



Harry Franzheim—an HR/OD Practitioner for over 30 years—has published this newsletter to bring you careful insight into reducing costs and unlocking employee potential.

AT ISSUE

Don't harm your existing team and their sense of unity when adding new players to the mix. It's important for managers to shift their leadership style to manage the team building process.

Are You Ready to Rebuild Your Teams?



HR Fact:

The opposite of love is not hate. It is apathy. Give me a workforce that hates the way things are and we can move mountains. Give me a workforce that doesn't care and you might as well close the doors. Conflict at work is a positive sign. Don't quash it; embrace it. Don't ignore it; harness it. Employees that complain still care.

There is nothing like a good downturn in the economy to force a business to get lean—maybe too lean? As you start to rebuild your teams by adding employees, it is important to remember the team building process and the role of your leaders. Remember, new employees are another form of “work” for existing staff. The people you have in place now are probably working well as a team but probably getting close to being overworked. As you add employees, it will likely devastate the existing sense of teamwork, unless you manage the team building process and shift your leadership style.

The Four Stages of Development

All teams go through predictable and therefore classifiable stages of development (Bruce Tuckman, 1965). The stages are Forming, Storming, Norming, and High Performing. You must climb through the stages, like a set of stairs, without skipping one. And, while we all want and expect a team to be

high performing, you can't just get there without going through the prior stages.

THE FORMING STAGE

This stage of team development is identified by the cautiousness and anxiousness of team members. As you add people, the new and the existing employees will be excited at first but also concerned about how things will work out. Employees will wonder what their role will be. What the expectations are. And how they will fit in. They will be optimistic but possibly confused about the purpose of the team and how success will be defined.

THE STORMING STAGE

You will know that the team is past the forming stage when conflict among members and challenging of the leader emerge. This is called the “Storming” stage and it feels awful. Most employees want to get off the team and most leaders want to quash the unrest. That would be a mistake.

Conflict on a team is a positive signal. It tells a leader that people care; they care enough to complain or to question the process or to question leadership, which is risky behavior. But it is risk-taking that will allow trust to flourish. And trust is the fuel for a high-performing team. Still, there is one more important stage that you must get through before a team is high performing.

THE NORMING STAGE

To help manage the conflict, it is critical that the team be empowered to resolve their issues as a team. A team that learns how to manage their differences will quickly grow to high performing. That means that team members will need training in conflict resolution, effective listening, problem solving, and personal accountability. The team needs to have a process for discussing and working through their issues. Team meetings are essential at this stage and they need to be frequent, non-negotiable in

attendance, and well managed. The team will begin to set their own expectations and set team goals. They will determine the acceptable behaviors and how to handle deviations or problems. When you see individuals giving up their personal needs for the good of the team, they have reached the “Norming” stage of team development.

THE HIGH-PERFORMING STAGE

If you have ever been on a “High Performing” team, you know that you’d love to get on one again. Most people have never experienced the sense of unity, care, and success that comes from this stage. This stage is incredibly productive and the team can easily carve through problems and conflict. This stage breeds innovation. Because trust is so high at this stage, people feel comfortable serving up ideas and offering opinions. The diversity of thought among team members is unleashed and solutions to plaguing problems appear out of nowhere. Clearly, this stage is where we would like all of our teams to get to quickly and permanently.

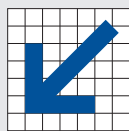
Unfortunately, there is another stage of team development called “Adjourning” and, as a result of the economic downturn, this is what has likely taken place over the past few years. So we now have to start all over. And this is why your leadership team needs to know what to do.

Failure to Recognize the Stages

As you might imagine, the leadership needs of a team that is forming are vastly different from the needs of a high-performing team. Yet many managers or supervisors fail to recognize the stages of team development and fail to shift their style accordingly. We worked with a team that, despite working together for years, had never moved beyond the forming stage. An interview with the leader suggested why. The leader professed a “hands off” style—he hired bright managers and paid them well, so he expected them to act appropriately. And they did, as individuals, but as a team they were awful.

TIP FOR KEEPING

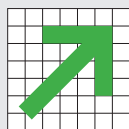
Costs Down.



Focus your leadership target on improving quality. It is cheaper to make a product or do a process once than it is to do it over. It takes the same amount of money to make a good unit as it does to make a bad one. The only difference is that you can sell the good unit. Quality improvement means finding the best known method, removing variation and waste, and using standard procedures. Employees will then need to be trained to the standard and leaders will need to audit for compliance. Employees might complain that they don’t have time to do as the procedure states, but what’s funny is they always find time to do it over.

TIP FOR KEEPING

Productivity Up.



Do you need to improve your efficiency and productivity? Before investing in the latest from the “lean gurus,” try simply asking your employees for ideas to make the process smoother, safer, faster. Go where they work and observe what they do. Ask them why they do it that way. As you listen, you will learn. And when you learn, you will understand that those closest to the problems are also closest to the solutions. When employees offer suggestions for improvement and their ideas are acted upon, the resulting changes are usually sustainable. It makes good business sense to engage the minds and the backs of our employees.

In fact, it is the leaders’ responsibility to determine the stage of team development and to provide the style of leadership needed. Forming teams need a “telling style” of leadership. Teams that are storming need a “guiding style.” Teams that are in the norming stage need an “encouraging style.” And the high-performing teams need an “empowering style.” (Parallax Challenges – 1999)

When Teams Get Stuck

Failure to match leadership style with the team development stage can cause teams to get stuck. We worked with a team and a leader that could not stomach conflict. Whenever an issue was raised about someone not pulling their weight or taking shortcuts, the leader would either take the responsibility to correct the problem himself or he would attempt to sweep it under the rug. Both leadership behaviors sheltered the team from the conflict resolution process needed to get to the storming stage. Consequently, the team remained in the forming stage and the leader was constantly using the telling style and always solving problems for the team. That is a recipe for leadership burnout and poor team morale. Teams that get stuck will experience higher absenteeism, turnover and injuries, and will flounder. That is a recipe for higher costs, lower production, and inefficiencies.

Employees Will Come and Go

In a constantly changing work environment, team members will come and go. And as businesses recover from the downturn, your current employees may be looking for better positions as they open up. In turn, you will be adding employees to replace them or for growth. Either way, the impact on your leadership team will be significant. They will complain about the impact the new employees will have on their metrics. Complaining won’t help. What will help is reminding your leaders of their obligation and helping them understand that it is their job to begin the process of rebuilding their teams. **ne**



903 East Main Street, Suite 103
Auburn, Washington 98002
T: 253.887.0746
W: NewEraHRsolutions.com

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Harry C. Franzheim

hfranzheim@newerahrsolutions.com