

Are YOU a part of a TEAM?: Team Building Basics

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In the office or in other places of work, the term "**team building**" or "**teambuilding**" is becoming a regular workplace term. What does it really mean? How can teambuilding benefit a "team?" One may think, "We do not need teambuilding, after all, we are already doing great." Right? Perhaps, everybody has been working together for quite some time, or maybe, some members are new to the "team."

Consider this: Even though you may be a part of a group of people working for the same company, you may not be a part of a "team" at all. **Try this:** Ask yourself the questions, "Is my 'team' maximizing productivity and efficiency?--Really?" Are you and your co-workers completing tasks at the quickest rate possible and as effectively as possible? Is there always SIGNIFICANT room for improvement?

Many scholars agree that a true team consists of the following: 1) Two or more individuals; 2) a common goal or goals; and 3) the necessary resources of: Time; materials; and space. Your "team" may seem like it has each of those qualities, but does it? Many "teams" are not really teams, because everybody is doing their own thing, and truly **NOT working cohesively** toward a common goal at all. If this is the case, then the "team" you belong to, may not be a team at all, but a "*working-group*." Believe me, there is nothing wrong with that, but wouldn't you rather be a part of a high-performance team?

According to many team building experts, there are four stages that must take place in order for a team to become a "*high-performing team*." Those **four stages of team building include: forming, storming, norming,** and **performing.** **Forming** is the earliest stage in the creation of team. In this stage people are getting to know each other by name and a number of of their basic abilities. In the second stage, or **storming stage**, the "*honeymoon*" is over; and people within the developing-team are generally trying to prove themselves and their abilities; while at the same time--establish a position for themselves. In the **norming stage** during the development of a team; most-everything is well-established as far as where each individual fits into roles and responsibilities. Everything is working beautifully and the team is a full-fledge team--without question. The final stage of team building is the **performing stage**. In this last stage, the team is unquestionably a high-performing team and is accomplishing job-tasks effectively and efficiently.

High-performance teams are formed at the quickest rate when a charter is developed. A charter is a formal written document that describes each member's role, tasks and responsibilities. Often a timeline and a description of decision-making processes can be included within the charter. The charter is usually signed by each member, once any details and questions have been worked out. Members of a high-performance team typically are cross-trained to do multiple functions within the team to accomplish each goal most-efficiently and effectively as described within the charter.

Team building is really a natural phenomenon. Groups of people get together in work-related situations in order to accomplish change in the form of a goal or goals. If the group is comprised of the ideal amount of people who possess the correct knowledge, attitudes, talents, skills and abilities to accomplish the necessary tasks--chances are very strong that a high-performance team will emerge. If the wrong people, who do not possess the correct attitudes, knowledge, talents, skills and abilities, are **minimally NOT** a part of the working-group, then it will be much more difficult for a true high-performance team to form.

Team building activities are any activities that help groups of people build trust in each other, as well as develop necessary skills, knowledge, and abilities in order to accomplish common goals. Quite often it is a good idea for organizations to hire outside teambuilding experts to aid working-groups in building trust and help each member see their own individual abilities, as well as the talents and abilities of their co-workers.

Bottom-line: Most people believe they are a part of a "team," but are actually only a part of a working-group with opportunities to enhance the ability to accomplish goals more efficiently and effectively with the aid of valuable team building training from outside experts. ■