

AMS Insights

Thought Leader Article



Re-Focusing and Re-Energizing Teams

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Management Consultants



Developing People, Enhancing Process, Enabling Technology

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Re-Focusing and Re-Energizing Teams

How would you measure your efforts to involve the entire workforce in resolving problems that inhibit productivity and their ability to succeed? Although there are exceptions to every rule, it is a relatively safe hypothesis that most people want some control over how they perform their jobs each day. A key factor in the success of teams assembled to analyze problems and offer solutions is how management responds to those suggestions. If those suggestions are accepted and acted upon, this is often the catalyst for motivating the team to reach for, and achieve higher levels of quality.

In my experience, teams that are most successful and have the longest life span are those with the fewest layers of “leaders.” Each leader added into the mix represents opportunity to compromise the effectiveness of communication within the organization. On high performing teams, leadership is a shared role. All members are developed to take a leadership role as required. This structure increases the feeling of responsibility for all members.

Reviving excitement in a team is a considerable challenge that can be accomplished if the team can be convinced their efforts are important and will be rewarded. The first step is to understand the causes of the team’s loss of focus. Successful teams often “cool-off” or lose interest more frequently than those who are struggling. The reason for the loss of focus is often boredom. Teams need a reason to remain excited. Each team is different and will be



excited and motivated by different things. Your challenge is to understand what will excite your teams and motivate them to see the value and pay-off for the projects you’re advocating.

Many organizations complain about not having enough time to get their products out, and the inability to meet delivery schedules. In this case, the paramount question becomes: How can these teams improve this situation? First, it becomes critical to understand why this is a persistent problem in order to move forward

with attempting to refocus the teams. Is the pressure to meet schedules due to insufficient staff to handle the work, a need for better processes, or people not adhering to the processes?

If the perception is that team meetings will only take away time required to complete the work, it is going to be very difficult, if not impossible, to refocus the teams. This is a prime opportunity for the management team to evaluate the current situation, and solicit the help of the teams to reach viable solutions. If there are not enough people to complete the work, it is going to be difficult to address the problem through the efforts of the teams. However, if the problems can be addressed through process improvements, this is an excellent opportunity to return excitement to your teams by asking them to improve the processes. A reward could be offered for the best solutions. I have always found it necessary to know the members of a team at an individual level in order to achieve optimum results. Coaching the managers closest to the teams to attempt to understand what motivates each person, and rewarding the person accordingly, will help keep the teams focused. It is also important to demonstrate that their outputs are important. This means that meetings are treated as work. They must be scheduled the same as other tasks, and not made optional.

About the Author/Research

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Dr. Maxwell is a Principal Consultant at Advanced Management Services, Inc. (AMS), a full service management consultancy servicing an international client base.

Since 1989, Pearl has developed a successful career as an organizational development practitioner, professional trainer and keynote speaker. She possesses a unique skill that combines adult learning models, personal experiences and humor to engage organizations and create successful improvement efforts and productive learning sessions.

Dr. Maxwell is on the faculty of The University of Phoenix where she teaches courses in management, leadership, ethics and project management. She is also a lecturer at Boston University's School of Education and The University of Massachusetts Medical School. She is a registered educational provider for the Project Management Institute, and has created and delivered hundreds of training sessions in a variety of industries at all levels from frontline employees to senior executives.

Pearl has extensive experience working with process improvement and reengineering initiatives helping clients, such as SCC, Sprint, Rehab Care, Symphony Health Services, to create functional business models for enhanced organizational productivity.

During her career with AT&T Corporation which span more than 20 years she held various management positions in operations, quality assurance and global project management. She also managed projects that created complex virtual telecommunications networks for AT&T's largest customers with both national and international scopes.

Dr. Maxwell earned a Ph. D. in organizational development from The Union Institute and University, a master's of education from Cambridge College, and a certificate in project management from Boston University. She is an AMS certified instructor. She is active in industry trade associations including the Project Management Institute, National Association of Female Executives and the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD).

Research

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