

Managing Multiple Teams

The old sports saying that there is no “I” in the word team was born out of necessity. Dealing with large groups of people is always complex and getting each person to put aside his/her personal agenda, personal ambition, emotions, and prejudices is an extremely complex task. When you add to the mix the need to manage more than one team at the same time, and the added dynamics of competition, jealousy and territory, the task seems almost daunting.

But have no fear. Tudog is here to calm the waters and provide 10 easy steps to the smooth and simple management of multiple teams. They are:

1. Don't Be Afraid to Lead

Since you can't be in two places at once, and you are managing multiple teams, you need to be willing and able to make your leadership felt even when you are physically absent. This can only be achieved if you are a confident, organized leader who demonstrates his/her leadership under all circumstances. As a strong leader, your actual presence will become less necessary, as the teams will be properly motivated to meet your expectations even when you are unable to be there and cheer them on. By leading in a clear and precise manner you are giving your teams direction, supervision and comfort.

2. Give Thought to Team Structures

Make certain you structure your teams with a balance of strengths so that they are able to work competently and together even in your absence. This means you need to make sure you are matching personalities, with an eye toward only one dominant character, and a good balance of complementary skills. By structuring your team members – and team responsibilities carefully, you will avoid the time spent on conflict resolution and be able to focus on goal development and attainment.

3. Set Up Easy Communication Channels

Since you will be interacting with each team remotely at least part of the time you need to make certain that you have set up reliable and sustainable communication channels. You need to make sure you have reports on progress from all teams and need to be certain that inter-team communications, to the extent necessary, is taking place. By having the right communications channels and protocol in place, you will make sure that you are always informed and able to make decisions and adjustments as necessary, as well as seeing to it that your teams all have the information they require to proceed with their respective mandates.

4. Don't Encourage Competition

Many leaders seem to think that what they call “healthy competition” serves to improve motivation and get their different teams striving to be the best. In actuality, it often leads to a decline in motivation, because for every “winner” there are multiple losers, and more often than not the losers decide that giving it their all is unnecessary because their efforts are measured in an all-or-nothing measurement driven by the competition. This is

a recipe for discontent. Rather than encourage healthy competition, you are better off promoting cooperation and teamwork.

5. Delegate

Filling in the gaps during your absences is a key and repetitive strategy when managing multiple teams. By definition you will be unable to be with each team all the time. Your only solution is to delegate both authority and responsibility so that your objectives can be pursued even in your absence. The assignment of responsibility is a delicate matter. You need to make certain that you select the appropriate proxy and that you manage your delegates.

6. Teach Stress Management

While this may not seem the most sensitive of statements, the less you need to interact with the personality weaknesses of employees the more time you'll have to handle the demands of your job. This is not to suggest that you turn a cold shoulder to the needs of your employees, but rather that you train and empower them to better handle the stress they encounter so that they need to rely upon you less. Giving your employees the ability to handle the challenges they face is a win-win for you and for them.

7. Teach Problem Solving

Once again, the less time you need to spend dealing with "issues" that could (and should) be resolved without your active involvement, the more time you will have dealing with those matters that you need (and want) to be focused on. Yet, simultaneously, you want those matters kept from you and resolved in your absence to be concluded in a manner that meets your standards and is consistent with the company's overall objectives. Therefore, you need to teach your staff how to resolve issues the way you want them solved. You need to provide examples, set up reviews, and keep involved until you are certain that those charged with being your proxies have the skills, thoughtfulness and discipline to successfully resolve matters that routinely arise.

8. Practice Accountability

The designation of responsibility and the assignment of authority need to be accompanied by accountability. Not only does this make certain that people are more careful in the execution of their mandates, but it also provides you with the mechanisms you need to manage remotely. By making certain that everyone knows what they are expected to do, how their performance will be measured, and what the consequences of poor performance are, you set the standards and rules in a way that remain even after you have physically left the building. You need to make certain you actually enforce your rules, otherwise they will cease to have meaning. This does not mean you need to have a heavy hand, or treat people rudely. It means you need to make sure every lives up to their part and that the rules you have set up are designed to help them do so.

9. Provide Honest, Timely Evaluations

People like to know where they stand and you need to know that your employees are making an effort to improve their performances in areas where they are in need of improvement. You cannot expect them to identify their weaknesses on their own. You

need to be there for them and make sure you provide timely, honest evaluations. Keeping in mind that people respond better to constructive criticism, it is best to make sure you deliver your evaluations with improvement, not criticism. The goal is to get people to do better, not reduce confidence or obstruct motivation. Let you the members of your multiple teams know what you expect from them and how they can meet your expectations. By providing them with the means to succeed, they will recognize your interest is in helping them excel, not in criticizing them.

10. Provide Paths for Improvement

The management of multiple teams, with all the associated dynamics is more easily accomplished when you have training sessions embedded into your management processes so that everyone involved has access to the information and knowledge necessary for him/her to improve individual performance. By making certain that the know-how is available, you can get a better handle on performance and maintain higher standards over an extended period of time.

Managing multiple teams is not, as it may seem, about multi-tasking. Actually, it is all about repeating the same set of tasks multiple times. The shortcuts to success is making sure these tasks are part of your overall management processes and that you have taken the steps necessary to eliminate distractions and are able to focus exclusively on the productive tasks. By doing this you will be able to transform your multiple teams into one larger set of management objectives – which, by definition – will be easier to manage, leading to better all around results.

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