

# THE EXTRAORDINARY TEAM

*Tips and techniques to improve  
the way your teams work.*

## Teams, A Rewarding Experience?

*By George Denninghoff*

Are your team members satisfied with the rewards they receive for performance?

A recent survey by the American Compensation Association published Winter Edition of the ACA Journal indicates team members are less than satisfied with their companies team reward system.

The surveys overall results show that on a scale of 1 to 7, employees rated team based rewards at 3.59. Not exactly the response we would want from our own teams!

The eight areas examined for their impact on teams: reward size, allocation method, perceived task and outcome interdependence, knowledge of procedures for allocation of rewards, pay for performance perceptions, team goals, distributive and procedural justice and workload sharing.



The good news is that some of these areas fall into the category of being easily remedied in your work place. For example, the team members knowledge of the procedures for the allocation of rewards can be resolved through one simple word: Communication.

Take a look at these areas for possible improvement: **Orientation programs.** Your first impression is a lasting one. Letting someone new to the team know

what and how the reward system works is critical.

**Company Newsletters.** Let your folks know how the reward system is working for them and for their team.

**Handbooks, guidebooks, and compensation manuals.** Clearly written explanations which can be easily referred to by team members.

**Training.** Make sure that all of your teams and key personnel are fluent in your companies approaches to rewards.

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Teams at the Top:*



## Team Critique

Want to improve your team work? At the close of each meeting, conduct a quick, short critique. Take a piece of flipchart paper or on a whiteboard, draw a line down the middle to make two columns. At the top of the left column, write a plus sign “+” and a delta sign “Δ” in the right column. Ask the team to think about what went well.

List their answers under the “plus” column. Teams typically comment on their progress, team participation, process used or meeting logistics. When all ideas are exhausted, thank the group for the positive feedback. Encourage the team to keep up the good work!

Next, look to the “deltas” or things the team would have done differently. Notice the phrasing; it is much more positive and upbeat than asking *(continued on page 2)* the team to identify the

## What's Different about Virtual Teams

Virtual Teams work across traditional boundaries. The members can be in different locations, time zones, departments, even companies. Enabled by faster, cheaper communications technology, virtual teams are springing up everywhere. But don't fear: What works well with conventional teams - common goals, clear communication, balanced participation, diversity - also works well with virtual teams.

For a virtual team to be successful, however, each team member must recognize the differences inherent in not working face to face. Pay attention to:

**Purpose.** Virtual teams often operate without set procedures; interaction is brief and sporadic. Spend time up front defining mission and goals. This allows team members to focus quickly, and when distracted, to get back on track. Before each virtual meeting, develop an agenda and identify decisions that need to be made. Do the bulk of the work outside the meeting, and *(cont'd on*

*page 2)*

# TEAM

*“Virtual teams are not a panacea for teams that do not work. Quite the contrary. It is harder for virtual teams to be successful than for traditional face-to-face teams.*

*Misunderstandings are more likely to arise and more things are likely to go wrong.”*

*Jessica Lipnack & Jeffrey Stamps*

*“Virtual Teams: Reaching Across Space, Time, and Organizations with Technology”*

## Critique the Meeting *(cont'd)*

negatives or “what we did wrong.” List the deltas without commenting on them. You may have to be patient.... Many team members may be uncomfortable giving team feedback initially, but when they recognize the value of the critique, will open up more readily.

Wait for all the deltas to go up on the board, and *then* ask the team what they can do to prevent the deltas from happening again. Some items might be a “one time” occurrence, and the team will agree that nothing needs to be done. Other items may require action from the team. Agree on what that action is, who will do it, and by when.

For example, “less side conversations” was recorded. Ask: “What might we do differently next time?” There will be a flurry of responses, and the team will settle down to a quick, simple solution. A typical response might be to add “no side conversations” to the ground rules.

Quickly thank the team for taking the time to critique their team work, reinforcing the strengths and taking action

on areas for improvement. Ask for any final comments and adjourn the meeting.

If you are leading the team, don't be defensive during the critique. Avoid attempting to explain why you did what you did -- but feel free to ask questions for clarification or for specifics.

After the meeting, take a few minutes to conduct your own personal critique. (If you had a co-leader or facilitator, ask them to join you). Ask: Did we achieve our intended results? Did we use/follow an effective process? Did we work well together? Overall, what worked well and what could we do differently?

Compare your impressions with the team's critique. Look for patterns or trends. One contrary comment certainly should be considered, but if there were several contrary comments (regardless of the reasoning), take a closer look.

+	Δ
	Less side conversations

## Virtual Teams *(cont'd)*

**Communications.** Virtual teams effectively interact using a variety of methods: audio conference calls, video conferences, online conversations, interactive digital meetings, intranets, Internets as well as conventional face-to-face meetings. The key to success is using a robust media mix to support team relationships. The cost is falling dramatically. What you once thought impossible may now be an option.

**People.** Virtual team members can come from anywhere - so you should be able to get the experts needed to accomplish the work. They should be self-motivated and have team skills.

Most virtual teams need some face-to-face time to function effectively, especially at the beginning and at critical points to realign the work and celebrate successes.

You'll find that the team becomes more virtual over time.

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# TEAM

A newsletter designed to facilitate discussion and share tips and techniques to improve the way your teams work.

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“Because of the very nature of our team, we build our agenda each time we meet. This allows us to prioritize our time wisely and focus on the right things.”

Sally, Larry, Kristin, Steve & Ray

## What's New at QPC Inc.

Whew! I am thrilled to put 1997 in my rear-view mirror. The past year has been fast and full of changes (and surprises). I am proud to say “I survived 1997!”

Lots of great stuff on the horizon: strategic planning facilitation, facilitation training, a book on MBNQA (Baldrige) mini-assessments, more “teamworks” columns, a new and improved website, an audiocassette tape series on facilitation skills and well, more facilitation of teams!

The good news is: the workplace is

getting smarter about using teams - even the popular literature is now talking about teams. The bad news is: teams are still considered the panacea to problems. Take a look at Jon Katzenbach's books - he's got the best insight on teams I have seen. Check out page four of this newsletter for more info!

While you're there, take a gander at Exercising Influence. As we move more toward teams, influence skills are absolutely necessary. After all, how many teams have

direct and complete, total authority over the “thing” that they have been tasked to do? More good news: I will be co-facilitating a seminar in Richmond with Ken Boxer of Strategic Partners, Inc. This seminar is fun, dynamic and... you'll learn alot about influencing too!

The Arnold Building is starting to feel like home. The coffee and tea is on all day and you are welcome to drop by any time!

I was having lunch with my dear friend, Reza, and we have decided this is the year of action. I am excited about

## Practical Team Activities: Build an Agenda

### Build an Agenda

To keep the team on track

Time - 10 minutes

Nr. of Participants: Everyone!

Materials Required:

- Flipchart
- Flipchart markers

When there is no agenda, ask the team to build one! Before the team gets too involved in spinning its wheels, put your hand up and ask “Where's the agenda?” If the other team members look at you with glazed eyes or eager expressions, take advantage of the situation. Quickly hop up out of your seat, grab a flipchart marker and ask “What do we need to accomplish at this meeting?” Write down each idea *the way it was stated* and the name of the person who suggested the idea. Note: you are asking the team to identify outcomes or expected results - not just a laundry list of topics. Before you move on to the next step, ask if everyone understands the outcomes and clarify if necessary. Combine similar items - if there is any dissent, assume that the ideas are distinct and should remain

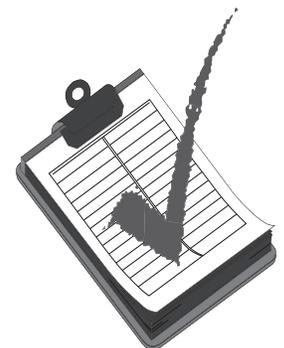
separate. Elapsed time to list the outcomes: no more than five minutes.

Next, take each item and ask the suggestor how long it will take to achieve the outcome. If the team disagrees, allow a few seconds for discussion and write down the most agreed-upon time. Remember: an agenda is just a roadmap and the time limits are guideposts. If the team later agrees that we need more time, we will have the flexibility to adjust our agenda. Also ask the suggestor if they would like to lead the discussion. If not, then ask the team for a volunteer. Beware: if just one or two people are leading all the items - you'll end up with a one-way conversation! Elapsed time to identify time limits and leaders: two minutes.

Lastly, prioritize your list. Most teams have too much to do and not enough time, so it is critical to start with the most important. Some teams simply rank the agenda items with number one being the most important, two

as the next most important, etc. Or try the ABC concept - where “A” is vital - we must accomplish this outcome at this meeting, “B” is important - we should accomplish this outcome, and “C” is trivial - we could do this, but the world won't come to an end if we don't accomplish this today. When prioritizing, quickly go through the list and ask “Is this an A, B, or C?” and write down the most agreed-upon letter. Some teams continue to prioritize by sequencing each group of letters - identifying A1, A2, A3, B1, B2, B3, C1, C2, C3. Elapsed time: one or two minutes.

You have now built your agenda! Start with the A1, and move through the list. Total time: no more than ten minutes - a worthwhile investment to the team's work.



“High performing organizations increasingly require a flexible and balanced leadership effort that fully exploits nonteam as well as team approaches.”

Jon R. Katzenbach  
*Teams at the Top*



## From the Bookshelf

Companies all across the economic spectrum are making use of teams. They go by a variety of names and can be found at all levels. In fact, you are likely to find the group at the very top of an organization professing to be a team. But even in the best of companies, a so-called top team seldom functions as a *real* team. Jon Katzenbach, author of the best-seller *Wisdom of Teams*, has just released *Teams at the Top: Unleashing the Potential of Both Teams and Individual Leaders*. He states that a team effort at the top can be essential to capturing the highest performance results possible — when the conditions are right. Good leadership requires differentiating between team and nonteam opportunities, and then acting accordingly.

Three litmus tests must be passed for a team at the top to be effective. First, the team must shape collective work products — these are tangible performance results that the group can achieve working together that surpass what the team members could have achieved working on their own. Second, the leadership role must shift, depending on the task at hand. And third, the team’s members must be mutually accountable for the group’s results.

When these criteria can be met, senior executives should come together to achieve real team performance. When the criteria cannot be met, they should rely on the individual leadership skills that they have honed over the years.



## Exercising Influence

Influence is a very complex set of behaviors and interactions. There are many ways to influence others -- and most teams try to convince them of what they want, or sell the benefits. If this works, great!. If not, you may want to try some other techniques.

First, **identify your purpose** or what your team is looking for. Is it to get something specific done? Influence someone to make a commitment? Take responsibility for something? Give you important information?

**Consider the context** or what is going on with the organization or individual. Evaluate what has happened in the past and your current relationship. How will this help or hinder your ability to influence?

**Select a strategy** (or a combination) which will help you achieve results as well as further your relationship. Here are several approaches with possible “sentence starters”:

**Ask open-ended questions** in a way that doesn’t imply either a right answer or assume responsibility. “What do you think about...” “How might we do this?”

“What are your ideas about....”

**Ask for clarification** to gain a clearer understanding of what has been said. “What do you mean by....” “When you say....”

**Build on what has been said** to deepen or extend the thinking. “You mentioned.....could you say more about that?” “Help us to understand.”

**Check for understanding.** Paraphrase or rephrase what was said and ask for agreement or correction. “What I hear you saying is....” “As I understand it....” “Let me see if I understand what you are saying....” “So you think (hope, feel, believe)....”

**Identify with the other’s** situation, experience or feelings and how it could be affecting the other person. “If I were you, I might be feeling....” “I remember how I felt when....”

**Paint a picture.** Describe the future in today’s terms, helping the other person to envision the results. “I can see us...” “Picture this....”

**Generate enthusiasm** by urging the other person to join the team

in taking action. “I know we can...” “I believe as a team....”

**Offer incentives** or negotiate a fair exchange. “If you do this, we will....” “In exchange, we will....”

**Test the unsaid.** Sometimes, the real issue has not been spoken. If you sense there is something which hasn’t been said, test it out: “I am wondering if you might be concerned about....” “If we do this, are you concerned about...?”

**Ask a show stopper** question: “What would it take for you to....” or “What could we do so you would agree?”

If you still cannot influence the situation, you can simply walk away and come back another day.

*Call for more information on the upcoming seminar Exercising Influence: Building Relationships and Getting Results on May 13-14, 1998 in Richmond, Virginia.*