

## How To Create High Performing Teams

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In a world where the workplace has become very diverse, team cohesion is of utmost importance. A mix between the personalities of people and the environment they work in can ultimately determine whether a team will be successful or not.

Many indicators point to a work environment that needs a team-building exercise. When workers are not connected to their peers they do not feel supported and understood. There is a high possibility of ending up with disengaged individuals which ultimately take a toll on the company's innovation, productivity and bottom line. Disengaged employees cost the United States, the world's economy 350 billion a year.

William .G. Dyer (2006) was a published author specialising in organizational development. He listed some pertinent pointers are indicative points of the need for team-building exercise and some of them are;

- Decreased productivity within the organization
- Multiple grievances or complaints from within of the organization
- Confusion about assignments or unclear relationships between people
- General lack of interest and involvement from some employees
- Ineffective staff meetings
- Poor communication interfering with group productiveness
- Lack of encouragement for working together in a better team effort
- Lack of trust between subordinates and managers

Richard J. Hackman (2002), a Harvard professor and an Organisational Psychologist, spent 40 years studying teamwork. His assertion was discounting personalities, enabling conditions are an important factor in deciding successful collaborations. According to Professor Hackman, the three factors that constitute enabling environments are;

1. Compelling direction
2. Strong structure and
3. Supportive context

The *compelling direction* aspect speaks to the group having a joint vision. Teams cannot be inspired if they do not know what they are working toward and do not have explicit goals. This means an environment where goals fit the *SMART* criteria (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound). The team is likely to be more successful is they are working towards a direction that energizes, orients, and engages its members.

Professor Hackman cites *strong structure* as; having the right mix and number of members, optimally

designed tasks and processes, and norms that discourage destructive behaviour and promote positive dynamics. High-performing teams include members with a balance of skills that complement other weaknesses.

Having the right support is the third condition that enables team effectiveness. This means that there are enough resources to execute one's job and meaningful reward systems.

Teams are sometimes not successful due to clashing personalities. Team Building forms part of organisational development. It aims to help teams work more effectively and efficiently together while improving and strengthening the relationships between people in the group.

Most organisations upon realizing that there is a problem, go straight into team building activities without probing the problem further. The modern-day team building workshops would require that the employee body take pre-assessments to further identify which areas are the most contentious and need the most attention. Examples of possible and relevant pre-assessments are the Team Climate Inventory which measures the level of team function, and Collaboration Network Analysis which measures the level of collaboration amongst team members.

Another optional extra that can help employees to understand themselves and their teammates better are personality self-assessments. There are a variety of personality types in the workplace, and some personalities work better together than others. Particular personality types might make it easy to work with one colleague and leave you struggling with another.

The Meyers Briggs Type Indicator Assessment is an example of such a test – an evaluation of an individual's inborn predisposition and preferences that influence how they perceive the world and make decisions. Understanding this will help your employees understand themselves and each other better, and assist them to be able to adjust their behaviour to suit the team's purpose. The aim of taking your employees through these assessments is to build a more effective team.

The general expected deliverable of a team-building exercise is that the organization will function at a higher level as compared to before. Although the overall focus is on team building, other smaller factors will contribute to this. The team-building exercises in themselves should be structured in such a way that they speak to opening up communication, identify leadership qualities within individuals but also reinforcing the value of having fun in the workplace. Bonding is also important as it can create that sense of looking out for each other that can also bring a sense of trust. A positive and enthusiastic team paves way for good morale in the workplace.

Other benefits of a well-executed team-building exercise are:

- The creation of a team that is emotionally aware and appreciates the different personality types and cultures of fellow employees and how to interact with them appropriately;
- Increased cohesion among the employee body;
- Team members working together to achieve the organisation's goals and targets.
- a team which understands the effects of their attitude on the overall success of the organisation;

- highly motivated team geared towards fulfilling the vision of the organisation

High performing teams means that the organisation also does well. Means of ensuring successful collaborations include creating enabling environments for these teams to work and offering teambuilding exercises for increased group cohesion.

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