

Do You Know the 6 Keys to a Winning Team? (Part 2)

By Neal Gray, Business Coach, *Action International*

Last month we discussed that there are all shapes and sizes of teams from sports to business, but no matter what kind of team you have and no matter what arena your team plays in, there are 6 keys that are critical to creating a winning team. These six are not the only factors, but if these aren't in place then the other factors will have little long-term meaning in your team's success.

We discussed the first 3 last time. They are Strong Leadership, Common Goal, and Rules of the Game. This month let's look at the final 3 keys to a winning team.

Action Plan – This key is essential to making it clear to everyone about who is responsible for what by when. Initially this plan is very high level and may only describe which areas of the business are responsible for getting broad areas of work done by certain deadlines. Each area must then continue to create more detailed action plans with a person's name next to every task that needs to be done. If these types of plans are not done, individuals will not know for sure whether they or someone else is responsible for a task's completion. When this happens, tasks will get forgotten or dropped because everyone thought someone else was doing it. Along with the Plan, there needs to be a positional contract for every position in the company from CEO and President all the way to the most simple basic positions in the business. There is no role in the company that is too important or too small to have a positional contract. A positional contract basically states all the task and results standards that are expected of an individual in a position as well as the Key Performance Indicators that will be used to determine if the individual is performing to the standards. The individual taking on the position signs the positional contract to indicate that they know, understand and agree to perform the specifics of the position and the immediate supervisor signs it to say that they know, understand and agree to manage the individual to the standards stated.

Allow Risk Taking – This doesn't mean off the deep end, jump over the cliff type risks. It does mean giving team members the freedom to be innovative and think outside the box when it comes to delivering your products and services. Understand that when team members are given this freedom, they will occasionally make mistakes. There are three rules to making mistakes. First, always do everything possible to minimize the negative results of a mistake. Second, learn from the mistake and do better the next time. Third, always share what you did and the outcome with others so that they may learn from your mistake and can possibly avoid the same one in the future. If you do not allow some risk taking, you will doom your team to mediocrity and slow death, because growth of a business only happens by taking small, calculated risks and learning from them.

100% Involvement and Inclusion – Everyone on the team needs to be included in what is going on. Get feedback and ask for ideas from your team on a regular basis. This doesn't mean you always have to use all the ideas (although you should use many of them) but a team will commit more strongly to the success of an idea if it comes from them sometimes and not just from management. Don't keep team members in the dark on what is going on. They can sense they are being left out and it will dig away at the morale of the team when they think things are being kept hidden. There will be times for legal or confidentiality reasons that everything can't be shared, but don't be a manager who keeps things from the team because you can or because you are afraid to let others know as much as you. I've seen managers who fear that they are worth less when their team knows more, when in fact most teams will be more loyal and committed to a manager who is open and honest with the team. Another factor in this key is having some rituals that the team does. For example, a sports team has everyone put their hands into the middle of a circle and yell a favorite phrase before they break and go out and play the game. Or a business team that does a simple 5 step stretch routine every time they get ready to start a meeting. Or

business teams that do a WIFLE at the start or end of every meeting. (If you don't know what a WIFLE is, please call me or ask me the next time you see me and I will tell you about this powerful team communication technique.)

Hopefully you have a better understanding of why these six keys are important to having a winning team. Remember they are Strong Leadership, Common Goal, Rules of the Game, Action Plan, Allow Risk Taking, and 100% Involvement and Inclusion.

If you would like to discuss this topic or other critical business development issues, contact Neal at 513-939-2145 or via e-mail at nealgray@action-international.com.