

The 5 C's of Team Success

By Paul Rutter

Whether you work in a large company with thousands of employees or a small office with only two staff members, teamwork is vital for your organization's success. Without teamwork, people drift off following their own agendas, allowing the company's goals to stagnate. But when effective teamwork is in place, everyone directs their energies towards a single focus, and they typically achieve amazing results.

But for many managers, the question is, how do you build a solid team of people who work well together and move the company forward? Even though a horde of business books preach teamwork principles, many managers still find themselves directing individuals and playing referee rather than leading one cohesive unit—one winning team.

Fortunately, building a winning team isn't as complicated as it often seems. If you're ready to build a true team that's geared for success, then all you need to do is follow the five C's of teamwork.

1. Build Community – As a manager, you need to make sure everyone feels that they're a part of the team. Realize that this process starts before a new person joins your team. For example, during the interview process, you can introduce qualified candidates to the other team members so they can get an idea of their potential new co-workers. When you hire someone, rather than just make an offer of employment, you can also explain what they can expect to encounter at your company—its culture, its values, its guiding principles. Once someone accepts an offer of employment, you can give him or her a welcome packet that details everything about the work environment and team expectations. Then, on the person's first day, hook the new employee up with a "buddy" who can show the newbie around and help the person adapt. The more you can "bring someone into the fold," the better he or she will adjust and feel a part of the group. Realize that the first two to four weeks of someone's employment are critical for instilling that team spirit. If someone feels that they're not a part of the team after the first four weeks, the person will likely leave.

2. Encourage Cooperation – To encourage a sense of teamwork, make sure everyone knows both the short- and long-term goals of the department and the company. Those people who have been at the company a long time may even have a say in the goals. At the very least, people need to have a say in the approach to meeting the goals. Even if you don't enact someone's suggestion, let people voice their opinions and really listen to what they have to say. When people know that they're being heard (even if their suggestions cannot be enacted) they feel a greater sense of involvement in the company's direction.

3. Support Coordination – Let each person know how he or she fits in to the company's big picture. Detail what each person is responsible for and how that person's actions and duties impact the company as a whole. Be sure that each person accepts the needed responsibilities of his or her job and is accountable for his or her actions. Everyone is there to do a particular job, so remind people of that fact and what their particular job is. A big part of coordination is making sure everyone is actually present to do his or her needed job. So in order to not hear excuses for why something didn't get done, make sure you define to your team the unacceptable excuses for poor performance upfront. Obviously we all make mistakes and are

human, but we can't allow people to repeat the same mistakes over and over and use the same excuses continually.

4. Promote Communication – If you want people to feel that they're part of a team, then they need to be informed. Therefore, make sure everyone knows what's going on that week, that month, or for that next project. Proper communication ensures that everyone is on the same page and working for the same goals. To encourage communication, have short meetings to bring everyone up to date. If possible, keep meetings to no longer than twenty minutes. Long meetings drain everyone's energy and tax their attention spans. During these short meetings, make sure everyone has an opportunity to speak. This does not mean that you force everyone to speak; simply make it known that everyone has the opportunity to offer their perspective or voice their concerns.

5. Offer Continuous Coaching – When you coach people, either within departmental guidelines or within their particular job duties, you send a message that says, "You're important." Additionally, if someone has been at the company for a long time, you could coach that person for the future position he or she wants. Your team needs to know that coaching is available and that you promote from within. Why? Because people are willing to do more when they know training opportunities are available and that there's room for advancement. Coaching creates a positive outlook for the team and your guidance helps your team meet goals. The more you train or coach people, the more they'll meet goals and seek out more challenging assignments.

Team Success Starts with You

No matter how large or small your team is, realize that teamwork rarely happens overnight. That's why you need to consistently lead by example. That is, if you want to instill teamwork, you need to be willing to do whatever task you're asking your staff to do. You also need to focus on the positive things people do to encourage more of it. So do the right things and acknowledge when others do things right. Before you know it, you'll have a winning team that seamlessly works together, achieving amazing results that propel the company forward.

Paul Rutter is the founder and owner of Smooth Sailing Communication, Inc., a unique consultancy focusing on corporate training and executive coaching. After 15 years as a cruise director on some of the world's largest cruise ships, Paul now lends his knowledge and insight to companies across the nation and helps them to apply creative solutions to everyday problems. For more information about Paul's consulting, please visit www.SmoothSailingCommunication.com, call 305-205-1782, or email paul@smoothsailingcommunication.com.