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EFS SERVANT LEADERSHIP FOCUS

A monthly newsletter to promote and stimulate servant leadership

“Great Teams are driven to create a culture of greatness.” Don Yeager

Topic this Issue: EMPOWER AND EQUIP TEAMS



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5 HABITS THAT KILL TEAM UNITY BY ENTERLEADERSHIP & RAMSEY SOLUTIONS



“You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime.”

— BABE RUTH

Look closely at any great company, and you'll find they all have one trait in common: a **unified team**. Look again, and you'll realize that a culture of unity is intentionally created and protected. Most companies, though, are made up of smart, talented people who, as a group, just can't get the job done. If you have a team like that, you can be sure it is under attack from one or more of the **five enemies of unity**:

1. POOR COMMUNICATION
2. GOSSIP
3. UNRESOLVED DISAGREEMENTS
4. LACK OF A SHARED PURPOSE
5. SANCTIONED INCOMPETENCE

You can build unity in your company by fighting these enemies. Let's take a look at these unity-killers so you'll be able to recognize them and fight them.

1. POOR COMMUNICATION

Communication is the lifeblood of any organization. It is the grease that keeps the gears moving. But most companies use mushroom communication: leaving employees in the dark and feeding them manure. That won't work. Winning organizations must have a culture of communication. Without it, team members are detached and insecure.

TOOLS TO USE:

A CULTURE/MISSION STATEMENT

Every company needs a culture/mission statement. In just a few words, it tells the world and your team who you are, who you are not, and what you stand for. It's also a great out-of-bounds marker. If an opportunity comes your way but it doesn't fit into your mission statement, pass.

SHARING THE STORY

Want to let your team know they are participating in work that matters? Tell

your story. Let them know how you got where you are today, including your hardships, sacrifices, and victories as well as all the times you refused to quit. It pulls the whole team together and lets them feel like they are part of something bigger than themselves.

THE WEEKLY REPORT

Each Friday, every person on Dave's team is required to turn in a quick, one-page report that answers the question "Why should Dave be glad I work here?" As a leader, it gives you insight into how your team is doing. It should also include a high or low for the week. This is where dissatisfaction and disagreements tend to be revealed, directly or indirectly.

For team members, it helps them understand the value they are bringing to your company. Remember, the key to the success of the weekly report is actually reading and reacting to them every week.

THE BOTTOM LINE:

When in doubt, overshare.

5 HABITS THAT KILL TEAM UNITY (CONT'D)

BY: ENTERLEADERSHIP & RAMSEY SOLUTIONS

2. GOSSIP

It may be human nature for people to talk about each other, but that doesn't mean you have to put up with it. It is impossible to create a unified team with a bunch of gossips. Gossip pushes people apart instead of pulling them together, and everyone knows you can't trust a gossip.

HOW TO CREATE A ZERO-GOSSIP POLICY AT YOUR COMPANY:

This policy encourages team members to tell their leaders, not each other, about the bad stuff. In fact, we follow a rule: ***Negatives go up, and positives go all around.***

- ✓ Schedule a meeting to tell your team about your no-gossip policy.
- ✓ At the meeting, explain that gossip is a fireable offense. Every employee at Dave's knows you'll be warned once but the next time, you're gone.
- ✓ Outline exactly what constitutes gossip. By definition, it's saying something negative about anyone or anything to someone who can't do anything about it.

QUICK TIP:

Your first step for shutting down gossip is to take a look in the mirror. Are you guilty of talking negatively about someone on your team to anyone who is not one of your leaders? As the owner or leader of your company, your team watches everything you do, and they will naturally follow your example.

3. UNRESOLVED DISAGREEMENTS

Most leaders don't realize that unresolved conflicts are destroying their businesses—they're not even aware these conflicts exist! That's a result of poor communication. Other leaders avoid confrontation. That's called denial. Either way, your team loses.

HOW TO DEAL WITH CONFLICT

- If you learn that one team member may be upset with another at work or has a problem with an assignment or a process (see weekly report), get the involved parties together and straighten things out.
- Deal with conflict like you would deal with a splinter: ***Pull it out right away, even if it hurts. Don't leave it until it's infected, causing even greater pain.*** A little confrontation can wash out the wound and allow the parties to go forward in a spirit of unity.
- Nothing is ever accomplished by being a bully or being mean, even when you are justifiably upset with those in conflict. In this situation, you have power and control, and they have neither. Plus, the idea of the meeting is to of course-correct and teach, not to embarrass and demoralize or lose your cool.

DAVE'S RULE:

I don't require everyone on my team to like each other or be best friends o campus. But I do require they respect each other and agree that while styles may be different, we have shared integrity and shared intent. We will sit and talk until we can get to that point.

5 HABITS THAT KILL TEAM UNITY (CONT'D)

BY: ENTERLEADERSHIP & RAMSEY SOLUTIONS

4. LACK OF SHARED PURPOSE

Have you ever seen a football team—a successful football team—that didn't know where the end zone was? Or one that was made up of skilled players who had no idea what their roles were in reaching the goal? Of course not. But every day, people show up to work with no idea what the company's goals look like or how their work contributes to reaching them—but they are still expected to be successful.

HOW TO FIX IT

- You can't have unity without a common goal, a common mission and a common vision, all flowing from a common dream. Create those things and talk about them over and over again. And then talk about them some more.
- Andy Stanley, a noted pastor who leads a church with thousands of members, says you should recast your vision every 21 days. When a company is growing and adding people, recasting the vision is even more important. It might be repetitive to the old-timers, but it's brand- new to a lot of people.
- Dave goes over the mission statement and goals of his company every few months as part of a weekly staff meeting. He asks the individuals who have been with the company less than a year to stand, which visually illustrates to the veteran team members why it is important to restate the mission early and often.

THEY SAID IT BEST:

"When you're surrounded by people who share a passionate commitment around a common purpose, anything is possible."

— HOWARD SCHULTZ

"Great minds have purposes, others have wishes."

— WASHINGTON IRVING

"Effort and courage are not enough without purpose and direction."

— JOHN F. KENNEDY

5. SANCTIONED INCOMPETENCE

When one team member is allowed to work less or consistently has a destructive attitude, it's a disaster waiting to happen. If you don't deal with the offending team member, the rest of the team will become demoralized and resentful. You can't allow incompetence to continue unchecked, whether it's related to social interactions or job productivity.

SHOULD THEY STAY OR SHOULD THEY GO?

The decision to dismiss someone should never be easy or made in anger. In most cases, it should be your last resort. Before deciding to let someone go, figure out why they're not getting the job done. It starts by looking in the mirror and asking yourself:

- *Is it a leadership failure?*
- *Is it caused by a personal problem? If yes, have you offered additional help, like counseling or extra time off?*
- *Is the failure caused by incompetence?*

In most cases, the issues can be fixed once you get to the root of the problem. If not, the firing shouldn't be a surprise to anyone involved. There is one exception to the process: If the person has an integrity issue or they're caught stealing, they need to be gone that day.

The Secrets of Building a Team of Decision- Makers

Make better decision-makers out of your team by giving them the freedom to be themselves.

By: Scott McDowell (Fast Company article)

We're at a moment in time where top-down planning is increasingly ineffective. **Change is the only constant.** Rather than set a plan with rigid parts to have others deliver on, as a leader it's more efficient to set strategic direction and priorities, then hand over incremental decisions to smart specialists. A good leader can locate the calm in any situation, and then relay that sense of control to the team.

In *Linchpin*, Seth Godin uses the example of the fast and complex Japanese transit system that operates on schedule and on budget, not by top-down directive, but by a large pool of empowered employees making the best decisions in the moment. "Letting people in the organization use their judgment turns out to be faster and cheaper—but only if you hire the right people and reward them for having the right attitude."

Jazz musicians practice for hours, and then when they arrive on the bandstand, forget their training and just play. In this respect, planning does play a role. Planning, or prioritizing, helps ground your decision-making when things go haywire. Think of it like the foundation of a house: whatever goes on top of it, you've done the work to create the solid foundation, so your house will at least be structurally sound.

When constructing an organization built for good decision-making and rapid iteration, start with the foundation.

1. **Reward Independent Thinking.** There's always a lot of behind-the-scenes greasing of the wheels before the big visible result. Make sure you're developing a culture that features baked-in autonomy and rewards independent thinking and teamwork. Kill all obstacles to an open culture.
2. **Hire The Right Leaders Hire for personality, drive, execution, and accountability.** Skills and experience will always be essential, but today they're not enough. The value of positive, responsible, accountable, and *happy* team members who take action cannot be overestimated.
3. **Celebrate Improvisation.** In order to learn how to be spontaneous, it's important to create a hierarchy that leaves room for flexibility and potential failure. Think of good decision-making as a skill to be fostered in your organization just as you might keep employees up to speed with new technology or processes. It might even be a good idea to incentivize attempts at big ideas, whether they fail or not.

4. **"Brand" Your Mission.** Every team should be well versed in its purpose. A brand is purpose distilled to its essence. Is your mission as simple to understand as a good brand? If not, work on it. Do this relentlessly so that your employees are guided at all times by the team's mission.

5. **Allow Freedom Of Movement.** Employees never cite money as the number one factor in determining work happiness; it usually has something to do with autonomy and freedom. If you encourage cross-functionality, knowledge sharing, openness on projects, you create an atmosphere of respect and openness.

6. **Encourage Side Projects.** Successful main projects almost always started out as side-projects. I know of one company that held an internal product competition. Think about ways you can get employees solving problems that may not be directly related to their roles and cross-pollinate whenever possible.

In the end, good decision-making depends on clear priorities and an openness and willingness to be flexible, to respond in a thoughtful way in the best interest of the organization, and to be bold. **Are you ready to create a culture of doers and decision makers?**



Five Questions to Evaluate Your Team



Here are five practical questions leaders can use to evaluate their team and leadership.

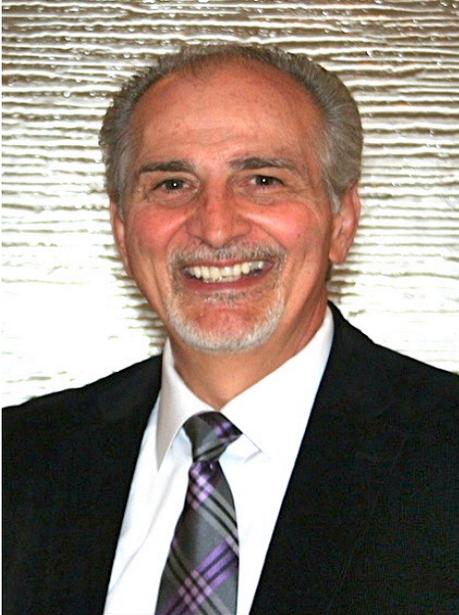
Question #1: The first role of any leader is to ensure their team is staffed for success. In addition to having the requisite mastery for their role it is critical that you recruit people with a *growth (versus fixed) oriented mindset*. **Ask yourself of your current team members, “based on what I know today would I rehire them?”** If **not** it is in your (and their) best interest to find a new team member.

Question #2: People want to be part of something great and that they’re hard work matters. Developing a short (7 words or less), memorable, inspiring sentence of why your team exists will help ensure everyone is rowing in the same direction. **Do you have a simple and clear “WHY” for your team?**

Question #3: All of us have unique gifts and talents that we are blessed with. The very best teams know this, and place each person in roles that enable them to unleash their full potential (and navigate around inherent weaknesses). **Are your team members in the best roles and/or situation for them to utilize their unique gifts and talents?**

Question #4: Sadly most employees hear about what they screwed up on and rarely when they excel. The very best leaders practice **“3 to 1”- three positives for every negative. At home this ratio is “5 to 1”.** **If we interviewed those who know you the best what would they say your ratio is at work or at home?**

Question #5: Most of us hate dealing with interpersonal conflict. We avoid having the “tough conversations”. This leaves others wondering. **One of our essential roles as a leader is to let every team member know where they really stand.** This can be done in a caring, respectful manner using a concept called “feed forward”. **Are you having the crucial and difficult conversations with your team members? If not, what is hindering you from having those conversations?**



This publication was produced by Michael J. Stabile, Ph.D. at FutureNow, Consulting

Empowering Thinking

Equipping Leaders

Coaching reminders:

Mike is available for individual leadership coaching.

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"EVERYTHING RISES OR FALLS WITH LEADERSHIP."

CULTIVATING THE EFS WORK CULTURE