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SUPERVISORY management

Recognizing Genuine Teamwork

By George Prince



Recognizing Genuine Teamwork



AS A TEAM LEADER, DON'T SETTLE FOR PUTTING TOGETHER a team that simply goes through the motions and produces adequate results. Real teams consist of members who genuinely care for one another, who interact like a close-knit family, and who work hard to make the team successful. Sound too utopian? Developing genuine teamwork is not as difficult as you might think.

By George Prince

Real collaborative teamwork proclaims itself in minute particulars every business day. For example, if an outsider commends a team member on an idea, that person accepts the compliment, but also says, "You really need to credit Joe, who gave me the idea."

Or, for example, a person from another department might be looking for Pam, who is out. The team member asked says, "Pam is out sick today, but perhaps I can help you?" then does whatever is necessary to satisfy the need.

Whenever a visitor or stranger asks a genuine team member a question, the answer is

never, "I have no idea." And no team member is ever too preoccupied to put aside what he or she is doing and assist someone who is having trouble or needs an extra pair of hands. It doesn't matter if the trouble has to do with work, or if a team member's car won't start. Team members are available to each other in a degree that is far different from the usual polite, cooperative gestures that mask disinterest.

Team characteristics

On a genuine team, there is typically an invisible flow of information between team members. In a way, you could make

a comparison between the team and a human body. A team has a circulatory system that alerts team members to trouble and summons antibodies. The circulatory system is a

constant exchange on the "state of the union." When all is well, feelings of exhilaration and satisfaction are exchanged. When the mission is threatened, feelings of distress and

■ ■ ■ Designing a Winning Project Team

By Virginia Gemmill

At some point in your management career, you will be called upon to pull together a project team. Whether the focus of the team is new product development or problem solving, the management challenge is to design a winning team that produces innovative solutions.

The unique character of innovative project teams is derived from three factors: the nature of the task or project for which the team is formed; the personalities, competencies, and styles of the people who comprise the team; and the way team roles are managed.

Vision and task

As a team leader, you will be the inspirational leader as well as the project manager. Begin by developing a clear vision of the project that is grand enough to excite the interest of potential team players.

Remember that a broad statement of goals that seems out of reach is better than a detailed plan in the beginning. Broad goals invite input from team members on the creation of objectives, as well as for decisions about how to achieve the goal. Keep in mind, too, to consistently encourage team involvement in the development stages, because it cultivates the commitment needed to carry the team through implementation problems that may lie ahead. In addition, a clear vision statement will provide a reference point for team members and will reduce the level of doubt and uncertainty that accompanies an innovative project.

Team diversity

It is important to build a team with people of diverse backgrounds, interests, knowledge, and experience. While it's tempting to surround yourself with like-minded people, doing so will limit the probability of accomplishing any more than you could do on your own. By incorporating members with different backgrounds in the beginning, you are more likely to create richer solutions, and you will be better able to anticipate implementation problems down the road. A team constructed

concern are exchanged, resulting in mobilization.

In addition, genuine teams are democratic; there is an absence of rank, of authority. Every member has the authori-

ty to cross over responsibilities and correct a malfunction or offer an idea when there is a problem.

An outsider may have an uneasy feeling about the lack of as-

from a variety of professional backgrounds and departments also greatly increases the probability of a successful outcome for more subtle, political reasons. A team constructed from functional departments automatically "builds in" the cooperation of represented departments in the later implementation phases.

Roles and responsibilities

In business, it is generally understood that assigned titles reflect areas of expertise. You don't necessarily have to dispense with titles, but you may find that the functional needs of the team are reflected better by the emergence of "roles." Some of these roles can be assigned, but roles are more effectively played when they are assumed by team members in the nature and course of the project.

Naming the role provides additional clarity that helps in the coordination of the team's work and can also be empowering, giving the one named a sense of special purpose and responsibility. Some examples of roles that frequently emerge are:

Ideator: This is someone who is good at generating lots of ideas.

Inventor: This person takes ideas and translates them into tangible realities; he or she is an implementor of ideas.

Champion: This is someone who has a passion and an impatience for seeing his or her vision become a reality; this could be you, the team leader.

Sponsor: This person has the power to protect, shield, and encourage both the project and the champion.

Technical gatekeeper: This is someone who assimilates, accumulates, organizes, and disseminates technical information.

Market gatekeeper: This is someone who assimilates, accumulates, organizes, and disseminates market information.

When a project is beginning, team members can and should be encouraged to play more than one role because there is so much learning that needs to take place. By having more than one role, the team, in aggregate, can magnify its capacity to learn. As the project matures, roles tend to be more definitive, with team members playing their roles of greatest expertise.

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sertiveness of the manager, who does not seem to be leading at all. On closer inspection, the outsider realizes that the leader is in the same questing attitude as other members of the team.

What makes teamwork work?

The first and perhaps most important element of a genuine team is its "recruiter."

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Process and content roles

Team leaders must also pay attention to two important project dynamics throughout the life of the project: the content of what the team is working on; and the process, or the way, the team is working.

The champion is in the ideal position to monitor the *content*, or how work toward the goal is progressing. Usually, the champion needs a coach or facilitator to help monitor the *process* of how people are working together. Ideally, this facilitator works on a number of process issues, including facilitating team meetings, communicating progress within the organization, managing conflict for speedy resolution, helping the team problem-solve through hurdles, getting cooperation from other parts of the organization, and generally being the coach or confidant of the leader.

Gaining cooperation and commitment

New projects demand commitment from team members. Generally, if the team leader and sponsor demonstrate commitment to team members, it will be reciprocated. Certainly, the most successful leaders understand the principle that "everyone is in business for himself" and know how to provide appropriate, meaningful rewards for individual team members.

Summing up

Designing a winning project team often requires superhuman effort, lots of overtime, and real personal sacrifice. But the results are well worth the effort. By gaining early input on goal definition, by encouraging the assuming of, rather than the assigning of, roles and by naming and managing those roles, you can develop an innovative project team that will endure and succeed.

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Good recruiters have the ability to pull together a real team because of their skill at conveying a sense of meaningfulness and importance about the mission. Beyond that, good recruiters are aware of their own core hunger for affirmation and validation, for belonging. The key trait of good recruiters, however, is that, because they have received enough of these necessities in their early years, they're able to channel their energy toward affirming and validating others!

Searching for team members

Generally, people fall into three categories when it comes to building teams:

The first type are "non-recruitables." They distinguish themselves as such with cynicism, adversarial behavior, and pessimism. Since they are rarely successful at traditional jobs, the prisons are filled with non-recruitables. But they are also found in America's best companies. Certainly, the addition of a "non-recruitable" to a team is bound to result in a false team spirit, with obvious consequences to the team effort.

The second kind of person is "recruitable." These people are always optimistic and are embarked on a life-long quest. Each is aware of this longing, but can give it no description and, perhaps, no complete un-



"Poor Mulford. The county condemned his cubicle."

MIKE TWOHY

derstanding. Many find that religion and joining various organizations satisfy some of the need. But most "recruitables" always yearn for this mysterious "something" to give them lasting fulfillment.



If team members feel free to decide how to operate, they're more likely to assume responsibility for the end result.



The third kind of people are the recruiters. These, again, are the rare ones who have a kind of "seeing" that allows them to perceive a direction that promises fulfillment.

As a supervisor, where do you fall on the recruiter spectrum? Don't get too discouraged if you think you don't rank highly as a recruiter. If you can just be more aware of the kinds of interactions that make others want to work with you, you will be much closer to the recruiter end of the spectrum.

Reaching paradise

It would be easy to assume that once recruitables are work-

ing together on a project, teamwork will spontaneously occur. Unfortunately, this is not true. Teamwork takes hard work and dedication on the part of all team members. Basically, there are two commitments all members must make to form a genuine team.

The first commitment is for the recruiter or manager to surrender status and turn over the power to the group members. Translating this into action requires courage. In short, recruiters need to forge ahead despite the feeling of uncertainty that goes along with relinquishing power.

Power is the vesting, through fear, of the right to be affirmed and validated, and meaningful to subordinates. These, of course, are pseudo affirmations and validations, and yet they are extremely hard to give up. To the extent that you hang on to this pseudo fulfillment, you will develop a pseudo team, a team that goes through the superficial actions, without the substance.

On the other hand, if the creator of a team successfully gives the group the power or authority to decide how it wants to operate, the team members will feel free to take responsibility for accomplishing the team's mission.

The second commitment is that each member of the team

must take responsibility to act in ways that promote teamwork. No outside source should define how a team is going to work together or conduct personal transactions. Rather, at the outset team members

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As a leader, the manager must exemplify the kind of behavior that promotes a sense of teamwork among group members.

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should be reminded of the specific types of behavior that can either help or hinder a team.

As a leader of the team, this is your challenge. You not only must exemplify the kind of behavior that promotes teamwork, but also communicate to team members the characteristics and importance of such behavior. When you do this correctly, your team breaks through the superficial-team barrier.

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