A Clear Elevating Vision

High performance teams have both a clear understanding of the vision to be achieved and a belief that the vision embodies a worthwhile or important result; teams with a 'clear and elevating vision' understand that whether the team succeeds clearly makes a difference.

Results–Driven Structure

To be successful, a team's structure should be designed around the results to be achieved. There are four necessary features to team structure:

- *Clear roles and accountabilities* — each member's relationship to the team is defined in terms of the role to be assumed and the results the role is to produce;
- *An effective communication system* — opportunities for team members to discuss team issues in a relaxed environment (social and informal interaction opportunities) are essential; methods for documenting issues raised and decisions made are important as well;
- *Monitoring performance and providing feedback* — establishing systems of checks and balances to assure that performance meets expectations is a must; and
- *Fact–based judgments* — objective and factual data should be the basis of the team's sound decision–making.

Competent Team Members

Competency is defined as the necessary skills and abilities (technical competencies) to achieve the desired objective and the personal characteristics required to achieve excellence while working well with others (personal competencies).

- Technical competencies are minimal requirements of any team. They include knowledge, skills, and abilities related to the specific tasks to be accomplished.
- Personal competencies refer to the qualities, skills, and abilities necessary for individual team members to identify, address, and resolve issues.

There are three common features of competent team members:

- The essential skills and abilities to conduct the work;
- A strong desire to contribute; and
- The capacity to collaborate effectively.

Unified Commitment

A unified commitment is best characterized by "team spirit," or a sense of loyalty and dedication to the team. It is often exhibited by an unrestrained sense of excitement and enthusiasm for the team and its work; a willingness to do anything that has to be done to help the team succeed; and an intense identification with the people who are on the team.

There are two significant features of this characteristic:

- *Commitment to the effort* — teams do not excel without significant investment of individual time and energy; and
- *Unity* — group spirit and teamwork are indispensable to superior performance.

Collaborative Climate

A collaborative climate is most commonly described by the statement, "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts." Teams operating in a truly collaborative climate work well together, and trust is a mainstay virtue.

Trust is produced in a climate that includes three elements:

- Honesty (i.e., integrity and truthfulness);
- Consistency (i.e., predictable behavior and responses); and
- Respect (i.e., treating people with dignity and fairness).

Standards of Excellence

Standards define those expectations that eventually determine the level of performance a team deems acceptable. Standards determine the type of technical competency required, the amount of initiative and effort required, how people are expected to behave with one another, how firm the deadlines are, and how the results will be achieved. Ultimately, standards dictate the rewards for success and the consequences for failure.

Pressure to perform can come from a variety of sources:

- Individual standards;
- Team pressure;
- The consequences of success or failure (i.e., reaching the clear and elevating goal/vision);
- External pressure; and
- The team leader.

Three variables are integral to establishing and sustaining standards of excellence. They are the extent to which:

- Standards are clearly and concretely articulated;
- Team members require one another to perform according to the established standards of excellence; and
- A team exerts pressure on itself to improve.

External Support and Recognition

External support and recognition is measured by the extent to which those individuals and agencies outside the team, who are capable of contributing to the team's success, acknowledge and support the work of the team. (Interestingly, the external support and recognition factor seems to be more an effect of team success than a cause of it. It is noted more for its absence in poorly functioning teams than its presence in highly effective teams.)

Principled Leadership

Leadership can add tremendous value to any collaborative endeavor, even to the point of sparking the outcome with an intangible kind of magic. Effective leaders draw together the team's vision, a belief in the opportunity for change, and the ability to meaningfully involve others.

Effective leaders:

- Establish a vision of the future;
- Enlist others to embrace the vision;
- Create change; and
- Unleash the energy and talent of contributing members.

Collaborative Justice. (2015). *How to collaborate: A working definition of the term "collaboration."* Retrieved from http://www.collaborativejustice.org/how.htm

Principles of Quality Teams