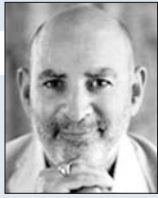


Great Team Players

They have a unique mindset.



by Howard M. Guttman

TEAMS ARE THE BUILDING blocks of organizations. In tightly knit, high-performance teams, individuals work as one unit to improve their function, and the organization's performance. That requires *change* in how players view themselves, their leaders, and organization. This new mind-set is built on *three pillars*:

1. Think like a director. Members of great teams think like members of a board of directors. They keep their eye on the overarching goal: the results the company needs to achieve to stay on top of the competition. They're interested in the health of the company first, before any one area or function. Knowing that time is money, they put a premium on swift, effective action. They are committed to maximizing ROI with every decision. Issues get handled in the moment and don't get tabled. People don't let issues go unresolved. If progress is being impeded, if two leaders are letting something fester, a team member will address the issue. When this hyper-efficient mind-set cascades down to second-tier management, energy kicks into overdrive. Every player steps up and begins taking action and implementing plans to stay ahead of changes in the market and customer demands.

2. Put team first, function second. Like a board of directors, members of high-performing teams are focused on business results rather than being emotionally invested in any single business unit or function. They are team members first, functional reps second. Such players don't look for the biggest budget handout, unless a solid business case can be made for the resources. *They contribute their technical expertise across functions when it is needed. And they do not hesitate to weigh in on the performance of other functions when they sense problems.*

One CEO who applied the *high-performance team model* noted: People still oversee their functions, but they're aware of the interdependencies and take own-



ership for moving the total game along.

- When this new mind-set permeates an organization, a sense of ownership begins to take hold. Managers become emboldened and begin to think critically about feedback from customers and subordinates. They take responsibility for their function, and for the performance of the entire organization.

- *Not every player moves to high-performance straightaway.* Some are too concerned with individual contributions and how they can vault their career to focus on the total team. In these cases, managers must give direct, unalloyed feedback to holdouts on their attitudes. If they are capable of achieving high-performance, they'll be receptive to frank direction and guidance toward this new way of thinking.

- *No matter how dedicated an individual or team is to the principles and habits of high performance, there is always the danger of backsliding into bad behaviors and old patterns.* On a great team, siloed thinking is out. In doing business, some conflict is bound to arise, even on a great team. When it does, it is dealt with quickly and directly.

3. Embrace accountability. At the end of a quarter, a big financial shortfall in one business unit caught the management team of a food-service company off guard. The CEO learned that the head of the unit had been aware of the problems for months but had not taken any action. Two of his team members had also known what was going on, but they remained silent as the situation spiraled out of control—a classic case of the “it's not my job” syndrome.

Leaders who embrace the *principles of high-performance horizontal teams* reorient their thinking and assume accountability for their performance, and for that of their peers, leader, and organization.

Each of these pillars represents a step in the direction of high-performance decision-making and problem-solving. The goal is a *transparent horizontal organization*, where *every team member is a stakeholder who holds peers accountable*—and expects his colleagues to do the same, no matter their title. Building exceptional teams requires patience and perseverance. But they'll transform the DNA of an organization for the better, with proof on the bottom line. **LE**

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ACTION: Build performance on these pillars.

Leader Judgment

It can determine success or failure.



by Noel Tichy and Warren Bennis

MAKING JUDGMENT CALLS IS THE essence of leadership. Long-term success (*sustainability*) is the sole marker of good judgment. Good leaders sort the important from the trivial, and focus on getting the important calls right. They make the tough calls, and see to their execution. They manage relationships with key constituencies, and align and mobilize team members.

Each leader makes thousands of judgment calls—some trivial, some monumental. The measure of their success is the sum of all of their judgment calls. How many good ones did we make? Did we make good ones about the things that really mattered? Our judgment determines the quality of our lives. *In leadership, the importance and consequences of judgment calls are magnified exponentially by their increasing impact on the lives of others* (the cumulative effect of leaders' judgment calls can determine team success or failure).

In the face of *ambiguity, uncertainty, conflicting demands, and time pressure*, leaders must make decisions and take effective actions to assure the survival and success of their organizations. This is how leaders add value—they exercise good judgment, make smart calls, and ensure that they are well executed.

Consider these four principles:

1. Judgment is the core, the nucleus, of leadership. With good judgment, little else matters; without it, nothing else matters. Take any leader, a U.S. president, a Fortune 500 CEO, a big-league coach, wartime general. Chances are you remember them for their best or worst judgment call. Leadership is, at its marrow, the chronicle of judgment calls; this is the leader's biography.

2. In decision making, the only thing that counts is winning or losing: the results. Long-term success is the sole marker of good judgment. It's not “The operation was a success, but the patient died.” It's not “He acted brilliantly, but the outcome was poor.” Judgment is successful only when the outcome achieves