Dealing with Dysfunctional Teams

Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision by directing individual accomplishments toward desired goals and objectives. Obviously, the leader has a significant role to play in developing a team. Much can be understood about the team by studying the leader and his/her actions (not words!). An effective leader, for example, can facilitate a trusting environment by showing trust; he/she can foster accountability by being accountable and dealing with those who are not. So as a team leader it is crucial that you intervene when someone is not performing as an effective member of the team.

Why are Teams Dysfunctional?

- Lack strong, supportive leadership
- Lack of purpose (relates to leadership)
- Consist of team members who have both poor communications and interpersonal skills
- Team members lack the skills to perform well, yet they conceal this

Types of Dysfunctional Teams:

- Individualists
  - Everyone is out for him/herself – no unified effort
  - Striving for power and attention
  - Passive resistance
  - Mediocrity prevails
- Conflict-avoiding
  - Everyone seems compromise all just to get along
  - Creativity and innovation suffer because no one want to speak up and be seen as a trouble-making
  - Mediocrity prevails
- Indecisive
  - Poor decision-making abilities
  - Leader makes the decisions

How to Begin Building a Collaborative Team:

- Establish a common vision and set of goals for the team
  - Ensure all members understand them
  - Reiterate throughout the rotation, as needed
- Get to know each other
  - Foster camaraderie
  - Establish a team identity
- Establish some ground rules
  - Define an acceptable means of interaction, conduct, and performance
- Define each member’s role
- Handle tough issues and conflict together (this may not always be possible)
- Provide positive feedback

Dysfunctional Teams
Resolving Conflict

Conflict Styles

Once you understand the different styles, you can use them to think about the most appropriate approach (or mixture of approaches) for your situation.

1. Forcing
   - Operates from a position of power
   - Know what you want
   - Can be useful in emergency situations
   - Can leave others feeling resentful (if used repeatedly)

2. Collaborative
   - Solves the problem together
   - Tries to meet the needs of all involved
   - Communicates that everyone is important
   - Useful when there have been previous conflicts in the group
   - Can take longer than other styles to find a resolution

3. Compromising
   - Tries to find a solution to partially satisfy everyone
   - Expects to give up something
   - Useful when team members are at equal levels and at a firm standstill

4. Accommodating
   - Willing to meet the needs of others (at your own expense)
   - Knows when to give into others, but can be persuaded to give in even when it is not necessary
   - Not assertive, highly accommodating
   - Useful when issues matter more to the other person (and outcomes are not detrimental)
   - Not a strong leadership style – unlikely to yield good outcomes

5. Avoiding
   - Tries to evade conflict entirely
   - Does not want to hurt anyone’s feelings
   - Delegates controversial decisions
   - Can be useful when the controversy is minor or when someone else is actually in a position to better solve the problem
   - Again, not a strong leadership style – ineffective approach