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"We engineer the quality of your success"

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How To Make Teamwork Work

Teams need solid leadership to succeed. The following 4 steps show how team leaders can use group dynamics to get quality teams to perform to the best of their potential. (See Table below for S1, S2, S3, S4).

1. Start with a team orientation. Use S1: Directing, to form a group. Explain why they've been asked to join the team, management's expectations, their mission and goals. Then use S2: Problem Solving, to

focus the group by involving them in determining decision-making procedures, roles and responsibilities, and the best ways to achieve the mission.

2. Clarify individual assignments. Use S1: Directing, and S4: Delegating, to ensure everyone knows what their responsibilities are, what deliverables are expected, and when they are due. Ask how they plan to accomplish their tasks and what is needed from the team leader or other members to get the work done.

If storms arise, use S2: Problem Solving (specifically getting team members' input to guide decisions), to clarify what the team is expected to do and reorganize the effort to get it done. Storms occur because the team is not focused, the mission and goals are ambiguous, the roles are confusing, the operating principles and procedures are dysfunctional, or adequate time or resources are denied.

3. Let team members get to work. Use S4: Delegating, to give individuals room to accomplish their assignments. Use S3: Developing, to empower members to take action. Check in periodically to help them make good decisions and offer encouragement and support.

4. Make time for team problem solving. Meet periodically so members can give progress reports, be updated on changes, identify and solve problems, co-ordinate each person's efforts, and capitalize on opportunities that have developed.

When decisions need to be made, use S2: Problem Solving, for decisions the team leader needs to make; or use S3: Developing, to help team members with decisions they agreed to make. Avoid group decisions. Individuals must be empowered to make decisions based on team members' input. Waiting for total buy-in will bog the team down in group-think, one of the biggest diseases that infect quality teams.

NEXT MONTH: How To Empower Individual Team Members

Strategies for Team Leaders

S1: DIRECTING

- Take responsibility, get input, then make decisions on your own
- Give information about what to do, how to do it, why it should be done, and how to measure progress and end results
- Give people recognition for following your leadership

S2: PROBLEM SOLVING

- Involve people in your responsibilities and make decisions based on their input
- Seek information for analyzing and solving your problems
- Give people recognition for their contributions

S3: DEVELOPING

- Help people think through their own problems
- Ask questions to help others analyze & solve their problems
- Give people recognition for seeking or accepting support

S4: DELEGATING

- Give people responsibility & let them make their own decisions
- Have limited communication through briefings and updates
- Give people recognition for accepting responsibilities

ISO/QS-9000 On The Road To Total Quality

For many companies starting on the journey to ISO/QS-9000 registration, a common question is: "Does this mean we are finished with total quality?"

ISO/QS-9000 is only partial, and not total quality, but preparing your company for ISO/QS-9000 is a good start on the road to total quality.

For companies that have not yet started to build their house of quality, ISO/QS-9000 provides an excellent foundation stone. For companies already well along the way to quality improvement, it lends rigor and discipline and forces the business process analysis that many companies overlook.

In its favour, ISO/QS-9000 sets out a series of clear registration requirements that companies must meet (and that any company can achieve). Absent is the "do it if you feel like it" attitude that often pervaded TQM, just as when the inlaws invite themselves to your house! The prospect of an external auditor coming to look at your business pushes you to clean up the business.

ISO/QS-9000 motivates a company to define its processes. By addressing such elements as internal audit, management review, and corrective and preventive action, ISO/QS-9000 will drive continuous improvement of those processes.

Help Customers Identify And Articulate Their Needs

Know in detail the work your customer does, how the customer uses your products, and what concerns and problems the customer has. Be aware not only of problems resulting directly from defects in the product, but also of related problems experienced by customers even when the product is functioning properly.

Those who are not yet (or no longer) your customers can also provide you with invaluable feedback on your product or service. Why don't they use your product? What do they use and what has been their experience with it.