Team Building

Use past experience

Think back on those teams that you may have been part of:

- What were you asked to do?
- How did you go about it?
- Where were you successful and why?
- What difficulties did you come up against?
- How were these overcome?
- How was your team led?
- What did the leader do well?
- Where were they not so good?
- If you were in charge, would you have done anything different?

Successful teams:

- They need to have something worthwhile to aim for
- They know what they have to achieve
- They need time to develop as a unit
- Team members are clear about their roles
- Team members support each other
- They have worked out a suitable way of working
- They review how they are doing
- They have fun

Know why you're there

Ask those sponsoring the team:

- What do you want us to do, for what reason and by when?
- What's the 'big picture'?
- Are objectives specific, clear, challenging and measurable?
- How will you judge our 'success'?
- What resources are you making available to us?
- How realistic is it?
- Is there anything we can't do?
- Finally, is there anything we should know but haven't been told?

Key objectives

Objectives are key to galvanising the energies, spirit, enthusiasm and skills of all involved.

This can be work related, eg:

- Developing new products
- Providing a new or better service to customers
- Organising an event by a specific date

Or community based, eg:

- Raising money for a particular cause
- Helping out people in need

Involve others

Make sure that the team knows what it has to achieve:

- Start planning an effective way of working and consider what information is needed from the beginning
- Have a basis against which to measure both performance and progress
- Give some thought to your first meeting and how you will do this

Involve others – vary the method

We take in information through each of our senses – some people have a preference for:

- Pictures and visual images
  In which case try using a picture, drawing or cartoon

- Sounds
  Explain what you are trying to achieve, encourage discussions and invite questions

- Feelings
  Give them something to touch or hold

Hold the first meeting in a different venue, where the environment is more appealing.

Identify skills and experiences

It will help the group to form if time is spent at an early stage getting members to talk about:

- The skills they have developed, at work and elsewhere
- Their achievements
- Their experience of working in teams and what they have learnt
- How they prefer to operate, and what they value in others
- What they think they can contribute to the task
- Their interests and what they regard as a worthwhile challenge
- Any initial concerns they may have

From vision to goals

- Statements that capture the imagination and energy of those involved are needed.
- Give some thought to what these ought to be before you meet with your team.
- Aim to get buy-in and accountability, rather than impose your own views.
- Don’t be afraid if team members challenge suggested goals.

Give people roles

In teams that work well:

- Individuals are clear about the part they are expected to play
- Roles may overlap but they don't conflict
- The mix of roles and skills is sufficient for the task in hand

Identifying people's abilities and preferences at the initial team meeting can be helpful.

Find the best method

Suggestions may include:

- Keeping things simple and not over complicating matters
- Not over planning
- Breaking down large tasks into manageable sections with their own timescales
- Encouraging flexibility and openness to new ideas and methods
- Constantly looking at what you are doing and how

Work on the basis that the fewer rules the better, as rules reduce freedom and responsibility.

Team meetings

Consider:

- The purpose of holding meetings in the first place
- How often you need them
- The practicalities of getting people together
- The option of rotating the chair at meetings

Team meetings – solving problems and making decisions

Consider:

- Creativity techniques for those problems that aren't routine
- How decisions will be made by the leader or by consensus
- What levels of authority people will have
- How you will communicate any decision
- How you will judge the success of your meetings

Review progress

You need to take time out and examine:

- Progress against the goals and objectives that have been set
- How the team is functioning:
- Openness to people and ideas
- Co-operation; is it happening?
- Meetings; productive or a waste of time?
- Communication; are there gaps?
- What have people been grumbling about?
- Conflict; constructive or harmful?
- Skills and talents; is the team making best use of them?
- Are we our own worst enemies?
- Are the real issues being tackled or avoided?
- What lessons can be learnt?

Have fun!

Teams operating in even the most difficult circumstances still manage to have fun.

You can tell this from:

- The 'buzz' and energy about the place
- The smiles on people's faces
- The way they celebrate success
- What can you do to make work more enjoyable and exciting, and people more enthusiastic?

What is leadership?

Leadership is the skill of influencing people towards the achievement of goals or objectives.

Successful leaders have been quoted as:

- 'Walking a tightrope between the discipline of binding people together and a human touch'
- 'Being at their best when people barely know that they exist'
- 'Demonstrating wisdom by settling for good work and then letting others have the floor'

The missing leader

Frequently, those in leadership positions:

- Have no idea how to get the best from others
- Use fear to get the group going
- Blame others and are not prepared to carry the can
- Seek to grab the credit for good work
- Feel that they should be right all the time
- Spend their time doing and not leading

Managing vs leading

Studies would suggest that managing is about:

- Making plans and working out details
- Setting up a structure so that plans can be met
- Monitoring progress against plans
- Producing the results that others are expecting

Whereas, leading involves:

- Developing a vision for the future and where we want to be
- Getting people on board and giving them direction
- Motivating, inspiring and energising people to overcome any barriers
- Producing change in products and method to stay competitive

Leaders:

- Make things happen
- Inspire, empower and trust people
- Express their views
- Take risks
- Trouble shoot
- Use tactical planning
- Negotiate and do deals with people
- Trust their judgement
- Accept responsibility
- Achieve results

Can leadership be learned?

- There is no one common style of leadership and no one best way to lead
- Leaders are not born; we all have the potential but no gift of leadership
- In truth, signs of understanding leadership show most in the quality of those who follow

Making a start

- Think back on your own experience.
- If you lack confidence in your ability or in the people you have, then think twice about putting yourself in the position of leader.
- Don’t worry if you feel that you have not got all the skills.
- As the task evolves your approach will probably have to change, and you will learn.
- A good start would be to work out what inspires you.
- How will you communicate this to others?

Understanding group behaviour

When people communicate there are two major ingredients at play:

- the subject matter on which they are working (content)
- what's happening between the individuals (process)

Decisions are made:

- from a logical standpoint or an emotional one
- by involving everyone or as a result of one person's dominance

Understanding group behaviour (continued)

Influence and participation are not the same

Influence can take many forms; look out for various styles that people use:

- autocrat attempts to impose his/her will on others
- peacemaker tries to prevent conflict or the expression of unpleasant feelings by pouring oil on troubled waters
- laissez faire people seem withdrawn and uninvolved
- democrat works hard to include everyone in the discussion or decision

Assess the atmosphere

See if you can spot how the group is working and the atmosphere it creates.

Consider whether it is:

- friendly or hostile, open or closed
- and why this should be

Understanding the rules within the group

- Very often any rules are unwritten and, until they have been broken, people don’t know that there’s a problem!
- Can you spot any behaviours that are acceptable and those that are not?

People who only think of themselves

See if you can recognise:

- dominating behaviour
- attacks or blocks on individuals
- attempts to gain sympathy
- the person who's fed up and withdrawn
- joking and ridiculing of others

This behaviour is not conducive to teamworking

Demonstrating leadership 1

The key to making teams work is to demonstrate leadership and encourage teamworking by:

- Giving people a meaningful and stimulating challenge
- Creating opportunities for people to work together
- Getting the stronger to help the weaker
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- Rotating jobs and tasks

Demonstrating leadership 2

The key to making teams work is to demonstrate leadership and encourage teamworking by:

- Not hanging on to positional power
- Knowing when to listen, when to act and when to withdraw
- Explaining decisions
- Smiling and encouraging humour

Demonstrating leadership 3

The key to making teams work is to demonstrate leadership and encourage teamworking by:

- Giving praise when it's due
- Letting go and not trying to do everything yourself
- Encouraging open-mindedness
- Learning from failures and successes

Demonstrating leadership 4

The key to making teams work is to demonstrate leadership and encourage teamworking by:

- Asking for ideas and acting upon them
- Promoting good ideas
- Simplifying things: what could we not do?
- Ensuring that people have the resources they need to do the job

Demonstrating leadership 5

The key to making teams work is to demonstrate leadership and encourage teamworking by:

- Developing feedback between team members
- Running different types of meetings
- Giving people a chance to air their views
- Encouraging networking

Demonstrating leadership 6

The key to making teams work is to demonstrate leadership and encourage teamworking by:

- Promoting a team identity
- Rewarding the team
- Leading by example
- Trusting your people
- Never assuming