KEYS TO TEAMWORK / TEAMBUILDING SUCCESS

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Do the Hard Stuff for Teams

Fostering teamwork is creating a work culture that values collaboration. In a teamwork environment, people understand and believe that thinking, planning, decisions and actions are better when done cooperatively. People recognize, and even assimilate, the belief that "none of us is as good as all of us."

Organizations are working on valuing diverse people, ideas, backgrounds, and experiences. We have miles to go before valuing teams and teamwork will be the norm.

You can, however, create a teamwork culture by doing just a few things right. Admittedly, they're the hard things, but with commitment and appreciation for the value, you can create an overall sense of teamwork in your organization.

Create a Culture of Teamwork

To make teamwork happen, these powerful actions must occur.

- **Executive leaders communicate the clear expectation that teamwork and collaboration are expected.** No one completely owns a work area or process all by himself. People who own work processes and positions are open and receptive to ideas and input from others on the team.
- **Executives model teamwork in their interaction with each other and the rest of the organization.** They maintain teamwork even when things are going wrong and the temptation is to slip back into former team unfriendly behavior.
- **The organization members talk about and identify the value of a teamwork culture.** If values are formally written and shared, teamwork is one of the key five or six.
- **Teamwork is rewarded and recognized.** The lone ranger, even if she is an excellent producer, is valued less than the person who achieves results with others in teamwork. Compensation, bonuses, and rewards depend on collaborative practices as much as individual contribution and achievement.
- **Important stories and folklore that people discuss within the company emphasize teamwork.** (Remember the year the capsule team reduced scrap by 20 percent?) People who "do well" and are promoted within the company are team players.
- **The performance management system places emphasis and value on teamwork.** Often 360 degree feedback is integrated within the system.

Tips for Team Building

Do you immediately picture your group off at a resort playing games or hanging from ropes when you think of team building? Traditionally, many organizations approached team building this way. Then, they wondered why that wonderful sense of teamwork, experienced at the retreat or seminar, failed to impact long term beliefs and actions back at work.

I'm not averse to retreats, planning sessions, seminars and team building activities – in fact I lead them - but they have to be part of a larger teamwork effort. You will not build teamwork by "retreating" as a group for a couple of days each year. Think of team building as something you do every single day.

- **Form teams to solve real work issues** and to improve real work processes. Provide training in systematic methods so the team expends its energy on the project, not on figuring out how to work together as a team to approach it.
- **Hold department meetings to review projects and progress**, to obtain broad input, and to coordinate shared work processes. If team members are not getting along, examine the work processes they mutually own. The problem is not usually the personalities of the team members. It's the fact that the team members often haven't agreed on how they will deliver a product or a service or the steps required to get something done.
- **Build fun and shared occasions into the organization's agenda.** Hold pot luck lunches; take the team to a sporting event. Sponsor dinners at a local restaurant. Go hiking or to an amusement park. Hold a monthly company meeting. Sponsor sports teams and encourage cheering team fans.
- **Use ice breakers and teamwork exercises at meetings**. I worked with an organization that held a weekly staff meeting. Participants took turns bringing a "fun" ice breaker to the meeting. These activities were limited to ten minutes, but they helped participants laugh together and get to know each other – a small investment in a big time sense of team.
- **Celebrate team successes publicly.** Buy everyone the same t-shirt or hat. Put team member names in a drawing for company merchandise and gift certificates. You are limited in teamwork only by your imagination.

Take care of the hard issues above and do the types of teamwork activities listed here. You'll be amazed at the progress you will make in creating a teamwork culture, a culture that enables individuals to contribute more than they ever thought possible - together.

How to Build Powerfully Successful Work Teams

The Path to Team Building Success

How to create effective teams, team work, and team building is a challenge in every organization. Work environments tend to foster rugged individuals working on personal goals for personal gain. Typically, reward, recognition, and pay systems single out the achievements of individual employees.

Appraisal, performance management, and goal setting systems most frequently focus on individual goals and progress, not on team building. Promotions and additional authority are also bestowed on individuals. Given these factors, is it any wonder that teams and team work are an uphill battle in most organizations?

Here is the information you need to develop team work and effective work teams in your organization.

Use this information for team building.

Teams

Employee involvement, teams, and employee empowerment enable people to make decisions about their work. This employee involvement, team building approach, and employee empowerment increases loyalty and fosters ownership. These resources tell you how to do team building and effectively involve people.

Employee Empowerment: How to Empower Employees

Employee empowerment is a strategy and philosophy that enables employees to make decisions about their jobs. Employee empowerment helps employees own their work and take responsibility for their results. Employee empowerment helps employees serve customers at the level of the organization where the customer interface exists.

Employee Involvement: Involve Employees in Decision Making

Employee involvement is creating an environment in which people have an impact on decisions and actions that affect their jobs. Employee involvement is not the goal nor is it a tool, as practiced in many organizations. Employee involvement is a management and leadership philosophy about how people are enabled to contribute to continuous improvement and the ongoing success of their organization.

Team Building Creates Successful Teams

People in every workplace talk about team building, working as a team, and my team, but few understand how to create the experience of team building or how to develop an effective team. Many view teams as the best organization design for involving all employees in creating business success and profitability. Learn how team building helps enable the success of work teams and team work.

Teams and Team Building Resources

Find recommended reading to help you create effective work teams, successful team work, and team building ideas and activities.

Meeting Management for Team Meetings

Ineffective team meetings use critical resources, sap organizational energy and movement, and affect employee morale. Find out how to make your team meetings work for you.

Team Energizers, Icebreakers, and Team Building Activities

Icebreakers, energizers, and activities heighten the effectiveness of training and team building sessions when targeted to the training, speaking, or facilitation topic and the needs of the learners or participants.

Team Building Holidays

Find ideas for successful teams, effective team work, and team building aroud holiday ideas and themes.

Positive Work Relationships Contribute to Effective Teams

Want to work more effectively with people at work? Whether your relationship is with your team, supervisor, manager, customer or coworker, you want to make your interpersonal relationships positive, supportive, clear, and empowering.

How to Make Teams Effective

People in every workplace talk about building the team, working as a team, and my team, but few understand how to create the experience of team work or how to develop an effective team. Belonging to a team, in the broadest sense, is a result of feeling part of something larger than yourself. It has a lot to do with your understanding of the mission or objectives of your organization.

In a team-oriented environment, you contribute to the overall success of the organization. You work with fellow members of the organization to produce these results. Even though you have a specific job function and you belong to a specific department, you are unified with other organization members to accomplish the overall objectives.

The bigger picture drives your actions; your function exists to serve the bigger picture.

You need to differentiate this overall sense of teamwork from the task of developing an effective intact team that is formed to accomplish a specific goal. People confuse the two team building objectives. This is why so many team building seminars, meetings, retreats and activities are deemed failures by their participants. Leaders failed to define the team they wanted to build. Developing an overall sense of team work is different from building an effective, focused work team when you consider team building approaches.

Twelve Cs for Team Building

Executives, managers and organization staff members universally explore ways to improve business results and profitability. Many view team-based, horizontal, organization structures as the best design for involving all employees in creating business success.

No matter what you call your team-based improvement effort: continuous improvement, total quality, lean manufacturing or self-directed work teams, you are striving to improve results for customers. Few organizations, however, are totally pleased with the results their team improvement efforts produce. If your team improvement efforts are not living up to your expectations, this self-diagnosing checklist may tell you why. Successful team building, that creates effective, focused work teams, requires attention to each of the following.

- **Clear Expectations:** Has executive leadership clearly communicated its expectations for the team's performance and expected outcomes? Do team members understand why the team was created? Is the organization demonstrating constancy of purpose in supporting the team with resources of people, time and money? Does the work of the team receive sufficient emphasis as a priority in terms of the time, discussion, attention and interest directed its way by executive leaders?
- **Context:** Do team members understand why they are participating on the team? Do they understand how the strategy of using teams will help the organization attain its communicated business goals? Can team members define their team's importance to the accomplishment of corporate goals? Does the team understand where its work fits in the total context of the organization's goals, principles, vision and values?

- **Commitment:** Do team members want to participate on the team? Do team members feel the team mission is important? Are members committed to accomplishing the team mission and expected outcomes? Do team members perceive their service as valuable to the organization and to their own careers? Do team members anticipate recognition for their contributions? Do team members expect their skills to grow and develop on the team? Are team members excited and challenged by the team opportunity?

- **Competence:** Does the team feel that it has the appropriate people participating? (As an example, in a process improvement, is each step of the process represented on the team?) Does the team feel that its members have the knowledge, skill and capability to address the issues for which the team was formed? If not, does the team have access to the help it needs? Does the team feel it has the resources, strategies and support needed to accomplish its mission?

- **Charter:** Has the team taken its assigned area of responsibility and designed its own mission, vision and strategies to accomplish the mission. Has the team defined and communicated its goals; its anticipated outcomes and contributions; its timelines; and how it will measure both the outcomes of its work and the process the team followed to accomplish their task? Does the leadership team or other coordinating group support what the team has designed?

- **Control:** Does the team have enough freedom and empowerment to feel the ownership necessary to accomplish its charter? At the same time, do team members clearly understand their boundaries? How far may members go in pursuit of solutions? Are limitations (i.e. monetary and time resources) defined at the beginning of the project before the team experiences barriers and rework?Is the team's reporting relationship and accountability understood by all members of the organization? Has the organization defined the team's authority? To make recommendations? To implement its plan? Is there a defined review process so both the team and the organization are consistently aligned in direction and purpose? Do team members hold each other accountable for project timelines, commitments and results? Does the organization have a plan to increase opportunities for self-management among organization members?

- **Collaboration:** Does the team understand team and group process? Do members understand the stages of group development? Are team members working together effectively interpersonally? Do all team members understand the roles and responsibilities of team members? team leaders? team recorders? Can the team approach problem solving, process improvement, goal setting and measurement jointly? Do team members cooperate to accomplish the team charter? Has the team established group norms or rules of conduct in areas such as conflict resolution, consensus decision making and meeting management? Is the team using an appropriate strategy to accomplish its action plan?

- **Communication:** Are team members clear about the priority of their tasks? Is there an established method for the teams to give feedback and receive honest performance feedback? Does the organization provide important business information regularly? Do the teams understand the complete context for their existence? Do team members communicate clearly and honestly with each other? Do team members bring diverse

- **Creative Innovation:** Is the organization really interested in change? Does it value creative thinking, unique solutions, and new ideas? Does it reward people who take reasonable risks to make improvements? Or does it reward the people who fit in and maintain the status quo? Does it provide the training, education, access to books and films, and field trips necessary to stimulate new thinking?

- **Consequences:** Do team members feel responsible and accountable for team achievements? Are rewards and recognition supplied when teams are successful? Is reasonable risk respected and encouraged in the organization? Do team members fear reprisal? Do team members spend their time finger pointing rather than resolving problems? Is the organization designing reward systems that recognize both team and individual performance? Is the organization planning to share gains and increased profitability with team and individual contributors? Can contributors see their impact on increased organization success?

- **Coordination:** Are teams coordinated by a central leadership team that assists the groups to obtain what they need for success? Have priorities and resource allocation been planned across departments? Do teams understand the concept of the internal customer—the next process, anyone to whom they provide a product or a service? Are cross-functional and multi-department teams common and working together effectively? Is the organization developing a customer-focused process-focused orientation and moving away from traditional departmental thinking?

- **Cultural Change:** Does the organization recognize that the team-based, collaborative, empowering, enabling organizational culture of the future is different than the traditional, hierarchical organization it may currently be? Is the organization planning to or in the process of changing how it rewards, recognizes, appraises, hires, develops, plans with, motivates and manages the people it employs? Does the organization plan to use failures for learning and support reasonable risk? Does the organization recognize that the more it can change its climate to support teams, the more it will receive in pay back from the work of the teams?

Spend time and attention on each of these twelve tips to ensure your work teams contribute most effectively to your business success. Your team members will love you, your business will soar, and empowered people will "own" and be responsible for their work processes. Can your work life get any better than this?

Keys to Team Building Success

Want to make your next team building activity or team building exercise live up to its true potential? Integrate the team building with real-time work goals. Establish a systematic workplace integration and follow-up process - before you go on the team building adventure. You need to make the good feelings and the outcomes from the team building activity last beyond the final team building exercise.

Impact of Team Building Events

Without this attention to integration, corporate team building or planning events are, at best, a short term boost to employee enthusiasm and positive morale. If they are planned and executed well, people feel good about themselves and about each other. Employees get to know each other better and have a common experience to talk about back at work.

A frequent expectation from team building activities is that they build trust. Team building events have little to do with building trust, however, unless company planning, that is carefully followed up on and yields real results, is part of the team building or retreat.

Team Building Downsides and Risks

At worst, team building sessions help employees become cynical about their organizations. This occurs **when the team building events are held outside of the context of the company's normal way of doing business**. If you send people off to a team building event, as an example, but all rewards in your company are based on individual goals and efforts, the team building event will have no lasting impact.

People will lose productive hours complaining about the time and energy invested in the team building or planning activities. Unhappiness, management criticism and employees complaining to each other sap energy, productivity and joy from the work day.

An event that is not **followed up with meaningful activities in the workplace** should not be held. They harm trust, motivation, employee morale and productivity. They don't solve the problems for which they were scheduled and held. You will eventually lose the people you most want to keep – especially if they don't see your organization getting better as a result of off-site team building and planning sessions.

If the team building event has no follow up, people become jaded about such events as a waste of time and energy. In fact, I don't lead team building events that are just for team building without a business purpose, in addition to, or to build the event around. With recent organizational downsizing and cost cutting, people feel as if they are already doing more than one job. In this context, team building for team building's sake has lost popularity.

Team Building Success Factors

The success of a team building or of a strategic planning activity begins well before the start of the sessions. **Use a team to plan the event** since you want to model the behavior you seek from the team building sessions you schedule. The likely long-term effectiveness of a team building event or corporate retreat is enhanced when you **incorporate annual team building events into an overall company structure**. This cultural framework of philosophies, values and practices is designed to build the concept of "team" on a regular basis. In this environment, team building sessions can yield supportive results.

If team building and other offsite events are to offer value, **their inclusion in an overall corporate structure of philosophies, values and practices is critical**. People must already operate in a team-oriented environment that is characterized by such philosophies as shared purpose, shared vision, shared mission and a performance development system that enables people to grow both personally and professionally. Or, your organization must be proactively pursuing team work as a business and employee strategy.

In such a system, **team behaviors are rewarded and recognized**. Teams solve problems and improve processes. There is a genuine concern for employees and the policies and work are employee and employee-family friendly. When a problem or failure occurs, the search is not for the guilty, but instead, managers ask, "What about the work system caused that person or team to fail?"

When such a structure exists on an ongoing basis within an organization, **team building events can enhance and help the system grow stronger**.

Again, build the team building events around a business purpose to which all attendees can contribute, and you have the opportunity for an energizing, exciting growth opportunity.

Successful companies regularly demonstrate their commitment to building team unity, trust and positive morale among their employees in their daily workplace. Without this commitment and the presence of team building success factors, negative effects can result from formal team building or planning sessions.

I facilitated a team building and planning event recently in which a management team gathered to put together their annual priorities. The group did a salutary job; they were set up to spend the quarter both productive and focused. They were excited and feeling a strong sense of direction.

The next day, much to my sorrow and their lost morale, their manager pulled out a list of everything that had not made their priority list at the team building event. He called this the "B" list and said that, even though these were not the priorities, they all had to be completed, too. Can you imagine the impact of telling them that all their work, thinking and prioritizing really didn't matter? They had to accomplish it all anyway.

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