

TEAMWORK and TEAM TRUST – the key to WINNING

Is there such thing as The Three Musketeers team mantra of *All for One, and One for all*? Can it really exist in organizations today? Is there any such thing as team work, or as Tom Peters suggests, are teams a bunch of quirky individuals who typically rub each other up the wrong way, but through good leadership, know how to be their peculiar selves and how to win together.

The idea of team work is in effect a contradiction of a society grounded in individual achievement – through most of school and life it's about working and winning alone; winning a place at college, winning a job and so on. Once in a job, people are asked to work in teams to achieve shared goals, they talk about shared ownership, responsibility and trust. For many this is an alien practice and young people are thrown into teams with a boss or manager with whom they may have no rapport or trust, yet they are expected to develop it, no matter what. This may be their first sense of 'team', working with a group of people from a variety of cultures, ages and backgrounds with a variety of needs and values. A team invariably needs a variety of different skills and ideas, and yet it is often the necessary differences that lead to conflict, mistrust, personality clashes and poor performance. The ingredients to a creative and successful team, are also the ingredients to conflict.

Within a team, people will define winning in a variety of reasons from winning together, winning at all costs and the key to winning is in detailed planning. We know from experience that some people in business want to win more than others, and that the word win has many different meanings and value, and that shared responsibility is fine until something goes wrong and then it's someone's fault.

My Uncle's expression, used to be 'All for me and Sod the rest' as he built his business out of the end of the Second World War in Bristol, thieving rotten vegetables from the docks and bare knuckle boxing at the age of 14 to earn money to feed the family, including his little brother, my father. Times were different then, but the attitude remains in some part in many businesses when it comes to prospects, promotions, a car parking slot or a nod of approval from the Big Boss.

So who can you trust in business today and who are the winners and losers in today's highly competitive environment. According to Stephen

Covey, Trust is the glue that holds teams together, without it productivity will suffer. Surveys tell us that some 60% - though there is some evidence to say this figure could be as high as 88% - of performance issues are to be found in people issues, such as a lack of trust, soft skills, rapport and appreciation. As Robert Bales says that poor teamwork can prevent effective final performance. And it can also prevent team members from gaining satisfaction in being a member of the organization.

So it seems that without team work and team spirit, everyone loses, but with teamwork there is significant chance that team members can win – or enjoy success – in ways that matter to them. The needs of the team are best met when we meet the needs of individuals, and when people have their needs met, and have a greater sense of self worth and engagement they achieve seemingly impossible. This still means that some people will win a little more than others, but at least through team work we can all have a chance to win, and its core values such as trust and leadership that make it work.

Whilst the Three Musketeers mission statement might be a little naïve, in the 21st Century, the value of their ability to work together to achieve success is, if anything, even more laudible. In the words of Robert Yates, 'It is amazing what can be accomplished when nobody cares about who gets the credit.'

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