

Building the Team

Hiring and retention of personnel is the cornerstone of any business's success. Understanding the components of recruiting qualified employees is half the battle.

by Rudd McGary and Ed Wandtke

("Building the Team" begins the first in a three part series on team management. Parts II and III will appear in the September and October issues, respectively.)

There are a great many questions that come up when discussing how to hire and develop a successful workforce and develop it into a productive team.

Let's first define what teams are outside of sports and then go on to the major questions of hiring and recruiting of personnel that will make up your team.

Common objective

Teams are two or more people working towards a common objective within a given timeframe and with a strong central management or leadership function present.

If any of these parts are left out you simply won't have a team. The common objective must be understood by all the people you hire and all the people that are currently on the team, your employees.

Unless there is some reason for the team's existence, and that reason is to accomplish something, you can't hire



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PART 1

TEAM MANAGEMENT



IN BUSINESS

or recruit anyone. You should note that often different parts of your team have different specific objectives, but that overall the team has to understand how those different parts fit together toward one unified goal.

One division may be working on obtaining more customers while another division may be working on profit improvement through reducing cancels, improved quality of service or more frequent customer communications. A second part is the timeframe that you expect a specific task or objective to be accomplished in.

Don't say, "We want to give better service by next year," because the time frame is too long. While that may be your final objective you have to give the team members short term objectives so that they can have the feeling of accomplishment and understand how they are expected to perform in a given space of time.

A more realistic goal would be: Cancels for round 1 will be 35 percent below last year's round 1 cancels.

The third major part of the team concept is that there must be a strong central figure that is in charge. In sports this is a coach, in business it's the manager/owner.

The coach

Telling a group of people that you want them to work like a team is useless unless you have someone who is responsible for the performance of the team. The reason why committees take so long to get things done is usually the fact that no one person is in charge.

Companies need the strong management function in place all the time. This last statement doesn't mean that you have to beat people over the head all the time, simply that responsibility for the team's performance is with the manager. They don't fire the players in baseball, they fire the managers.

In business we often see the reverse; they fire the subordinates and leave the management in place. A true team's performance is the responsibility of the top man, and there is no way that a good team manager can give up that responsibility, or should want to.

Let's look at how building a successful team starts with the hiring and recruiting of all your personnel.

Below are some key points to consider.

- 1. When hiring be sure you have a specific function for the new team member. It isn't enough to hire bodies. You must be aware of the reasons why that person is being brought into the team. Over-staffing is expensive.
- 2. You should have some standards of operations and performance that are made clear to the new team member.

Frequently people who are hired, particularly in part-time positions, don't really know what is expected of them. Don't have employees just standing around when there is no specific task to do, have them check back with their manager.

- 3. During the hiring interview make sure it's really an interview, not just a sales job by you to get them to come to

work for you. Know what you want to find out in the interview, and then stick to it until you do find it out. You can do this best by writing down what you want to know before you begin the hiring interview. Be consistent in obtaining a standard body of information about each job applicant.

■ 4. Not everyone on the team has to be a superstar. You're going to hire mostly people who do standard jobs. When you're hiring consider the fact that most teams have a few superstars and then a lot of good workers around them. You can't expect everyone on your team to be great at what they do, particularly if their position doesn't require greatness, just competence.

■ 5. There are two major ways to find new people. One way is to advertise in newspapers or magazines. This will bring responses from anybody that thinks they can do the job described and gives you a broad base to work from. A second way is to use personal references from those that are already working for you. A good worker generally wants a good worker next to him or her and should be encouraged to suggest new people for job openings.

■ 6. Plan as far ahead as possible for hiring. If you trap yourself into having

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to hire anybody who applies for a job because you put yourself under time pressure, you won't put much of a team together and you deserve what you get.

■ 7. Keep a list of those people that you've interviewed. Sometimes three people interview for a job and all three are almost as good. You still have to choose one but if you keep a list, with comments, you can help yourself if you get in a hiring crunch. (Throw away the peoples' names that didn't make a good impression in the interview, generally they won't get any better.)

■ 8. Make sure you have minimum standard for hiring. Everybody puts together a profile of the perfect employee. They are hard to find. You

have to set a minimum standard. Never go below this.

■ 9. Don't expect to find too many great team members when you're hiring entry level personnel. Consider the position and the salary when you begin your interviews. Sometimes you can get lucky and find extraordinary people at low prices. Sometimes it rains in the Sahara desert, too.

■ 10. Do the interviews in person. Resumes and phone interviews give you some idea of the person but since you are recruiting for your team do it yourself to be certain the individual will meet your standards and complement the needs of the team. Putting a team together is not an easy process. Managing it is even tougher.

If you start with a good hiring process at least you have a better than even chance at getting the people you want. If you start with a mediocre group of people chances are you will put together a mediocre team. **WT&T**

Next month's column will deal with motivation of teams. One preview thought. Hiring of the team will be a key variable in the success of the team. All the great coaches were good at getting great personnel. If it were easy, everyone would be doing well. It is possible, though.

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