

# HOW TO BEGIN IMPROVING YOUR TEAM'S PERFORMANCE



You, as the LEADER of your team realize that YOUR TEAM can PERFORM BETTER.

So where do you start?

It is useful to divide the tasks under the following FOUR headings:

- A. Establish current level of performance and define areas that need improvement
- B. Devise methods on how to bring about improvement
- C. Establish an Implementation programme of the defined interventions, as well as a monitoring procedure.
- D. Follow-up, and Identifying new areas for improvement

It is essential that at EVERY STEP of the process you achieve **BUY-IN from the people concerned**. If you do not, it will be a one-man top-down intervention, and your chances of achieving lasting improvement are very small.

## **A. Establishing the current level of performance and define areas that need improvement**

A.1. It is probably best to sit down on your own in a place where you are not disturbed, and start writing down anything that comes to mind where you feel your team can do better. At the same time it is also necessary that you reflect on your own performance and noting down any areas where YOU can improve.

A.2. Then **compare your list against the stated objectives/strategic plan** that all members of the team are/should be familiar with. It will also be good to look at your organization's mission statement, and see how your team's performance lines up with that.

A.3. Once you have modified your list after considering these, it is a good idea to schedule a meeting with **your senior people in the team**.

Repeat A.1 and A.2 with this group. Ask them if they can think of any obvious gaps in the team's performance.

Get them to go through the same exercise evaluating their own performance against the stated objectives/ strategic plan/mission and vision, and ask for their views how the team fared against the stated objectives and targets.

Only when you have their assessment, present what YOU have identified.

A.4. When you have gone through the assessment process with your senior managers then repeat A.1 and A.2 with the whole team – with everyone, including your senior managers present.

The language used in the notice to the team member, and during all meetings is very important. Frequent use of the word “we” will be beneficial. Avoid a top-down approach. One does not want to create negative feelings ahead of this meeting.

Often when this type of introspection occurs, all kinds of reasons (possibly excuses?) are offered. These reasons need to be thoroughly discussed. Do not rush the meeting. It may even be necessary to schedule a second exploratory meeting.

Remember that the most important objective is to GET BUY-IN from the team members regarding the desirability for an improvement of performance.

A.5. Have a follow-up meeting with your **senior managers** where you summarise all the identified shortcomings. Once drafted into a readable form, circulate this summary to ALL team members by email, thanking them for their contribution so far, and announcing that the next step in the improvement process will take place the following week when the WHOLE TEAM will come together to draft workable interventions.

## **B. Devise methods on how to bring about improvement**

Having reached consensus on the performance gap, and clearly defined the gaps it is necessary to craft interventions that will be able to mitigate these gaps.

Schedule a meeting for the WHOLE TEAM a week after the whole team met to discuss gaps in performance. This gives all the team members a chance to think about the performance improvement initiative, and to start thinking of workable interventions.

It is best to have a facilitator for this activity, and ideally the facilitator would be one of the senior managers (not the Team Leader) who has good rapport with all the people on the team.

It is important to allow sufficient time for thorough discussion both of the problem areas, and the suggested solutions. The facilitator needs to ensure that everyone has opportunity to contribute in the discussions, and may have to manage some of the people who want to dominate the discussions.

Provision must be made for detailed record-keeping of all the proposed solutions. The facilitator will summarise each proposed solution once consensus has been reached.

The team members will be advised that a summary of the proposed (and agreed) intervention details will be circulated by email to everyone.

In that email, the next step (part C) in the process will be announced, apart from a clear summary of all the proposed intervention measures.

**C. Establish an Implementation programme of the defined interventions, as well as a monitoring procedure.**

A week later, when everyone has had the opportunity to study the proposed interventions carefully an implementation session will be arranged, again where EVERYONE will attend. The leaders may have discussed a draft programme amongst themselves ahead of this meeting, but again BUY-IN is critical.

This meeting does not have to be long, but ample opportunity must be given for discussing possible problems envisaged with implementing the agreed intervention.

A schedule for implementing the different actions has to be agreed and roles allocated.

Once this is done, a system of monitoring the effectiveness of the intervention must be agreed, and documented.

The team is informed that the implementation schedule, as well as the monitoring scheme will be emailed to all.

**D. Follow-up, and Identifying new areas for improvement**

At a date that has been agreed upon at the conclusion of the implementation programme meeting, the effectiveness of the intervention/s will be reviewed by ALL team members.

At this meeting new challenges may be identified, and will require drawing up a scheme to address these.

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