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Building teams that are keen to win big

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Building teams that are keen to win big. FILE PHOTO | NMG

Why do some teams thrive while others flounder? Google famously empowers teams that in turn perform and exceed targets. The firm even allows employees to spend 20 per cent of their time working on their own initiatives and creating their own teams. Over the past ten years, Google is known for its work teams generating innovative new products used by billions of global citizens.

On the other hand, Yahoo for years tried and tried and tried again to attract top human talent, form innovative teams, then tried to achieve renewed success. However, year after year, Yahoo failed to achieve its former glory and marked very few successes. Commensurate with its decline, the company even suffered repeated embarrassing security breaches in its signature web-based email product. Upon the security failures, Yahoo found it even more difficult to get their teams to perform.

Unfortunately for Yahoo, teams consist of individuals. Individuals on teams have psychological needs, perceptions, attitudes, intentions, and behaviours. Employees find it difficult to get excited and solve organisational problems when teams have lackluster histories. Instead of working feverishly to achieve institutional targets, the staff start working on their own selfish goals to protect themselves. They start networking, updating their CVs, and scouring job websites intensely looking to find more stable predictable employment. Workers fear that teams with a history of underperformance might get disbanded or shrink its workforce. Also, employees feel embarrassed to be associated with an underperforming team and instead strive to bolster their personal reputations to counter the team status.

Now please take out a pen and paper or get out your mobile device and record your perceptions of agreement on the following four statements. Rate your agreement on the following scale of five options with 1) strongly disagree, 2) disagree, 3) neither agree nor disagree, 4) agree, and 5) strongly agree for each statement individually:

My team achieves its goals; my team achieves high performance; my team makes a great contribution to the company; my team is very successful in terms of overall achievement.

Next take your agreement rating for each of the four statements and then total them together. Divide your total number and divide by four to arrive at your average rating. If your average rating comes in at four or higher, then you work on a successful contributory performing team. If your average rating falls between three and four, then you labour in a moderately performing team with nominal successes. In the event that your average comes in under a three, then your team abates as an underperforming group with unimpressive achievements.

As a manager, how do you start to overcome the psychological hurdles of prior mediocre performance or uninspiring organisational influences? Create clear wins for your teams. Generate achievable targets to cheer in addition to the more challenging goals. Do not merely obsess on difficult broad targets. Then, when achieving even incremental success, celebrate accomplishments in meaningful ways to boost the morale and reputation of your team.

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