



[DR. SHIRLEY SAYS...]

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Team building: Six basics for success

Most challenges in the workplace today require much more than good solo performance. Organizational success depends upon workgroups operating as a cohesive unit that uses all the best individual assets of its team members. The benefits are clear — increased productivity, improved customer service, higher employee morale and greater job satisfaction for all.

In the 1980s and 1990s, many companies recognized “team building” as an important factor in providing quality service and remaining competitive. So, is your workgroup operating as a team, or is a little team building needed?

First of all, let’s define “team” and “team building.” According to research, a team is a group of people working toward a common goal, and team building is a process of enabling the team to achieve that goal.

I have been fortunate to see firsthand what makes the difference between unsuccessful teams and successful ones. Here are six guidelines that I have practiced and that I know, when implemented on a regular basis, can lead to the development of a successful team. These guidelines can be applied to your organization, your family — and if you are a coach — your sports team:

➤ **Common goals and vision.** According to Chris Widener, president of Made for Success, effective goals and vision have three aspects — short, simple and clear. Can the team members state the goals and vision in 30 seconds? Do the team members and others understand them? Does the team all know what they are working

together for? If not, why not?

➤ **Leader communication.** Team leaders need to communicate the vision. They should set the pace with open and honest communication so that all can follow. The leader should communicate the vision frequently to update the team as to where they are and what changes need to be made. This communication should be ongoing. In addition, to enhance team communication, leaders can provide skill training in listening, responding, the use of appropriate language, giving and getting feedback, consensus building and meeting management.

➤ **Commitment to excellence.** Successful teams are teams that are committed to excellence in all they do. Their goal is to achieve at the highest level. And, this commitment is held throughout the entire team.

➤ **Team effort.** Ever watch a good football team? They are talking to each other all of the time — helping each other out, encouraging each other, praising each other and telling each other how to improve. The same strategies are true of successful teams in the professional world and in life in general. To develop confidence on a team, leaders should highlight the talent, experience and accomplishments represented on the team. And to reinforce this confidence, feedback, coaching and professional development opportunities should be provided.

➤ **Power of praise.** Successful teams appreciate members and show it in a variety of ways. The leader shows it to the team members and the team members show it to the leader, as well as to one another. As

Patty Hendrickson, author of “The Toolbox for Teams” points out, “We must look for every opportunity to applaud others for every effort from the minuscule to the magnificent.”

➤ **Change management.** Tom Peters in “Thriving on Chaos” writes, “The surviving companies will, above all, be flexible responders.” In the February 2002 issue of BIC, I wrote, “Success in the change environment requires that you, the manager, be flexible and adaptable.” It is no longer a luxury to have workgroups that can perform effectively within a changing environment — it is a necessity. You, the leader, can reduce resistance to change by providing information and vision, as well as modeling a positive attitude yourself.

According to Dr. Suzanne Willis Zoglio, author of “Teams at Work: 7 Keys to Success,” being part of a work team is a bit like being part of a family. You can’t have your way all of the time. You must develop a generous spirit. Leaders can help teams by addressing these “rules” of team spirit — value the individual, develop team trust, communicate openly, manage differences, share successes and welcome new members.

Fostering teamwork should be a top priority for leaders. In today’s workplace, more and more, organizations are realizing the importance of developing teams that can work in a coordinated, efficient, effective and creative manner.

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