



## High Energy Teams

These teams work because they focus on and implement issues such as:

- Continuous improvement
- Suggestions
- Outside catalysts
- Support initiatives
- Risk taking
- Learning from failure & others
- Bias towards action
- Support innovation
- Conflict management
- Functional relations
- Monitoring projects
- Creative meetings
- Pride in achievement
- Efficiency
- Respect for individual
- Respect for intellect
- Management – employee closeness
- Tolerance for the unconventional

## Editor's Note...

There are many definitions of teamwork out there, my personal favourite is:

**Together Everyone Achieves More!**

This definition highlights the three characteristics of teamwork that make it so valuable to organizational success: first, the concept of cooperation, second, the focus on increased performance and third, building and expanding on individual abilities and performance.

This issue of e-HR Trends brings you two articles that focus on key issues related to teamwork. Specifically, the first focuses on the importance of creating a sense of togetherness and the other highlights some of the myths related to team formation, conflict within teams and the need to surrender individualism for the sake of team success. We have also touched on the readiness of a group to become a team and the issues that high energy teams successfully cope with on a daily basis in order to achieve their goals.

In putting together this issue we were reminded once again that the success of a team starts and ends with the leader's ability to effectively put the team through the team development process and to keep levels of cohesion high. It is a never ending process that first and foremost requires focused, inspired and participative leadership.

# TEAMWORK

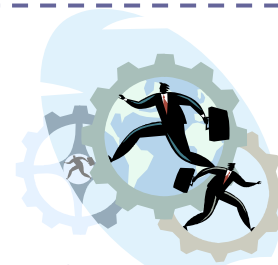
Publications Committee - Editor: Chris Mathas

## INDIVIDUALISM vs. TEAMWORK

An article written by Tim Bryce; summary by Kiki Kalli

If teamwork is to succeed in the workplace, it has to be embedded in the corporate culture, with everyone working in cooperation towards common objectives. This involves teaching people to be disciplined at the place of work, conforming to rules and working together. In countries such as the USA, freedom and individualism are prevalent, starting from schools where kids are allowed to wear whatever they want. This makes the teaching of teamwork challenging! In comparison, in countries like Japan which enforce the school uniform and discipline students to clean up their lunch, students are taught the value of cooperation very early on in their lives. So, in order for true teamwork to happen in the workplace managers must:

1. **Articulate goals**, give direction and lead so that the team can follow. What's important is for the leader to instill confidence and trust in him or herself.
2. **Institute uniform operating practices** such as operating work hours and dress code to which everyone will be expected to conform. The writer also suggests downplaying job titles and emphasizing work assignments instead as titles can disrupt equality.
3. **Establish standard work execution practices** which improve communication and provide worker interchangeability.
4. **Ensure clarity of roles and responsibilities** and that each person understands their assignments and their importance as nobody likes to be regarded as the weakest link. Communicate the importance of the team members' work and balance their workload carefully. Not everyone is a star and there will be weaker performers but teamwork is a group effort and those team members will either have to be replaced or supported (via coaching or training) to pull through.
5. **Check progress on a routine basis.** The leader must be aware of his/her team's strengths and weaknesses so keep a record of them, for your eyes only.



## Game Day!

A story that demonstrates the eternal value of individual presence to team success!

In my younger days, I was a very avid and competitive baseball player. When I was probably 25-26 years old I played in a tournament against a team from a nearby town. On their team was a player who was 44-45 years old. He played the game the way it was meant to be played. He slid headfirst into bases, crashed into the wall chasing fly balls, and generally hustled more than any other player on the team.

I knew this player in a casual way so I went up to him and said: "Mike, you really came to play today!"

I will never forget his response – "**Everybody here came to play. I came to win!**"

I think that there is much to be learned from this short exchange.

Contributed by: Jeff Davey,  
Illinois, Bits & Pieces.

## Is your team ready for team building?

Positive answers to these statements indicate readiness for teambuilding:

- All members of the team feel the need to invest time in building a team.
- Sufficient funds are available to pay for facilitators and workshops.
- The team leader is willing to be open to the process.
- All team members are willing to be open to the process.
- Team members have been trained in interpersonal skills.
- The team leader is respected by team members.
- The team have tasks that require cooperation between members.
- A trained facilitator is available.
- The team meets together often.
- Top management supports team building.
- The work of the team is important to the organization.

Source: M. Woodcock & D. Francis, Gower

## INDIVIDUALISM vs. TEAMWORK (continued)

An article written by Tim Bryce; summary by Kiki Kalli

6. **Look for harmony in your team.** Conflict is sometimes inevitable in working relationships so you may need to referee such conflicts and decide how to handle them so as to avoid arguments on your team.

7. **Assist in the formation of camaraderie** amongst the team by giving them time to meet and discuss team issues. This helps everyone to be in tune with common goals, the team's general progress and problems it may face while also allowing them to socialize and bond.

8. **Reward on a team basis.** You can recognize individual achievement but a balance has to be in place when rewarding on an individual basis.

Source: M. Bryce & Associates

## MYTHS RELATED TO TEAMWORK

An article written by Rick Brenner; summary by Chris Mathas

This is a summary of a series of articles in which the author highlights and then subsequently dispels some of the most common myths related to important aspects of teamwork such as team formation, conflict within teams and the need to surrender the self to the team.

**MYTH: There's no "I" in team** – this implies that team members can support team goals only if they abandon their individual goals. Although team performance is not the sum of individual performance, it does arise, from individual performance. Most performance management systems emphasize individual performance.

**MYTH: The inherent need of humans to be individuals limits team effectiveness.** Precisely how does human individuality limit team effectiveness? There are countless examples of teams of people with complementary skills, offering each other mutual support.



### MYTH: Team cohesion results from personal chemistry

This belief conveniently exonerates everyone and everything else, including policy, customers, layoffs, culture and management. In a misguided effort to form high performance teams, we sometimes staff teams according to personal chemistry rather than knowledge, skill or capability. When team members believe that chemistry drives cohesion, destructive conflicts erupt because members believe that these differences are driven by personal agendas.

**MYTH: Conflict undermines performance.** Many believe that conflict is destructive, that disagreements always threaten team goals, and that those who disagree aren't *team players*. If disagreement is disallowed, how can we ever perfect group decisions? Constructive conflict is essential to high performance.

**MYTH: There is an optimal size for all teams.** An optimal team size *range* probably does exist which is dependent on other factors rather than a universal rule of thumb. Therefore when sizing a new team, be guided by the nature of the task, the character of the organization and the particular people who lead and belong to the team.

**MYTH: Team building is worthwhile only at the beginning.** Although team building is an essential aspect at the stage of team formation, maintaining team cohesion is an ongoing process whose need increases with the frequency of changes in aspects such as team composition, geographic dispersion, increases in stress, resources and constraints imposed from external sources.

Source: <http://www.chacocanyon.com>

“Never underestimate the ability of your employees to exceed your expectations”

D. NEWBERRY  
Businessman

“Let each of us work to build organizations where everyone can make a contribution... where everyone counts... organizations which will continue to change the world.”

E. DOLE, Politician



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