

Building Team Trust

Like it or not, all teams are potentially impaired. This is inevitable because they are made up of imperfect, limited human beings. From the basketball court to the executive suite, politics and uncertainty are more the rule than the exception. However, facing the test and focusing on teamwork is chiefly significant at the top of an organization because the executive team sets the tone for how all employees work with one another.

A client, the founder of a billion dollar company, best articulated the clout of teamwork when he once told me, "If you could get all the people in the organization paddling in the same direction, you could lead any industry, in any market, against any competition, at any time."

Whenever I repeat this maxim to a group of leaders, they without delay nod their heads, but in a distracted sort of way. They seem to take hold of the truth of it while in chorus surrendering to the impracticality of truly making it happen.

Fortunately, there is hope. Counter to conventional wisdom, the causes of low team trust are both identifiable and curable. However, they don't die easily. Making a team efficient and interconnected requires levels of guts and restraint that many groups cannot seem to gather.

Addressing the Challenges

To begin improving your team and to better appreciate the level of contest you are facing, ask yourself these simple questions:

- Do team members candidly and willingly make known their views?
- Are team meetings gripping and dynamic?
- Does the team come to decisions rapidly and steer clear of getting bogged down by agreement?
- Do team members face one another about their limitations?
- Do team members forgo their own wellbeing for the good of the team?

Although no team is ideal and even the best teams sometimes tussle with one or more of these issues, the most excellent organizations constantly work to make certain that their answers are "yes." If you answered "no" to many of these questions, your team may need some work.



The first step toward reducing politics and misunderstanding within your team is to understand that there are challenges to compete with, and address each that applies, one by one.

The Challenges

Challenge #1: Lack of Trust

This takes place when team members are hesitant to be open to the elements with one another and are disinclined to admit their oversights, weak points, or needs for help. Without a certain comfort level among team members, a base of trust is impossible.

Plan for Rising Above

- Identify and discuss individual strengths and weaknesses.
- Spend considerable time in face-to-face meetings and working sessions.

Challenge #2: Lack of Conflict

Teams that are deficient on trust are unable of engaging in unfiltered, ardent discussion about key issues, causing situations where team disagreement can easily turn into roundabout discussions and back channel remarks. In a work setting where team members do not openly expose their opinions, second-rate decisions are the result.

Plan for Rising Above

- Recognize that conflict is required for industrious meetings.
- Understand individual team member's ordinary conflict styles, and set up common ground rules for engaging in conflict.

Challenge #3: Lack of Loyalty

Without conflict, it is tricky for team members to commit to decisions, creating an atmosphere where doubt prevails. Lack of direction and assurance can make employees, particularly star employees, discontented.

Plan for Rising Above

- Evaluate commitments at the end of each meeting to make certain all team members are allied.



- Accept a “disagree and commit” mindset making sure that all team members are committed apart from initial disagreements.

Challenge #4: Lack of Accountability

When teams don't commit to an understandable plan of action, even the most alert and motivated individuals think twice about calling their peers on actions and behaviors that may seem counterproductive to the by and large good of the team.

Plan for Rising Above

- Plainly communicate goals and standards of behavior.
- Frequently talk about performance versus goals and standards.

Lack #5: Lack of Results

Team members unsurprisingly tend to put their own needs (ego, career development, acknowledgment, etc.) ahead of the cooperative goals of the team when individuals aren't held responsible. If a team has lost sight of the need for achievement, the business in due course suffers.

Plan for Rising Above

- Keep the team focused on concrete group goals.
- Reward individuals based on team goals and shared success.

The Treasure

Striving to construct a purposeful, unified team is one of the few remaining competitive advantages available to any organization looking for a powerful point of differentiation. Well-designed teams avoid wasting time talking about the wide of the mark issues and revisiting the same topics over and over again because of lack of buy-in. Purposeful teams also make higher quality decisions and achieve more in less time and with less diversion and aggravation. Additionally, "A" players seldom leave organizations where they are part of a solid team.

Flourishing teamwork is not about mastering slight, chic theories, but rather about accepting common sense with uncommon levels of discipline and persistence. As luck would have it, teams do well because they are extraordinarily human. By recognizing the weaknesses of their humanity, members of practical teams triumph over the natural tendencies that make teamwork so hard to pin down.

