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Seven Core Skills for TEAM Success

“Individual commitment to a group effort -- that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.”

Vince Lombardi

Last weekend, I saw Michigan State play at Notre Dame. As I watched both teams battle toward victory, it made me think about the critical role of each individual player and coach. Each brought their unique skills to the team. No two players or coaches were alike. And neither team could win without individual commitment to the group effort, with everyone collaborating to bring their own best efforts to the goal: winning the game.

So it is in our firms and organizations. As individual members of a team, whether it's a formal department, project group or community board, we are called on to commit to our organization's goals. Often, however, actual team collaboration and a sense of commitment are virtually nonexistent. Team members lose sight of the value of bringing their individual and unique skills to the group. Infighting, passive-aggressive behavior, and the desire for individual achievement above team undermine its ultimate goal of sustainable productivity and positive results. And both productivity and positive results provide the necessary fuel for achieving the organization's goals.

As leaders, enhancing team effectiveness is squarely on our shoulders.

Do Teams have Emotional Intelligence?

Research has confirmed that the greater emotional intelligence an individual brings to a team, the higher the emotional functioning can be expected from the team as a whole. The good news is that teams as a whole can also learn new skills to help them function more effectively. Marcia Hughes and James Bradford Terrell in their book, *Team Emotional & Social Intelligence*, identify seven core skills that function like rocket fuel to propel your team to achieve its full collaborative capacity. These seven skills drive productivity and collaboration for your team and result in team trust, loyalty, empathy, and ultimately better decisions. Assessing where your team falls in each of these core skills can be a critical starting point in enhancing your team's effectiveness.



Let's take a look at the seven core skills for team success identified by Hughes and Terrell.

1. Team Identity

On teams with their own personality and credibility, individuals more closely identify with fellow team members based on that shared association. Team members develop a strong allegiance to team purpose. Fostering team identity encourages members to accept one another and to put the needs of the team above their own individual needs.

2. Motivation

Team motivation is exemplified by a team's commitment to activate its three essential resources of time, energy and intelligence (both IQ and EQ). There is a cumulative desire of the team to add value. Everyone on the team pulls in the same direction in order to be successful. Is your team on the same page? Do you keep one another accountable? Is your team persistent in its movement toward goal achievement?

3. Emotional Awareness

This skill requires members of the team to notice one another's emotions, to seek to understand why the emotions exist and to respond appropriately when they are relevant to the team. Emotional awareness is a critical factor in motivation, productivity and a team's ability to collaborate. Emotions ARE contagious. How emotionally aware is your team?

4. Communication

Communication is critically important to every team interaction. Think of your team. Do you take time to listen to one another? Do you take responsibility if your message isn't understood?

5. Stress Tolerance

This skill includes the ability of the team to work with the right amount of creative tension without letting it go too far. Team members significantly influence one another's stress levels. Stress tolerance reflects the team's ability to understand the types of stress factors and the intensity affecting others and the team as a whole. Are people tense or at ease? Does your own work/life balance impact your ability to gain perspective on team issues?



6. Conflict Resolution

Team conflict arises when disagreement is based on different perspectives, values or priorities, and then rises to some level of disturbing an effective team system. How constructively does your team handle disagreements? Many styles of resolution can be engaged, including cooperation, confrontation, competition, and the most sophisticated, collaboration. Unaddressed team conflict undermines your team's ability to achieve its goals.

7. Positive Mood

Optimism and happiness are both aspects of mood and are vital parts of team emotional intelligence. A team's "can-do" attitude and perseverance typifies this positive mood. Positive moods are also critical to team resilience.

Impact of Enhancing TEAM Emotional Intelligence

Each of us tends to be members of several different teams. Notre Dame's defensive line works as one unit, yet also belongs to the team as a whole.

Think of your teams at work. As a leader, how could taking the time to focus on enhancing these seven core skills impact your team's success? Research has shown that team loyalty, trust, empathy and better decisions are just a few of the results. All of which provide the fuel for achieving your organization's goals: victory.

For more information on assessing and building your team's seven core skills for team success, contact me at Mary@wernercoaching.com.

About the Author: *Mary C. Werner, CPA, MOD is the founder of Werner Coaching and Consulting, Inc., a practice that builds on her more than 25 years of accounting, business and financial consulting experience. A leader of leaders, Mary is especially skilled at coaching and consulting with CPAs, attorneys and other business professionals who are interested in accelerating their personal and professional growth for breakthrough results. For more information, visit <http://www.wernercoaching.com> or contact Mary directly at Mary@wernercoaching.com.*

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