

## **LEADING TEAMS TO THE MISSION AND VISION OF THE ORGANIZATION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Leading teams to success that will provide a pathway to completion of objectives and goals is probably one the most difficult endeavors a leader can deal with. Many teams lack direction and are too static in their beliefs and because of this, the interpersonal dynamics can be complex. In an ever-changing global environment issues such as culture, language, communication, and context add even more complexity to working in teams. Leaders must ask some pressing questions such as: is everyone getting along, showing respect for each other, appreciating each other talents and opinions, getting the task done, and getting it done right. How do we facilitate such an environment on a consistent basis? In the following narrative leading teams to the vision of the organization will be discussed.

**KEYWORDS:** Complexity, Probably, Organization & Talents

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Building Teams**

The skills related to team building pertain to the second domain of the three-domain model. The skills that are related to managing self, such as emotional intelligence, active listening, and time management, are critically important. Leaders need to be competent and highly skilled to facilitate behavior that leads to great teams. Also, leaders need to be the technical expert in regards to their industry so proper training can occur. These skills, play a pivotal role in recognizing the goals of the organization. One of the most important characteristics of a great team is a collective vision towards the accomplishment of the mission of the company. The team is symbiotic using communication openly and holding each other accountable. Members must trust and respect each other for the team to be cohesive in accomplishing objectives. This all starts with the leader; he or she must provide an environment that leads to these values and habits. The structure may vary depending upon its purpose, task, professions, and the relationship between departments (Kumar, Deshmukh & Adhish 2014).

Teamwork historically has shown improvement in performance in almost every industry and country. Effective teamwork can significantly increase job satisfaction, reduce workloads and increase retention. Teams that work together on a consistent basis are more effective and innovative. High quality business operations are more effective when team motives and goals are clear. In the initial stage of forming a team, the leader must make sure that the team members understand the roles, rules, norms, and expectations. It is the responsibility of the leader to make sure that this happens. After the initial stage it is important for the team to get to know each other and working together on a project is a very good way to see that it happens. Leaders must then provide a positive and creative attitude of respect and appreciation that enables their team to perform at a top level. Finally, there will be closure where members bond and move on to the next task. Leaders must keep a watchful eye on the different stages in order to adjust behavior that is not desirable in the completing of the task or project (Kumar, Deshmukh & Adhish 2014).

## WHAT HINDERS TEAMS

The first dynamic of dysfunction that hinders teams is the absence of trust. Without trust all will be lost and there are no way team members will bond. Leaders must foster trust by gaining trust from the team. This can be done with “always having their back” even when they are wrong. This is key in gaining their trust. The inference here is not that we are not holding employees accountable but making sure that staff knows that you will back them up and coach them up to an acceptable level of performance or behavior. The second dysfunction is the fear of conflict, lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability, and inattention to desired results. Sometimes team members ignore controversial issues that may be critical to team success and waste time in interpersonal risk management to keep the peace. This can become a disaster. Leaders need to make sure that team members understand that everything is transparent and difficult issues can be discussed in a professional way through proper channels. Open communication with all staff is a clear way to foster this behavior. Lack of commitment and avoidance of accountability creates ambiguity in the team direction and priorities. From the start leaders need to make sure all team members understand what is expected and that everyone will be held accountable for their specific tasks, procedures, and metrics. Great leaders make sure deadlines are met, projects are delivered, and that all members function at a high level. At every stage of the project or everyday operations leaders need to let staff know what they must do every day to accomplish the objectives of the organization (Kumar, Deshmukh, & Adhish 2014).

## MOTIVATORS

Motivation is completion of goals through the efforts of others. Job performance = ability x motivation x organizational support. Only motivated team members can produce quality work. The number one way to do this is by creating a positive work experience. Leaders can do this by providing an environment of servant leadership asking questions such as “how may I help you?” and providing proper resources, time, money, and coaching. Other motivating factors may include salary, enhanced self-respect, and a feeling of appreciation about what they do every day. A motivated team member can do more and adds quality to whatever is accomplished. Motivating employees is not a solitary event but is an ongoing activity both during bad and good times a member, team, or an organization passes through. It requires great attention from the leader on a daily basis. It is akin to taking the pulse of the team every day. Bad times will pass if you pay attention to asking yourself if everyone is getting it done. Is everyone getting it done right? Is everyone getting along? Does everyone feel respected and appreciated? If this is done team members feel empowered and enabled to perform at a high level and gain self-esteem through the wins that they receive in accomplishing the objectives. This has a two-pronged effect: employees feel more valued and in turn perform at high levels, and they sense a feeling of personal satisfaction that motivates them to be more cognizant of the day-to-day goals (Kumar, Deshmukh & Adhish 2014).

Maslow stated that an employee works to satisfy needs established in the hierarchy. The first requirement is physiological needs and is an essential need for survival, such as salary and working conditions. Then, they will need safety needs, such as job security and benefits. Finally, social needs will need to be satisfied, such as connecting with people, having the ability to network, and being accepted by the team. When these lower orders needs are achieved staff can work on higher order needs such as self-esteem and self-respect. The last aspect is self-actualization. This is where one becomes self-driven, works towards growth of self, and has a realization of self-fulfillment (Kumar, Deshmukh & Adhish 2014).

## THE UNIQUENESS OF GLOBAL TEAMS

It is imperative to speak about global teams and the dynamics of such teams within their cultural context. Global teams are defined as a group of employees selected from two or more cultural contexts and two or more organizations that work together towards a common goal. The main difference between global teams and most teams is that cultural interactions are at a high level. Teams unfortunately can be ill-prepared for an expatriate assignment. This is a coaching opportunity for training. Lack of training is one of the main reasons why teams and projects fail. The underlying issue here is cultural competence (Finn, 2016).

Competence in culture signals new learning patterns in behavior and effectively using them in appropriate situations. This kind of cultural competence does not occur naturally and requires a high level of professionalism and knowledge. Culture is not learned overnight, so this will involve training at a high and specialized level. Cultural competence is not a static event; it requires frequent relearning and unlearning about diversity. The idea of continuous learning and development can be both a team and organizational wide mandate. The improvement must be an ongoing and daily activity for all employees. This will make the organization very competitive and profitable. It is most widely accepted that one cannot truly teach any form of cultural competence without being proficient in that culture, so you will need an expert and it will be well worth the investment. Many organizations of the past have felt that this is an unnecessary cost and have failed miserably. This combines the notion of servant leadership with communication interaction and adult learning to increase the competency.

Don't take for granted that just because your home country does processes one way that other countries do the same. Most cultures have diverse ways of getting tasks done both formally and informally. This can cause cognitive dissonance among many staff members. Individuals and teams cannot be expected to function successfully unless basic training in these components are done. There must be a minimum competency in these parameters and goals or objectives will not be met (Finn, 2016).

## CREATING SUCCESSFUL GLOBAL TEAMS

The importance of trust in both national and global teams cannot be overstressed. Trust is a basic component in any relationship and must be nurtured and fostered. The need to develop trust is a central vision of any leader at any level. This central vision will inspire both leaders and followers to strive for success and push boundaries. One must adopt the concept of the desire to achieve for the sake of achievement. This is a common core of successful teams. Values, attitudes, beliefs, and expectations that one has are a starting point to understanding how someone can better impact the company. Staff need to take the inward journey that one must take of their own worldviews before attempting to understand the worldviews of others. Teams must have a visionary blueprint, that is "how must our team look and act in order to be successful?" This is a necessary covenant, or the goals of the team will not be realized. Teams must be competently selected and devise a process that leads to success. The overriding idea is that teams must unite as one working entity behind a strong vision always pushing forward to succeed (Finn, 2016).

When working in virtual teams the power of working and communicating openly and without trepidation is a key element of an excellent team. Working virtually can be a very challenging activity, but if trust and communication is established, tasks will flow more smoothly. Working in your own country one will find themselves working with different cultures raised in different countries or geographical areas. What motivates one team member may not motivate another.

Our style of communication may be direct and open, but others may find this approach uncomfortable or threatening. The cultural element of when they arrive at work, leave work, have dinner, or how work is organized can have a tremendous effect on the relationship between team members and leadership in a multi-dimensional cultural environment. Team members cannot address levels of anxiety and stress at the team level. Teams then tend to try to diffuse the stress through more team interaction causing more cognitive dissonance and avenues of stress. Most employees deal with stress through a combination of personal expertise and self-management. As leaders we must let staff deal with cultural events that one can identify with on a very personal level and find common ground. The job of leaders at this juncture is support, providing needed resources, and removing obstacles (Finn, 2016).

## **CULTURAL COMPETENCE**

The importance of cultural competence cannot be overstated. One of the most obvious contrasts between global and national teams involves how cultures interact. Many teams are ill prepared to deal with an expatriate assignment. Many times, team members are not fluent in the host country language or the culture. When translators are used, some are not fluent in the culture. The underlying issue here is competence. Ang & Van Dyne stated (2008) cultural competence is defined as: competence in cross-cultural functioning means learning new patterns of behavior and effectively applying them in appropriate settings. This type of cultural competence is not natural and requires a high level of knowledge. Cultural competence is not static and requires relearning and quite possibly some unlearning when it comes to diversity (Finn, 2016).

Continuous learning and personal development can be both a team and an individual employee attribute. Most persons cannot teach any form of cultural competence without being fluent in the language. One must be able to lead by example and be a servant leader in order to perform successfully. The leader must be able have a deeper-level understanding of the local culture. This includes a knowledge of the culture's historical, political, economic, religious, and educational institutions, along with its values, ideologies, arts, sciences, technologies, attitudes, beliefs, and reciprocal role requirements (Finn, 2016).

## **CREATING SUCCESSFUL GLOBAL TEAMS: COMBINING SEVERAL APPROACHES**

Trust is a common theme when it comes to leading individuals. Lencioni (2002) describes the heroic acts by the first responders on September 11<sup>th</sup> are rivaled only by the familial relationship. Due to this level of trust, first responders were able to make many complex decisions rapidly and save lives. To achieve trust among a global team we must look inward at our own values, attitudes, beliefs, and expectations. This is the starting point for understanding how one can better affect the organization in a positive way. The inward journey to achieve self-understanding is the start to understanding how to imbue trust in global partners, peers, and employees. We have to understand our own worldview before understanding the worldview of others (Finn, 2016).

## **TRAINING GLOBAL TEAMS**

Training teams that are global involves preparing expatriates for intercultural projects, but also developing team skills that increase broad communication. Leaders must reinforce a strong vision for success and a framework of mutual trust. Since leadership cannot exist without a dialogue between leaders and followers than a perpetual state of conversation must exist, and the organization has to be a learning organization. Leaders must be constantly looking for ways to improve and motivate everyone in an organization to rise to their potential thus creating extra value added to all customers (Finn, 2016).

While these principles look good on paper and in theory, there is an immense amount of work that must be completed in order to create a successful team. Each member of the team must be carefully selected based on their individual characteristics that will positively impact the project. Assessments can have a positive impact, but the best way to achieve this is to have a pilot project and see how the employees do first in a national setting. Then, make sure before they are assigned to a global setting that they are fluent in the language and customs of the culture. Make sure all training is participative, open, and positive; this can, in the future, break down barriers, open communication, and are an imperative to success. We must instill a vision of success every step of the way and continual education is the key. True vision will inspire others to continually push for success and this is a contagious spark that will lit a fire beneath both leaders and followers. The team must be the central part of this message everyday of the year. At this point a team assessment can be administered to the team to gage engagement, empowerment, and motivation. Although one cannot directly correlate between individual assessments and team assessments, one can discern whether the global team has created a bond which is the key to success. (Finn, 2016).

### **TEAM MEMBER LEARNING**

Team leaders must foster an atmosphere of constant learning. If your team is not learning, then they enter the decay and death stage. This can be very harmful to the success of the goals and mission of the organization. Scholars and practitioners alike are turning to a new view of leadership that provides for the perception of the stakeholder outside of traditional authority structures.

This requires a different kind of leadership that is based not on the model of just one person facilitates success, but rather the collaboration and teamwork of the leadership team. This shift also requires a change of focus in how we manage talent because it requires identifying and developing leaders, as opposed to the traditional ideas of traits such as charisma. So, how do we as team leaders create conditions for team member growth and learning? Research has shown key enabling conditions, such as designing the team's tasks to be conducive to individual expertise and making sure that the work, is compelling to team members (Higgins et al, 2010). Training must stretch one's personal knowledge and skills and must instill the idea to the stakeholder that "I learn a great deal from my work on this team." Leaders must constantly focus on the relationships between leader and team member coaching individual team members' growth and learning. Growth and learning must be a central idea of every team (Higgins et al, 2010).

### **COACHING IS THE CENTRAL THEME**

There are several ways to help teams become effective and improve learning. One way is to focus on task processes that include working with the team to develop the best approach to its goals and keeping them aware of processes that they may require in the day-to-day. Help the team identify talents effectively and building a shared sense of commitment to the work at hand. Focus on interpersonal processes by working with the team to resolve interpersonal conflicts and improve relationships within the group. Reinforcing good behavior is a good way to help or improve team effectiveness. Unprofessional behavior should not be tolerated in any way, shape, or form. Do not engage in certain unhelpful interventions such as micromanaging the team. Most employees do not like having a manager looking over their shoulder. This will only create animosity and disengagement. In a world of highly competitive global players' leaders cannot afford this type of behavior. Let your staff "fly" and be there everyday if they need guidance. Leaders will need training on resolving interpersonal conflicts. This is most important for the team to move forward and accomplish the team mission

and vision. Many times, team conflicts are directly related to how team tasks are designed and how employees are working on the task and cause unrelated “personality conflicts.” Over the years there is a growing body of research that states that interpersonal approaches to coaching are not the most effective way of improving team performance. Interventions focused on the task outperformed those focused on interpersonal processes. One of the central tenets of leading a team is that the leader should help the team help itself (Higgins et al, 2010).

Micromanaging a team is counterproductive and destructive. Create conditions that enable the team to help itself; for example, getting the right people on the team at the very start of the project and making sure they are trained before the project starts. This enables the team to proceed in a productive manner. The extent that a team leader allows the team to lead itself results in a self-learning, self-managing, self-designing, and self-directing team. In a self-managing team, the team leader sets the rules and direction, gets them trained but leaves team members to decide how to monitor and manage the tasks. As a team leader one will become the consultant that provides needed guidance and further training every step of way. In the self-designing team, the team members both monitor and manage the tasks and processes and determine how the work will be done. In the self-directing team, members set the direction design, monitoring, and managing the work to execution. At this juncture the team members may assume the coaching role at any time needed. In relation to task-related coaching, team members might promote motivation and commitment that is shared among the members causing the team to use the best approach to its work. This will push the team to effectively build and use the members’ skills and knowledge in a productive and successful way. At this point team members can focus on interpersonal processes to resolve any problems or conflicts among the members. Leaders do not focus on attitudes but processes. This keeps members of the team from engaging in unhelpful interventions that negatively affect learning, growth, and the overall success of the team (Higgins et al, 2010).

Focusing on the team’s work may have a positive effect on the team’s interpersonal processes. Task-related coaching is superior to interpersonal process-related coaching. Also, coaching from within, from the team members, can have a greater effect on growth and learning than coaching by the team leader. It is most important for team leaders to create an environment in which team members feel comfortable in speaking up and lending a hand even when it might not be their responsibility. A “psychologically safe” team environment is then created (Higgins et al, 2010).

## CONCLUSIONS

Leading teams is one of the most important and difficult tasks that modern-day leaders must face every day. It is critically important to the success of the company. Because of the global environment and the fierce competition that it brings, leaders must master how to lead teams to success. Many of the business failures can be attributed to poor team leadership and lack of understanding of the social constructs that truly make great teams.

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