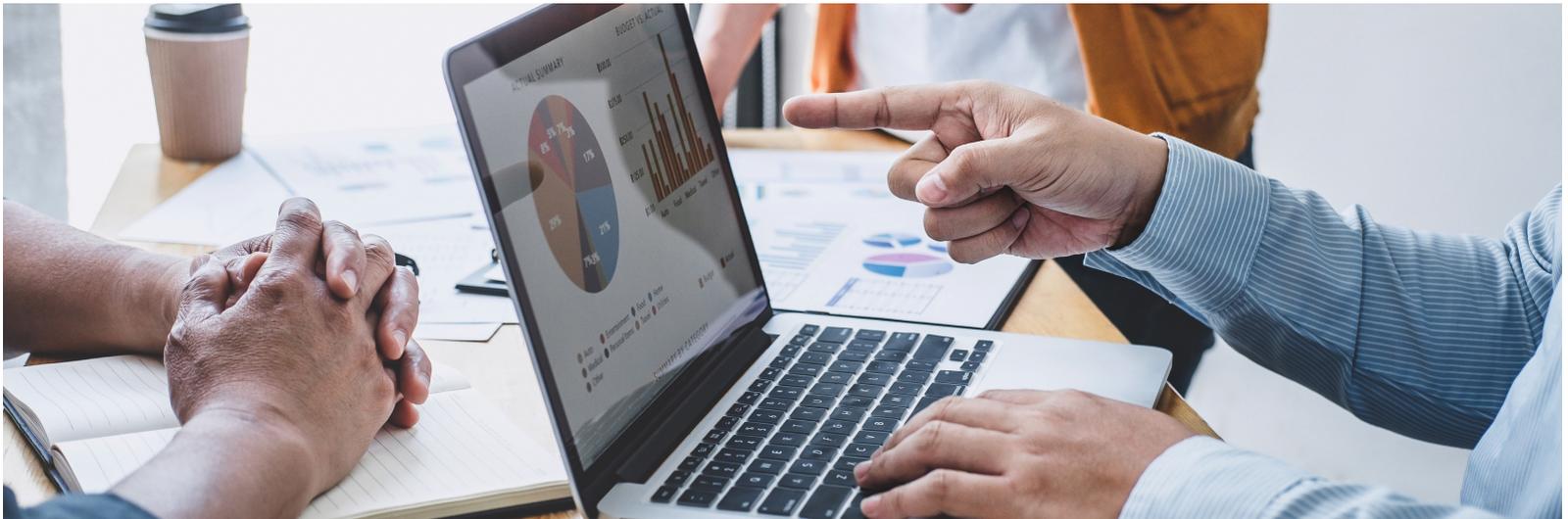


Squeezing Extra Performance from Teams

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Consistent and sustainable high performance from teams has never been achieved by simply instructing them to work better harder and faster, and issuing veiled threats if they don't.

As with any social group, the behaviour of work teams is the outcome of a complex mix of situation, opportunity, and individual motivation.

Exploring the factors that contribute to effective team working can help improve our understanding of how teams can generate top results.

In their seminal book 'The Wisdom of Teams' (Harvard Business School Press) team working gurus, Jon R Katzenbach and Douglas K Smith identify five key elements that directly impact team performance.

1. Meaningful Purpose
2. Performance Goals
3. Common Approach
4. Complementary Skills
5. Mutual Accountability

At Bourton Group we have developed and refined a proven approach that helps teams to develop in these five areas and go on to generate extraordinary performance. Central to our approach is enabling teams to find answers for themselves which they can relate to and feel they 'own'.

Why are you here?

For a group of people to be a 'team' there needs to be a common, shared purpose that gives them a sense of identity and direction. Whilst there are many different types of teams that may work together in the short or long term, it is the core purpose that provides focus and momentum for both individual and collective activity. This will inevitably be shaped by the needs of the organisation and its customers.

However, spending time with a team helping them to explore and translate this into something that is specific and relevant to them. This will give them a yardstick against which they can assign priorities, measure progress and direct their energy. Clearly, the more relevant, meaningful and compelling the core purpose is, the more likely team members are to buy into it.

Top tip: Help the team to express core purpose in their own words!



How can you help each other?

Teams work more effectively and efficiently when they have challenging, achievable and shared goals. These goals should demonstrate a clear relationship with their core purpose and present a level of challenge and potential reward that individual members feel worth working for.

Help your teams to identify what helps and hinders them in the achievement of their core purpose, and to translate these into measurable tasks and activities. The more closely the team can identify and shape their own goals, measures and targets the more likely they are to work together to deliver them.

Top tip: encourage teams to think about performance in terms of cost quality and delivery, and measures in terms of leading (what's coming up), in-process (what's going on), and lagging (what's happened) indicators.

How would you like to work together?

Having a clear direction and useful progress monitors, in themselves, don't create great teamwork. At best, people will work on their own initiative: at worst their activities may be counterproductive.

Again, help the team to examine the context in which they are operating to identify external constraints on how they work.



Examples may include regulations, policies, technologies and quality standards. Help the team to work out how these constraints impact the way they operate and help them to establish those areas where they may use their own discretion.

These may involve, for example, selecting their own team members; managing their own budget; writing their own procedures, etc. Once these 'ground rules' is defined, teams can then determine for themselves how they want to work. They may wish to underpin these ways of working with some shared values which set out the standard of team behaviour: what is/isn't acceptable and what they expect from each other.

Having greater control over who does what, when, where, and how within the team will improve co-operation, improve response times, and make better use of resources.

Top Tip: Formalise the authority, information, and resources that will enable the team to deliver and give them discretion on how they use these.



What do you want to achieve?

To contribute effectively to a team effort, individuals need to be competent and confident in their agreed role. However, for a team to generate that extra performance, everyone needs to possess not only the technical or functional skills necessary, but they also need to be equally adept at problem-solving, decision making, and interpersonal skills.

Spend time with the team showing them how to follow a structured improvement approach (such as plan, do, check, act) with a suite of basic tools. Similarly, use team profiling to help everyone understand the impact of individual personalities and how to play to strengths. Sharing a suite of communication and conflict resolution tools will also help maintain harmonious relationships and quickly overcome barriers to effective performance.

Top Tip: Encourage the team to take ownership of their own skills development using a skills matrix

Are you in this together?

Where the first four elements are embedded in the team, the likelihood of mutual accountability increases. Trust, commitment and honesty cannot be 'commanded', they are the outcomes of a mutually positive experience. Initially, this experience must be consciously introduced and maintained but in time will become self-perpetuating as a team matures.

However, teams that are newly formed, or find themselves operating in a different context, will need facilitation and support to progress. Using Bruce Tuckman's model to illustrate the team's journey will help them to understand where they are and how they need to move on.

Top tip: Ensure that your organisation's recognition and reward systems reflect team effectiveness as well as individual contribution.

MATRIX SKILLS

No	Name	SKILLS				
		Skillset 1	Skillset 2	Skillset 3	Skillset 4	...
1.	Asep					
2.	Sarah					
3.	David					
...	...					



Basic



Developing



Performing



Teaching

In conclusion

Without the answers to these questions, teams will need more direction and control.

Decisions must be made for them and they will expect problems to be solved by someone else. This causes delays, absorbs management time, misuses potential and ultimately, devalues individuals.

If you're investing time in empowering your teams to do these things for themselves and let them take ownership of their own results, you will not need to squeeze extra performance from them.

They will be delivering it to you!

if you'd like to know more about this subject then get in touch on 01926 633333 or email info@bourton.co.uk.