

# Group Dynamics- The Pursuit for Improving Team Performance

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Risking self-disclosure and participating in fair confrontation, is also known as the search for the truth before reality sets in

# The Appleton International of today

- We supply solutions for papermakers
- Rapidly changing industry conditions required that we renewed our organization
- We pursued an agenda of leading practices
- A need to exceed the rate of external change
- We needed more speed in everything we did
- We needed a better process to align our team

# Objectives

- Explore the reasons that teams operate at different levels of efficiency
- Provide you with a different perspective on teams vs. traditional norms
- Knowledge and tools that you can use to change your team as a member or leader
- Share the process that we are using to improve our organization

# Why Is this relevant?

- Change programs get traction only when their teams have a vested interest
- Real change only happens when vested teams are a part of the action they seek
- Vested teams have members who are motivated and fulfilled
- Motivated people are attracted to teams who are successful
- New poll from TEC International - the biggest challenge is creating great teams

# Testing for dysfunction

- Does the team you are on make you more anxious and/or less energized?
- As a team member, does it seem like the leader is making most of the decisions?
- As a team leader, does it seem like the team won't make enough of the decisions?
- Are you frustrated when members of your team stay silent on tough issues?
- Do you have an insatiable need to choke certain team members but there are laws preventing you from doing so?

# Best Team Exercise

- Take a moment to identify the best team you have ever been a part of
- Write down the reasons – What made it the best team?
- What made it different from a current team that you would like to be better?
- Revisit both teams during our discussion and think of ways to bridge the gap

# Checklist of Effective Teams

## Survey says...

- The team had a clear purpose and shared values
- Shared fate - what happens to one happens to all
- Team members understood their role and strengths
- The team handled adversity
- Members were committed to each others success

# Understanding Teams

Having the basics in place for creating a great team does not guarantee success

Success is achieved only when there is ownership and accountability among all team members

In order to achieve this, you must first understand the principles that affect human behavior in a group setting

# Supporting research

- Dr. Wilford Bion–“Experiences in Groups”
- Dr. Jerry Harvey-The “Abilene Paradox”
- Dr. Pat Murray, “Group Dynamics and their impact on teams”

# Bion's Rules – The “Concept of the Herd”

- Humans are “pack animals” – our learning and development occurs in groups
- Individual action is a myth. We carry our groups with us – they don't need to be present to affect us
- Connection to a group is a requirement for survival

# Bion's Rules – The “Concept of Ground”

- Our identity and mental configuration comes from the groups in our lives
- We can't function unless we are standing on solid ground
- When its shaky we will pursue any and all means to find new ground

# Bion's rules – The concept of “Bams”

- “Basic assumption mental state” or BAMS
- Its when groups are either on or off
- When there is individual discomfort around issues
- As the tension rises individuals may “check out”
- It's the Leaders job to get the team back to work
- Use your gut to detect it and your courage to call it out
- Even the best teams go into “Bams”, but they know how to get out of it faster

# Harvey's rules – “Fear of Separation”

- Our fear of separation leads to “action anxiety”
- Therefore we sometimes imagine the worse case or “negative fantasy” which give us an excuse not to act
- When we shut down, the team shuts down

# The Irony of Separation

The inaction we sometimes take in order to avoid separation will often lead to the very separation we hoped to avoid.

There is no way to play it safe in the real world - the truth always wins.

# Harvey's rules - The concept of "False Agreements"

- Individuals supporting things they don't totally believe due to "group force"
- The team decides on an action you will not be fully committed to, but go along with
- Without commitment, comes a lack of accountability for the team's results
- This slows the team and may make it fail
- It's the slippery slope of not being honest

# The Irony of “False Agreements”

“Its not the ability to manage conflict,  
it's the inability to manage agreement”

# Murray's rules – The “Messiah Syndrome”

- When individuals take issues to the leader
- When leaders “save the day”
- Eventually team members give way
- At some point the leader will fail
- The team goes into crucify mode
- The search is on for a new leader
- How do you spot it?

# Murray's rules – The concept of “Real Issues”

- Definition of real issues – Even thinking about them turns our stomachs
- What do they usually center around
  - Lack of team member performance
  - A violation of a team intolerable (values)
  - The team purpose gets sidetracked
- What do team members do to avoid them
  - They “pair” – AKA the “meeting after”
- Real issues are the property of the team

# The Irony of Real Issues

The issues that can tear groups apart  
can be the same issues that can  
bring them together

# There is Hope...

*To counteract fear, and to make the individual strong to face whatever the future may hold, there is nothing so important as belonging to a group whose fate has a positive meaning to us.*

*~ Kurt Lewin*

# What You Can Do As The Leader

- The role of the leader is to maximize connection and minimize separation
- Brute force honesty – helping the group to surface and deal with its real issues
- Propose a list of “intolerables” and the consequences for breaking them
- Revisit the deal–confirm your agreements
- Just say no, stop the “Messiah Syndrome”

# Ending the “cycle”...What You Can Do As a Team Member

- Develop the courage to speak your mind
- Ask to confirm your teams purpose
- Offer a definition for real issues
- The list starts with pairing, messiahing and avoiding real issues
- Confront the action or issue, not the person
- Be a “Bammer”

# Developmental Confrontation

- No surprises and no feeding frenzies
- Revisit the deal – restate the expectations
- Speak for yourself – stand only behind you
- Educate yourself and be slow to understand
- Share your opinion in such a way that makes it easiest and safe for someone to hear-only they can choose to change and grow

# Appleton International's Journey

- We combined our business plan with our personal goals to define our shared fate
- We shared our "best team" experiences and defined our success criteria
- We risked our opinions by assessing each others strengths and weaknesses
- We publicly committed ourselves to the goal of investing in each other

# How do we keep it going?

- We meet monthly – insure that our business plan is in concert with our group process
- Encourage each other to surface “real issues”
- Confirm our purpose and revisit our strategy
- Conduct regular 360's
- Affirm that we are a work in process
- Celebrate our successes

# How have we benefited?

- We get to “real issues” quickly spending more time on resolution and strategies
- We discuss critical issues without the discomfort of “personal volleys”
- This process also reveals more options and better solutions
- We now try to focus on the best result, not necessarily the most popular idea
- We spend less time on distractions and more time on customers

# Setting Teams up for Success (the basics)

- Define the team's role, purpose and fate
- Agree on how to deal with the tough stuff
- Set the deal
- Expect some fall-out
- Avoid the traps that derail teams
- Know your role as a leader and/or team member
- Use the tools and language of the process

# What's your next step?

You must be the change you wish to see in your team...

# Future References

## Books

“No-Fault Negotiating” – Len Lertz

“Fierce Conversations” – Susan Scott

“The Five Dysfunctions of Teams” –  
Lencioni

“Abilene Paradox” – Jerry Harvey (also  
on video)

# Enjoy New Orleans!

- [www.pimaweb.org](http://www.pimaweb.org) for this presentation
- [www.appleton-intl.com](http://www.appleton-intl.com) for a transcript
- The best Cajun music is at the Cajun Cabin on Bourbon Street
- Don't forget about other great educational opportunities through PIMA and the CPBIS series