



## **TOPIC: LEADERSHIP MANAGEMENT**

### **TITLE: CREATING A HIGH PERFORMANCE TEAM**

April 20, 2000

"Only when every single member of this team gives it everything they've got, every time, will the glory be yours". - T. Cox

An effective team is a group of people acting together in an atmosphere of trust and accountability who agree that the best way to achieve a common goal is to cooperate.

Many of us have seen great teams in action - sports, work, or in our personal lives. We're all part of teams, whether at the office because we participate or lead, or outside the office. Our families are teams, we play on sports teams, and there are a variety of other teams in which we participate. Some may perform at a high, average, or below par level.

My message today focuses on creating a high-performance team. Specifically, how do you take any average or under-performing team and improve their results. The first thing to do is look at how effective teams operate. There are eight key characteristics in high-performing teams.

1) Have a common purpose each member is committed to.

All teams need a goal and purpose in life. This may be driven by the team leader, by the entire team, or a combination. It is critical that everyone knows exactly what the team is here to do, why it's important and what it will look like when completed. It is also important to know why I have been chosen as a team member, and what contribution is expected from me. If you look at any professional football team, they are driven by a purpose - they show up knowing what game they are going to play, what they need to do to win and what is their ultimate goal - winning the Super Bowl.

2) Work at building spirit and commitment.

Great teams have excitement, energy and passion for their purpose. How often have you been in a meeting where someone isn't engaged or is distracted with other priorities? When team members have spirit and commitment, it breeds among the entire team and everyone remains focused on the ultimate goal. Everyone shows up ready to play.

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3) Discuss how they're doing.

Continuous, balanced feedback is critical to success. Feedback should focus on "what are we doing well, and what aren't we doing well". In the latter case, what will we do differently? Teams need to keep score on what they're doing, what they're accomplishing and share the results. They also need to manage their meetings. What did we accomplish? Was it a valuable investment of our time? How will we improve next time?

4) Invest time and money to protect and enhance team fabric.

Time and money are limited commodities. Great teams are willing to invest resources to support the purpose and mission of the team. Their resources, monies and initiatives are measured against their purpose.

5) Care about each other and are sensitive to each other's needs.

Great teams have a sense of community and family. The team members have relationships with each other, and support their roles on the team without individual competition. They care how they are doing outside of the team and support each other's initiatives. There is compassion, sensitivity, more tolerance and lots of sharing.

6) Concern about how their actions and attitudes affect each other.

Actions speak louder than words. Do others see you supporting your team mates outside of your team? Do your daily actions support the team's mission? Are you willing to put aside a personal agenda for the greater good of the team and its purpose? These are often hard questions to answer, but are critical to the success of the team as a whole. The team is only as strong as its individual members, both on and off the field.

7) Listen intently to each other and respect all points of view.

Although there never seems to be enough communication, this addresses quality not quantity. Everyone should feel safe in expressing their opinions. Team members listen for understanding and clarify what they've heard. Conflict is discussed within the team in a non-confrontational and constructive fashion; also, it is addressed where appropriate outside the team. The team leader coaches everyone to stay focused on the issue, behavior or problem, and not the personality or person. Team members take initiative to make things better and appreciate diversity.

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8) Encourage participation from everyone.

There are no "sleepers" on great teams. Everyone participates and attends meetings regularly. A contributing factor to this is team spirit and commitment. Sometimes groups play to the average, whether low or high. By having spirited, motivated team members and team leaders, everyone naturally is encouraged to participate. When that doesn't happen, both the leader and the team mates actively engage that person by asking questions and soliciting opinions. If done consistently, people show up ready to play every time.

Great teams are a combination of effort from everyone who participates. The leader is a critical role model who demonstrates the behaviors and actions which support the team mission, and facilitates and manages the process. Great teamwork, however, is not only the leader's responsibility. Every team member has an obligation to demonstrate these same behaviors, motivate the team and hold their team mates accountable. The first step to improved teamwork starts with you.

My challenge for you this week is to assess your own contribution in these eight teamwork characteristics. On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your individual contribution in each area? Once you have completed your assessment, choose one you would like to improve.

For the category you've chosen, what would it look like if you improved your rating to a 5?

What behaviors would you role model?

In order to improve your performance in this area, what are the actions you will implement this week?

I will implement the following:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

I challenge you to measure the progress on your commitments after every team interaction. Did you do what you committed to? If so, what results did you see? If not, what will you do differently next time? Take this newsletter to your next team meeting and let the group assess its own performance and identify its areas and actions steps for improvement.