

Performance Through People: Part 1 of 3

Why Good Management is About People, Not Things

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Teambuilding & Conflict Resolution

Up until now, I have mainly addressed the one-on-one relationships with employees. However, teambuilding is about interdependence with a diverse group. Football great Vince Lombardi once said, "Individual commitment to a group effort - that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work." Note that there really is an 'I' in team! A good manager does not demand and cling to his rights as leader when developing individuals who are part of the team.

This touches on a destructive management style at play in both the private and nonprofit sector: Perhaps not quite meeting the criteria for a "god complex," leaders who believe that they are always the smartest person in the room dismiss good ideas and solutions almost out hand--often because they didn't think of it or didn't pay a consultant thousands of dollars to tell them the same thing.

Good ideas are not the sole province of the senior titles. It is said that plans often fail for lack of counsel but perhaps more correctly rejection of it. However, when the same brushed off idea contributed by an employee does surface a few meetings later as an epiphany of the "leader," then trust, morale, and the success of the team take a hit.

School children recognize that idea stealing amounts to coveting your neighbor's goods and bearing false witness. Lawyers call it theft of intellectual property. Just the ethics of such antics should be dissuasive enough. But if not, the manager's image will be damaged—not enhanced—and he or she will now have extra work in dealing with the distrust, lower morale, and conflict they created...exactly the opposite result hoped for.

Teamwork is motivating for most people, to be part of something larger than we are. The U. S. National Guard found that this is the number one reason its volunteers enlist. Three important elements to successful teams are understanding and acceptance (buy-in) of a clear purpose, trust, and the necessary resources to complete the task.

A common purpose, understood and accepted by all, is *the* elevating overarching unifier for the team. When individual success is based on the team's success with everyone on a

team intent on the same purpose, that team can do great things.

Trust is the catalyst that allows team members to create synergy. Trust empowers the team members to make decisions, take risks, and seek support from one another in seeking both personal and organizational goals. It allows sharing of information, ideas, and personal perspectives. Prima donnas, corporate politics, and personal agendas destroy trust, erode performance, and impede success.

A good leader provides the team the necessary resources for success: information, supplies, equipment, skills, knowledge, and competencies to complete the tasks assigned. As simple as this may sound, many a team is set-up for failure for lack of the needed requisites for success--be it tools, training, or tolerance for occasional failure.

Good teamwork reduces conflict but with any group inevitably comes conflict. However, conflict can also be positive if everyone involved shares their perspective, and solutions are based on facts rather than emotions. Simply telling people in conflict to cooperate is not particularly helpful. Establish and maintain mutual respect while making sure the real issues (usually beliefs and purpose) are being discussed rather than symptoms or personalities. The team's commitment and openness to resolve the conflict will determine success.

Keeping Connected

Managing is about people but not only the people that you manage. Staying connected both formally and informally to other stakeholders and those outside the team will help inform and provide support for you and your team. The old axiom "It's not what you know but who you know" is more aptly put, "It's not who you know but who knows you."

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