

Performance Management Company

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Stuff

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We have a
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updated
website
and a blog
and new
products!

This newsletter Teams!

This newsletter focuses on teams and teamwork plus engagement and collaboration so as to benefit people in the workplace and improve performance.

Gee, that sounds like a lot! But I think that we can all benefit from a better understanding of what teamwork is and what teamwork does to improve profitability and collaboration.

Teamwork has impacts on things like:

- Improving productivity
- Reducing employee turnover
- Increasing engagement
- Improving profitability
- Increasing customer service

All of the above directly impact the bottom line. Reducing employee turnover, for example, reduces training costs and reduces the impacts of new employees in terms of reducing lost productivity as they come up to speed and gain knowledge, reducing manpower costs of screening and drug tests and all that. And one must remember that half of all new hires will be below average performers – that is just the nature of numbers.

Performance Management Company frames team building as a serious tool for engagement and discussion, something we often refer to as generating “choice and choices.” Sometimes, there is the discovery of a new approach to an old problem but more often it is the sharing of knowledge that already exists within the workforce. These activities expand “considered alternatives” and give people more chances to think about what they could *choose to do differently*. If people are doing the same thing over and over, how can one think that they will choose to spontaneously change?

We position our games and other tools to facilitate ongoing team-based problem solving, knowing that the collective is more intelligent than the individual.

All of us know more than any of us.

We play games so as to allow for long-term follow up and feedback about collaboration and coordination of employee engagement.

Sometimes, I wonder how anyone really thinks that anything gets done in organizations without teamwork and communications, shared missions and goals and all that stuff.

Guess that cuts both ways, though. If most things require teamwork, then teamwork must already be good, right? People will naturally collaborate and communicate and work together for the common good of the company, right?

No. Observations and experiences generally show that “interdepartmental collaboration” is an oxymoron in many places. Just like the fact that there are no “Jumbo Shrimp” or that you can make an “original copy” or that an associate is “terribly nice.” Heck, some people think that “motivated employee” is an oxymoron in today’s workplace! Pretty ugly, right? Do I hear a defining silence? (Country music?) Okay, I did get off-track here with those oxymorons...

The goal of this newsletter is to share some ideas about how we can justify doing team building training in today’s workplace and to outline some of the issues and impacts. I will discuss some of the things I do NOT see as team building and why I think they represent a waste of corporate assets. And I will discuss what I DO think represents the good use of employee time in regards to generating long-term impact.

So, prepare yourself for a little philosophy and a little controversial stuff.

Sound like fun? ❄️

A Few Questions...

A consultant and customer in India, Rohit Bagga, recently sent me an email after using our Square Wheels® **Alignment Toolkit** for a few months.

He said:

1. In India, we face a very big problem with our clients, while taking them on Lean Journey. Some of senior managers think they know every thing (fact is, they don't know anything) and are never ready to listen as they want to show to Top Management that they are the one who should get credit for making any changes. And many of them start competing with us (external Consultants). It's mainly Ego Issue which we face. We normally deal with this situation by making such guys leaders of the Projects / Lean Journey. Are there any illustrations which directly attack on solving the Ego issues?

2. Sometime the Pushers have no willingness to push or even change the wheels as they keep thinking what will they get out of it. How to deal with problem where Pushers are not even ready to Push?. Basically "How to create Willingness to change"? Pushers understand it is important to change the square wheels to round wheels, but they don't want to do it.

Please help.

My first thought was, "Not just India, my friend..."

And then I got to thinking more about the issue. His predicament is shared by a lot of people who are trying to implement change and improvement in organizations and that the politics are probably even more significant when the people are internal (and not external consultants). I know that I have been in that situation both within and from outside on many occasions.

One key, in my experience, is to use this intrinsic competitive motivation to help support the motivation for change and improvement, to work to re-direct the energy in some way to generate support for the issue rather than competition between players.

There can be LOTS of miss communication among people. Heck, think about how much occurs between married couples with plenty of interacting experiences, or between parents and children.

I think that one key is alignment to the mission / vision / goals of the group or the organization. If people are working together on key issues of importance to others and if there are supporting measurement and feedback systems, it tends to generate a shared focus on accomplishments. *There are plenty of things that can generate the recognition of individual performance in most organizations and sharing credit as a team is an important issue.*

The reality is that some people will, in fact, work in their own benefit as opposed to the group – that is a clear, self-motivated reaction not uncommon in the real world. But there is often more than enough accomplishment available for everyone.

In addition to the alignment issue, another related solution is to generate group alignment and peer support / peer pressure for working together.

Our team building game, The Search for The Lost Dutchman's Gold Mine, is pretty perfect for this. Dutchman sets up tables of 5-6 people who have "everything they need" to accomplish the task of managing a journey to and from the Mine and for mining "as much gold as we can." They must make decisions and agree on choices and work together to manage the information and the various

associated tasks involved with play.

On the other hand, you offer them "information that they do not have that teams find helpful" and put them in a predicament of spending time to access that information as opposed to moving. This often generates a good deal of discussion.

The value of the added information is questioned, and the tables do not all get a chance to acquire it (resource scarcity). On the other hand, the information IS quite useful to the tabletop. And the information can be shared between tables to benefit the group.

The goal is to mine as much gold as WE can, and the Expedition Leader is obviously more interested in maximizing gold for the group rather than the success of any one team. Thus, the game design sets up a conflict, one that shows the influence of choice and choices, the motivation related to competition and winning, the issue of collaboration and optimization, etc.

In the discussion, we can easily link to the themes of alignment and collaboration and the issues surrounding shared success and common visions.

A focus on, "My Team, My Team, My Team" is what drives small group teamwork and camaraderie. But the focus on overall results and collaboration between the tabletops (sharing information and resources) is what drives organizational improvement and profitability.

For the outside consultant, the role of Expedition Leader is to, "Help teams be successful and maximize ROI." For the internal trainer or manager, their role is also to be of help. But the reality of play is that,

Nobody ever asks the Expedition Leader for advice.

We see this all the time in organizations where people do not ask for help when it is needed and they then choose to suboptimize results. There are many opportunities for coaching for improved performance available, if only people would see the manager / trainer as a resource rather than a competitor of some kind.

Insofar as motivation, people find far more motivation as a player on a team than they do as a solo operator. While a few people can operate as a virtuoso or as a solo artist, many more find their long-term success in playing in the band. There is just more support available to individuals when they operate as a group.

So, teamwork is supportive when playing a game like Lost Dutchman or Innovate & Implement. The question then becomes,

“How do we get more people in the workplace feeling that they are an important part of the team?”

One real key is ownership. I cannot say this enough:

Nobody ever washes a Rental Car.

Our New Team Building Game

Innovate & Implement

We are quite pleased to offer our newest organizational development and training tool to our customers. I&I is a Square Wheels game, using the metaphor of replacing SWs with round ones as the reason for playing.

In the game, players move around a game board with the roll of a die. As players follow

different routes, they must enter rooms, uncover and solve a problem related to innovation or implementation, and uncover what might be a round wheel.

On discovering all four round wheels, they must race back to the starting point in order to complete the game. They are working against a timer and have a process to follow for each of their turns. The more efficiently they can work together, the more effective are their movements.

Play also requires collaboration, the sharing of problem solving cards. So, a level of planning and a smooth process for moving information and resources between the players at each table is a necessity.

The game is designed for a table of 3 to 4 players and each of the tables is an independent game, so the exercise can scale up to very large groups since little on-the-floor facilitation is required for control. Since each table is working against a central clock, the group is all completing the exercise at the same time.

I&I has a strong and robust design and the metaphors built into the game about problems and problem solving are solid.

Players view a PowerPoint slide program that covers the rules and procedures, they have time for questions, and they then play a short trial game to insure that they understand the flow of the process. Then, you start the clock and play begins.

It is bundled with our typical extensive debriefing materials, along with a number of our different bundles of Square Wheels tools.



click on the image to go to the website

We guarantee that you will like how the game plays and that you can readily link the issues and opportunities represented by the transition of Square Wheels into round ones to your organizational improvement or engagement initiatives.

Cartoon Animation:

Godzilla Meets Bambi

Yeah, we went crazy. But I got inspired to show some of my thinking about why innovation and motivation get squished in so many organizations and my colleagues at EduRiser in India put my initial thoughts done in PowerPoint into a short Flash animation.

This is a 2-minute video of me doing some thinking about people and productivity and innovation and leadership and similar.

And it ends in a somewhat predictable manner.

Click on the icon below to go to the website and view the animation.



*Have some FUN
out There, too!!*

Performance Management Company



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