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COACHING ORGANIZATIONS FOR BREAKTHROUGH PERFORMANCE

Teambuilding Events Don't Work

Have you ever attended a teambuilding event only to return to work and encounter the same team issues that existed prior to the event? So, why didn't the experience and bonding from the event stick? Why did it have an impact while you were there but little or no residual effect?

Were the participants not committed? Were the event activities lackluster? Was it just *"too little, too late"* for your team? The answer to all of these could be 'yes.' More likely, though, it's because **teambuilding events don't work.**

Now, don't get me wrong. I think teambuilding events are great and can be a powerful step towards greater team effectiveness. They are not, however, a silver bullet or magic solution. Building a team is a **process** not an **event**.

Are you looking for a one-day silver bullet or are you willing to look deeper at long-term solutions for the challenges your team is facing? If the latter is true, then keep reading.

When I get requests to facilitate a teambuilding event, I begin the process by asking questions.

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Is Your Team Motivated
And Effective?

More Than "Managing" During Change

Change management is a hot topic. There are change management consultants, change management systems and coaches who help people handle change. With all of that expertise available, it can still feel like we are just barely managing during change. In some cases, those feelings are exactly right.

Recently, I conducted a workshop within a worldwide organization. The folks in this organization had been put through an endless roller coaster of change in a brief period. The top leader had changed more than once, vice presidents and director level leaders had changed multiple times. The direction of the organization had changed 180 degrees and then completely reversed within two years. Even the target market and preferred customers were constantly shifting. These folks had experienced change overload. Change overload occurs when employees spend 30% or more of their time on change related tasks. I imagine this company was way over that 30% mark.

Surprisingly, the groups treasured their organization, and were amazingly committed. They desperately wanted to succeed. Until our workshop, they didn't realize they had already won several key battles. The first battle of any change situation is harnessing a desire to succeed. These folks still were committed to success even after being spun around on a *"tilt o wheel"* of organizational change. They had the drive to move forward, the first big win!

The second big win was their sincere appreciation for their staff and a keen interest in supporting staff needs. Most organizations spend time planning for system changes and little or no time planning for the impact of change on people.

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Here are some questions you can ask yourself to begin the **process** of teambuilding.

- ✓ What do the words "teambuilding" and "teamwork" mean to you and in your organization? Teamwork is one of those innocuous terms that mean very different things to different people. Sometimes performance management issues are confused with a general lack of teamwork and teambuilding will not usually help you solve individual performance management issues.
- ✓ What are the current challenges that the group is experiencing?
- ✓ What is the source of these challenges, and are they truly teamwork issues?
- ✓ What are the environmental factors that may be contributing to the team's current situation (company culture, dept. culture, the management and leadership style for the team, etc.)?
- ✓ What behaviors constitute teamwork for you or your organization?
- ✓ What are the specific behaviors that you want to see displayed?
- ✓ How will you know the teambuilding was effective?



A day or two of teambuilding is a great START and can definitely give the team a *kick "in the rubber parts."* Teambuilding exercises get people thinking about the other individuals in the team and their strengths and weaknesses, they can build more cohesiveness and trust in a relatively short period of time and they can help individuals to consider what behaviors are most effective for optimum team performance.

Recently I facilitated a teambuilding event that utilized the DISC Behavioral Assessment to help participants understand, appreciate and begin to work better with the different styles in the team. One of the participants said, *"This is all well and good, but how do we keep what we've learned here going? How do we keep ourselves from slipping back into the same behavior?"*

Continued on next column –

I gave a hearty 'AMEN, sister'! This person was seeking a **process**, not an **event**.

If you really want to create a highly effective and performing team you must consider a long-term teambuilding plan. Teams aren't just created over night or via a one or two-day offsite event.

Here are 5 ways to **"keep the music playing"** after a teambuilding event:

1. **Continue the conversation.** Plan follow-up events, discussions, reports or meetings and consider these part of the teambuilding event.
2. **Keep it regular.** Make room for regular, ongoing teambuilding in team meetings, along with your other business agenda items. As a leader, rotate responsibility to other team members to facilitate the teambuilding activity and increase *"buy-in."*
3. **Commit to it in writing.** With the team, create a Team Charter outlining the appropriate behaviors the team will engage in and post it during meetings or in the teams' work area.
4. **Train the team.** Hold periodic skill development training on topics that impact team effectiveness like conflict management, peer accountability, project management or receiving and delivering feedback. Issues like these have a direct impact on a teams' effectiveness.
5. **Special events.** As long as you're also committed to an ongoing teambuilding **process**, special **events** are a great way to give the team a *"booster shot"* and sends the message to team members that what is accomplished is as important as how it's accomplished. These don't have to be full days, and they don't have to be focused only on teambuilding. Teambuilding can be mixed in with other agenda items to create a balanced and valuable team development event.



By approaching teambuilding as a process, not an event, you will achieve more lasting change that will have a greater impact on your teams' effectiveness and ability to produce results.

– Reprint permission granted by author Bill Burtch, SPHR.

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These mid-level managers did not have the authority to stop the roller coaster, but they had a sincere desire to minimize any unnecessary damage. They had a vital quality for leaders in change, a genuine concern for people.

The third victory was their realistic yet hopeful attitude. There was no pretending that the environment was easy. They had a no-nonsense understanding of their pain and the pain of their staff. At the same time, they had a driving optimism and were confident that perseverance would bring success. An important attitude in change success is “*realistic optimism.*” Having a realistic but hopeful view during change is a potent yet practical motivator. These folks were already there.

Finally, they had adopted a powerful change leadership attitude. These managers understood the power of their influence. Instead of whining about what “*the leadership*” should do, they pumped me for information on how they could lead their staff through the mess. They were true change leaders. Change leaders create positive influence at all levels in the organization.

This group had achieved key victories even before I reached them. It *felt* like they were just “*managing.*” In reality, they were a long way toward success. I tried my best to bring some first aid to these embattled change warriors. During our time together they learned additional skills for the final push forward. Equally important, we celebrated their success in “*managing*” the turmoil of the last years.



Change is not easy. Dramatic and repeated changes are especially challenging. When you think that you are barely managing, take stock. You may be doing much better than you realize. Are you committed to success and moving forward? Are you caring for your team and minimizing their disruption as much as possible? Are you being a positive leader from your position in the company? Do you have realistic optimism about the future? If so, pat yourself on the back! You are doing much more than just managing. You are well on your way to succeeding. Keep going and add more skills to assure the win. Finally, celebrate every success! It will help you and your team feel better and creates energy to drive forward to change victory.

Barbara A. Kay, Co-author – *The Top Performer’s Guide to Change*. Copyright protected

Change does not necessarily assure progress, but progress implacably requires change. Education is essential to change, for education creates both new wants and the ability to satisfy them.

– Henry Steele Commager

It's not so much that we're afraid of change or so in love with the old ways, but it's that place in between that we fear . . . It's like being between trapezes. It's Linus when his blanket is in the dryer. There's nothing to hold on to.

– Marilyn Ferguson



ONE MINUTE IDEAS

Global Incident Map

This free public service web site was created to give the public law enforcement, military, government, and individuals a new way to visualize and become instantly aware of terrorism and security incidents around the world.

It was created by the publisher of TerrorisWarning.com with inspiration garnered from RSOE Havaria Information Service, the federal map systems used by FEMA, and other types of incident maps.

GlobalIncidentMap.com and its publishers do NOT receive any funding from any foreign or domestic government entities, nor any special interest, religious or political groups.

Check it out at:

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What one thing should our team do to produce a measurable impact on our business?

Renew your focus before you change your actions. Most teams fall short of potential to produce desired results until everyone is “*on the same page.*” To gain clarity of action you need improved clarity of purpose, so begin with strategic thinking and business planning – even if your organization already has a plan. There is no better “*teambuilding*” process that will produce desired impact. Does your team share the same goals, as well as understand individual roles? Really? How do you know?

Become a strategic thinking and execution team. Developing an executable plan that focuses collective actions to produce desired results requires more than just an annual one-day “*retreat.*” In effect, many businesses *do strategic planning* without any sustainable benefit other than a dusty document and to say “*we did it.*” That is not what we suggest. The objective of planning is the establishment of an *ongoing planning process as a routine part of teamwork* in order to achieve substantially improved performance for the short term and the long term.



Re-engage your purposeful thinking, planning and action. Involve an experienced coach who understands business and behavioral change. Such a person will ask questions that take you from where you are to where you and your team really want to be.

– Mark Sturgell, Performance Development Network. Copyright protected. All rights reserved worldwide



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