

## Four Great Teams in Business History

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published on BNET.com 1/25/2008

Great teams are more than just a gathering of smart people. In each of these four cases, something extra — a spark, a defining principle, or some business environment juju — helped push them to develop ideas and products that redefined their companies.

### The Java Development Team at Sun Microsystems

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**Key members:**

Patrick Naughton, programmer (Agitator); James Gosling, programmer (Expert); Mike Sheridan, business development (Wild Card); Bill Joy, chief scientist (Leader); Arthur Van Hoff, programmer (Workhorse)

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**Accomplishment:**

The platform-independent Java programming language added interactivity to the then-static Web.

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**The backstory:**

Naughton laid the groundwork with a 12-page criticism of Sun that became a wake-up call for the company to step up innovation and focus on the consumer.

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**Guiding principle:**

Independence. Naughton and Gosling's team worked in an office far from the Sun campus on an assignment initially known as the Stealth Project. With the blessing of the company's top execs, the team worked 100-hour weeks and created a language that stood apart from Sun's core moneymaking endeavors.

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### Ford Motor Company

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**Key members:**

Henry Ford, founder and chief engineer (Agitator); Clarence Avery, lead developer of assembly line (Wild Card); Peter Martin, head of assembly (Leader); Charles Sorensen, assistant head of assembly (Workhorse)

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**Accomplishment:**

Ford used the cost savings from mass production to make the automobile affordable.

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**The backstory:**

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Ford and his team believed that cars should be reliable and reasonably priced. Everything they did was focused on cutting costs and passing those savings on to the buyer.

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**Guiding principle:**

Efficiency. Ford and his team of engineers applied the lens of efficiency to all aspects of production, eventually devising the assembly line. Ford also recognized that by paying his workers twice the industry standard and reducing the length of the workday and week, he'd not only dramatically reduce employee turnover but also attract the best workers.

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## The Google Team

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**Key members:**

Sergey Brin, founder (Wild Card); Larry Page, founder (Agitator); Eric Schmidt, CEO (Leader); Omid Kordestani, SVP of Business Development (Expert)

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**Accomplishment:**

They created the most popular site on the Web, powered by search-engine technology that helpfully ranks results based on how many other sites link to a page.

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**The backstory:**

Having met and clashed with Brin on a Stanford University campus tour, Page called on him to help develop his doctoral thesis.

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**Guiding principle:**

Stay lean. The team stayed small as they developed the technology, first working out of Page's dorm room at Stanford, then a garage. When they were ready to turn their brainchild into a business, they brought in tech legend Schmidt to run the company, and Kordestani — known as the first guy at Google to wear a suit — to handle sales.

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## Walt Disney and His “Nine Old Men”

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**Key members:**

Walt Disney, founder and head of studios (Agitator); Ub Iwerks, Mickey Mouse creator (Expert); Roy Disney, founder and CEO (Glue); “Nine Old Men,” animators (Workhorses) — Les Clark, Ollie Johnston, Frank Thomas, Wolfgang Reitherman, John Lounsbery, Eric Larson, Ward Kimball, Milt Kahl, and Marc Davis

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**Accomplishment:**

Revolutionized children's films and created some of the most memorable and profitable characters in cartoon history.

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**The backstory:**

After a few failed business deals in their first cartoon studio (including losing control of one of their first successful characters), Walt Disney and friend Iwerks secured Roy Disney's financial backing to build a studio that would compete with larger studios in New York.

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**Guiding principle:**

Determination. Walt Disney and Iwerks were resolute in their grand vision to create cartoon stars complete with their own franchises. That vision, in turn, attracted top talent — namely the nine animators who created and popularized iconic characters Mickey Mouse, Snow White, and Cinderella.

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