



Leading People to Work Together as a Team

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INTRODUCTION

Team building refers to the various activities undertaken to motivate the team members and increase the overall performance of the team. You just can't expect your team to perform on their own. A motivating factor is a must. Team Building activities consist of various tasks undertaken to groom a team member, motivate him and make him perform his best.

All human beings love appreciation. Any individual performing exceptionally well must be appreciated well in public. He feels happy and motivated to perform even better the next time. If any team member has come out with a unique idea; treat him with anything that makes him happy. Never criticize any team member or demotivate him if he has failed to perform. Ask him to "Buck up".

TEAM DYNAMIC

Team building is a philosophy of job design in which employees are viewed as members of interdependent teams instead of as individual workers. Team building (which according to English Professor Emeritus Alexandra Gerstley of Dickinson University is correctly spelled with two words) refers to a wide range of activities, presented to businesses, schools, sports teams, religious or nonprofit organizations designed for improving team performance. Team building is pursued via a variety of practices, and can range from simple bonding exercises to complex simulations and multi-day team building retreats designed to develop a team (including group assessment and group-dynamic games), usually falling somewhere in between. It generally sits within the theory and practice of organizational development, but can also be applied to sports teams, school groups, and other contexts. Team building is not to be confused with "team recreation" that consists of activities for teams that are strictly recreational. Team building can also be seen in day-to-day operations of an organization and team dynamic can be improved through successful leadership. Team building is an important factor in any environment, its focus is to specialize in bringing out the best in a team to ensure self development, positive communication, leadership skills and the ability to work closely together as a team to problem solve.

Work environments tend to focus on individuals and personal goals, with reward & recognition singling out the achievements of individual employees. Team building can also refer to the process of selecting or creating a team from scratch.

GOALS

The overall goals of team building are to increase the teams understanding of team dynamics and improve how the team works together. Unlike working as a group, working as a team incorporates group accountability rather than individual accountability and results in a collective work product. Team building encourages the team approach to working on a project. There are many advantages to this approach. These advantages include the following:

- Increased flexibility in skills and abilities
- More productive than work groups with individual mindset
- More beneficial in times of organizational change
- Encourage both individual and team development and improvement
- Focuses on group goals to accomplish more beneficial tasks
- Improved range of team building objectives such as collaboration,

communication and increased creative or flexible thinking.

LEADERSHIP ROLES

Successful team leaders frequently contain six of the same leadership abilities:

- A team leader is usually goal-oriented to keep the team on track.
- They must promote a safe environment where members can openly discuss issues.
- A leader must build confidence amongst members by building and maintaining trust and offering the members responsibilities.
- A leader should be technically competent in matters relating to team tasks and goals.

It is important for a team leader to set a manageable list of priorities for the team to keep members focused.

Finally, leaders should offer clear performance expectations by recognizing and rewarding excellent performance, and provide feedback to others.

Carl Larson and Frank LaFasto conducted a three year study of over 75 diverse teams. By interviewing key members of each team, Larson & LaFasto identified eight effective strategies a leader should employ to enhance team building:

- Establish clear and inspiring team goals
- Maintain a results-oriented team structure
- Assemble competent team members
- Strive for unified commitment
- Provide a collaborative climate
- Encourage standards of excellence
- Furnish external support and recognition
- Apply principled leadership

TEAM MODELS

1. The Traditional Model

This is a group of people with a traditional boss. The boss also shares some of his/her responsibility as well as authority. How much is being shared by the boss is usually dependent on the issues under consideration. This traditional boss is in charge. But still, on certain issues, this person may allow his other team members to take on the leadership role.

2. The Team Spirit Model

This is a group of people who are working for one boss. The team members are very happy and everything seems to be going well. There is team spirit in people. The fact remains that in reality this is not really a team. This is because there is one person who calls all the shots. Besides, there is no sharing of authority or responsibility.

3. The Cutting Edge Model

This is a group of people who are managing themselves. There is no single person in this group who has the authority to make any such decisions about the events which will impact the whole group. This is also known as a self-directed work team. This is because each one has the authority as well as responsibility for all the decisions that they need to make.

4. The Task Force Model

This refers to a group that comes together for a specific time only.

This is because it has to work on a special project or a task. Such a group has traditionally been called a task force or a committee. This may also include quality circles as are used in TQM efforts.

5. The Cyber Team

In such a team model, members see one another rarely or even, not at all. These are also known as “cyber” or “virtual” teams. What makes these teams different is that the team has to work together in order to accomplish goals, but they may be meeting only at the beginning of their project. Post that, they may be interacting through e-mail, telephone or through video conferencing only.

NEED FOR TEAM BUILDING - WHY TEAM BUILDING?

Team Building activities are of utmost importance as they help in the overall development of the team members and in turn improving the team's performance. It also strengthens the bond among the employees and they feel motivated to work and achieve the targets. Some kind of team building activities must be undertaken from time to time to encourage the team members to work hard and realize their dreams.

TEAM BUILDING EXERCISES

Team building exercises consist of a variety of tasks designed to develop group members and their ability to work together effectively. There are many types of team building activities that range from games for kids to games and challenges that involve novel and complex tasks that are designed for improving group performance by addressing specific needs.

Team building can range from simple social activities - to encourage team members to spend time together- to team development activities -designed to help individuals discover how they approach a problem, how the team works together, and discover better methods of communication.

Team interaction involves “soft” interpersonal skills including communication, negotiation, leadership, and motivation - in contrast to technical skills directly involved with the job at hand. Depending on the type of team building, the novel tasks can encourage or specifically teach interpersonal team skills to increase team performance.

Whether indoor or outdoor, the purpose of team building exercises is to assist teams in becoming cohesive units of individuals that can effectively work together to complete tasks. Some corporate team building companies theme their events around ideas from popular culture such as TV game shows to add a fun element to the event.

1. Communication exercise: This type of team building exercise is exactly what it sounds like. Communications exercises are problem solving activities that are geared towards improving communication skills. The issues teams encounter in these exercises are solved by communicating effectively with each other.

Goal: Create an activity which highlights the importance of good communication in team performance and/or potential problems with communication.

2. Problem-solving/decision-making exercise: Problem-solving/decision-making exercises focus specifically on groups working together to solve difficult problems or make complex decisions. These exercises are some of the most common as they appear to have the most direct link to what employers want their teams to

be able to do.

Goal: Give team a problem in which the solution is not easily apparent or requires the team to come up with a creative solution

3. Planning/adaptability exercise: These exercises focus on aspects of planning and being adaptable to change. These are important things for teams to be able to do when they are assigned complex tasks or decisions.

Goal: Show the importance of planning before implementing a solution

4. Trust exercise: A trust exercise involves engaging team members in a way that will induce trust between them. They are sometimes difficult exercises to implement as there are varying degrees of trust between individuals and varying degrees of individual comfort trusting others in general.

Goal: Create trust between team members

ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

In the organizational development context, a team may embark on a process of self-assessment to gauge its effectiveness and improve its performance. To assess itself, a team seeks feedback from group members to find out both its current strengths and weakness.

To improve its current performance, feedback from the team assessment can be used to identify gaps between the desired state and the current state, and to design a gap-closure strategy. Team development can be the greater term containing this assessment and improvement actions, or as a component of organizational development.

Another way is to allow for personality assessment amongst the team members, so that they will have a better understanding of their working style, as well as their fellow team mates.

A structured team building plan is a good tool to implement team bonding and thus, team awareness. These may be introduced by companies that specialize in executing team building sessions, or done internally by the human resource department.

RISKS

The major risk of team building is that a team member may become cynical of the organization. This could happen as a result of the organization holding team building events outside of the normal context in which the organization usually functions under. For example, if an organization hosts team building events when individual goals and efforts are the norm with the organizational culture, the team building event will have no lasting impact.

It is crucial to follow up a team building event with meaningful workplace practice. If the team members do not see an improvement within an organization as a result of team building events, members may view such events as a waste of time. This may lead to loss of trust in the organization, harm motivation, as well as decrease employee morale and production.

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