

Build a Winning Team Dynamic

These seven tips will generate teamwork in any organization.

Success in any organization is based upon its employees and their ability to work together as a team. As much as any manager would love for this to happen organically, it takes a lot of work to get individuals at various levels with divergent personalities and skill sets all operating as a cohesive whole. Following these seven recommendations will help any organization generate true teamwork:

1. Create a "We" Culture

Team building starts at the top. If senior executives encourage an environment where the organization uses less "I" and more "we" in how they communicate, everyone will feel supported, included and important to the organization. When counseling clients, use terms like "we believe..." or "our recommendations include...." This eliminates an employee's fear of standing alone and shows that the entire organization is thinking about the client.

2. Clearly Define Roles and Personal Growth Plans

When individuals know what their role and responsibilities are, there is far less competitiveness in an organization. It allows employees to come together as a team in an enriching environment where everyone can contribute creatively and strategically. In addition, when employees understand what expectations exist for them to rise to the next level they are more apt to be a good team player, because they understand that they are really competing with themselves, and not their colleagues, for success.

3. Recognize Success, Regardless of Its Origin

The worst organizations are those that think good ideas or successful programs only come from senior-level individuals. Conversely, good organizations encourage creative thinking from all levels and give credit when a creative idea or solution comes from junior or mid-level employees. This is one of the most crucial components of developing a teamwork-based culture.

4. Educate, Train and Role Play

Teachable moments happen every day in every organization. If you want your organization to operate like a team, take advantage of opportunities to train and educate your employees in best practices. We do a lot of role playing and situational training to teach junior staff better

ways to handle situations. When the culture is driven by "getting-better" in a non-competitive way, you breed teamwork.

5. Win and Lose as a Team

Accomplishments or failures should always be shared as a team. When there is a big account win, it is great to acknowledge all of the creativity, hard work, and commitment the entire team put into the win. Conversely, when the organization experiences failure of any nature, the worst situation is to fault any one person for that misstep. This is the quickest way to demotivate an individual and it usually erodes confidence in an organization when others hear of it being handled this way.

6. Encourage Social Get-togethers

One of the best ways for employees to feel attached to an organization is to get to know each other on a more personal level. The best types of social gatherings are very organic in nature; ones that aren't company-sponsored, which can feel forced. However, the organization must let employees know that it supports their participation for it to work. When individuals are more personally attached to each other, they are more comfortable working together, which helps to build teamwork.

7. Develop Team-building Exercises and Programs

I have long believed that information is power. As a result, we have brought our entire organization together for the past 10 years to celebrate the previous year's success, do some forward thinking and, most importantly, get together for structured team-building programs. We have done scavenger hunts, "Survivor" and "Amazing Race"-style competitions, and a variety of other programs designed to bring people together in both a social and fun, competitive environment. These team-building exercises have become some of the most important and memorable within our organization.

It's incredibly important for the leadership of any organization to understand that teamwork doesn't just happen by itself, and it certainly won't take shape overnight. It requires dedication from the organization to lay a foundation of building blocks that cause employees to want the same thing. With both sides working toward this common goal, true teamwork can be achieved.