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## DREAM TEAMS

**What makes a winning team? Terence Mauri, director of LeadersFirst says that answering eight specific questions can ensure the creation of a successful business team.**

What does outstanding team performance look like? How do you develop the competencies of your team to ensure business success? Very simply, it all begins with strong leadership. Managers must understand staff well enough to give them the support and direction they need. Studies have highlighted the importance of team development in determining a company's success. A well-defined team development programme has a direct impact on both the bottom-line and the softer measures of motivation and learning. So what are the steps to creating a high performing team?

I believe that there are eight critical questions that need to be addressed in order to be a successful team.

### **Where are we now?**

As managers build trusting relationships with individuals, they become teams. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of people and develop a clear plan for the team to follow. Assess what is working and what could be improved and vary your leadership style to suit individuals. SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats), for example, can uncover blocks to performance.

### **Where are we going?**

Clarity of purpose and measurable accountability act as powerful motivators and can pull your team in the right direction. Training companies such as The Storytellers help leaders to craft and articulate a company's vision and strategy.

### **How will we get there?**

Managers need to articulate business objectives and outcomes in clear, motivational language. Teams must be empowered to take ownership and responsibility for their results. Poor communication is frequently cited as the number one sin for managers, so organise regular briefings, celebrate wins and help teams learn from setbacks.

### **What is expected of us?**

Identify the essential competencies and qualities required to perform. Remember, success leaves clues. Clearly outline the role of each team member and define the critical outputs and priorities for each job to save time and increase efficiency. Create energy and momentum by sharing best practice and provide the tools and knowledge needed to generate results. Team members should have a range of short, medium and long-term goals. Staff at Google, for example, dedicate 15% of their time to innovation projects.

### **What support do we need?**

Assess training needs to identify any performance gaps. Design and deliver the relevant training and offer individuals coaching and mentoring plans.

### **How effective are we?**

Use benchmarking tools, appraisals and performance reviews to measure and monitor performance. Analyse the competition and ask the right questions. Jack Welch, the legendary former CEO of General Electric, used five questions to help him understand the issues within each of his businesses:

- What does our competitive environment look like?
- In the last three years, what have our competitors done?
- In the same period what have we done?
- How might they attack us in future?
- What are our plans to leapfrog them?

### **What recognition do we get?**

Provide developmental feedback. Look at remuneration and fringe benefits and make sure incentives are aligned to performance objectives. Remember that recognition strengthens performance.

### **Who are we?**

Personal values, ethics and integrity are now commercial necessities. Get these right and your team will be energised and feel proud of the work they do.

### **CASE STUDY – L.K. BENNETT**

L.K. Bennett, the successful fashion retailer, is currently experiencing major expansion. After a rigorous needs analysis by head of training, Coral McKenzie-Cooper, Leaders First were invited to create a specific training intervention for their management team. Using this framework, a range of learning interventions were designed and delivered. As part of this process, a specific programme was created called "Building Team Success." A range of practical tools were shared including the "What Makes Great Teams" model. Feedback was extremely positive with new levels of motivation and team focus reported. McKenzie-Cooper comments: "Leaders First's training model was inspiring and practical. We have learnt invaluable skills'.

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