

Teams: What are they?

We all know that a team is more than just a group of people. A team becomes a team when they begin to have critical elements such as a common goal, respect for individual difference and trust in one another's abilities. Actually, perhaps this is what a high performance team is. A simple team, may not have anything else but a common goal and this is the problem within most corporate organisations today and hence the need to have team building programs.

Team building is the process of creating a high performance team. An effective team building exercise must therefore assist in creating strong emotional bonds. Emotional bonds in great teams exist on three levels. They are:

An emotional connection to the goal that the team is trying to achieve.

An emotional connection to the identity that the team has or is developing.

An emotional connection to the team members within the team.

When these three emotional connections are all present, you will have a team where $4+4=10$ or more. This is what defines a great team compared to most other teams.

Team building is critical in developing these emotional bonds. It must be stated that a great team does not just emerge. It must be carefully created and this is as much a science of hiring the right type of skills as it is an art of bringing together different types of personalities. To get this mix right, tools such as the Team 8 DISC 360 combined with opportunities for open communication between team members must be created.

As well, in developing a strong team, each team member must feel involved in determining the goals that are to be achieved and then to have ownership in how these goals are achieved. Once the goals are clearly identified, each team member must be constantly reminded in creative ways what these goals are. Think about doing a jig saw puzzle. How many times do you need to see and refer to the picture, in order to complete the pieces? Keep team goals in everyone's line of vision, hearing and touch and feeling. Let team members identify with their goals in a way which they most want to.

To develop a team identity, teams need to be able to define who they are and what they stand for, as well, how they want to be seen by others. Once again, involve each team member in defining this and once again they will feel connected to the outcome. It does not have to be rocket science and even better if it is not. Make it relevant and meaningful and believable.

Finally, team members will develop an emotional connection to each other when they share their expectations, hope, fears, skills, knowledge and give each other emotional and technical support. When team members know one another at a much deeper level, they begin to relate and create stronger associations that bond them in significant ways. It is in the process of learning about one another's strength and limitations (yes, we all have them) and how team members can complement one another, that really deep bonds can be created. Trust and respect are the fundamental factors here and any great team building event or activity will help to gently push team members out of their comfort zones where they will become safely exposed to the rest of the team and embraced in a way that brings out the best in them and the team as a whole.

The common phrase that an organisations competitive advantage rests with its people is only true to the degree that those people form high performance teams through effective team building processes.