

Barriers to sustainable team and organizational performance

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I have read and learned from famous authors, and remarkable business executives who are unique individuals. They shaped my attitude and understanding that leaders come in all shapes and sizes and with different personalities. However, I believe all inspire others to invest themselves in achieving something significant and greater than they could do by themselves. Galvanizing an individual and team focus with shared commitment to a common purpose. Today, a team orientation is essential to organizational structure planning and strategy.

Calling a group of people a 'team', does not make it so. Much has been written about how to create team spirit. But, it's more than words of encouragement. Genuine leaders must walk the walk and talk the talk. In the majority of cases where the concept of team seems to be failing, my experience suggests to look for one or more of the following that may be in play.

- ✓ Teams not having a clear direction or mandate and the authority to carry it out, usually due to poor or absent leadership. This manifests itself in; missed deadlines, a lack of team commitment and morale, wasted time, inefficiencies, poor and or incorrect results.
- ✓ The lack of group project tasks being viewed as essential to achieving an understood business objective. Leadership failing to recognize their responsibility to effectively communicate the vision, mission, values and business objectives. Without buy-in, employees become disenchanted and feel isolated.
- ✓ Poor communication creates accusatory exchanges, and common phrases are shared such as: he said, she did, they didn't, etc. Job satisfaction includes team participation. It creates higher levels of retention, higher quality work and more consistent results (not to mention creating a more stimulating work environment).
- ✓ Leaders defending their 'silo kingdom's' to protect their own interests, to control specific outcomes rather than integrating team efforts across, as opposed to up and down in a common effort. Common symptoms of "silo dwelling" include poor meeting attendance,

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inadequate communication, limited brainstorming and scarce cross-functional problem-solving. A non-silo environment establishes a full understanding by all, of everyone's role and responsibilities. Timely and effective communication, constructive problem resolution and consistent escalation processes contribute to results when individuals and teams understand their accountability.

Lastly, without all of the above, change initiatives will fail. Improvement starts with the change of the mindset, individually and corporately - everyone. It is said that the sequence of improvement is 'see-feel-do', because as long as people don't first see it and really feel it, no inside transformation is possible. At best, people will perhaps display another behavior, they'll change their behavior temporarily and nothing will really be transformed, the mindset will not be altered.

Organizations wishing to support a team and results oriented environment must have leaders who address the issues stated above and then embrace a new paradigm, a new way of thinking about their role. They must weave into their leadership approach four winning characteristics: authentic interaction, appreciative understanding, creative integrating and continual improvement.

True transformation is a top down driven process adopted by management and accepted by the whole organization as a desired culture reality.

While there are other issues that contribute to the formation of strong contributing team performance, it has been my experience that these have proven to be the greatest obstacles to entrenching the concept of 'team' into a company's culture.

Stay tuned,

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