

TEAM-BUILDING INCLUDES SHARING GOALS, BENEFITS, RESPONSIBILITIES

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There is a lot of talk these days about the recent movement toward team-based management. The concept of teaming—self-directed work

teams and cross-functional sub-groups—can be found in most business periodicals, yet only one fact about them so far is clear: It is much easier to talk about managing teams than to actually do so.

How do you transform a work group from being manager-led to being team-led? Following are three suggestions:

Share information. This includes information about the company's goals, marketing strategies, competitors, even finances.

Unless you give today's employees the trust and respect necessary to enable them to take initiative and feel responsible, you will probably be unable to get them to excel beyond the nine-to-five position they were hired for. A broader base of information and understanding about company information is critical to motivating front-line employees to think strategically about the business.

Share responsibilities. Initially this can begin with cross training, which allows flexible work scheduling and enables employees

to fill in for one another.

Beyond that, it moves employees away from specialized jobs to broader, more general responsibilities. This improves employees' value to the organization and allows them to act in ways that benefit the organization, not just their position.

For example, at the Levi sewing plant in Murphy, NC, cross-trained team workers perform 36 tasks instead of just the traditional one or two. Teams run the plant, handling everything from organizing supplies and setting production goals to making personnel policy

At Edy's Grand Ice Cream, cross functional consists of four or five people who actually make the ice cream plus a packaging operator, an engineer, a shipper, a palletizer, a maintenance person and so on. Each team handles everything, including quality and sanitation checks, meeting individual business goals, internal scheduling, discipline, training and career development.

Once employees in a group can do the same tasks, they move a step closer to managing the group's work. The job of running the group can then be rotated or shared, and the group can begin to address more traditional management tasks such as planning, budgeting and problem solving, or even hiring/firing and

compensation decisions.

Share benefits. As you encourage employees to move away from being individual contributors to being team players, rewards can be geared to the group level as well.

Incentive programs can help. Instead of singling out individual accomplishments, your incentive programs should reward group efforts. For example, instead of awarding the typical two-week trip to Hawaii to just the top salesperson, consider presenting weekend getaways to all team members when they meet group goals. Alternatively, have a group celebration that recognizes everyone who assisted in achieving the goal.

Group rewards also promote cooperation rather than competition among group members. Moreover, of course, if the group's efforts lead to higher degrees of effectiveness, efficiency, customer service or innovation, financial gains to the organization need to be shared with those who made it possible. ✦

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