

The Value of Teamwork

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In almost every company or organization, teamwork plays a vital role in getting things accomplished. This may consist of planning and building a new hospital; implementing a new marketing campaign; or planning the next conference. However, how much thought is given to how the team will function? How can we ensure a high-performing team? What causes a team to be dysfunctional? In the book, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, the author (Patrick Lencioni), delves into why teams fail and how to recognize and address the symptoms. The five dysfunctions include:

1. Lack of trust
2. Excessive conflict
3. Lack of commitment
4. Little or no accountability
5. Failure to focus on results

While the above factors appear obvious, there can be many other subtleties at work within the team's dynamics. For example, does the team leader have credibility and the personality required to lead a group? And, in many organizations, a team leader has the responsibility of implementing a project, but not necessarily the authority. This is especially true in matrixed organizations where team members are assigned from different functional areas. Therefore, it is very important that team members have trust, commitment, etc. to be effective. The corporate groundwork for successful team performance lies within two sources: the culture of the company and the freedom (i.e. process) by which the team is allowed to function.

One key method to keep teams on track and motivated is constant communications between team members and the leader. It is not enough to just dole out tasks. Team members like to see the big picture and how their efforts will contribute.

However, let's delve a little deeper regarding motivation through rewards. When granting awards to great teamwork, this acknowledges the team's ability to function together as a group.

But, it is also crucial to reward individual team member's exceptional behavior that has contributed to those results. Why? Because not every team member contributes at the same level and if all that gets rewarded is "the team" then each member's performance slides towards the average. But if exceptional individual contribution is recognized in front of the rest of the team, the team's overall performance is pulled towards the best.



Managing a team effort to reinforce both good teaming behavior and exceptional individual contribution towards that team effort is hard, but well worth the extra effort it takes.

Finally, what do we mean by commitment? This implies action through team consensus building. However, one cannot necessarily wait for the extra time that consensus building requires.

It is the role of the team leader or project manager to extract as much information and opinion from the team as possible; that is, to include the team members in the discussion. However, once the decision has been made—and not everyone will agree—the team will move forward together having had the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process.

Keeping the team informed, along with regular performance feedback and rewards, can go a long way in keeping the team engaged and motivated. If you would like to discuss teaming with the author, please contact the author below.

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