HIGH PERFORMANCE TEAMS

All managers want to maximise the performance of their teams, but many contradictory methods of achieving this exist. Ultimately, the challenge is to focus, motivate and challenge your employees in order for them to perform at the highest level and hence the organisation succeeds in maximising available resources. Katzenbach and Smith (1993) investigated the driving forces behind the highest performing teams, concluding that high-performing teams operate in a very different way to less successful ones and their outputs are far higher than the sum of their parts. Using this research, along with other sources, we have developed what we believe to be the 10 key factors in building a high-performing team.

1. Learn from past experiences – It is unrealistic to expect your team to perform at the highest level from the off-set. Therefore, the team must learn as it experiences success and failures to continue to improve. Failures may come across as setbacks, in terms of the team's progress, but they are often also the best opportunities to learn.

2. Results driven – High-performing teams, by definition, deliver results. Therefore, it is important for them to always focus on what they are trying to achieve. Whatever part of the task is being done, the individual should always be aware of the end result. These results can then be assessing against the aims of the project.

3. Support and recognition – It is not enough to set a team a task and expect them to get on with it. Even the highest performing teams require support throughout the project and recognition of their success at the end of it. Support can come in the form of skill development, motivation and finance and recognition in the form of financial reward or career progression.

4. Identify individual strengths – Aligning individual tasks to the skill-sets of your team members is essential in maximising team performance. Often tasks are distributed based on team member status, rather than skills, leading to inefficient performance.

5. Accountability – Ensuring team members are aware of their individual responsibilities is key to maximising performance. It aligns every individual's work to the overall goal of the team and also acts as a tool to assess what went well and what did not. Individual's that feel accountable for their work are more likely to be motivated and produce high quality work.

6. Creating a collaborative climate – This allows individual's to utilise their teammates' strengths and experience to maximise their own performance. An environment where team members feel free to ask for help and express their own opinions benefits everyone.

7. Development Opportunities - Understanding that team members, however well they are performing, can always improve is crucial for continued success. Opportunities should be given to individuals to keep expanding their skill-set.

8. Collaborate with other departments – The importance of other departments in contributing to team performance is often underestimated. Knowledge, resources and even

finance can often be brought in from other departments, even if the project is outside their expertise.

9. Leadership – Strong leaders are required to direct the team internally and externally. It is not enough to simply have a strong leader directing individuals below them, all members of the team must demonstrate certain leadership skills.

10. Empower team member – There are a variety of different ways to empower team members, and different individuals react differently to different methods. Regardless of what method you choose, team members should feel empowered throughout the process.

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