GETTING THE BEST OUT OF THE TEAM

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INTRODUCTION

I have been invited to speak on the title "Getting the Best Out of the Team". Before I do so I'll talk briefly on how my Company has evolved. I started my Company in 1980 as a self-employed rural contractor doing dams, roading and development work predominantly for farmers. I moved into forestry work in the late 80s roading and roadline harvesting employing 3 people. That was my team then. I also diversified into civil engineering work and did contracts such as cable laying, upgrading residential services, installation of water mains, penstock storm water drainage systems for Electrocorp and a range of other projects. At this stage, I was now employing 10 men. In the early 90s I focused solely on forestry as I saw a stable future in the industry. We operated between Rotorua and the East Coast region. The early 90s saw us relocated solely to Gisborne and now currently employing 70 odd staff, so consequently I've had to create my own management team.

So "Getting the Best Out of the Team"

OPENING STATEMENT

We are all here as part of a team in one way or another, whether it be through a management role, a company owner, the employee, a service provided to a client. We are here today to think business, think smarter, think innovation, think smart technology. Think "the team" collectively networking to think smarter for the industry to compete globally. How do you actually create this team to harness its collective qualities?

THE TEAM

A group of individuals working together to reach a result. Individuals being the operative word. Individuals have their own identity, personality, mood, attitudes, aspirations, skills, experiences, strengths and weaknesses. All of these characteristics are there constantly within the team. The challenge is to bring all of these individual factors together to work in harmony.

EMPLOYMENT OF THE TEAM MEMBERS

The process of interviewing and screening required to evaluate the

individual skills. What can they bring to us in terms of experience? What's their attitude like towards other colleagues? Is this person going to be a team player? How are they going to interact with other people? Why do they want this job?

WHAT'S THE PURPOSE OF THE TEAM

To work collectively towards the goal to fulfil the requirements of the employer, its fairly simple. It's how we go about achieving this that can be complex.

IS THE ENVIRONMENT RIGHT?

For a team to perform, the environment has to be right, the direction has to be clear. One of stability so the focus of the team remains focused. To be able to operate efficiently and confidently.

THE OBJECTIVE - Take into Account these Questions :

Has the team an achievable objective or goal?

Who sets this?

Is it incorporating the team players or is management setting it with minimal dialogue?

How often has a "target" been set that is unachievable, whether you're in a corporate structure or a logging crew? Has the team the support that's necessary to perform?

Has the training and upskilling requirements been fulfilled?

Has the flow of information been passed on?

Has the team the relevant knowledge?

Have we a competent team that can perform?

All these questions need to be addressed in order to get the best from the team.

MANAGING TEAM PERFORMANCE

The monitoring of team performance is vital to the profits and the well-being of team members, and the end result required which is to make a profit. We all like to know how well we are "doing". Generally, we all strive for continual improvement. To incorporate members of the team is a crucial part of the equation. As a Company we have found that setting a series of short term goals is more achievable than a long term frustrating one.

Individuals need to know the boundaries. The parameters they are to work within to maintain the performance standards. We've found that if the team is given the latitude to function openly, with proper controlled systems, the result created is significant improvements to output.

TEAM LEADERSHIP

If leadership quality is poor, expect poor results. For myself this has been the greatest challenge being able to get the right leaders for the right operation. There is a direct link between performance, productivity and morale. If morale is down so is performance, productivity and profitability.

Sometimes, it would appear team leaders need all the skills of a psychologist, they need to be well focused and have the ability to cultivate the team. "To be a facilitator". They need to have excellent planning and communication skills. To be able to deal with a wide range of issues on a day-to-day basis. To promote professionalism and strive for continual improvement and understand the principles of business. All the while remembering they are an integral part of the team. It is a well known fact that our industry has lacked people with both strong operational skills, man management and business skills combined. This continues to be one of our greatest challenges.

Today's employees are motivated by achievement not fear. We don't dismiss team members for making a mistake, we learn from it. The situation being cost driven can create a fearful work environment when poor team performance creates poor production.

The individuals need to understand that the team environment has been created as much for their benefit as the employers.

SUMMARY

To summarise, to get the best out of the team, the environment has to remain stable, the goal should be achievable and the team should be recognised for its achievements, everything else should fall into place. The team remains stable and stimulated. It creates commitment, pride and loyalty. Enhances honesty, trust, motivation and productivity. It promotes confidence in all aspects of the job and good attitudes and morale remain stable.

How often is praise given instead of criticism?

If the outside influencing factors create an unstable environment or the goal posts are constantly moved, what happens to the team? It can become fragmented, disillusioned, unproductive, less profitable and hence has lost its direction and is unable to perform. The bottom line is profitability is affected dramatically.

Employee motivation is a complex science, but its foundations rest on the simple recognition that we all need to feel important in some phase of our lives.

CHANGE

As we have all seen recently, the huge changes that have occurred within our industry. I do not personally agree that some of these changes lend themselves to a stable environment that encourages people to be "team members". How many of you sitting here today consider yourselves to be "team members"? With some of the corporate restructures there would have to be some fairly disillusioned people about some companies "team building" philosophies. If you haven't got job security, how can you expect 100% input from team members. The challenge for the industry now is to create a stable environment with some certainty and confidence so that these teams that I've spoken about actually have a change to perform.

You've heard it before - TEAM stands for :

Together Everyone Achieves More!