

TeamLeader

DARTNELL'S

YOUR PERSONAL GUIDE TO BUILDING SUCCESSFUL TEAMS

I N S I D E

TRAIN TEAMMATES TO SPEAK UP

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QUICK TIPS

Alter your role, check for commitment

By LISA A. BEACH

To master your role as team leader, you must understand the phenomenon that makes a team prosperous, according to **Chris Majer**, co-founder and principal of **SportsMind** in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. "Successful teams boast underlying commitments that pave the way for the right practices and behaviors to take place," says Majer.

Majer's company, SportsMind, conducts leadership and development programs to build honesty, communication and accountability within teams. Having produced winning results for clients such as **Microsoft**, **Capital One** and **AT&T**, Majer explains how any

team leader can produce similar results. As the team's guide, learn to observe the following commitments by:

1. Owning team's values, mission and vision. Are members taking accountability of the team's values, mission and vision? Each team member should design and take actions consistent with those of their teammates.

2. Producing and invoking trust. Do team members maintain open, authentic relationships with one another? Trust goes beyond a feeling. Team members shouldn't hold private, negative assessments of one another and should work ruthlessly to kill rumors.

3. Creating an aura of success. Do team members understand that

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Uncover miniscule matters to win points

When you're coaching your team, the "big" responsibilities often take precedence over the day-to-day activities. Surprisingly, the coaching tactics you use can determine how well you "score" with team members.

The daily problems and decisions your team faces are probably more important to your team than you may realize. It may be a matter of trying to think smaller than the "big picture" when it comes down to coaching sensibly. Consider these tips:

- **Speak with your teammates** and really listen. Encourage them to problem-solve along with you.
- **Don't expect to change behaviors**, but attempt to modify attitudes

with constructive feedback or a display of genuine concern.

• **Assume loyalty.** Don't believe your teammates make mistakes to purposely damage your reputation as a leader or manager, but see correcting errors as opportunities to build closer relationships.

• **Stick to your promises.** If you expect your team to follow through on what you ask for, hold yourself to the same standard. Follow up on your words with "action."

• **Recognize good work.** Everyone likes to be in the spotlight, and a job well done should be commended. Congratulate your teammates in front of their peers, and offer special rewards or certificates of achievement. ■

- **Liven up unpopular shifts.** It's difficult to staff the Friday and Saturday night shifts, but here's an idea: Hold a drawing for a gift certificate for a music CD, and make it a regular event. Attendance will improve, less absences will increase production and employees will enjoy a fun break.
- **"To err is human."** You want to serve as a role model for your team, but openly admitting mistakes or poor decisions can be even more admirable. Do not be afraid to discuss what you have learned from your errors. This will set a powerful example for your team members.
- **Customer service is universal.** Each team member is one link in the customer service chain, so why not give each member the opportunity to talk directly with customers? Design a program that provides a chance to connect with customers. This creates a sense of ownership in the company.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

My vice president feels that the members of our team need to reduce the amount of work time spent on team projects — essentially to become a part-time team. I am strongly opposed to this because I am afraid that a couple of major projects will be left undone. How can I support my conviction that the team continue on a full-time basis?

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Respect individuality

"Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and you help them to become what they are capable of being."

—Goethe

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Sell the benefits of full-time input

If the team has managed to reach many of its original objectives, the company's leadership may be justified in asking that less time be required for team projects. If not all the goals have been completed, however, can you afford to have team members focus part-time on the remaining objectives? If not, then consider approaching management with a pros and cons list of full-time and part-time teams.

There are five issues you may want to address:

- 1. Full-time team members are not as distracted** or as nonproductive because of "other work." Part-time members may see their "other work" as a higher priority than team projects.
- 2. Full-timers can concentrate on one primary objective** and are less likely to burnout. Part-timers often feel "burned out" from the combination of regular work and team tasks.
- 3. Full-time teammates don't have as much trouble focusing.** Part-time teammates feel they serve "two masters" and can exhibit a lack of focus in both settings.
- 4. Full-time service assures the team** that the company is serious and supportive of the team's goals. Part-time service infers that the team's work is not high priority. Quality, productivity and timelines may suffer.
- 5. Full-time work can provide ample time** to clearly define the team's purpose, build trust and establish consensus. Part-time work may impede progress in these areas. ■

Source: The Team Leader's Idea-A-Day Guide (Dartnell 1997).

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everyone must operate in a mood of confidence? No one is entitled to be in a bad mood. As the team leader, you serve as the guardian of the team's mood. Negative moods to eradicate: Resentment, resignation, cynicism and arrogance. Positive moods to embrace: Ambition, confidence, trust, acceptance and mobilization.

4. Fulfilling a role. Do team members want to participate? No team member should say, "I don't want to do that" when working toward the team's goal.

5. Maintaining team performance standards. Does your team know how to measure its success? To maintain trust, teams should set interaction standards (i.e., how members relate to one another) and operation standards (i.e., set of agreements to know what to expect from one another).

6. Backing up resolutions. Do team members support decisions 100 percent? Once the team makes a decision, it's everyone's responsibility to support the decision, even if they don't agree.

7. Stressing learning and innovation. Do team members strive to develop new competencies, rather than to simply understand processes? True learning involves a long-term commitment that requires passion and perseverance.

8. Focusing on the future of the individuals, team and organization. Do you invest in developing team members? Produce routine habits to achieve team objectives with consistent, quality results from members so they can tackle bigger projects. This enhances their loyalty, passion, accountability and commitment to the organization.

Bottom line: Shift the way you practice being a team leader. Instead of checking team members' activities, check their commitment, accountability, ownership and moods. Start listening and observing. Ask questions such as "What's the mood of the team? Are members unified behind the team leader?" Answer these questions and your actions are apparent. ■

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Team Leader (ISSN 1525-0881) is published biweekly by LRP Publications, 747 Dresher Road, P.O. Box 980, Horsham, PA 19044-0980, (215) 784-0860. Editorial offices: 360 Hiatt Drive, Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33418, (561) 622-6520. Permission to photocopy for internal use is granted through the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) for a \$2-per-document fee and \$1.50-per-page fee to be paid directly to CCC, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923. Fee Code: 1525-0881/99/\$2 + \$1.50.