

Building a Winning Team

Sometimes we forget how critical the people around us are to the obtainment of our objectives – both corporate and professional. The old joke about the boss who turns to his employee and says, “I didn’t say it was your fault, I said I am going to blame you” puts a certain spin on it, but the point gets made. When we are in a team environment we are there to support one another, assist one another, and yes, sometimes take the fall for one another. This sense of collective fate is not something that happens merely as a result of people being thrusts together into a task. It is created through the selection of the right people and the nurturing of a workplace atmosphere that empowers, enables and establishes a spirit of cooperation and joint effort.

In other words, if you want a great team, you have to create it. Here are some helpful hints on the type of system you need to set in motion for your team to be a winning team.

Rule 1: Create Common Goals – creating a team atmosphere means people need to feel as if they are working toward the same objective. Even when certain tasks require individual execution, the others need to feel part of the team by either playing support roles or simply serving as cheerleaders.

Rule 2: Define Outcomes – by letting everyone know what the final objectives are people are able to understand their role in getting the group there.

Rule 3: Create an Interdependent Environment – create tasks that require interdependent working relationships, where skills and knowledge are required equally in order to complete a task. Be sure that each individual understands what he or she is going to contribute, and see to it that each contribution is viewed as critical to the overall success of the effort.

Rule 4: Establish Measurable Results – teams usually function more effectively when you can measure its performance because people like to see how they’re doing within the team structure.

Rule 5: Emphasize Differences – people are different and creating a good team starts with acknowledging these differences, including cultural, ethnic and individual. Allow each person to define him or herself and explain a bit about the characteristics his or her background and personality brings to the team. Make sure people understand one another because this is key to their being able to subsequently work as a team.

Rule 6: Train Your People to Be a Team – in addition to creating the appropriate environment and setting up systems for interdependency, training your team to function as a team is always a good idea. There are methods of training that improve cooperation, trust, communication and conflict resolution, and you should engage in some of each.

Rule 7: Keep the Purpose Present – make sure the purpose of the team is always visible, always present. By stressing the purpose of the team you are giving it meaning and people will respond to the challenge and gain a sense of purpose.

Rule 8: Make Sure Your Team Can Win – even if your team is competing only against themselves in their quest to meet whatever objectives have been set, you need to make sure that you have provided the team with the skills and competencies it requires to succeed.

Rule 9: Support Your Team – just as it is crucial that you place the right players on the team, so too must you provide it with the proper support – from financial resources, to the decision making capacity to get done what needs to be done.

Rule 10: Maintain Strong Communication Channels – make sure that everyone on the team is able to communicate openly and freely with everyone else. Develop a schedule of communications so everyone has the opportunity to be heard and so that the mood and spirit of the team can be monitored and adjusted as needed.

Teamwork is more than a silly slogan, it is the core of a successful enterprise. Slipping into an environment fraught with gossip, backstabbing and interference isn't as impossible as it may seem. Some great companies have lost their greatness because they lost sight of the common goals and disintegrated into huge globs of bickering and battling, self-defeating people.

So create your teams with forethought and systematically execute their development. You'll benefit from the increased production, improved environment, and overall sense of accomplishment.

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