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Team Building - For Fun by Gene Ference



Here is the type of team building and team management you need to be promoting in your organization. Learn five basic guidelines for success.

Have you ever gone to the grocery store to buy candy and noticed that one of the smallest candy bars is labeled "Fun Size?" Wouldn't the real "fun size" be one of the largest candy bars? Ever watch successful sports teams? The ones that consistently win and who are near or at the top of their profession aren't necessarily the ones featuring individual super stars. Instead, they feature team players who look like they not only work hard, but they actually have fun doing it--together. High fives, shouts of encouragement, slaps on the back and smiles and laughter all indicate a team that enjoys what they are doing, and one that sticks together like a family.

This is exactly the type of team building and team management you need to be promoting. While each person on "your" team has individual talents, and strengths and weaknesses, as a manager or "skilled coach," you need to mold these individuals into a "well oiled" cohesive unit. Your alternative—to allow a group of workers to clock in and clock out each day, increase costs due to high turnover, lower morale and standards of service and create poor employee loyalty.

In order to become a true team—rather than merely a group that spends eight or more hours a day together—managers need to adhere to five basic guidelines for success:

Allow all members of your team to perform and excel at their job.

Encourage individuals to support and want to work with each other.

Foster team problem solving—allowing for conflicts as well as for solutions.

Reward each individual, as well as the team, for their efforts and accomplishments by recognizing them at an appropriate time and place.

Most importantly—keep promises and commitments.

Unlike sports, where team goals and accomplishments are almost immediate, business goals and accomplishments, for the most part, take longer. Successful teams, whether in sports or dealing in business, know that achieving team goals are more important than reaching individual goals.

Baseball players, for instance, may better serve their team by sacrificing themselves and bunting another player to the next base rather than "swinging away" with the possibility of hitting into a double play. Likewise, making sure an employee isn't merely "standing around" when extra attention and help is needed during an especially busy project can certainly help the staff eliminate the possibility of poor and untimely service, resulting in a better team effort and increased success rate for all involved.

As their manager, knowing what motivates and drives each player on your team as well as showing support for their needs will lead to increased responsiveness and motivation for each team member. Be sure to keep everyone "in the loop," communicating both progress on goals, objectives and targets, and changes that affect individuals and teams. And keeping your team "in the loop" doesn't stop at merely informing them of the latest company news. Rather, you and your team should benefit from each other's insights, observations and know-how. Completing the loop means managers must allow and encourage problem-solving feedback. This will encourage a personal commitment to alleviating problems or provide help in finding a solution. The collaboration of team members will lead to support of methods and goals. Everyone must "buy in" to the program, and everyone must want to be involved. Then, let the team know up front that teamwork will positively influence recognition.

At HVS/The Ference Group & The Center For Survey Research, we believe that the search for organizational peak performance is a process involving periodic guest and employee surveys that build towards organizational-performance improvement and the realization of team success. Moreover, survey results

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should serve to enhance the personal communications between management and employees.

With results from employee satisfaction surveys in hand, managers can focus on improving their managerial effectiveness, and exhibit increased openness, fairness and honesty towards team members, as well as a willingness to listen. A good listener will invariably be able to counsel the problems, consider the gripes and console the tragedies that may befall team members from time to time. But, they will also be able to celebrate the victories and share the good fortune that will also appear.

In short, managers need to win the trust of team members, and in turn, the trust should be mutual. They must support team members rather than take all the credit for a job well done. Instead, credit must be given where credit is due. Good employees will make their team leaders look like stars. In turn, a good leader that keeps commitments and schedules an employee's day off as requested, or in some other way keeps a promise will instill loyalty in an individual and increase the overall productivity and positive outlook for the team.

Remembering that trust is timely, recognition is required and praise is priceless, a positive attitude enhances creativity and teamwork and "rubs off" on everyone. The more that is expected from a situation, the more success will be received. Even when teams encounter obstacles or problems, having a little fun and using a sense of humor to reduce stress will place the advantage back in your court.

The team approach leads to greater job satisfaction for all. In turn, this leads to happy employees who are willing to give it their all to achieve the goals set for them. And, as previously stated, everyone should be able to have a great deal of fun, enjoyment and satisfaction from their job, rather than just a little. Isn't it really more fun to enjoy the big candy bar rather than the smaller, bite-size version, no matter what it is called?

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