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When Teamwork Isn't Working: Fixes for the Teams You Depend Upon

When a team tackles any project, there can be hidden hazards and predictable pitfalls.

Yet complex problems are best solved by teams, as researchers at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign found. They compared teams of three, four, or five people, to people who tackle the same problems by themselves or with one other person. They learned that when group members combined their abilities and resources, they were able to outperform individuals on a task.¹

Start with Guidelines

What guidelines can teams use to avoid getting bogged down?

New York Times bestselling author and *Forbes* contributor Kevin Kruse says teams can get off to the right start by first agreeing on the purpose or mandate of the team. “This will unify

¹“Groups Perform Better Than the Best Individuals on Letters-to-Numbers Problems: Effects of Group Size,” Patrick Laughlin, Erin Hatch, Jonathan Silver, and Lee Boh, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 90, No. 4



everyone’s action and direction. Second, agree that debating ideas is healthy, but personal attacks are not. Third, go party! The more team members know about each other on a personal basis—the more they relate to each other as people instead of roles—the more positive the interactions. This builds trust.”

Lead by Listening

Kruse, author of “Employee Engagement 2.0: How to Motivate Your Team for High Performance,” says a great group leader is a facilitator.

“Even if she thinks she knows what the answer is,

she will remain silent while she listens to others and then builds consensus around the right course of action (whether it was her idea or not).”

Trust and Accountability

“When people work together in an atmosphere of trust and accountability toward a common goal, they put aside turf issues and politics and focus on the tasks to be done,” according to the American Management Association’s 2014 article “Building a Sense of Teamwork Among Staff Members.”

This focus “overcomes barriers, helps to identify new

“Contrary to popular belief, there most certainly is an ‘I’ in ‘team.’ It is the same ‘I’ that appears three times in ‘responsibility.’”

- Amber Harding

TEAM

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Getting Teams on the Same Track

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opportunities, and builds a momentum that leads to three major bottom-line benefits: better problem solving, greater productivity, and more effective use of resources.”

The Benefits of Respect

“In a workplace where people feel respected by peers, by subordinates and by supervisors, they usually respond by taking the initiative,” writes Rick Brenner, organizational expert and consultant,

Chaco Canyon Consulting, in his online article “Teamwork Myths: I vs. We.”

“They seek not only to demonstrate their willingness and ability to contribute, but also to help their co-workers do the same. They do this, in part, because they benefit themselves when they and their co-workers excel. ‘I’ and ‘We’ blend together, in a way.”

But even more importantly, Brenner adds, “these acts of contribution, collaboration, and support do create and sustain a sense of belonging. They make you feel good. Try it.”

Resources:

Weekly tips for leadership success (free newsletter by Kevin Kruse) www.KevinKruse.com

Employee Engagement 2.0: How to Motivate Your Team for High Performance, by Kevin Kruse, The Center for Wholehearted Leadership; 5th edition (July 14, 2014).

101 Tips for Managing Conflict, ebook by Rick Brenner. <http://www.chacocanyon.com/products/101tipsconflict.shtml>

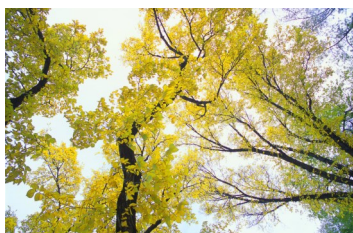
Teamwork Myths: I vs We, online article by Rick Brenner <http://www.chacocanyon.com/pointlokout/090701.shtml>

You First: Inspire Your Team to Grow Up, Get Along, and Get Stuff Done, by Liane Davey, Wiley; 1 edition (September 23, 2013).

[Building a Sense of Teamwork Among Staff Members](#), AMA online article, Nov. 6, 2014.

“A single leaf working alone provides no shade.”

- Chuck Page



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Can Executive Coaching Improve Teamwork?

Physicians and scientists often are promoted to executive positions based on their research or clinical success. When they find themselves in leadership roles, they may feel unprepared to navigate their new roles. Leadership seminars or workshops can help, but executive coaching offers a personalized experience.

According to Margaret Cary, M.D., M.B.A., M.P.H., of the Cary Institute, it can be challenging for physicians in leadership roles to excel in administration and management. “They don’t have an ‘honest broker,’ someone who’s in their corner, someone to hold up a mirror and gently say, ‘So what does that mean?’” she said.

Executive coaching helps people in leadership development hone leadership skills by providing feedback, support, and challenging ideas, according to Kevin Grigsby, D.S.W., AAMC senior director of leadership and talent development.

“Typically, executive coaches participate in a time-limited relationship with an executive leader to inspire, transform, and enhance executive leadership skills,” Grigsby said. “The executive leader emerges from the coaching relationship with an enhanced behavioral repertoire enabling her or him to improve the performance of the organization and the people comprising the organization.”

According to a Manchester Consulting Group study of executives at Fortune 100 companies, executive coaching pays off. Those who participated in executive coaching experienced a 77% improvement in relationships, 67% improvement in teamwork, 61% improvement in job satisfaction, and 48% improvement in quality. The benefits can be expected in academic medicine and science, as well as in the private sector.

Source: News Release, “Executive Coaching: A Worthwhile Investment for Physicians and Scientists,” by Julie Edwards, in *AAMC Reporter*, July 2013