

Building Powerful Teams – Part Three

In the last issue of the Executive Brief, we talked about geese; emotional intelligence of teams; and virtual teams.

In this third and final segment in the series, we now turn to:

- Trust
- An Exercise in Team Effectiveness
- A Final Thought on Building Teams

*“What you do speaks so loud that
I cannot hear what you say.”*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Trust...

Little word... big meaning... and essential to teamwork.

Outstanding performance and winning teams are based on trust and competencies that produce results. When there is no trust – there is fear. Fear kills teamwork, innovation, motivation, creativity and productivity.

Trust cannot be mandated. It must be earned.

*“Few things help an individual
more than to place responsibility
upon him, and to let him know
that you trust him.”*

Booker T. Washington

In her EMBA course work at Case Western Reserve University, Loree W. Connors, CFO and Treasurer of Vita-Mix Corporation did a research project on trust in teams.

There were several key components of developing team trust that came out of Connors' project. The three main conclusions were: trust develops over time; trust is developed by behavior; and trust is developed through clear information, goals and a strong team leader.

First... it takes time. How much time it takes to develop team trust depends upon several factors. Among these are: the players; the purpose; the process; the structure and the leader.

The quality and depth of relationship between team members plays a critical role in the effectiveness of the team. Trust develops more quickly when the players know each other and feel confident in their abilities and accountability.

Secondly, trust is about behavior. It's a dynamic that fluctuates over time, based upon the actions of the individuals. Individual actions and behaviors that are consistent with words build trust, reliability and a sense of real teamwork to get the job done and done well.

Finally, and equally important, trust is about the leader. According to Connors' findings, trust is established by the quality and effectiveness of the team leader. Clearly defining purpose, objectives, outcomes, roles of each individual, deadlines and measures of success are critical to the success of the team and the credibility of the team leader.

Team leaders who are vague, lack self-confidence and direction, 'bark orders and micromanage' are ineffective and are often times simply ignored – leaving the team to fend for themselves and often at odds with each other - instead of working together with a cohesive team vision toward a shared and common purpose.

Trust is one of the most critical elements of building powerful and collaborative teams... and for that matter, successful companies.

As Connors' states;

“In this age of growing global competitive pressures on organizations, it is imperative that teams perform at the highest levels possible. With speed of transactions and innovation critical to organizations, trust is what allows [them] to have de-centralized organizational structures where decision-making can be made throughout the organization – helping the company to make decisions that are closer to the customer and are more flexible in today's environment of constant change.”

“Our distrust is very expensive.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson



“The only way to make a man trustworthy is to trust him.”

Henry L. Stimson

An exercise in team effectiveness...

Here is an excellent team-building exercise developed by Marshall Goldsmith (*Team Building without Time Wasting*, Keilty, Goldsmith & Company, 1998.):

Research has shown that focused feedback and follow-up can increase leadership and customer service effectiveness. It requires that team members courageously ask for feedback, have the discipline to develop a behavioral change strategy, to follow-up and to “stick with it.”

“The true test of character is not how much we know how to do, but how we behave when we don't know what to do.”

John W. Holt, Jr.

To implement this process, the leader acts as a coach to help members develop their own behavioral changes.

The ‘coach’ begins by asking each member of the team to confidentially answer two questions:

1. *On a scale of 1 to 10, how well are we working together as a team?*
2. *On a scale of 1 to 10, how well do we need to be working together as a team?*

Discuss the results. Research involving several hundred teams in multinational corporations showed that the “average” team member believed that his/her team was currently at a “5.8” level of effectiveness but needed to be at a “8.7.”

Then, ask the team, *“If every team member could change two key behaviors which would help us close the gap between where we are and where we want to be, which two behaviors should we all try to change?”*

Prioritize the behaviors and determine the two most important behaviors to change for all team members.

The team members also choose two behaviors for their own personal change that will help close the gap. Then they ask for brief progress reports from each other monthly.

Have each team member choose an accountability partner, meet regularly to chart their progress and share the results at team meetings. Results clearly show that if team members have regularly followed up with their colleagues, they will increase their effectiveness on the team and in their individual areas for improvement. The process works because it encourages team members to primarily focus on changing their own behaviors.

A final thought on teams...

How productive and effective are your teams?

Bringing individuals together in a group and giving them a project does not create a team.

More often than not, it simply creates a group of people working at cross purposes with individual agendas that are unrelated to the project at hand. The results are often lack of trust, communication, shared vision and goals.

Ineffective teams damage organizations and people – they cost time, money, opportunity - and undermine the culture and morale of the entire organization.

Imagine what it would be like if your teams...

- had a common purpose and passion;
- were solidly aligned to the corporate vision & strategy;
- shared and achieved common goals;
- trusted each other;
- created success for themselves and for the organization... out-distancing the competition, effectively communicating, collaborating, and, dare we say it... having fun!

We can help. ProLaureate Ltd is now offering a high intensity, three-day team building workshop, *“The Team Tune-Up for High Performance”*.

Give us a call. Every ProLaureate program and workshop is customized to meet the needs of each individual client, so please give us a call and we’ll be delighted to learn more about your needs and challenges and discuss the details of how we may be able to help.



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