

Karen Mathews & Associates Newsletter

Team Building

February 2007

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Welcome to our February newsletter. In keeping with the spirit of Valentine's Day - that is of human connection, the theme of this month's article on Intentional Leadership is team building through building relationships. I wish you a very happy Valentine's Day.

"People, even more than things, have to be restored, renewed, revived, reclaimed, and redeemed; never throw out anyone."

- Audrey Hepburn

Your Tips are Welcomed!

Do you have a tip to share regarding intention and/or leadership? If so please send it to us and we'll publish one per month.

• **Team Building - (Read Time: 4 minutes)**

When you get down to the very basis of how work gets done, it's always through relationships or at a minimum through connections between people. Whether it's on the phone, email or face to face, we depend on interactions to make work happen. In working within a team we depend on interactions with our team mates to an even greater degree. Team building is really about relationship and trust building. Everyone knows that the quarterback cannot win the game by himself.

Some of the behaviors of a truly effective team leader and members are that they communicate well, have a high degree of trust and loyalty to the team, are accountable, deal honestly with the thorny problems facing them as well as leverage synergies and advantages. They demonstrate through their interactions that they are respectful colleagues, not necessarily friends, who work together earnestly with the same goals and objectives.

demonstrates this level of trust and efficiency? The first phase in the team building process is connecting all team members to each other and developing relationships, providing that an organizational structure is in place to ensure that everyone understands the expectations of their behaviors. This process starts with the highest ranking leader of the organization intentionally modeling and promoting trust building behaviors by holding employees accountable and providing compensation for acceptable behaviors.

It is critical to the trust building process to have human interaction so to understand more fully the other members' perspectives. This is especially important with virtual teams, where members connect electronically. It is vital that there is some getting to know each other's time set aside. In the beginning, during the team forming phase and depending on the personality types of the team members, a deliberate emphasis may be required by the Team Lead to ensure this connection is more than a cursory good morning let's get down to business. This is not about becoming great friends; however, it is a first step in trust building and ultimately creating safety in the group.

Additional effort to assist in the connecting phase is likely needed for those whose preferred style is to work alone or who are uncomfortable in social settings, as well as those who are remotely located and cannot meet in person. Ideally, team members who are meeting electronically, whenever feasible, should meet in person at the outset of the team formation and should continue to meet in person periodically.

One effective approach is to begin simply by sharing personal information with another. This can be done safely in pairs and on topics that are fairly harmless, but informative. One that I like to use is to give half of a meeting time to getting to know each other. Have the group pair up and interview each other on a list of questions that is handed out and have the interviewer take note of remarkable and unusual responses. Give each interviewer 3 minutes each, and then change partners until everyone has interviewed each other. Then share the unusual or surprise answers with the large group. This is great as an ice breaker and is fun even for teams that have been together for a while but who have not yet not connected.

When team members are connected to each other it promotes a sense of inclusion in the group and begins to build trust. The next important step in relationship

building is for the team members to come to agreement about how to interact and work together as a group. Setting up ground rules that are mutually agreed upon by the team create a structure for how the team will work together and is extremely effective at helping accomplish the teaming process.

Stay tuned, next month we will be exploring team problem-solving strategies.

Want to know more about team building or leading a team? Call us to schedule a free consultation on your teaming challenges at 408-988-2361. We have more than 20 years of experience with team building and provide resources from Executive Coaching to a 1.5 hour mini-workshop to a 3 day off- site retreat. We guarantee that you will get the results you want.

Thank you for reading and I hope you enjoyed this newsletter. Please feel free to pass it onto your friends and colleagues. We never intend to spam anyone, if you would like to opt out please click on "SafeUnsubscribe" at the bottom of the page.

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• Team Problem-Solving Tip (Read Time: 1 minute)

Experiment with intentional influence to have more productive meetings and build trust within the team. Some suggestions are to intend to:

- Make everyone and every opinion count.
- Avoid finger pointing and blame.
- Uncover and write down the assumptions the team members are holding about the problem.
- Spend time on uncovering the root cause because it will lead to a better solution.
- Decide what outcome the team wants to achieve.
- Avoid the impulse for a quick fix because it will likely only provide a "band-aid".
- Don't be afraid of disagreements when discussing solutions since they will lead to compromise and a far better solution.
- Avoid group think by having a team of diverse thinkers. An effective team has different personality types that provide different thinking.

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