13

Reasons Why Your Team Probably Isn't Very Good…

…and what you need to do to make them winners!

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This is not a comprehensive checklist, but it does include some of the strategies that great teams work hard at getting right. Some of the "fixes" are obvious and simple. Some need you to do things differently. Others need external help.

So here they are:

13 reasons why your team probably isn't very good, and some things you need to do straight away!

1 Magic!

Your organisation spends big money on individuals, infrastructure, IT and change programmes. But nobody really understands how to develop teams. Or how to create stellar teams. Everyone hopes that good stuff will somehow happen. By good people just turning up. Your people believe in cost-free magic. You, too?

Do this now! Open your mind to some experimentation and put some or all of the next 12 tips into action.

2 Purpose

A football team knows that its purpose is to win games. Not just to score goals, but to score more goals and win the game. Are you clear about the difference? Clear about purpose? Does everyone in the team understand their common purpose?

Do this now! Ask them. As a team, what do you think our purpose is? Write the answer down. Can you simply state, "This team does X, in the service of Y"?

3 Fit for purpose?

Who can help you to fulfil the team's purpose? What knowledge, attitudes and skills will make your team shine? What is the best you can do with the best that you have? What investment are you making to achieve this?

Do this now! Think about your dream team. How far away are you from reaching it? Do you need to take big steps to get there? Or is it just slipping out of your grasp? Jot down how you will bridge the gap. Further development or fresh new faces? Include yourself in this. And remember that a great team is not a collection of great people.

4 Who cares?

Who cares about your team? Would anyone notice if it vanished? Who are you delivering stuff to - your customers, if you will. Who are you in the higher service of - your team's organisational sponsors? And does your team care about itself? What do they need to turn up and turn on?

Do this now! Explore these questions with your team. Write the answers down. Revisit the answer to No 2.

5 Rough enough isn't good enough!

You have a rough idea of what your team's sponsors and customers want. But do you? And you are very clear on what you need from them to deliver the best possible job on their behalves. But are you? What does "good" look, sound and feel like? For everyone? How do you know? How often do you check?

Do this now! Ask your sponsors and customers what they need from you and the team. Be honest and let them know what you and the team need from them. Do the same with your team members. Write this down as a form of contract or charter. Revisit this frequently. Do this as a collective exercise.

6 Emotional foundations

Low self-awareness and self-management exists amongst team members. They are blind to their patterns of behaviour, and how these impact one another and the team as a whole. Their relational skills are underdeveloped. Their emotional immaturity is holding you back.

Do this now! This is the foundation on which your team's performance and resilience is built. This needs fixing - pronto! It needs to be stable; otherwise, you are in trouble. Get external help. Recruit a team coach.

7

Loads of fear

So, no real surprise that trust levels are low as well! Instead, there is subtle (and not so subtly felt!) fear where you want to see fearlessness. All that emotional energy is channelled into self-protection rather than kick-starting creative and inspiring ideas.

Do this now! Get your team to share their lives' stories. Encourage your people to reveal something of what lies behind their work personas. A team coach can really help facilitate what can be a difficult process for some people.

8

Masks and armour

Fear is racing around. People are hiding behind masks and armour. The result? Passion and neck-sticking-out is almost non-existent. Meetings are pretty stale and quickly revert to agenda ticking. Great teams trust one another enough to kick ideas, not each other. They are passionate and productive. People turn up and turn on.

Do this now! Hold a meeting without a table – just a circle of chairs! And once the meeting is underway, write contentious agenda items on a blank sheet of paper, or better still, a plastic football, and place it in the centre of the circle. This will encourage people to challenge the topic and the ideas that arise, rather than attack the individuals suggesting them. Without a desk to hide behind, people who challenge other people - rather than ideas - will feel more than usually exposed! In addition, or alternatively, introduce a system of "red-carding" whereby everyone can help one another to recognise unhelpful behaviours.

9

Promises, promises!

Oh sure, everyone commits to decisions and agrees to names against actions. But to what extent do people feel these are personal promises? What then gets done? With what sort of drive and energy?

Do this now! Make sure that any actions are robustly tested against the team's goals and overall purpose i.e. will this action, when it is completed, contribute directly to reducing a risk or achieving something of value? Try voting on the suggested action. Marks out of 10 for relevance and value – anything less than 5 gets binned!

10

Accountability

How does accountability work in your team? Are actions reviewed at team meetings? How much leeway is given for missed deadlines? Who is "giving" the leeway? Is it the team leader? What are other team members doing between meetings to hold one another accountable for their promises? "Actions" feel as if they belong to "someone else" whereas promises are pretty personal. What sort of language and behaviours will get stuff done in your team?

Do this now! Invite your team members to buddy-off when someone gets an action. Ask the buddy – not the action owner – to report back at the next meeting. This will help kick-start pre-meeting accountability discussions.

11 "They just don't get it!"

If you and your team deliver ideas and direction that requires communication, understanding, and action, just how much effort goes into anything other than a single burst transmission? A single email? Is everyone in the team getting "out there", walking the talk and helping others get stuff done? Or do they walk out of the meeting room, the email sent, their job done. And later, feign surprise that people "just don't get it"?

Do this now! If "they don't get it", then maybe you aren't giving it in a compelling and convincing way. Think about what you are communicating, who your audience is, and how you might best engage. And consider who in the team is doing this. What could it be like if everyone in the team was "out there" creating powerful conversations and bringing feedback back to the team?

12 Admin

Wrong place, wrong space, wrong time, wrong light, wrong papers, wrong agenda, wrong technology, wrong food, wrong mood etc.

Do this now! Getting the admin right is important. So is the venue. Think about the kind of thinking you need to do and the conversations you need to have. Then select a place that will promote what you wish to achieve. Operational meetings work well in the workplace. Consider going off-site with a facilitator to encourage creative and strategic thinking.

13 Development

Team breakfasts on a Friday. An away day once a year. Maybe MBTI or some other psychometric. Tick. Job done. How much performance and resilience does that give you? Sounding like magic again? Acting like stars? Feeling like champions?

Do this now! Make time at the end of each meeting to discuss what went well and what to do differently next time. Behaviours, information, processes, admin etc. And every few months or so, when you are having a more strategic sort of discussion, discuss what the team and team members need to help fully deliver the team's strategy. Get some feedback from customers and sponsors to help inform this development review.

The Fresh Air Learning Company works with ambitious organisations to develop the performance and resilience of their people and teams.

If one or more of the 13 reasons ring an uncomfortably sounding bell and you need a winning team, get in touch with us now by calling 0800 052 7900 or emailing info@freshairlearning.com

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