Let the Team Approach Make a Difference in Your Business

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Market forces in the 21st century have changed the very nature of how work gets done. Functional silos have been replaced by horizontal business processes and integrated vertical business units that demand tight interdependencies.

Customer-centric teams consisting of sales, service, product developers and operations personnel must work seamlessly to create an impeccable customer experience.

Within the realm of health care, physicians, nurses, social workers, administrators and other direct care workers are called upon to show unprecedented levels of collaboration in the service of patient care and safety.

All business sectors – financial services, high tech, manufacturing, retail, hospitality, health care and nonprofit – thrive through teams working together.

A team is not simply a machine with replaceable parts. It is a living, dynamic system. It has a unique personality, temperament, mood and vision. It is a culture with both spoken and unspoken rules and values.

The system itself exerts tremendous influence on what gets done and how it gets done. As such, the team needs to be coached as a system – a living entity that has a life apart from the individual personalities and their interrelationships.

An effective high-performance team model and web-enabled assessment catalyze teams to be their best. The model and assessment are based on research showing that most successful teams take productive action and build effective relationships that motivate and sustain the action.

Correspondingly, the team assessment is built on two fundamental axes: factors that optimize productivity and factors that promote positivity and neutralize negativity. The team diagnostic model defines seven productivity factors and seven positivity factors. This constellation of strengths provides a complete picture for high-performing teams.

The seven team productivity factors are:
1. *Goals and strategies:* challenging, clear and linked to rewards and recognition;
2. *Alignment:* a sense of common mission and purpose;
3. *Accountability:* clarity of roles and responsibilities;
4. *Resources:* obtained and managed to meet objectives;
5. *Decision making:* efficient processes are used;
6. *Proactive:* embraces change; and
7. *Team leadership:* the leader uses leadership styles appropriate to the situation.

The seven team positivity factors are:
1. *Optimism:* enthusiastic and forward looking;
2. *Trust:* it is safe to speak up;
3. *Respect:* genuine positive regard;
4. *Communication:* direct, clear and efficient;
5. *Constructive interaction:* conflict is used for growth and creativity;
6. *Camaraderie:* sense of belonging; and
7. *Diversity:* openness to differences and other perspectives.

An effective team coaching process includes a one- to two-day in-person workshop followed by team coaching teleconferences or in-person meetings. Prior to the initial session, team members complete the anonymous diagnostic assessment, which serves as a basis for the team coaching.

The coach provides a mirror to the team and says, "This is how your team looks," "How is that working for you?" "What would you like to acknowledge or change?"

When working with a team, coaches model and demonstrate effective teaming behaviors. Therefore, it is best to use two facilitators to lead the sessions. The benefit of this approach is that team members see effective behaviors demonstrated.

Seven outcomes of team coaching are:
1. Measurable results with a customized report for the team based on the team's assessment;
2. Stronger levels of trust, respect and camaraderie by creating processes and practices in communications and feedback;
3. Ability to engage with conflict creatively;
4. Higher degree of innovation;
5. More adaptability to change;
6. Strategies and structures that leverage team strengths; and
7. Team members who are consciously engaged with and enthusiastic

about the team goals.

A case study Client profile: Privately held manufacturer of components for the technology industry.

Team type: Senior management team.

Team size: Seven.

Issues:

• Executive team had been dealing with the easy issues and not confronting the difficult ones;

• Executive team was polarized. This was aggravated by geography since the team was physically located in two locations;

• In spite of a very rosy current financial situation (the industry as a whole was doing very well), there were concerns that the company was not performing up to its potential;

• There was suspicion, lack of cooperation, finger pointing and blame. "We're in this mess because of them";

• General lack of constructive conflict. If there was conflict or disagreement in a senior management meeting, it was avoided rather than used to create something constructive;

• Although the company was flush with business and the balance sheet said "life is good," there were stressful, long hours resulting in dissatisfaction and disappointment on a personal level; and

• Severe lack of trust in the management team.

Approach: An anonymous team diagnostic assessment was implemented. Safety was created because individual responses weren't exposed.

During a two-day session, the team uncovered issues outside their comfort zone. Their habit in meetings was to discuss operations but they had no history of talking about the functions/interrelationships of the group. The diagnostic gave them a forum and language that was safe enough for challenging conversation.

Team sessions were held approximately every six months and individuals were given coaching as well.

A second team diagnostic assessment at 15 months revealed:

• Constructive interaction improved;

• Trust, respect and camaraderie increased;

• The team was far more proactive than before;

• Accountability improved;

• Everyone in the organization, not just the executive team, knows that key relationships are more effective, more collaborative;

• They can now look at internal and external threats to the organization and discuss them much more candidly and plan for the future;

• The team is more adaptable to change; and

• They are able to discuss the parameters under which they might decline an order. (In the past, they automatically said yes to all requests, resulting in confusion, waste and customer frustration.)

Conclusion Team coaching offers an insurance policy that minimizes the risk of cost overruns, missed deadlines, inferior quality and team member burnout.

Newly forming teams benefit from actively planning how they will work together to optimize team performance.

Veteran teams that engage in team coaching will infuse their work with renewed energy, innovation and enthusiasm.

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