



Working in teams to improve performance



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The Basics of Team Building

A Basic Definition

Some people define a team as being the people who report to the same boss. This can be misleading. In a well-designed organisational structure, people reporting to one boss do often form 'teams'. Whilst a team is a group of people, a group is not necessarily a team.

A team is a group of people working together towards a common goal.

If a team is a group of people working towards a common goal, *'team building' is the process of enabling that group of people to reach their goal.*

In its simplest terms, the stages involved in team building are:

- To clarify the collective goals
- To identify those problems that prevent them from reaching their goals and remove them
- To put in place enablers that assist them
- To measure and monitor progress, to ensure the goals are achieved

I. Section I

Is the selected answer correct?

The team...

- ...lack any form of long term strategy or vision
- ...know where they are going in the long term

The team...

- ...take an uncompromising stance on certain issues
- ...may have strong views, but they are willing to compromise

When the team discuss problems...

- ...they often get locked into an argument between different viewpoints
- ...they find a solution and then move on

The team compromise with each other...

- ...too much, even before they have discussed their differences properly
- ...after they have discussed their disagreements

When faced with an urgent problem, the team usually...

- ...act on it too quickly without thinking things through
- ...act in a timely manner

When the team try to communicate with each other...

- ...they don't listen and misunderstand each other
- ...they articulate points clearly so there is no misunderstanding

When faced with an urgent problem, the team usually...

- ...fail to take action soon enough
- ...act in a timely manner

The ideas that the team come up with...

- ...are far too radical, seemingly out of touch with current realities
- ...may be innovative but are also practical

2. Section 2

If the team examine their priorities...

- ...they think that everything they do is important
- ...they recognise that some things are more important than others

When there isn't enough information to decide...

- ...the team won't make assumptions, wanting too much certainty
- ...the team make reasonable working assumptions when they need to

The team are...

- ...resistant to change
- ...open to change

The organisation of the team is...

- ...non-existent, the way it works is chaotic
- ...good, it is well-organised

When faced with a complex problem...

- ...the team never seem able to solve it
- ...the team discuss the complexities and usually find a solution

During team discussions, they...

- ...keep going off from one tangent to another
- ...usually stick to the main point of discussion

When team members are in difficulty...

- ...they get little or no support from other team members, even when they ask for it
- ...other team members will offer/provide support as best they can

The team insist on following exact procedures...

- ...all the time, even when it is unnecessary
- ...when there is good reason to do so, but not all the time

3. Section 3

When there are differences of opinion, the team...

- ...will ignore those differences in order to be nice to each other
- ...talk about their differences

When faced with a difficult problem, the team...

- ...are unable to come with any ideas or potential solutions
- ...suggest various ideas

Before making an important decision the team...

- ...don't do any logical analysis
- ...think through the consequences of each option

People outside the team...

- ...are often alienated by the vehemence of the team's values/beliefs
- ...recognise and respect the team's views

Team members regard their own work...

- ...as much more important than the work of the team
- ...as a part of the team's contribution

The team have agendas and/or plans...

- ...never
- ...when they are needed

When the team starts a new initiative...

- ...they quickly get bored and look for another initiative to start
- ...they'll usually finish it before starting another one

The team...

- ...always do things the same way
- ...are willing to try new things to see if they might be an improvement

4. Section 4

When the team recognise that one thing is particularly important...

- ...they will still try to do everything else as well
- ...they will focus their attention on what is important

If and when the team talk about their long term vision...

- ...no one else can understand it, it is so 'way out'
- ...others can understand and relate to it

The messages the team send out are...

- ...inconsistent, saying different things to different people
- ...consistent, they are all 'singing from the same hymn sheet'

When faced with a short term problem, the team usually...

- ...use the first solution they can find, even if it sacrifices the long term
- ...try to find the right balance between short and long term needs

A logical argument between team members usually leads to...

- ...an irreconcilable debate where they nitpick each others' arguments
- ...someone suggesting a solution that they hope is acceptable to both

The team's activities are planned...

- ...too much, there is no room for any flexibility or diversion from team plans
- ...appropriately, with the right balance between planning and flexibility

When given a lot of information...

- ...the team delve too deeply into the detail and lose sight of the 'big picture'
- ...extract the detail they need without losing sight of the 'big picture'

When faced with a short term problem, the team usually...

- ...review their long term strategy, and fail to respond quickly enough to the short term problem
- ...get the balance right between short and long term needs

5. Section 5

When presented with unproven ideas that nevertheless may have potential...

- ...the team are not interested in anything unproven
- ...the team will take account of the hidden potential

The paperwork in the team is...

- ...excessive because the team is too bureaucratic
- ...kept to a reasonable level

Having a good 'team spirit' is...

- ...all important, no one is allowed to upset other team members
- ...important, but not at the expense of team performance

The team are...

- ...pursuing an unrealistic strategy strategy or impractical ideas
- ...taking a realistic approach

When trying get things done, the team usually...

- ...start doing things without spending enough time talking about it
- ...give things the right amount of consideration before taking action

When the team need to brainstorm, they...

- ...have difficulty thinking of any ideas
- ...can generate lots of ideas

The team's identity, values or beliefs...

- ...have no bearing on, or relevance to, the work they do
- ...are used to help decide where they should focus their time and effort

If the team was asked to provide an analysis of logical options...

- ...they wouldn't do it
- ...they would produce the analysis

6. Section 6

Relationships between team members...

- ...are nonexistent or poor, most people keep themselves to themselves
- ...are good, they are more than colleagues, they are friends

When the team are given an important message or information...

- ...they often misunderstand it, miscommunicate it or lose it
- ...they can be trusted with it

When working on a new project...

- ...the team are very enthusiastic at the start but lack the follow through to complete it themselves
- ...the team work on it through to the end

When the team discuss things that are important to them...

- ...they are emotional and fail to engage in objective discussion of the issues
- ...they will listen and discuss others' opinions

When someone suggests the team change their plans...

- ...the suggestion is always rejected because the team never divert from established plans
- ...it is considered and, sometimes, the team do things that are unplanned

When asked to solve a problem, the team...

- ...over-analyse things, causing 'paralysis by analysis'
- ...don't waste time, and try to find a solution as quickly as they can

When trying get things done, the team usually...

- ...spend too much time talking or thinking about it, rather than doing it
- ...take action after giving things the right amount of consideration

The coordination of effort in the team is...

- ...a shambles,
- ...done well, everyone knows what others are doing

7. Section 7

When asked to look critically at their own beliefs, the team...

- ...won't do it, they'll just assert that what they are saying is right
- ...are prepared to discuss it rationally

If the team needed to listen to a complex, logical analysis...

- ...they wouldn't have the patience to listen
- ...they would listen and ask questions

When thinking about important decisions...

- ...the team don't take enough account of current realities
- ...have a good awareness of what is currently happening

The team...

- ...find it hard to see any perspective other than their own
- ...can see how things look from others' points of view

The way team members treat each other is...

- ...too polite and with too much respect, they avoid saying what they really think
- ...with respect, but not at the expense of straight talking when it is needed

The team ask for information...

- ...too often and they want too much detail
- ...when it is relevant and needed

The team try to...

- ...do everything that comes their way
- ...focus their efforts on what's important

The team talk about things that are...

- ...unrelated to current problems and practical constraints
- ...relevant to the issues they are facing today

8. Section 8

When the team meet...

- ...they waste a lot of time in pointless logical arguments
- ...they don't argue unless it is productive to do so

If someone suggests doing something in a new and different way...

- ...the team will reject it
- ...the team will consider it

Previous experience and knowledge...

- ...is ignored by the team, and/or they fail to recognise it's value
- ...is used well by the team

When someone suggests the team should produce a plan...

- ...it never happens, the team don't plan
- ...they'll produce a plan, if it is needed

Team members...

- ...discourage and demotivate each other
- ...encourage and motivate each other

The team's attitude towards rules is...

- ...they must be followed to the letter
- ...a little more flexible

The methods the team use to get things done are...

- ...always the same, even when a different approach would be better
- ...often the same, but they are still open to better ways of doing things

The team change the way things are done...

- ...all the time, in fact they can't leave things alone
- ...only if it needs to be improved; if existing methods work well they'll use them Today's task

9. Task

Team leader to manage your team and using the materials available you are required to do the following

- 1 Identify the skills within your team
- 2 Delegate tasks to a production director, marketing director and sales director, a presenter
- 3 Create a unique consumer product
- 2 Brainstorm a brand name
- 3 Identify the products customer benefits
- 4 Present your product to the group
- 5 Time allowed 15 minutes

The winner will be the team that have the most innovative and imaginative solution