

How to get your team working effectively

Most managers will never find themselves in a position to hand pick their team members - they will inherit their team and occasionally add to it. In order to be successful, teams need to quickly get along, work together and support the common objectives of the group. How the individuals engage as a team will determine how they respond to problems and obstacles, react to changing circumstances, and ultimately how they get the job done.

These three essential elements will provide the best opportunity to ensure effective team work:

Establish clear team values, goals and objectives

Context is everything. If all team members understand the team goal and the standards and values they are expected to demonstrate, they will be more likely to work as a cohesive team. Talk to the team about progress so that they have a sense of their success and understand the challenges ahead. Address teamwork regularly. You can discuss:

- What are the standards of success for our team performance
- What progress has been made and what are the next milestones?
- What do we really care about in performing our jobs – what are the key drivers? Is it time, profit, budget, quality, service etc?
- What actions can we take to live up to our stated values?

Set individual goals and evaluate performance. Use SMART objectives to make sure that every team member knows the actions they are responsible for, the deadlines involved and how success will be measured.

Communicate, communicate and communicate

Find ways to keep communication channels open with the team and become a facilitator of communication. While emails, memos, work procedures etc are useful and valuable as reference material, there is no substitute for getting people together (physically or virtually). It will allow the team to knit together better, provide clarity on issues that may have caused confusion, promotes problem solving and sharing of ideas.

Facilitating communication means setting an example by remaining open to suggestions and concerns, by asking questions and offering help, and by doing everything you can to avoid confusion in your own communication.

Build and encourage trust, openness and cooperation throughout the team

In order to have any kind of functional team, you need to make sure that the doors are open, every member on the team needs to understand that they are all contributors and everyone's ideas are valuable. Each team member's actions will have an impact on the end result of the objective. If you

find people on the team not listening to others or trying to force their ideas and opinions on the rest of the team, then take step to address this quickly. If it goes unchecked, then you may well miss out on the most creative ideas as they are stifled before getting a fair hearing.

Open the doors, listen to the entire team, not just the one or two people who are the loudest. Teams thrive in an open environment as long as there is structure and they have a leader who is clearly interested and vested in working with the team members.

Encourage sharing of information and delegate problem resolution to the team members to maintain their interest and personal investment in the team's success. Ownership of issues and resolutions at this level encourages responsibility and accountability across the team and will help keep the team members motivated.

Want to know more?

For more advice about how to get the best from your team, on setting objectives, on ways to use psychometrics to measure team dynamics and on team building activities, then please call Julia or Angela on 01768 753001 or email info@peopledecisions.co.uk