

Recipe for Highly Effective Teams

by Terry "TJ" Wisner

All too often, companies waste their hard earned profits on team building efforts that result in little, or no, improvement in performance. If the only results the leadership wants to see are to have fun and spend some cash, then that is perfectly fine. However, if the leadership desires highly effective teams, then they will need to follow the recipe for teamwork.

As with most recipes, it is recommended you adhere to each step at first. After getting some experience, it will be safe to adjust ingredients to the team's personal taste.

Step 1: Pre-condition the environment for the changes in team operating principles. It is important that the environment is set just right, or the team will not reach its optimal performance. This collection of people will, from this point forward, be known as a team. The team will be expected to accomplish certain things and achieve specified results. The environment, also known as a culture, should be generously and evenly coated with leadership. The leader must set the tone for a collaborative and cooperative culture. Although there have been cases where highly effective teams exist in an environment with the boss rules with fear and intimidation, it is very rare.

Step 2: Add equal and significant amounts of Mission and Values to the organization and each individual person on the team. It is widely known, that people cannot operate effectively if they don't know where they are going. The more people understand the mission, the more likely they are to be effective. The more they believe and live by the values, the more likely they are to be engaged. Add a good dose of understanding individual roles and responsibilities. Team members must be aware of how everything they do supports the mission and how they are expected to relate to others. People on poor performing teams often do not understand how their efforts affect the overall mission. Every individual on the team must have their own goals. They must have one or two primary and several secondary goals. When they achieve these goals, the mission will be accomplished. The individual goals should come from the person and not the boss. They can and should work together on identifying the goal, but the individual must make a personal commitment to attaining the goal. This commitment to performance will only come about, if the individual believes the changes are important to them personally.

Step 3: Now fold in a clearly defined operating process for team members to follow. Every successful team has established rules and guidelines for members to follow. These processes should include how team members should communicate internally and externally. They should tell members how they should resolve conflict and encourage each other. Problem solving mechanisms are also included in these processes. Effective operating processes also help build the "chemistry" among the team players. This chemistry comes from every team member having the just the right amount of attitude and engagement. An attitude of cooperation, collaboration, and compromise will go a long way in creating an effective team.

This is where a good deal of trust is folded into the mixture. Every team process is based on trust. Team members must trust the leader and each other. Team members cannot take individual credit for team accomplishments. As the old saying goes; there is no "I" in team. It is true however, that a team consists of a number of "I"ndividuals.

Step 4: Just a dash of attention must be given to the way team members interact with each other. They must respect and assist each other if the team is expected to excel. Team members and leaders must reinforce positive team behaviors and deal with team behavioral issues. Just the right blend of people, doing the right jobs, will make for great team results. A sprinkle of attention should be directed to how team members interact with others outside the team. All too often, a highly performing team can alienate outsiders and find their mission is compromised because of external factors. A team can never be more important than the overall company mission and objectives.

Step 5: Finally, sprinkle in rewards to taste. Rewards must be appropriate for the team and it is most effective if the entire team receives the reward. The fastest way to make a good team go bad, is to select one or two team members and recognize the team efforts through them. If everyone achieved their individual goals, then everyone should share accordingly. Ask the team members, they will tell you if it's fair. That is, if the environment is right in the first place.

The mix of these ingredients will make a high performance team. The secret is how to adjust the quantities of each and just the right blend for your company and group of individuals. Through years of experience with building high performance teams, Terry "TJ" Wisner, aka "Life Saver Dude" has developed an effective process to inspire leaders and teams to make the necessary changes to achieve higher levels of performance. Cook up the right recipe for highly effective teams and become more successful.

*Terry "TJ" Wisner, MBA, is the founder of **The CPO Institute** (a division of Partnering to Success, LLC), a Michigan-based company inspiring performance improvement that generates necessary change. TJ is a successful speaker, coach, and entrepreneur with over 30 years of experience training executives, small business owners and CEOs. He has worked with thousands of companies ranging from small to Fortune 50, and has helped tens of thousands of individuals enhance their performance in both their personal and professional lives. For more information about TJ Wisner & The CPO Institute please visit: www.byocpo.com*