

The Manning Newsletter

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Teamwork: The Password of the 1990's

Most organizations are forming "high performance" teams, self-directed teams, and quality teams. Some work well, others fail. How do you gauge the success of your team?

Research says that specific performance goals and a spirit of collaboration provide tangible footholds for teams.

The purpose of the teams is to achieve performance that is superior than if the members were working individually. This can generally be achieved if the team has a specific goal and is able to focus on performing.

Teams need specific goals that are common to all team members. Once the goals are established, the team members have some direction and can focus on their performance in order to achieve these goals together.

The main steps for achieving "high performance teams" are to set specific goals, to allow the team members to perform without interfering, and to reward the team for all successes.

But creating "high performance teams" also requires building cohesiveness among the team members. In order to accomplish this, here are some of the stages that teams can go through.

Forming happens whenever a new employee joins the team or an employee leaves the team. This is a time when rules and expectations may be unclear, leading to confusion and higher stress levels. There may be cliques formed among the "old guard." Most team members are somewhat guarded and careful in their communication. As the leader, your challenge is to help members get better acquainted with each other. You might consider some positive more social events. Also, spend time defining tasks.

In the **storming** stage, style differences begin to surface. There can also be struggles for the informal leadership and power in the team. Conflicts are often avoided, but evident. The leader's role is to teach some conflict management techniques. Help the team surface conflicts, define some workable resolution processes, and make more group decisions. The team needs support and encouragement to move to the next stage.

Norming is a time when team members are committed to their tasks and a feeling of harmony becomes the norm. Some, however, may have a "don't rock the boat"

attitude which may discourage creativity and effective group problem-solving. Encourage the team to set some of its own goals, by providing less structure and supervision. Model open communication by accepting criticism and asking for their suggestions. Plan celebrations and team building sessions to build trust.

Performing is perhaps the ideal stage of maturity of a team. Work output is very high as well as morale and trust. Any change in the team members, or disbanding, may be strongly resisted. As the leader, keep empowering the team to make decisions and keep information flowing. Celebrate outstanding achievements. View yourself more as a facilitator than a manager.

Adjourning occurs when the team or some of the team disbands. It is crucial to allow time to express feelings (some people need to mourn) and to celebrate and acknowledge the accomplishments of the team. Closure is vital before you move on and "form" a new team

Many of my clients find it helpful to have me assess in which stage their teams are functioning. Then we are able to design specific strategies to help the team transition to a more productive stage. Once managers learn these skills, they can plan more effective off-site meetings and other team activities.

Partially adapted from Turkman and Jensen, *Group and Organizational Studies*.

No one can do
everything, but
everyone can do
something.

Marilyn Manning, Ph.D., CSP (Certified Speaking Professional) of Growth Seminars, Inc. is an international speaker, trainer, consultant and author. She is a recognized expert in the areas of communication, leadership, team building, and managing conflict and change. She offers keynote presentations as well as workshops, consulting, and staff development.

New Book Announcement...Coming This Spring

My new book co-authored with Patricia Haddock, *The NAFE Guide to Starting Your Own Business*, will be available in June, published by Irwin Professional Publishers. This book is a guide to starting a business; it is written specifically for women and addresses the unique challenges faced by female entrepreneurs. It offers:

- ⌘ Guidelines for making the transition from career woman to entrepreneur.
- ⌘ A “skills assessment guide” to help women identify the strengths and abilities they’ll need to launch and grow their business.
- ⌘ Strategies for cultivating the seven characteristics of successful women entrepreneurs.

Contents include: What it takes to own and run a business; developing the seven primary skills women entrepreneurs need; strategies for overcoming obstacles; making the transition; and growing your business.

This book is available at most bookstores at a price of \$15.00; or call 1-800-634-3966.

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