

Building Multi-Organizational Teams Under One Roof #1

By Paul Clayton

A consultant friend of mine recently told me about going into a big One Stop Center and using the employee lunch room and seeing three different microwaves, each labeled which organization could use them. If we are separating in the lunch room what are we doing to our customers? People leave signs all over the place about how they feel.

The first big mistake is assuming that people working together will create a team by calling them a team. "I just want you to work like a team." Being a team takes a lot of coaching and training. Just because I get five people together and throw them a basket ball does not mean that they become a team. If you ask people in your office what they think a team is and ask for examples I bet you get different answers.

Second: Years ago the organization I was working for was having some inter personal problems. The director got us all together and said something like "You don't have to like each other you just have to work together" At the time I thought nothing of that statement but now it sounds real stupid. What if several members of a pro team had some big personality problems would the team function real well? In order to begin to create a team you need people real friendly toward one another.

Third: you need a goal, a vision. People can come from different backgrounds and different cultures and still create a team but they need a vision that will bring them together. "I have a dream," "The promised land," "The New Frontier," "Thy Kingdom Come". A vision that all can believe in, a goal to obtain. People will follow a leader with a vision.

Forth: A trust level in the team. When you have separate meetings for the supervisors and don't allow front line staff to join in, it hinders the staff's trust level. The City Manager of Key West invites the directors to bring a least one front line worker to the Department Directors meeting.

These are just a few things that have to happen before we can even get started. In the next few letters I am going to make suggestions about how to bring this about.

If you have seen signs physical signs of non team work in your office or have any thoughts this topic let me know and I share them.

I received lots of responses including many phone calls from my last article on team building. It seems from many of the responses there seems to be a lot of people just renting space at our One Stops. I have enclosed some of the responses that I received, there are some great examples of team work inclosed. Next week I am going to suggest more about creating teams and organizational pride. This week I commented on a few of the responses the underlined ones. This is long but worth reading, may be it could be used as a discussion top at you next staff meeting.

I hope that you have a great week and be safe.

Paul

RESPONSES FROM BUILDING TEAMS

Very on target. And how do we teach this to our students, customers, etc. when we don't really get it ourselves. Just getting the message from you is a reminder to me to do what I can to create real teams in my life. Sharon NY

Happily, our office currently functions with much more of a genuine team-oriented attitude than it did in the past. Unfortunately, there was a time in our organization's history where our (past) management decided we needed to become a team and we were basically told, "You're going to become a team, damn it-and you're going to like it." A consultant was hired and our agency's case management/job development staff were divided into two competing teams with an equal number of case managers and job developers on each team. It was handled badly, and all hell broke loose. People who had previously worked well together were at each other's throats. We were told that our evaluations (equated with our "permanent records") would be based on our ability to serve more clients than the opposing team, we'd be rated on how many OJTs were written, how many clients were placed in higher paying jobs, and other such strategies designed to make each team a "cohesive unit."

We were told that these strategies worked really well in car dealerships.

After much metaphorical blood-shed, and more than one person on the brink of going out on stress leave, the competing team idea was, thankfully, abandoned. Several years and at least a few team building approaches later, we have a pretty solid group of staff. Within our own specific agency we do well most of the time of keeping the common goals in mind. I'd like to see us behaving more the way we did a year or so ago when the majority of our agency's staff really seemed to like and care about each other as people, as well as the agency's good as a whole. We're just in a little slump right now, I think, but there was a time (at the end of the time mentioned above) when it was unspeakably dreadful. Within the One-Stop partnership, for the most part, we're a pretty good team on a front line staff level, but on the partnership management level there seems, at times, to be more friction. I can't wait to hear feedback from other agencies on how they are functioning. It will either serve to give us all new ideas or to make us feel thankful that we're as functional as we are! Bridget CA

This one really hit home because we worked together for five years as potential partners in our community (Tulare County, California) before we ever opened our One-Stop (called the Employment Connection here) doors. It was through working together that we discovered what would be potential problems in the future, like funding streams and specific rules and regulations that might be hard to integrate into the group effort. We worked on these problems prior to our conjoining and it made the transition into the single site a lot easier. We are celebrating our 1st Anniversary now (last December) and

we hardly ever think of ourselves as separate entities. The credit for this seamless transition goes to a total group effort involving all 27 Partners of this One-Stop operation. We have sites in Visalia (where I am located), Tulare, and Porterville. We are planning to open a fourth One-Stop location to the North in Dinuba. This one has taken longer due to the lack of a suitable location. We also have a Site Committee at each location who work on any problems that may arise. Soon after we had our first Site Committee Meeting, we decided to set up sub-committees that will focus on certain areas of our operations and be sensitive to any particular problems that occur in any of those areas. We've also created a sub-committee that we refer to as the "Partners in Motion". We work together as representatives from all the different Partners that are involved in these One-Stops and plan activities and social events that we open to everyone. We try to plan at least one a month. We've had a Silent Auction that netted over \$500 that was donated to the United Way, and many events that centered around the holidays that have occurred along the way. We're planning a "Baked Potato Bar" for March in honor of St. Patrick's Day. Working together and not allowing anyone to deliberately try to separate into "off-shoot groups" has kept us unified and moving forward. This really comes into focus when we get a new employee who isn't used to this kind of team work. We try to make sure that we stress togetherness when we do our "Welcome Wagon" presentation from all the Partners. That usually gets the point across immediately! Anyhow, we 1 Year old now and still have room for growth, but we're working together as a team and loving every minute of it! We know what our goal is and how we can achieve it...TEAM WORK...that's the key. Our motto is, "One person pulling alone can't accomplish much, but all of us pulling together can move mountains"! Joy Blanchard
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Our office consists of 5 different activities. We also have several different personality types & personal interests. Whenever one is working with deadlines, an understaffed office and pressures of top performance, there is bound to be some conflict. What really counts is how the conflict is handled. So often people have a negative attitude toward conflict - it's no wonder some people tend to shy away from it. We have taken the time to do some "fun" training to get to know one another & learn about each other's personality. It helps to understand why people react the way they do.

Now, we are able to recognize personality differences & are more aware of taking the time to get to know one another so that when a new person arrives, we are prepared & excited to see a new personality!

Granted, this is something that we all need to be aware of & remind ourselves often, we do have occasions of falling into the old way but with a good team in place, someone brings you back to reality to remind you of what we have learned. Most of the time it works. Janet IA jawalker@cityofdubuque.org

This is a great topic. I have been in those office with "labeled microwaves". The sad thing is that not only do they treat their partners with a hand off my stuff attitude, they treat their co-workers the same way It reminds me of the story about Everybody ...There was an important job to be done, and Everybody was asked to do it. Everybody was sure that

Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody was angry about that, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, but Nobody realised Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up where Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done. Have a good week...It's sunny in Washington State today! Debby

We are the prime example of the is and the is not's. For many of us with experience in the training arena, we have tried numerous ways to motivate our clients and each other, unfortunately our particular contractor told us to do our own program and whether we knew of successes and failures it did not matter. On the other hand, there have been reports in other areas how the contractors and state workers melt together with knowledge and experience and depend on one another to obtain their goals. There is a old saying UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL. Take care and keep up the good work. TX

I am very interested in your Team concept. I work in a Call Center and we have teams. We have are everyday struggle with management and employee differences, but I try with my team to build a relationship (some days not easy). I think the biggest thing when building a team is "Respect" and I am trying to have individuals work on projects together to build that. Any Suggestion??? Sherry :-) RI I will talk about this next week Paul

We have recently undergone a period of layoffs. There were a total of 8 team members affected. Here's the challenge. There are several team members that are having difficulty in adjusting to this new work environment. They have voice concerns about their own job security. I know that this is a natural "aftershock". But do you have any ideas about increasing morale? I am a strong believer that no ones job is "sacred", but I feel that we can survive in the work environment without coming to work each day wondering "Am I next?" Can you help? Wes

Anytime there are layoffs etc everyone in the office thinks the same thing. Am I next? This is a normal process and similar to the grieving process. It is extremely difficult for people to put energy into something that may not be finished. If these are the last of the layoffs then people should be assured of that. I would suggest that you have lots of pep talks and keep one theme or a focus like celebrating each placement etc. Paul

Just about every thing we do involves relationships, whether it is with our spouse/partner, our children, our co workers, etc.

If we stop to think about it, every thing we do is basically in concert with someone else. If we are driving on the Interstate Hwy travelling 70 mph we have responsibilities to ourselves and to other drivers. All drivers have to work as a team abiding by the rules of the road in order to make driving a safe experience. If we are in a restaurant, we must wait our turn to be served, use proper etiquette and have a pleasant demeanor in order to have a wonderful dining experience. We must work as a team with those who are serving us to ensure our needs are met and to ensure we are meeting their needs as servers. If we are parents and we have children, we all must work as a team in the morning getting ready for work/school/etc in order to help our day get off to a good start. If we can get

our clients to buy into the fact that they are already a member of a team several times a day, it is easier for them to understand the concept of being a team player at work. Helping them understand that to be a good team player at work means they must become proficient at having and maintaining all different kinds of relationships. Once they see they are already participants on several teams and that they have some control over whether the team is a winning or losing team, most clients will adopt the attitude that they want to be on a winning team and will learn to do those things that are associated with winners. Hope this helps Susan GA

What is a team? According to the dictionary, team used an adjective is "marked by devotion to teamwork rather than individual achievement". In a One-Stop, I believe that needs to be the goal, to work together for the success of the customer which will reflect the success of the One-Stop. I do believe this is very hard to do given the different entities within a One-Stop and their individual requirements. Some entities within the One-Stop fear losing their identity. To me that means not focusing on the importance of being there, to serve the customer to the best of our ability. As you said, there needs to be a common goal for all and striving together towards that goal is teamwork.

I don't know if there is a model One-Stop in California or in the Nation. I have seen many One-Stops in California that are collocations only. Within these One-Stops, I believe there is some teamwork but may not encompass all the entities within the One-Stop. Anita CA

Key words for team building:.... Shared vision, shared decision making no secrets, holistic ,no hierarchy, facilitators, not managers....generalist or specialist....depending on the type of work...it is important to have various personality "types" on the team...not all technocrats or all creative types...variety creates the right kind of group dynamics...odd that you should mention ...the example of teamwork that i use in job club is the family unit....each with their duties responsibilities and unique talents.....pulling together rather than apart...esp.... In single parent families.....one of the major problems in team concepts for most "old school" military model" managers is the relinquishing of power that must take place....the artificial power of the manager.....Len.. Ohio

I'll have to think about how we have such a great team in my office. I would love to think that it is because I'm such a great person and people just want to please me but....NOT!! Its really hard work to build a team and keep them pumped up.

We all had dinner together at a restaurant the other night, and I bought each of them a present I think I surprised a couple of my staff who are having difficulty "fitting in" recently.

I also have paid out of my own pocket, on occasion, for staff to attend classes in special things like Power Point or let my Employment Specialist attend training sessions that I am invited to, because I'm a Director of my agency. She just loves it that she gets to rub shoulders with "the big wigs" but more importantly, she feels really obligated to get the information correctly and bring it back to share with her co-workers. The benefit to me,

of course, is that I don't have to go to all of the meetings, I get the information, and I have a very happy staff person.

When I am out of the office, NO ONE is in charge of anyone else. I travel to other offices to do training, and it is so obvious to me when an equally staturesd (is that a word?) person is put in charge of everyone else in the director's absence, that it is demoralizing to the rest of the staff and creates monsters sometimes. When I am out EVERYONE is in charge. Not only of their own job duties, but in charge of the success of our agency. I think they really function more effectively as a team when I am gone than when I am there since I'm such a control freak. When I'm there, they are able to relax more too since I take the hard cases, weird phone calls, etc.

I'd put my team up against any team in the US. And by the way, my staff is entirely made up of enrollees. I am the only paid non-enrollee staff, so if it's done right, pay isn't the issue. It's the self esteem, its the being able to take great news home and share it with family and friends, its the knowing that the person who is in charge thinks you are a star. Don't we all wish for those things at work??? CA