

## Team Building 101

Team Building is the process of improving collective performance.

A simple but effective methodology involves:

- Establishing **ownership** of shared goals
- **Removing inhibitors/blockages** to achievement of those goals
- **Introducing enablers** (awareness, resources, information, processes, etc.) to help achieve those goals
- **Using team building processes** (e.g.: health checks, performance management, 360 feedback) in the correct sequence to gradually raise performance, akin to climbing a ladder one rung at a time

Team Building is often ineffective because:

- In many cases, advanced teambuilding techniques are used while there is a *lack of buy in* to the shared objectives. Commitment to team building activities is predicated on commitment to the overall direction/goals.
- Interventions are made out of sequence (e.g.: a poorly defined structure, roles and responsibilities will undermine attempts to improve interpersonal relationships)
- Many offsite events fail to add any real, lasting value because the approach taken to team building is too generic. Be certain that any offsite event should be designed to meet specific goals and outcomes.
- There is often a lack of understanding of the difference between a group and a team.
- There is a lack of assessment of the team – a diagnosis is required in order to develop effective intervention strategies.

**Objectives:** In the Forming stage (Forming-Storming-Norming-Performing), individuals are committed, at most, to their own objectives. Members will only invest time in Storming activities if they think it is worth it - that is, if the collective objectives are seen as important as their own. *A common mistake is for individuals to think that being committed to their own objectives means they are committed to the team.* As in the age-old metaphor where a house needs to be built on rock, the foundation of all team building is *commitment* to the *shared* goal.

**Techniques:** The choice of intervention strategy depends not only on the current state of teamwork, but on the nature of the people. For highly motivated individuals, it can be enough to set a high level direction and then allow individuals to contribute to the detailed development of the goals. For others, whose natural motivations are more individual, there may need to be objective-based rewards that require teamwork. In some instances, where high levels of teamwork cannot be achieved, they may only be effective in the Forming stage, which is highly dependent on leadership. Interventions fall into four main areas:

- **Individual** - e.g.: development of individual skills; establishing familiarity with shared processes
- **Relational** - e.g.: improvement of unconscious dynamics; engendering a sense of common purpose and commitment
- **In/Out Groups** - tackling the barriers between different organizational units
- **Cultural** - building a teamwork “way of being” in the whole organizations

Adapted from: <http://www.teamtechnology.co.uk/tt/h-articl/tb-basic.htm>

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