GUIDE: DEVELOPING YOUR TEAM

Introduction
You are accountable for the work of your team; if they do well, you are likely to do well. And so is your department. Having capable people who are good at their separate jobs is only one strand of having a capable team. Do they work well together? Are they respectful and supportive of each other? Do they perform to the standards you expect?

What do effective teams look like?
Katzenbach and Smith (1983), in The Wisdom of Teams, suggest that high-performing teams share these characteristics:

- Meaningful common purpose
- Specific performance goals
- Complementary and well understood strengths and skills
- Commitment of all members
- Open communication
- Appropriate autonomy for decision making matched with appropriate accountability
- Attention to process and results
- Mutual trust
- Emotional intelligence/respect for difference
- Constructive conflict resolution

So, your task is to ensure that as many of these factors are happening within your team.

How is team development typically done?
Most team development happens in the workplace and is often done by:

- Making sure individuals have the needed skills etc. to do specific tasks to the standard needed. This assumes you have made clear what these standards are and you know what skills and abilities your team members have.
- Improving communications in the team (eg through regular team meetings, discussing how best to share information and what information everyone needs, and seeking feedback on your own communication to the team).
- Holding occasional awaydays or team lunches/breaks to focus on specific topics or challenges and to share information and ideas.
- Having members share their skills and knowledge (eg by feeding back to others on meetings they have been to or training events or conferences they have attended).
- Using projects to challenge team members and get them working together.
- Seeking ideas. Asking rather than telling.

What you can do:

- Review the skills and abilities of the team and how these compare to those skills and abilities needed to achieve team goals. Do these match? Where are the strengths and weaknesses? Is there enough cover in the team in terms of skills and abilities and available time?
- Never tolerate disrespect among team members. They should respect and value difference. Having a team of clones will get you nowhere.
• Hold regular team meetings to discuss progress against team goals, news and to ensure everyone knows what each other is doing. Structure these so they have a point, and encourage contribution and sharing of ideas.

• Set clear goals and objectives for everyone and for the team as a whole. Don’t forget to emphasise the team’s purpose and importance. Don’t simply present a list of tasks. People like to know how their work makes a difference.

• Engage the team. Ask them for ideas. Listen to opinions. Encourage feedback.

• Develop individuals. Use PDR/CDR effectively. Support the development of new skills where this adds to the abilities of the team overall. See what support you can give to career goals.

• Make sure you are even-handed. Do you favour some team members over others (or do people think you do)? How well do you know each team member? Do you naturally lean towards some members of the team?

• Review how you shape performance. Do you give regular feedback to individuals and to the team? (E.g., through regular one-to-ones, and through regular team meetings). Does everyone know how they are doing? Do you say, Thank you and Well done everyone?

• Ask what people in your team need from you. Are you giving this? What ‘quick wins’ might you put in place to address any issues raised by team members? What might you have to change in the medium to longer-term?

• Create opportunities for team members to work together and get to know each other better. Use projects to develop collaborative work.

• Hold occasional team days or half days that focus on improving how they work together or support each other. Keep these light, but make sure they have a point and produce results (e.g., a new way of doing something; improved communications).

• Celebrate something. Teams that celebrate successes and special occasions are more supportive and involved.

Summary

To develop your team, you need to develop both individual abilities, how the work is covered and how people get on. And you need to ensure that skills and abilities match the needs of the work and that the working environment encourages collaboration and mutual support.

You can learn to do this in several ways, so choose a way that suits your needs and the time you have. (See the list of options on the Developing your team page.)

Useful Links

Other potentially useful Guides

• Planning an awayday
• Using personality and team profiling tools
• Guide to coaching
• Making good use of OLI consultancy
• Giving feedback
• Career conversations
• Carry out an effective PDR