The 8 Characteristics of Highly Functional Teams

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Your Best Team – Your Worst Team

Why?

How?
1 - A Clear, Elevating Goal

- If you asked each of your team members?
- If you asked your boss?
- Examples:
  - We will consult, simulate and treat every SRS patient within a week. (Stanford CK team).
  - I would not hesitate to have my mother treated in my department (personal)
2 – Results-Driven Structure

1. Problem-Resolution Team
   - Resolve problems on ongoing basis (2nd check)
   - TRUST

2. Creative Team
   - To create something (build a prone breast board)
   - AUTONOMY

3. Tactical Team
   - Execute a well-defined plan (LDR implant)
   - CLARITY
3 – Competent Team Members

- We hire for specific job competency
- What if your team needs to change directions?
- Hiring for competency & fit within the team
- Optimize: combination of specialists and generalists
4 – Unified Commitment ("Team Spirit")

- Most often missing, elusive to define
- Sense of loyalty & dedication
- **CANNOT** have conflict between individual and team goals
- Commit mental & physical energy to TEAM
  - Participate actively
  - Consequences of NOT achieving goal
- Putting your personal self behind team goal
  - Michael Collins on 1st moon landing
  - “What can I do for you?”
5 – Collaborative Climate

• What is your formal incentive structure?
  • Individual achievement?
  • How are good team players awarded?
• What is your informal incentive structure?
  • Who gets credit: team leader or the team?
6 – Standards of Excellence

1. Clearly define acceptable standard & consequences if failing to adhere
2. Individuals hold each other accountable
3. Teams need to hold themselves accountable
4. (External pressure)

Maintaining standards is hard & at times uncomfortable work!
7 – External Support and Recognition

• Absence of external support is noticed more than its presence
• Is the Department Chair supporting the physics team?
• Is the support tangible vs. just philosophical?
  • Incentives tied to team success
  • Reward the team for behaving as a team
8 – Principled Leadership

1. Avoid compromising team’s objective with political issues
2. Personal commitment to team’s goals
3. Not dilute efforts with too many priorities
4. Fair & impartial to ALL members
5. Willing to confront & resolve issues with inadequate performance/conflicts
6. Be open to new ideas from team members
My Personal Favorite

- Groupthink is **dangerous**
- Devil’s Advocate is most effective team member to prevent groupthink
- BUT it stigmatizes
  - Rotate the role at each team meeting!
Thoughts for your flight home:

• What was the best & the worst team you worked in

• 8 Criteria:
  • For your best team?
  • Your Worst Team?

• Which ones of the 8 criteria did you have control over?
Recommended Reading