

Developing High Performing Teams:

Let's begin with some questions:

Does your team experience significant errors where re-work is required?

Do you feel your team generates waste that could be reduced in terms of material and/or time?

Does your team have energy sapping meetings where team members get frustrated and dread attending?

Are team members often mired in conflict due to blame, disagreements and arguments?

Does your team make decisions that do not get fully implemented and yield mediocre results?

Do you find that only some team members are fully engaged while others are “part timers” and only get involved when it benefits them?

Do you find that when team members challenge each other they get defensive and hunker down on their positions? Do team members often talk about or portray being victimized?

Are team decisions and/or actions second guessed by people of authority?

When senior people leave your organization do they take valuable knowledge with them, leaving the organization with a huge void?

Are young employees (generation “X” and “Y”) driving you crazy with their entitlement mentality and lack of work ethic?

If your team is experiencing any of these symptoms, we invite you to have a conversation with us to talk about how you can improve teamwork and retain organizational knowledge in a very significant way. Most of the clients we work with use our services because they are experiencing some combination of the above issues.

Our Experience with Team Building

You may have tried team building efforts in the past and they have failed to deliver improved, sustainable performance results. If your team is like most others, the results of team building have been very short lived and have only had a mediocre impact, before the team fell back to the “old” way of doing things.

Most team building engagements are superficial and result in “feel good” tactics that primarily make people feel good about themselves, each other and their accomplishments. This causes them to want to work together, because they enjoyed an experience as a unified group. However, once the team re-engages in the “real world” culture of the workplace, they quickly slip back into the status quo and revert to doing things the “old” way. It's a natural human response, so we should not be surprised when it happens.

If you truly want to change the results, you must change the Culture

Culture can be very simply defined as “the way things really work around here.” We have found from our own experience as members of high performing teams and from our work to develop high performing teams from around the world, that in order to achieve sustainable, high performance results with your team; you must change the culture by changing the behavior of the team members and it must start with Leadership. Without recognition, demonstration and full support of Leadership, culture change efforts will merely become flavor of the month and contrary to somewhat popular belief, culture change cannot be achieved by team building exercises alone. Many organizations are discovering this reality the hard way.

Our extensive field experience leads us to conclude that for true teamwork to emerge Leadership must inspire the change in their people by communicating and demonstrating the behaviors consistent with building and sustaining excellent relationships with the people they work with. To do this effectively, they must demonstrate: integrity, commitment, humility, respect, ownership, and excellent communications, where information is shared openly to resolve differences and achieve win-win outcomes. The combination of these behaviors being demonstrated consistently will result in building **TRUST** that is capable of yielding up to 300% sustainable performance improvement, as identified by Stephen M. R. Covey in his book “The Speed of Trust.” As an added benefit, with information sharing and trust at the fore-front, knowledge can be retained within the organization, so the possibility of knowledgeable people leaving the organization with an operational void is significantly mitigated.

How can we move forward?

People have an innate desire to succeed. That’s the good news. We at FOCUS Management Development understand that people also have a desire to succeed as team, but only under the right conditions. The challenge is, when Leaders and Team Members realize they personally need to change, they resort to winning as individuals, because this is easier than changing their own behavior for the benefit of the team. Unfortunately, this individual winning usually comes at the expense of others and unhealthy competition and conflict emerges. This destroys trust and any possibility of high performance teamwork.

The result is a group of people who tolerate each other and performance suffers, rather than creating a team that collaborates and works together toward a higher common goal. In the worst case, experienced people leave the organization and take critical operational knowledge with them that causes a huge void in the day-to-day functioning of the organization. In order to correct this problem a common practice has been to bring the experienced people back into the organization as contractors to enable the organization to function again. While this seems like a reasonable solution, it is only temporary and costly, because unless the system fundamentally changes, the same problem will reoccur. With a change in organizational culture, these issues can be proactively addressed at the root cause, rather than reacting to the symptoms.

How can FOCUS help?

The first phase of the FOCUS approach is to engage Leadership in a conversation to understand the untapped potential of their organization. Most traditional Control style management models do not have access to the extraordinary potential of a committed workforce, because the behaviors in a control philosophy discourage involvement at the core. Therefore the potential must be “unlocked” by changing the culture at the core. FOCUS has the tools and capability to effectively educate and demonstrate the impact of the different approaches on performance results. This allows Leaders to assess whether the degree of potential benefit in their organization is sufficiently large enough to engage the organization in cultural change. If a decision is made to capture the untapped potential, then the change process can begin.

The second phase involves reviewing and modifying the organizations Vision, Mission, Objectives and Goals to ensure critical elements are in place to support a committed workforce culture. Once this work is completed then a Business Case for Change is developed. The purpose of the Business Case for Change is to inspire people in the organization to engage in the change process that will improve performance, benefit the employees and organization and create a better place to work.

In the third phase the Culture Change workshop is conducted with the Business Case for Change kicking it off. This workshop engages and educates team members on proven, practical approach that teams can use as the common platform to make the cultural and personal changes necessary to succeed as a team and as individuals. During the workshop the environment is created where the team and its members experience and genuinely believe they can achieve a higher goal successfully together. The workshop integrates practical concepts and tools with experiential exercises where team members can learn, practice and experience a high performance level of teamwork naturally, as they learn more about themselves and change their behavior. The results are energizing and extraordinary and team members clearly understand what they personally need to do, to be a top notch team player.

The workshop also helps team members understand the pitfalls and traps that they will have a natural tendency to fall back in to, to maintain the more comfortable status quo. This is a critical aspect of learning, because human beings are typically programmed to maintain status quo, unless forced or choosing to do otherwise. When forced to change by external motivation, people will naturally protect themselves by playing the victim and blaming others for problems rather than taking responsibility for the part they played in generating results that fall short of expectations. Therefore, we must consciously put thought and energy into overcoming our natural tendencies and embrace change as an opportunity, if we want to proactively and collectively generate better team results. The FOCUS approach allows people to engage in the process freely where the team members create the right environment for the team to thrive and since the members create the environment themselves, they have ownership and a desire to make it work.

A really good start, but this is still not enough

The fourth phase of the approach to achieve extraordinary results is a technical design of how the work gets done. This has been referred to as work process design through process mapping and common approaches used to achieve this are Six Sigma, Lean Sigma and/or Lean Manufacturing.

Our experience tells us that a small portion (10-15%) of possible improvement can be achieved with a social design alone. A slightly higher percentage can be achieved with only a technical process design described above; however sustainability is questionable in either case. We have found that when an integrated design (social and technical) is effectively implemented, there is a compounding effect on overall results to achieve most of what's possible and not only are these results sustainable, performance continues to improve over time. It also creates a great place to work where people are engaged, accountable for results and look forward to working together to solve problems and make further improvements.

In the fifth phase of the change process we collaborate with clients to assess and modify the organizational structure (as required) to be fully integrated and to successfully support the work process and social design.

How do we ensure we stay on track?

The last phase of the approach integrates all aspects of day-to-day work, special projects and change efforts into a single plan that allows the organization to track progress and transform itself while continuing to conduct its business. This is a very powerful model, because the changes can happen quickly and adjustments can be made to ensure success.

We believe a critical factor in achieving success is providing on-going coaching throughout all phases of the change process, until such time as the team has made the critical transitions and the organization can sustain the gains alone. Many teams go to training and never receive follow-up coaching to effectively apply what they learned, in the proper context. The problem we typically find is that undesirable, past behaviors get naturally and unknowingly integrated into team interactions and effectiveness suffers. Going unchecked, this will result in the team being pulled back into the previous culture, and will eventually end up with some degree of incremental improvement (at best), rather than the breakthrough that was initially expected.

Why does the approach work?

What makes this approach effective is that we engage people to think and to reflect on how their behavior impacts other people and overall results. This self-realization is the most powerful motivation for personal change, because the motivation and commitment comes from within the individual team members themselves. This same intrinsic motivation is what drives the untapped potential and extraordinary results in teams. In this mode, the team members strive for extraordinary results because they want to, not because they're told to (or are forced to) and this makes all the difference in performance.

What does a typical FOCUS Leadership workshop look like?

We custom design our workshops based on client direction and needs. However, a typical 2-day workshop would include the following topics and exercises:

1. Case for Change – Learning Objectives, including personal change.
2. Trust Exercise – Experience building and destroying trust. Learn how to establish and sustain a win-win culture.
3. Finite and Infinite Team development – Learn about constructive versus destructive behaviors.
4. Management Models – Learn Commitment / Control and impact on teamwork.
5. Perspective Exercise – Experience the power of sharing different perspectives to seek truth and also learn how different perspectives can generate conflict.
6. Improve Effective Communications – Share information openly and listen to learn from one another versus arguing to win.
7. Communication exercises – Experience the difference between productive and non-productive communications and learn how to stay on the productive side.
8. Making the impossible possible Exercise - By naturally applying all the learning, the team will typically achieve 800-1000% improvement in performance during this exercise. It reinforces all the concepts and tools and ties it all together.
9. Summary and Team Member commitments going forward.

What does a typical Work Process technical design look like?

1. Review Organization's Mission, Vision, Objectives and Goals. If this is not current, we facilitate this exercise.
2. Using Objective and Goals, collaboratively conduct a proprietary process called Lean Analysis of Work (LAW)TM, where the organization's work patterns and tasks are studied and analyzed to identify a) low value work that the organization should stop doing, b) improve work to add value or c) shift work within the organization where more value could be added.
3. Using the results of LAWTM, collaboratively benchmark existing work practices and make improvements so that work processes are integrated, comprehensive and streamlined to best-in-class standards. Develop process measurements to track effectiveness and improvement.
4. Assess the cultural attributes of the organization and collaboratively develop a culture plan that will support the work processes.
5. Develop a training program to effectively roll out the work processes.
6. Develop an all inclusive Workflow Efficiency PlanTM (WEP) to effectively track and implement changes.
7. Monitor progress, measure application and improvement results.
8. Develop goals and plans for next task cycle.

What does typical on-going Coaching look like?

1. Inspiring people to overcome resistance and channel their energy into the tasks that will enable the organization and themselves to be successful.
2. Modeling the tools and behaviors that are introduced and practiced in training sessions.
3. Providing one-on-one coaching of Leaders and members of the organization to apply the FOCUS models and tools correctly through observation, questioning and feedback geared to successful personal and organizational change.
4. Effectively supporting application of the models and tools in the work environment to generate positive overall results.
5. Providing real-time practical advice that leads to lasting improvement.
6. Building capability and competence within the team, so that the team members can coach each other for the model to be self-sustaining.

About FOCUS Management Development

FOCUS has the expertise and experience to collaborate with organizations to design and effectively implement a true, high performance culture that yields extraordinary results. Our primary goal is to build positive, long-standing relationships with our clients and to do the work as quickly as possible to minimize transition time and cost to the organization. Once the organization can sustain the gains on its own, we conclude our direct involvement, but will stay connected for coaching, as requested, to ensure effectiveness and sustainability of results.

We have seen many organizations waste valuable resources on team building that rarely leads to any significant and sustainable results; therefore we work with organizations that have a genuine commitment and desire to develop true and effective teamwork. We have achieved excellent results working with local and global clients that have applied our approach successfully.

We take responsibility in finishing what we start and therefore we are engaged with the team until successful results are generated. This sets us apart from consultants who design from theoretical concepts and then leave the organization in the lurch, trying to make the program work after the experts leave. We are hands-on, working with the team, as required, to collaborate and generate successful outcomes at every step of the way.

Our commitment is to make a difference through our clients' success!

For more information, please visit our website at www.focus-na.com. If you have any questions or would like to explore team development further, please feel free to contact us.

Warmest Regards,

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