

The five pillars of teamwork (Part III)

Pay attention to results

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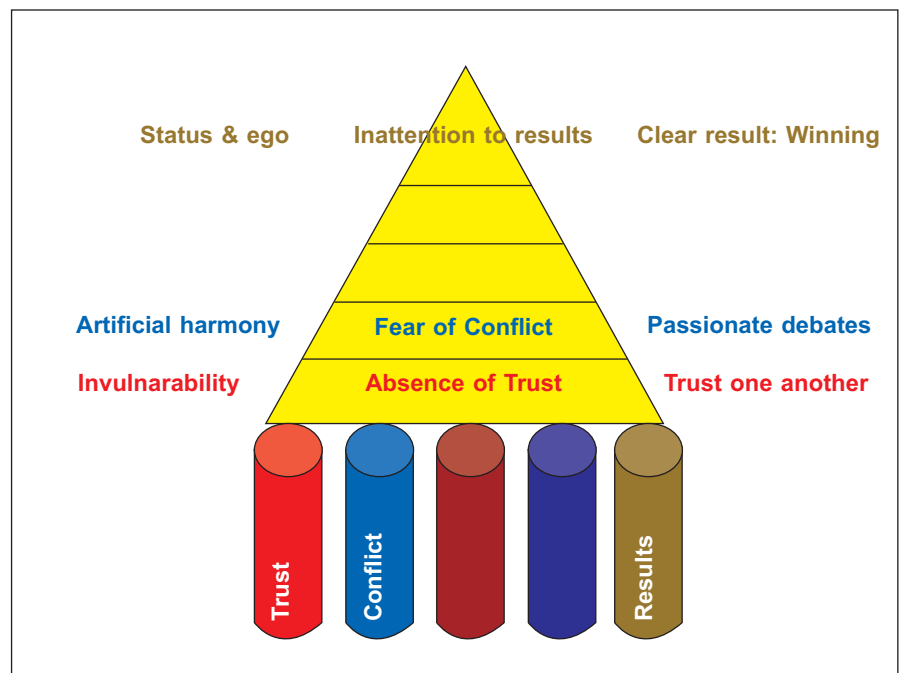
After Trust and Conflict, let's proceed to the ultimate pillar or value 'Paying attention to results', or rather 'Inattention to results,' as is today. We will have to revisit Trust many times, and come back to the other values. The results that any organisation wants to achieve are the goals set at the beginning. It is said that your 'goals must be set in concrete, while plans made in sand'. Goal is also your dream with a date on it. Can you imagine a game of soccer without goal posts? Where would you shoot? How would you decide the score? So setting goals are necessary to measure performance. World over 'inattention to results' is the ultimate dysfunction of any team. Why? And how can you correct it? Read on

Sit through any team meeting and it is easy to notice the tendency of team members to seek out individual recognition and attention at the expense of results, I mean collective results – the goals of the entire team. This is a typical dysfunction of a team. The requirement for any team that judges itself on performance must be unrelenting focus on specific objectives and clearly defined goals or outcomes.

Teamwork means cooperation, collaboration, joint effort and solidarity. Think of the good old team games. Why do you think team members in most organisations focus on individual recognition and attentions? Their egos. Does that mean sportsmen do not have egos? They have huge egos, but these egos are usually tied to a clear result – winning. They just want to win – as

a team – more than being called a star, or getting their picture in the box or even making money. If you have not figured it out yet, just understand that the teams that figure it out have a bigger advantage than ever before because most of their competitors are just a bunch of individuals looking out for them.

What does all this have to do with manufacturing or software, you might ask, depending on where your company is segmentised? Good question. It has everything to do if you are going to make your collective results as important as the score at the football world cup game. You would not want to leave any room for interpretation when it comes to your success, because that only creates the opportunity for the individual ego to sneak in.



Credit: Lencioni's tables

A team that is not focussed on results	A team that focusses on collective results
Stagnates / fails to grow	Retains achievement – oriented employees
Rarely defeats competitors	Minimises individualistic behaviour
Loses achievement-oriented employees	Enjoys success and suffers failure acutely
Encourages team members to focus on their own careers and individual goals	Benefits from individuals who subjugate their own goals/interests for the good of the team
Is easily distracted	Avoids distractions

The results that the team needs to achieve must be so clear (to everyone in the team) that no one would even consider doing something purely to enhance his or her individual status or ego. Because that would diminish the teams collective ability to achieve its collective goals. In such a case everyone would lose. The key, of course, is to define your goals or results in such a way that it is simple enough to grasp easily, and specific enough to be actionable. It should be noted that results are not limited to financial measures like profit, revenue, or shareholder returns. Though, it is true that many organisations in the capitalist economic environment ultimately measure their success in these terms, it is essential to refer to a far broader definition of results, one related to outcome-based performance. Profit is not actionable enough. It needs to be more closely related to what you do on a daily basis.

Planned specific to time periods, it is these goals that drive more than the financial metrics. The other way around is that when you drive these metrics, they drive your financial results. These goals must make up for all near and long term results desired. The goals and objectives that the executives set for themselves along the way constitute a more representative example of the results they strive for as a team, rather than the profit goals, which the corporations use as the ultimate measure of their results.

Other than results, teams also focus on their status – both team and individual status. To some members, merely being part of a team is satisfying enough. Such people desire achievement of specific results but do not consider it worthy of great sacrifice or inconvenience. Many teams fall a prey to the lure of status. This also happens in philanthropic, unselfish,

altruistic organisations that believe more in the nobility of their mission to justify their satisfaction. When prestigious companies see that success is merely being associated with their special organisations they fall a prey to this dysfunction – inattention to results.

When team members tend to focus on enhancing their own positions or career prospects at the expense of their teams, they are focussing on individual status. A functional team must make collective results of the group more important to each individual than the individual members' goals. As obvious as this dysfunction might seem and obvious that it must be avoided, it should be noted here that many teams are not result focussed. They do not live and breathe in order to achieve meaningful objectives, but rather merely to exist or survive. Unfortunately, for such groups, no amount of trust, conflict, commitment or accountability can compensate for a lack of desire to win.

Tools to overcome this dysfunction

How do you ensure that attention is focussed on results? By making the results clear and understood by all, and by rewarding only those behaviours and actions that contribute to those results. When a team declares publicly their intent to win, they are more likely to work with a passionate, desperate desire to achieve their results. On the other hand, teams that merely say, "we'll do our best" are subtly, if not purposefully preparing themselves for failure. An effective way to ensure that team members focus their attention on results is to tie their rewards - compensation - to the achievement of specific goals or results or outcomes. Be careful not to rely on this entirely, because it assumes that financial motivation is the sole driver of behaviour. Letting

someone take home a bonus merely for 'trying hard' sends home a message that achieving the outcome may not be very important after all.

Building good thinking is a necessary role of leadership (refer 'Good Thinking' in 'Mantras for Manufacturing Excellence' published in *MMT* August-September 2005). The role of a leader is to set the tone and focus the group on achieving the results (refer 'Crossing the Great Divide' in *MMT* January 2005). If the team members sense that the leader values anything other than results, they will take that as permission to do the same for themselves (refer 'Changed Thinking – A Eureka Moment' in *MMT* October-November 2005). Therefore, it is important that team leaders must be selfless and objective, and reserve rewards and recognition for those who make real contributions to the achievement of group goals.

As much as information contained in this series on teamwork, the reality remains that teamwork ultimately comes down to practicing these set of principles over a long period of time. Success is not a matter of mastering subtle sophisticated theory but rather embracing common sense with uncommon levels of discipline and persistence. Teams succeed because they are human. By acknowledging the imperfections of their humanity, members of a functional team overcome the natural tendencies that make trust, conflict and results so elusive. ♦



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