there? |

Create your plan

- How will you foster stronger relationships with your colleagues this year? Commit to 1-3 specific activities you'll do towards this goal.
- Name 1 new way you can support your teammates in the new year and 1 way they can support you.

Your work style

Look back at what happened

Connect the dots

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| <p>24 What was a new habit or routine you created that's improved your efficiency at work?</p> | Why do you think it worked so well for you? |
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| 25 | When did you feel most productive? | What factors (environmental, team, or otherwise) contributed to your productivity? |
| 26 | How much focus time did you have?
Did it feel like enough? | What pulled you away from focus? |
| 27 | During busy moments throughout the year, how did you choose what to focus on? | Would you change anything about that approach? |
| 28 | Name 1 commitment you upheld and 1 that fell through the cracks. | What helped you stand by your commitments? What got in your way? |
| 29 | Describe a time this past year when you felt truly connected to the work you were doing. | What about the work itself, the circumstances around the work, your mindset, etc., helped you feel that sense of connection? |

Create your plan

- What's 1 thing you could change to find more focus time, balance, or connection to your work in the new year?
- With your work style in mind, what do you need to set yourself up for success in the year ahead?

Team Reflection

Use these to adjust and optimize how your team works together.

Your learning and development

Look back at what happened

Connect the dots

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| 30 What were your team's top 3 priorities this year? | Do you feel that you were spending time on the right things? Briefly share why. |
| 31 Name 3 highlights from the year and 3 lowlights. | Do you notice any themes across these experiences? What factors helped you feel successful and what held you back? |
| 32 What did your team do this past year that had the most meaningful impact on your customers, users, or clients? | How did you measure and/or notice that impact? How was this different from activities and initiatives that were less meaningful? |
| 33 What team deliverable are you most proud of? | Why is it something you're proud of? (Could be the role you played in it, the end product, the teamwork that went into it, etc.) |

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| <p>34 Name a noble failure from this past year — something that didn't go as planned but you learned from instead.</p> | <p>What did you learn and how might you apply that to future experiences?</p> |
| <p>35 What goals did you make progress on? What got stalled or deprioritized?</p> | <p>What factors (internal or external, day-to-day or big-picture) do you think contributed to that progress or lack thereof?</p> |
| <p>36 What's 1 risk your team took together this year that paid off?</p> | <p>How did you decide to take that risk? Why do you think the risk worked so well for your team?</p> |

Create a plan

- What does your team need to be successful in working towards its goals this year? How can you work together to make sure that happens?
- Commit to 2 things you'll do more of as a team and 2 things you'll do less of in the year ahead.

Ways of working

Look back at what happened

- 37** What were some notable decisions that happened on your team this year?
- 38** Did your team try any new technology tools or processes this past year?

Connect the dots

- How did the decision-making process feel for your team and what was the impact of those decisions?
- What was that experience like?

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| <p>39 What was our meeting load like this past year?</p> | <p>Which meetings felt useful?
What do you wish had been an email instead?</p> |
| <p>40 Think about your team's different communication channels (email, Slack, spontaneous chats, asynchronous docs, etc.) —what's 1 that felt valuable to you this year? How about 1 that you'd like to change or get rid of?</p> | <p>Why do you think some forms of communication work better for your particular team than others?</p> |
| <p>41 When you have a question (about a project, something another teammate is working on, etc.) how do you go about finding answers?</p> | <p>Does this process feel effective?
What, if anything, could make it better?</p> |
| <p>42 What's something you feel like you spend too much time on?</p> | <p>Why do you think the amount of time or effort you spend on that task/activity doesn't feel worthwhile?</p> |

Create a plan

- Pick a meeting on your team's calendar that you'd like to make more effective in the new year and outline 1-2 changes you can try to help you get there.
- What are 2 areas your team can focus on (communication, meetings, tools, etc.) to improve ways of working in the year ahead? How might you build on the momentum of what worked well last year to help you get there?

Teamwork

Look back at what happened

- 43 What was your team better at this year past year compared to prior years?
- 44 Was there a time this past year when a teammate pushed or challenged your thinking in a helpful way?
- 45 How did you hold each other accountable in the past year?
- 46 On a scale of 1-10, how much do you feel like you can trust your teammates to get done what they say they will?
- 47 What's your team's superpower?
- 48 What's one thing you wish you could be better at as a team?

Connect the dots

- What factors, behaviors, and beliefs might have led to those improvements?
- What did you learn from this experience?
- Were some practices more effective than others? Did some feel easier or more challenging? Why?
- Is this number lower than you'd like it to be? About right? Why do you think that is?
- How has this superpower manifested itself in your work together?
- How might you start to work on that together?

Create a plan

- Choose 1 aspect of how your team holds each other accountable that you'd like to maintain/amplify in the new year, and one that you'd like to improve upon as a group. How might you adjust your team's routines to make this possible?

Culture

Look back at what happened	Connect the dots
49 Name 2 things that brought you together as a team this past year.	Why do you think these activities or practices helped your team connect? How did it make you feel?
50 What made it harder for your team to feel like a team?	Looking back, were there ways you could have solved for that?
51 Did your team find moments to recharge together in the last year? What did that look like?	How, if at all, did those moments impact your team dynamics after-the-fact?
52 Name 1 thing you learned from a teammate this past year that made you better at your job.	How might you and your teammates make it easier to learn from each other in the new year?

Create a plan

- What are 1-2 activities or practices your team can try to feel more connected in the year ahead?

Reflection for leaders

Use these to reflect on your leadership, understand where your team or org needs to go, and outline priorities and goals for the year ahead.

Your priorities

Look back at what happened	Connect the dots
53 Where did you spend the majority of your time and energy in the past year?	Did those feel like the right needs to prioritize? Why or why not?
54 What would you like to spend more time on in the new year?	Why does that feel important?
55 What areas can you take a step back from?	Consider your answer—why'd you choose these things versus something else?
56 What did your prioritization process look like this past year?	What do you think is working well about this? What might you change to make it even stronger?
57 What was a time you felt frustrated this past year?	How did you manage it?
58 What distractions did you encounter this past year?	How did you work through them?

59 How was your meeting load this past year?

Are there opportunities to reassess the meetings on your calendar?

Create your plan

- Write out your 1-2 top priorities for yourself as a leader in the year ahead. What inputs or factors will best help you achieve them?
- Pick 1 thing to let go in the new year. What do you need to help make that a reality?
- Create a plan for how you'll address new priorities that might come up throughout the year. How will you balance them with existing priorities?

Your leadership

Look back at what happened

Connect the dots

60 If you had to write a book about your leadership experience this past year, what would the title be and why?

Now, pick your title for next year and think about what shifts need to happen to create that narrative.

61 Name 2-3 notable decisions you made as a leader in the past year.

What inputs informed those decisions? Were you happy with how they turned out? What was their impact?

62 What are 3 words you would use to describe your leadership style this past year?

Give an example of something that happened from the past year that demonstrates each.

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| <p>63 What's one piece of feedback you received this year that had an impact on your approach to leadership?</p> | <p>How can you continue to incorporate this feedback into your work?</p> |
| <p>64 Share an example of a time when you asked for help this year.</p> | <p>What did you learn from the experience?</p> |
| <p>65 Who or what made your job easier this past year?</p> | <p>What might this mean for you in the new year?</p> |
| <p>66 What's one work experience that brought you joy this past year?</p> | <p>What about it made you feel that way?</p> |

Create your plan

- Pick a book, podcast, or course to take in the new year to help you grow as a leader.
- How can you continue to build on your strengths as a leader in the year ahead? Pick 2 activities or practices you'll continue and share an example of what that might look like.
- Choose 1 area where you'd like to strengthen your leadership and brainstorm ideas for how you can get there.

Supporting your team

Look back at what happened

Connect the dots

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| <p>67 What was your team's bandwidth like this past year?</p> | <p>How did this impact things like morale, engagement, and output?</p> |
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| <p>68 Name 3 strengths and 3 opportunities for growth your team demonstrated this past year.</p> | <p>How did your leadership contribute to each?</p> |
| <p>69 How did you help the team grow this past year?</p> | <p>What actions supported you in this?
What can you do more of in the year ahead?</p> |
| <p>70 What have you learned about your team or company culture in the past year (either through direct feedback from teammates or through your own observations)?</p> | <p>What are some highlights and potential growth areas that come to mind?</p> |

Create your plan

- What do you think your team needs most from you this year? How can you make sure you're providing that?
- What might you adjust to help your team stay productive and avoid burnout?
- What could make your team stand out from the pack in the new year and beyond?
- Pick one opportunity for growth for your team to focus on this year. What are 2-3 specific actions you can take to empower them in this area?

Goals and impact

Look back at what happened

Connect the dots

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| <p>71 How would you summarize this past year at your organization?</p> | <p>What came easier than expected?
What was more challenging?</p> |
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| <p>72 What goals did you set for your team or org this past year?</p> | <p>Did some turn out to be more important than others?</p> |
| <p>73 Based on data from this past year, what are some high-priority changes your team or org needs to make in the new year?</p> | <p>What do you anticipate will be the biggest challenges in getting there?</p> |
| <p>74 What needs do your customers, users, or clients have that you hope to address in the new year?</p> | <p>With the resources you have, what are some ways your team might address them?</p> |
| <p>75 What are you most excited to tackle in the new year? What are you dreading?</p> | <p>Why?</p> |

Create your plan

- What would a successful year look like to you? What do you need to get there?
- If you and your team could accomplish one thing in the new year, what would it be?

Final thoughts... and a moment to reflect

To be true to the reflection process, let's take a moment here to pause and think about takeaways from this exercise.

- What did you learn about yourself and your team?
- What was most surprising? What did you already know to be true?
- What elements of this reflection process can you take back to your daily or weekly routines to support your continued growth and well-being?

Looking back on all you've accomplished in the past year, there's certainly much to celebrate. Honor what you've done by taking some time to recognize that success. Then, as you go forth into the new year, we hope the questions in this ebook have given you a deeper understanding of what to focus on next to grow personally and with your team.