

Secrets to a Stronger Team



by Kerrie Mullins-Gunst



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Secrets To A Stronger Team

by Kerrie Mullins-Gunst



One of the primary responsibilities of any leader is to build and develop a strong team. Strong teams work together effectively and well to achieve exceptional results.

When you are leading a team that is strong it will be quite clear.

A strong team consists of a group of people who support and respect each other and work together willingly to achieve a set of common goals.

Frequently, strong teams are comfortable working independently of the leader, and often achieve better than expected results with lower levels of direct supervision.

The effort you put into building a stronger team will bring substantial rewards, so the question is - How do you deliberately build a strong team?

Here are five common characteristics of the strong teams I have observed over my many years of business consulting, leadership coaching and facilitating strategic planning. If you focus on each of these as you build your team you will discover your team gets stronger and stronger every day.

Clarity

Strong teams are quite clear about why they exist (their purpose) and what they need to do (their role).

When a strong team has clarity about purpose and role they are typically quite capable of determining how they should do what they need to do, with little

input from you as a leader. This relieves you of the burden of micromanaging numerous projects and improves your personal efficiency.

While you might be tempted to assume that your team is clear about why they exist and what they need to do, you may also be surprised at the misunderstandings that can arise over time as new members join your team or new priorities or situations arise.

Regular strategic planning, evaluation and review programs for your team will help you to ensure that clarity of purpose and role develops rather than withers within your team.

Commitment

Clarity about your team's purpose and role allows the team to be more effective, yet at the same time feel that the expertise and insight of individual team members is both valued and worthwhile. This fosters the commitment of individual team members in a powerful way.

If individual team members are not committed to the team you will find it challenging to form a strong team. Aside from the ever present likelihood of individuals leaving the team and disrupting the workings of the team, uncommitted team members are unlikely to devote their full efforts to achieving the team goals.

Building commitment to the team and its role can be quite complex and involve a number of different dimensions, which is why externally facilitated team building programs are so popular.

However, when team members understand and support the reason why the team exists, they are much more likely to demonstrate commitment. And once individual team members get to know and respect the skills and experience that other team members contribute to the team, they are much more likely to see how they fit into the team and demonstrate commitment.

Communication

Good consistent communication is critical to any strong team. One of the most common complaints I hear from poorly functioning teams is about lack of communication, or inconsistent confusing communication, from the team leader.

However poor internal communication, between individual members of the team, can also create significant issues.

When you consider communication with and within your team it's important to remember that different people prefer different modes of communication. Some people like to receive things in writing, others like to have things explained face-to-face, some prefer a visual diagram, and so on.

Establishing good communication practices is not difficult, and something that strong teams just seem to take for granted. Yet despite all we know about how essential good communication is to effective team performance, poorly functioning teams still seem to withhold information or use it as a reward, drown people in useless data or just neglect to ensure every team member has the information they need to play their part in the team's success.

Establishing effective and consistent communication with your team - and within your team - is fundamental to building a strong team.

Concern

This secret is one that is not often considered or mentioned as a component of team success.

However the strongest teams I have ever observed all obviously demonstrate a genuine concern for other individual team members, as well as a commitment to the team as a whole. This means that if an individual is struggling to complete what is expected of them for some reason, other team members willingly pitch in to assist.

The concern is respectful and supportive rather than punitive or some sort of barter for future favours. It acknowledges that almost all of us face personal challenges, illness or skill gaps from time to time, when we need a little more assistance or support.

This mutual concern goes to the core of why teams are more effective than groups of individuals. When individuals support each other in this way, a team will always outperform a group of individuals, no matter how skilled the individuals might be.

Celebration

My final secret to a stronger team can be quite a bit of fun!

Without a doubt, the strongest teams consistently celebrate team and team member achievements. Milestones achieved are reasons for celebration, not just reporting.

Setting milestones that are worthy of celebration once achieved, becomes an integral part of a strong team's working dynamic. And may bear little relationship to the formal reporting requirements.

The value of celebration lies in the recognition of progress, something that weaker teams commonly overlook.

Team celebrations may be quite simple, maybe even as simple as a "Well Done Us" at a team meeting or sharing coffee and cake at morning tea, or more substantial for a quite major milestone. Involving your team in determining how milestones to be celebrated should be both agreed and celebrated, has a compounding effect on the value of celebration in building a stronger team.

However, the important thing to note is that strong teams do not wait until the end of an entire project to celebrate achievement.

Strong teams set meaningful intermediate milestones and celebrate as each one is met.

If your team exhibits significant deficiencies in one or more of these five areas you will find it helpful to bring in an external facilitator to help you address the issues and open up the problems for discussion within your team.

However, even a high performance team can improve when you focus on each of these five areas. Follow through with each of these secrets to growing a stronger team and you will be delighted at how the results your team produces consistently improve.

Recommended Resources

Always remember, it's difficult to be good at anything without the right training and tools! Good business leaders consistently devote time to acquiring the information and resources they need to improve their skills. So check out these highly recommended tools and resources now:

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Free Leadership Resources Pack

<http://leadershipskillcenter.com/free>

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