

Developing and Leading BASIC Teams

BASIC TEAM CHARACTERISTICS

Some of the key characteristics of BASIC Teams, are presented under the following acronym:

BASIC Team Characteristics

Building a shared purpose
Acting on common objectives
Starting to work as a team
Identifying member strengths
Commitment to team growth

Let us take a closer look at each of the above characteristics.

Building a shared purpose

An important difference between a group of people that is simply working together and a group that wants to become a team is that sufficient time has to be spent discussing the purpose of the team and coming to agreement on its common objectives. Effective teams recognize that shaping a meaningful purpose provides direction and focus for its members. The development of a relevant common purpose usually takes some time; however, doing so can motivate members of the team and enhance their commitment to it.

Acting on common objectives

In addition to defining a shared purpose, effective teams usually begin to develop a common set of objectives and start working towards achieving them. Defining common objectives provides operational focus, which encourages people to consider how they can contribute to the team. An important aspect of team building is trying to engage team members in activities designed to reach a set of shared objectives.

Starting to work as a team

In contrast to a group, an emerging team begins to act in a collaborative and supportive manner. Team members listen to each other, build on the ideas of other team members and begin to act cooperatively to reach their shared goals and objectives. Some team members will readily act in this way, while other people may have to learn to work collaboratively

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with their colleagues. However, effective teams recognize that they need to develop a commitment to the team as well as make individual contributions to it.

Identifying member strengths:

An important aspect of team development relates to the attitudes, knowledge and skill the individual members bring to the team. As team members get to know each other, they begin to recognize the different competencies that individual members bring to the team. Effective teams consist of people with a variety of skills and experiences that complement and enhance the work of their colleagues. One of the basic characteristics of an effective team is that its members appreciate and encourage the unique contributions that individuals can make to it. Moreover, if they recognize that they need additional expertise to meet their goals, members, they actively seek out those people to join the team.

Commitment to team growth:

Building collegial commitment and trust within a team takes time and effort. Depending on the quality of the contributions that members make to the team, the amount of time to develop a strong commitment to the team may vary considerably. To a large extent, it will depend on how well the team has defined a common purpose, developed a shared set of objectives and established meaningful activities that allow people to contribute to the team in a collaborative and productive manner.

A group of people who wish to develop an effective team can use the above five characteristics to focus their initial discussions on what it takes to become a team. If they have started working together, they also may find it helpful to complete the BASIC Team Development Questionnaire designed to highlight some of the key practices of newly created teams and then discuss the results that they obtain. The questionnaire is available on the Self-reflection Quizzes Page.