

High Productivity Results from Strong Team Identity

- James Terrell and Marcia Hughes

The only purpose of a team is to enable people to solve problems that are too big for one individual to solve alone. In high performing teams we find that each individual member is clearly aware of the team's purpose and how they are expected to contribute to the problem-solving processes with which that team is charged. They are loyal and proud to be a part of the team. But almost no teams start out that way. High power teams develop their identity through understanding roles and responsibilities and establishing a mutual commitment between the team and the individual.

Most often the members of a team are selected by senior leaders in the organization based on their skill sets, who they've worked with in the past, and for their education and experience. While all this is obviously necessary and important, it is not sufficient to build the quality of team identity that results in high performance and maximum productivity. That only comes with a balancing and blending of emotional energies of the team members, and this is a process that requires time and openness and the courage to engage.

The members of high-performance teams are able to accomplish all they do in the most efficient amount of time because they have each defined and embraced the team's purpose for themselves in their own terms. In order to do this all the team members must openly discuss and agree on their mission for every project and what criteria they will need to meet in order to ensure success. Some projects require this engagement and clarification at high levels, many other actions are supported by more subtle communication.

Negotiating the mission, which we could also call purpose and focus, is actually a little bit like an auction in which everyone places a "bid" on how much energy, time and enthusiasm they will commit to which tasks. It isn't necessarily a conscious or obvious process, but a trained observer of group behavior would always be able to point out the stages as they occurred. In the same way that some bidders at an auction signal their bid with very subtle gestures of agreement that only seasoned auction goers could easily recognize, the "bids" of team members negotiating how they will proceed with a certain project may utilize considerable nonverbal communication. In the end all team members will understand who are the leaders and who are the followers and how much participation they have each committed to. This is because everyone is invested at a fundamental level of the team's identity not just as members, but as owners of the team's efforts and products and image.

In low performing teams these kinds of assignments must be conducted much more consciously because the buy-in to the mission is not as strong and the awareness and acceptance of the other team member's emotional energy profiles is not as well established. The way in which these emotional patterns show up in member's behavior can be noticed best in terms of assertiveness, independence, reality testing, problem solving, empathy, and perhaps above all optimism! Team members may have confusion on roles and responsibilities and their potential for being a proud member of the team is compromised. In *The Emotionally Intelligent Team* we explore the nature of these skills in depth. To order or learn more about the book please [click here](#). Thank you!

Contact us for more information on growing your team's identity.