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Teams That Play Together Stay Together

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Teams That Play Together Stay Together
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"You did what you knew how to do, and when you knew better, you did better"
–Maya Angelou

Introduction

Does your team sometimes seem more like a group than a team? Use our techniques, tips, and tricks to build trust and create a team that works well together. Learn how to foster increased communication, avoid common communication barriers, and build a strong team with clearly defined roles.

After attending this session, you will be able to:
- Identify the core differences between groups and teams
- Foster increased communication in your teams
- Avoid common communication barriers
- Build strong teams with clearly defined roles
- Build a sense of trust and optimism about addressing new challenges

Groups vs. Teams

Here we look at some key differences between groups and teams.

Groups	Teams
Members think they are grouped together for administrative purposes. Individuals work independently, sometimes at cross purposes with one another.	Members recognize their interdependence and understand both personal and team goals are best accomplished with mutual support.
Members tend to focus on themselves because they are not sufficiently involved in the planning of the organization's goals.	Members feel a sense of ownership because they are committed to goals they helped establish.
Members are told what to do rather than asked what the best approach would be. Suggestions are not encouraged.	Members collaborate to find effective solutions. Suggestions run rampant!
Members distrust the motives of co-workers because they do not understand the roles of the other members. Expressions of opinion or disagreement are considered non-supportive.	Members work in a climate of trust and are encouraged to openly express ideas, opinions, disagreements, and feelings. Questions are welcomed.
Members are so cautious about what they say that real understanding is not possible. Game-playing may occur, and communication traps may be set to catch the unwary.	Members practice open and honest communication. They make an effort to understand each others' point of view.

Members may receive good training but are limited in applying it to the job by the supervisor or other group members.	
Members find themselves in conflict situations that they do not know how to resolve. Their supervisor may put off intervention until serious damage is done.	Members realize conflict is inevitable and a normal aspect of human interaction. They see such situations as an opportunity for new ideas and creativity. They work to resolve conflict quickly and constructively.

How to Move the Team Forward

Intention is nothing. Perception is everything.

Communication Blockers	What Communication Encourages
Judging	Describing
Diminishing	Equality
Certainty	Accessibility
Domineering	Problem orientation
Manipulating	Sensitivity
Indifference	

Is communication closed on your team? Maybe you've heard these statements:

"Nobody will listen to my ideas, so why bother?"
"It wasn't my fault."
"It's not my job."
"That's not my problem."
"I don't have anything nice to say, so I won't say anything at all."

One way to open up communication is to encourage constructive disagreement. Here are some tips for that:

1. Share access to information and knowledge.
2. Encourage multiple points of view (involvement).
3. Treat members equally (courtesy and time).
4. Maintain open nonverbal communication (body language).
5. Listen without interrupting. (Shut up!)
6. Clarify what is said. Give and get feedback.
7. Focus on opportunity. Be solution-oriented.
8. Accept resolution without unanimous agreement.

Weed out the bad seeds. Start by pinpointing anti-team behaviors:

- Argumentative
- Disagrees with others
- Biased

- Always right
- Status-oriented
- Uncooperative
- Hoards knowledge

Light the fire of excellence under your team. Here are some things you can do:

- Develop a mini-contract of team rules and have them sign it.
- Choose your attitude, because it matters. 60,000 thoughts per day; 77% are negative
- Ask yourself, "Is my organization out of integrity with itself?"

Are members ready for new challenges? Some questions you can ask yourself:

- Have performance levels declined?
- Are employees completely competent in their jobs?
- Are there opportunities for advancement?
- Are there opportunities for personal or professional enrichment?
- Are there opportunities for job rotations or special assignments?
- Do you know your employees' individual goals and career objectives? Do they even have any?

Seek and get participation in the vision. 90% of what passes for commitment is really compliance. Be committed to the vision yourself. Ask for input and validate the team's contribution. Ask for the commitment.

Some key ways you can move your team forward are to link strategy and goals to foster commitment to the vision; develop common values; foster an environment of ownership; and provide a stabilizing influence during change and transition.

To move forward, you have to recognize when you're stuck, and why. Teams get stuck partly based on past patterns of success or failure. Success teaches us that there is only one way. Failures teach that there is no way. Existing systems, patterns, or ways of thinking limit possibilities.

The principal obstructing patterns are:

- Shutting off
- Labeling or analyzing
- Dominating
- Yes-butting
- Nay-saying

When the team is stuck, YOU NEED A LEADER WHO CAN FOCUS ON VISION! Are you that leader? If not, what is your lack of motivation? Listen for your own apathetic statements, and look out for ruts. Beware of dysfunction. Point it out.

Describe what is weighing you down. What challenges do you lack? Offer yourself choices and opportunities. Move outside your comfort zone. Find out who and what inspires you.

Eight Attributes of a Winning Team

1. Authentic participation
2. Open communication
3. Shared responsibility
4. Responsiveness
5. Innovation
6. Focus on client
7. Common purpose
8. Future orientation

15 Tips for Building a Great Team

Tip 1: Understand what team-building can do for your practice.

Teamwork and productivity go hand in hand. When you have a team, you can establish realistic, achievable goals. Problem-solving is more effective, and communication is open. You view conflict as normal. You maintain balance between group productivity and individual needs. Team members recognize the need for disciplined work habits and conform their behavior to meet group standards.

Tip 2: Honor your commitments.

There are two kinds of commitments: clear and vague. CLEAR COMMITMENTS are verbal and written promises that both sides understand (employment contracts, marriage, wage and bonuses). VAGUE COMMITMENTS are those cultural and social commitments that you are expected to just know and obey (certain behavior expected of men vs. women, employee vs. supervisor, child vs. adult).

If you have trouble with vague commitments, are the standards in line with your values? Is your personal expression more important to you than conforming? You may not be a good fit for that group.

Clear commitments are another story. It is imperative that you keep clear commitments to your team members. If you cannot keep a clear commitment, do not make it in the first place. If you do not honor your commitments to those who depend on you, the depth of their commitment to and loyalty to you will be very shallow.

Tip 3: Accept help graciously.

Are you trying to do too much?
Are you uncertain of your work priorities?
Do you need some help with time management?

Tip 4: Lead when a leader is needed.

It is confusing to hear that you will be a part of a team and that consensus will be the method of deciding things, and then be told that "leadership" is a high priority. It depends on your definition of leadership. Do you guide or do you dictate and run things?

Tip 5: Be a part of the solution.

"If you are not a part of the solution, you are part of the problem." This means that you arrive on time, be ready to work, listen to others' ideas, share your own ideas, and work on the priorities of the team.

Do you adjust your attitude when things are not how you would like them? You have some control over that. No excuses.

Tip 6: Admit your mistakes.

All people make mistakes. Don't be afraid. A team environment nurtures admission of error. Taking responsibility for an error is truly the first step in correcting it.

Learn to say, "I am sorry." Taking responsibility for a mistake is the first step. It allows the team to get past the error. Time is not lost finding fault and blame. If you cannot do this in your team, there are severe trust issues. Fix them!

Consider your apology style and how you think doing this will affect your team?

- Face to face or in writing?
- Private or group?
- Can you accept an apology?
- How do you accept an apology?

Tip 7: Take charge of morale.

When it comes to serving the public, you cannot afford a bad day.
How do you work to help with morale?
One bad apple…
Make allowances for strong team members.
Willingly offer some extra help.
Supervisors must act quickly.

Tip 8: Ask for additional training.

Four areas needed to contribute to team:

- Client service: policies, systems and procedures
- Team-building: working well/productively with others
- Communication and interpersonal skills
- Leadership skills

*If a practice spends 2% to 3% of its annual payroll on employee training, it should realize a 10% increase in net profit.

Tip 9: Share your expertise.

Why is this so important? You have freed yourself from having to be the only "go-to" person when something happens that requires this expertise. You have created your own back-up system. Your team as a whole becomes more valuable, more expert, and more fun to work
with because everyone shares a common knowledge base from which you can brainstorm and be creative.

Tip 10: Know your team's goals.

This is a great place to start: What are our goals? For example, "We will increase our net revenue by 10% over the next six months." Or, "By the end of the month, my group will all understand how to do an estimate for a TPLO."

What are your team's goals for the next six months? How were they selected? How do they reflect the hospital's mission statement? What is your role in achieving those goals? How can your team improve in its goal-setting process?

Tip 11: Build a climate for motivation.

People work for a variety of reasons, and good supervisors motivate all types of workers. Does everyone know what is expected and how it will be measured? Does your supervisor know each of the team members? Do you provide training to help team members achieve their goals? Does your supervisor guide and encourage personal growth? Does your supervisor recognize and encourage good behavior and reward it? Does s/he correct and eliminate problem behavior immediately?

Tip 12: Celebrate your success.

Take the time to celebrate your achievements. Everyone should know when goals have been met. What particularly difficult tasks is your team working on now? What would be an appropriate or satisfying celebration for the accomplishment?

Tip 13: Use "creative dissatisfaction."

PROBLEMS are the lifeblood of quality improvement. If everything were perfect, we would have no incentive to improve. Look for problems before a client complains, before the equipment breaks. Problems are a learning opportunity and a natural part of the improving process. Make problems into issues that are easily solved without placing blame. Let the team solve them, and ASAP.

Tip 14: STOP COMPLAINING!

Meetings are for problem-solving and brainstorming, not whining! Problems that can be fixed should be put on an agenda and worked on. How does your team handle complaining, inappropriate remarks, gossip, and time-wasting? Do you feel that the work of the team takes priority over individual complaints? How do you handle complaints beyond the control of the team?

Tip 15: Build one another up.

With practice, you can look for ways to compliment and encourage one another. Here's how that might sound:

"You did a great job on that case."
"I heard a client compliment you today."
"I could not have finished on time without your help."
"I appreciate your ideas."
"Thank you."

Identifying Key Roles in a Team

The Leader
- Finds new team members and develops the spirit of the team
- Excellent judge of the talents and personalities of the individual team
- Adept at finding ways to overcome weaknesses
- Is a first-class two-way communicator
- Good at inspiring and maintaining enthusiasm

The Critic
- Guardian and analyst of the team's long-term success
- Never satisfied with less than the best solution
- Expert at analyzing solutions to find the weaknesses
- Merciless in insisting that faults can be corrected
- Constructive in pointing out ways for remedies

The Implementer
- Ensures the momentum and smooth running of the team's actions
- A born time-tabler who thinks methodically
- Anticipates threatening delays in schedule in time for them to be prevented
- Has a can-do mentality and loves to fix things
- Able to rally support and overcome defeatism

External Contact
- Looks after the team's external relationships
- Diplomatic and a good judge of the needs of others
- Has a reassuring, authoritative presence
- Has an effective grasp of the overall picture of the team's work
- Discreet when handling confidential information

Coordinator
- Pulls together the work of the team as a whole into a cohesive plan
- Understands how difficult tasks inter-relate
- Has a strong sense of priorities
- Has a mind able to grasp several things at once
- Good at maintaining internal contacts
- Skilled at heading off potential trouble

Ideas Person
- Sustains and encourages the team's innovative vitality and energy
- Enthusiastic and lively, with a zest for new ideas
- Eager for and receptive to the ideas of others
- Sees problems as opportunities for successful innovation, rather than as disasters
- Never at a loss for a hopeful suggestion

Inspector

- Ensures that high standards are sought and maintained
- Strict and sometimes pedantic in enforcing rigorous standards within the team
- Good judge of the performance of other people
- Unhesitating in bringing problems to the surface
- Able to praise as well as find fault

The most essential feature of teamwork is trust. In fact, a team THRIVES on trust, so you must establish it early. Promote mutual trust through delegation, openness of conduct, and communication. Keep tasks to yourself only if you know that no one else can do them. Give team members freedom to make decisions. Encourage positive contributions from team members. Do not delegate any unnecessary work—scrap it.

When you are delegating, there are basically four main types of people:

- CAN DO / WILL DO: The ideal delegate; happy to accept full responsibility for a specific task and also happy to consult others and act on advice that is given.
- WILL DO / CAN'T DO: Initially the delegate may require encouragement and proper training to get the job done.
- CAN DO / WON'T DO: Reluctance to learn or accept other opinions may mean that an individual is simply not a team player and therefore not a strong candidate.
- CAN'T DO / WON'T DO: Unless this person's lack of motivation can be overcome, delegation will fail. S/he should move to another environment.

Overview

It's a process. Expect two to four years. Involve the whole staff. Lose control.

Action Plan

This week, I will:

The outcome for me is:

The outcome for the organization is:

This month, I will:

The outcome for me is:

The outcome for the organization is: