

White Paper

“What Successful Teams Look Like” by Don Akers

Have you ever been part of a team that just “clicked?” A team that worked hard because it felt it was destined to win? Didn't it feel great?

It's easy to know when you are looking at a winning team, it's a different thing to understand what *makes* a winning team great. When you know what makes a winning team great and when you have a proven process to get there, you have the tools to turn any team into a successful team.



What do successful teams look like?

Core Identity - They align around shared values and a collective “team” identity. Their core ideology is based on values and a common identity and world view that defines their team and it's purpose. They agree on what's important and who they are collectively and use that agreement as their guiding star.

Respect - They treat each other with respect. Team players treat fellow team members with courtesy and consideration — not just in public or with others, but consistently respecting the contribution each member.

Fun - High performing teams have fun together. Good team players have a sense of humor and know how to have fun, but they refuse to at the expense of a team member. There is often internal competition and back and forth banter but it is supportive in nature and absent any hostility. Great teams are at their best when they are doing their work, filling their roles and literally playing at their craft.

Relaxed - The atmosphere tends to be informal, comfortable, and relaxed. There are no obvious tensions, the working atmosphere keeps people involved, interested, and encouraged to challenge their own thinking.

Support - They support and defend one another. They support other team members to help get the job done. They err on the side of collaboration and consideration while they continually push each other to excel. They don't place conditions on when they'll provide assistance, when they'll choose to respond, or when they'll share information.

Loyal - They are loyal and protective of each other. They know when someone fits as part of the team and when they don't. They step in to separate team members who are in conflict and they actively work to bring the group back together.

Work Through Issues - They have a way of working through issues that helps individuals grow and diminishes no one. Criticism is frequent, frank, and relatively comfortable. The criticism has a constructive flavor — oriented toward removing an obstacle that faces the group.

Fully Engaged - During team discussions, virtually everyone participates. Team members listen to each other. Every idea is given a hearing. People are not afraid to appear foolish by putting forth a creative thought even if it seems extreme.

Ground Rules - They know their own ground rules. Each individual is respectful of the mechanics of the group: arriving on time, coming to meetings prepared, completing agreed upon tasks on time, etc. When action is taken, clear assignments are made (who, what, when) and willingly accepted and completed by each group member.

High Expectations - They are very clear about how they work together and make decisions. The group has taken time to explicitly discuss group process i.e. how the group will function to achieve its objectives. The group has clear, explicit, and mutually agreed-upon expectations for how they work: mechanics, norms, rules, etc.

Communicate Clearly - They communicate clearly and easily. Communication remains fluid, flexible, and clear by keeping the files empty, even after conflict — resolving disagreements with frank, open, and constructive discussion. Much of the communication within teams takes place informally. Beyond organized meetings, team members are comfortable talking with one another, passing along news and information day-to-day. Team players keep others in the loop with information and expertise that helps get the job done and prevents surprises.

Desire to Win - When corrections are made, there is improvement of the entire team as well as the individual. Team players with commitment look beyond their own piece of the work and they care about the team's overall mission. Performance constantly improves beyond “normal” guidelines. In the end, they're dedicated to winning — not in the sense of beating an opponent but in helping the team succeed.

Understand their Strengths - Teams know what they “are good at” and what they “are not good at.” Having the right people in the right seats has become a cliché, but only because having people do work that fits their natural talents and temperaments in an effective working arrangement is the recipe for success.

Do these characteristics describe your team?

If not, we can help you get there. It's not rocket science.

Simply a proven system we can walk your team through to make them unstoppable.

To learn how, call Don Akers at (281) 352-0165 or e-mail him at Don@DonAkers.com

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