

Leading light by Dan White, Client Manager at CHPD



Does the team work?

In several of our recent staff surveys, poor teamwork has been singled out as a real problem for our organisation. Managers and leaders ask me regularly to help them improve teamwork in their functions or teams. How can I approach this potentially woolly topic?

Many managers and leaders verbalise the 'need for a cohesive team', with a 'shared vision' or 'aligned values'. They want to be taken seriously as inclusive people managers, consensus builders and team players. Based on our research however, few really understand what it takes to deliver teamwork, and a tiny fraction have the tools to measure it. To help you with what may be considered a somewhat 'woolly topic', let's look at what teamwork actually is and how it can be used to stimulate performance.

We all understand the broad concept that a team that works well together will perform better. What is very poorly understood by managers, leaders and organisations is what teamwork actually consists of. A team is a unit of people that takes input from its environment, and then within that environment, converts this into output. Successful teams will be more effective, or efficient (or both) at converting these inputs to outputs. Whether your team is performing or not there are seven levers you can use in order to improve that efficiency/effectiveness. They are:

1. Leadership
2. People
3. Culture
4. Processes
5. Structure
6. Technology
7. Strategy

To improve teamwork, leaders need to understand which of these levers is the one that is currently holding the team back. For example, a team with excellent technology but a confused and overly hierarchical structure will have different issues to a team with a really innovative strategy but few good people to implement it.

It is easy to say how important teamwork is, and even to believe it. It is much harder to embody that belief tangibly in our everyday lives. As behavioural scientists we have researched the notion of teamwork and have boiled it down to key behaviours:

Facilitate team dialogue

When in team meetings ask the group how they feel about an issue. Open the floor to allow others to give their view. Ask quieter members to input.

Build ideas together

When you are facilitating team dialogue as above, don't just nod wisely, build on people's views and knit them together. Point out the linkages, ask if more than one idea could be integrated.

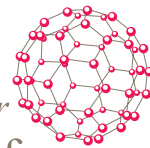
Reward good examples of points one and two

If you see others doing either of the points mentioned, congratulate them. By doing so you are creating an environment that values and reinforces good teamwork.

These measures of the effectiveness/efficiency of your team together with hints and tips on how to behave in a way that encourages teamwork,

should help to address some of teamwork issues you're facing and use your teams more effectively to drive performance.

For more information on building effective teams, visit www.chpd.com



Centre for
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News

Lost leader



Leadership development is topping the agenda for managers in the UK, as research shows that they are failing to perform and are lacking in key inspirational skills.

The Chartered Management Institute has revealed that few individuals see examples of 'inspirational leadership' in their workplace. Leadership characteristics most valued by employees are a 'genuine shared vision', 'real confidence and trust in teams' and 'respect for employees, colleagues and customers'. Only 39% claim these characteristics can be seen in their company.

When it comes to demonstrating leadership quality, the UK is losing ground to other countries. Figures from the DTI's Productivity and Competitiveness Indicators show that UK managers lag behind their colleagues in Europe and the US in terms of 'management quality'.

Jo Causon, Director, Marketing and Corporate Affairs at the Chartered Management Institute, said: "The pressure to perform at work means that managers need to master an array of skills and demonstrate all-round ability. However, if the UK is to be prevented from sliding further down global rankings in terms of 'management quality', responsibility for skills development must be shared between individuals and their employers. An environment needs to be created where individuals can learn from the experience of others to ensure the opportunity to develop skills is not lost."