Untangling Team Talent

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The biggest challenge to effective teamwork is the failure to listen and understand how to ACT together!

In our highly competitive culture teamwork is often impacted negatively by the individual members' efforts to ensure they receive recognition and compensation for their personal creativity. While this is certainly valid and important, leaders are often baffled on how to integrate this individual goal into the team culture and communications and still improve the quality of teamwork. There are many commonalities that support leaders in successfully diagnosing where the individual needs of the members (talent) get tangled up with the collective productivity of the team.

Gaining the benefit of top level individual and team performance is possible when the organization, departments and team leaders work together to maximize talent at all levels. Organizations, need to acknowledge the challenge and opportunity, provide support to leaders and teams to gain the skills to perform in all their capacities and express gratitude regularly!

At the Department and Team Leader levels, best practices call for gathering and using data, holding team based candid discussions in a safe and collaborative manner. Use a team model that gathers data based on "we" questions to access team performance. Most analysis of teams is misleading as it's based on individual factors, not team strengths and opportunities. Thus, a compilation of individual results from personality assessments such as MBTI, Emergenetics, Change Style Indicator or the many others will further the challenge of focusing on individuals and not teams. This is good an valuable data, it just should NOT be the only data considered. It is vital to look at the team as a distinct entity! When the team is recognized, intentionally responded to and lead, the team is given much more opportunity to flourish and productivity is enhanced!

The TESI® (Team Emotional and Social Intelligence Survey®) identifies the 7 core competencies teams need to function well. Action steps to untangle team talent begins with each team taking the TESI and receiving their own report. Then pull the data together to view trends across the organization. With this information action plans can be created for each team and at the organizational level.

Talent can be untangled by working with each of the team competencies as well as the team and individual performance.

Team Identity is based on how well the team demonstrates belongingness, a desire to work together, and a sense of clarity around the role of each member. Teams tangle when roles and responsibilities aren't sufficiently clarified. Take a look – is there a good balance in roles that is designed to bring out all team members talents? Does everyone understand the division of responsibilities?

Emotional Awareness considers the amount of attention the team pays to noticing, understanding, and respecting feelings of team members. Teams tangle when team cohesion is undervalued and there isn't time for enhancing interpersonal relationships. A central theme in building successful teams is that sufficient time and resources are spent so the team feels recognized, valued and that the organization is aware of them. This is followed by an organizational expectation, that is welcomed by team members, that they are expected to pay attention to one another and be responsive.

Communication provides feedback on how well team members listen, encourage participation, and discuss sensitive matters. Teams tangle when communication is focused between individuals and there is competition for the data. When the focus is just on individuals, team potential is diminished – collaborative intelligence has trouble showing up!

Stress Tolerance gives the team a reflection of how well it's doing in managing the pressures of workload, time constraints, and the real needs for work-life balance. Teams tangle when skills are developed without equality and balance. Are some people on the team seen as hot shots who get the plum assignments? The cost will come out in many ways – discord from those left out, maybe too much pressure on the high performers and missed opportunities of developing more skills in those who are getting less attention.

Conflict Resolution addresses how constructively the team conducts the process of disagreement and whether the team is able to deal with adversity to enhance its functioning, rather than being deflated by the conflict. Teams tangle when competition is encouraged and collaboration isn't. Teams tangle when conflict resolutions skills aren't practiced with intention and courage!

Positive Mood highlights the level of encouragement, sense of humor, and how successful the team expects to be; is a major support for a team's flexibility and resilience. Teams tangle when fearful attitudes prevail instead of "can-do" attitudes.

Lead your teams to success by using your resources and skills to maximize individual and team contribution!