Building A Winning Team

It is every manager’s goal, everyone’s dream, to build a winning team; certainly within.

the world of sport. And in the world of business and industry, which is just as competitive, if you want success it should be a key priority.

But what is a winning team? How is it created? Where does it come from? Does it just happen? Is it luck or judgement or perhaps a combination of both? For anyone who is sceptical about the concept it may be useful to begin by highlighting the benefits of successful team work. These benefits, although not exhaustive nor in order of priority, include the following:

Benefits of a Winning Team

•Achieves success/goals;

•Increased job satisfaction;

•Beats the competition;

•Maintains standards;

• Satisfied customers;

•Consistency of service;

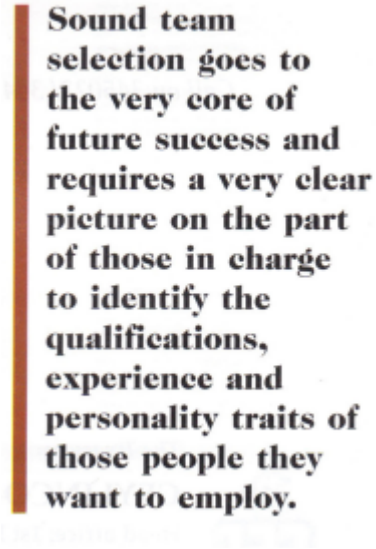
•Effective use of resources;

•Can generate more ideas;

• Efficient use of resources, therefore more activities/ opportunities;

•Enhanced time management; Greater loyalty of team members;

•Greater sense of achievement, ‘ownership’ and accountability.



Analysis of any successful team should reveal that at the centre and around which all else revolves is a display of strong leadership by the person in charge. It cannot be over-estimated how important leadership is to team development. This may sound like the obvious but it is perhaps for that very reason that it is often taken for granted.

Leadership

Leadership is something which must be on display all the time, it is not an occasional trait which is put on show as a flavour of the month, but should be an ongoing demonstration by the leader, constantly transmitting the vision/goals and the means by which they will be achieved to all those who are, or wish to be, part of the team.

For some people, leadership qualities and skills such as imagination, team communication, setting and maintaining standards, praise and recognition, are a natural characteristic of their behaviour in addition to an almost indefinable quality of their personality. For others, and perhaps that means most of us, constant thought must be given to these traits in order to maintain our leadership standards. If I had to summarise one element of personality make-up which will identify a leader from a non-leader, it would be a positive up-beat attitude. This attitude would manifest itself in each and every action towards the job, towards the staff and ultimately towards the customers satisfaction. The leader creates the culture; that powerful force which dictates behaviours, creates precedents, images and mystiques, structures and systems.

Once established, it can be likened to a transparent membrane, which envelops itself around individuals, touching every nuance of verbal and non-verbal behaviour in either a positive or a negative way to the benefit or detriment of those involved. The challenge for any new leader is to break the traditions and habits of a past culture and realign the energy and effort of the work force in the direction of the new vision.

The points for any leader to Clearly defined vision take cognisance of are:

•Ability to display strong vision and conviction for product and service:

•Behave like a ‘team coach’; Customer needs driven; Sound communication skills;

• Ability to listen Positive motivation;

•Give praise and recognition:

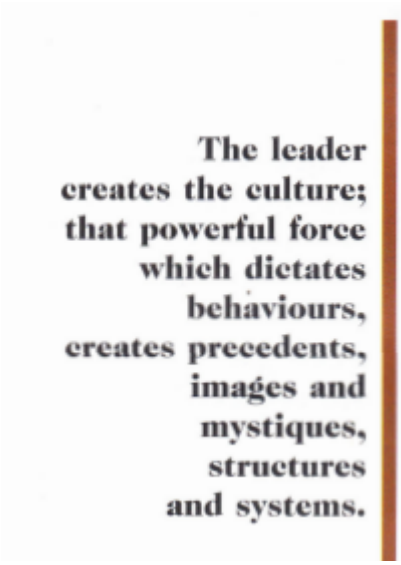
• Hold regular team meetings

•Encourage individual contribution;

•Provide objective feedback;

Use errors as opportunity to teach

•Set example and ‘walk the talk’.



Selecting the Team

A leader may find himself/herself with an established team in which case an analysis has to be undertaken to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the team with subsequent appropriate action being taken.

But where there are gaps or there is a need to employ new individuals, then the opportunity and challenge for an aspiring team builder is to select the right team for the task ahead.

Sound team selection goes to the very core of future success and requires a very clean picture on the part of those in charge to identify the qualifications, experience the personality traits of those people they want to employ.

Failure to identify required skills may result in not recognising them when they are presented to you by an individual at the interview stage. Failure to identify the required skills suggest that the job, and therefore a product or service based on it, has not been clearly thought through, so once again vision and success goals are not in focus and if these are blurred, then I would suggest that so is your judgement when it comes to the selection of staff. The key elements to be considered when selecting staff include:

■Clearly defined jobs which contribute to the end product;

■ Clearly defined skills and experience of people required to undertake those jobs successfully:

■Clearly targeted advertising.

■Sound interviewing techniques;

■Testing of applications to measure ability; Clear explanation to each applicant of the organisation’s goals.

Training the Team

Regardless of what skills or ability existing or new team members may have, a vital component is required to bring out the best skills and to hone ability at both individual and team level and that is training.

Training for new employees; training for existing employees; training in new technology; training in working together and under standing the role each team member plays and the abilities they bring to it.

Training sessions also provide the platform on which the leader's vision can be presented to the group, explained, questions answered and for each team member to identify the part they will play in contributing to the group's achievement of the goal. Bringing people together also serves to remind individuals that they are part of a team and they have to work together.

It encourages them to take ownership of their work experience and create this culture of success attitude to which I referred earlier.

It is essential therefore to ensure that you have:

■An excellent induction training programme;

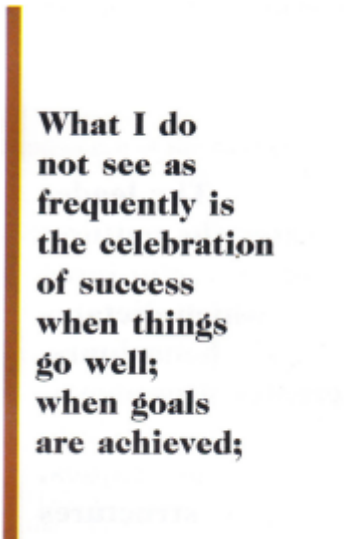
■An excellent job training programme;

■Regular team briefings; Career development programmes;

■Management development programmes;

■Appraisal performance programmes;

■Constant recognition of service excellence.



Setting Standards

Achieving a goal is about setting standards, the standard of the goal itself and intermediate standards which, if achieved, take a team through to its final destination. A mission statement or broad-based strategy although important is not in itself a sufficiently defined standard to motivate a team.

Meaningful standards should be set for each and every individual so that they know what their target is, what to aim and shoot for.

A winning team is given constant feedback on its performance, each stage of performance is measured, analysed and understood. Team briefings become an essential ingredient not only in presenting information about progress and achievement but about setting standards and the means by which they will be achieved. Any standards set should be SMART in nature, Ie:

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Reasonable

Time related

Team Maturity

When a team is new it requires constant attention from the leader to deal with all the issues which arise when you bring a group of people together for the first time or perhaps in a new location. A new team especially requires time to settle down, become familiar with each other, with the job, systems, procedures, accountabilities, above all the service of the customer. A new or young team needs constant vigilance from the leader with emphasis on the task to be done and the sharpening of skills to perform that task.

As a group develops and matures, so the leader can put emphasis into different aspects of the relationship. It is suggested that maturity of a group has been established when there is:

•Trust between the leader and the team;

•Trust between each member of the team;

•Total confidence of the leader and the team in the product or service they offer;

•Total confidence of the team in its ability;

•Ability of the team to take

•ownership and be accountable for its actions;

•An ongoing desire of the team to refine and improve its performance.

Celebrating Success

It is very common when things go wrong in an organisation for there to be a post-mortem. Tensions rise, maybe heads roll; but is there always an investigation as to what went wrong and why? This is followed by a service recovery programme designed to restore standards and, hopefully, introduce systems which will reduce or remove chances of the same mistake being made twice. What I do not see as frequently is the celebration of success when things go well; when goals are achieved; and when visions become reality. Celebrating success is just as important as finding out why things go wrong.

A good leader recognises the importance of celebrating success and perceives it as an intrinsic part of the team's accomplishment, ensuring that it is done with all the energy and enthusiasm necessary in order for the team to feel recognised and praised for its endeavours. At regular intervals the leader should:

•Look for opportunities to give praise;

•Be objective when providing feedback;

•Measure performance against set targets;

•Enjoy the success of the team; Continue to motivate the team towards existing or new levels of performance.

Within the confines of this article it's impossible to provide a detailed treatment of

the subject. However, this may provide the reader with some ideas for consideration when reviewing the process of building a successful team. I wish you success. Courtesy: Casino World