

# The Management REPORT

## TEAM MAGIC

*There's something really magic about a Team – a beautiful thing to observe and a fantastic thing to be a part of, the ultimate managerial goal.*

FOR an organisation, a true Team culture can mean the difference between sterling performance and mediocrity, or worse. To an individual, a Team is belonging – a reason to stay, despite 'better offers'. 'Team' is even PC and certainly in vogue in management circles where you'll hear much about Team culture, often from managers who consistently fail to achieve it.

Previously we've explored using tools such as Critical Path Analysis and PERT to bring projects in on time, on budget and to specification. Unfortunately, all the Critical Path Analysis and PERT won't make a successful Team. And while 'many hands make light work', that's true only when ALL hands are coordinating their efforts, working together, for the same purpose. When you have two or more hands, you have a group, but not necessarily a Team. In fact, many hands can make chaos if they're not a Team.

So while a Team is a group, all groups are definitely not Teams. Achieving that difference – that's the magic.

### Dive, Dive

Perhaps you're running for cover now, expecting a dissertation on football. Well, rest easy. You see, as a child, I was 'athletically challenged' – always picked last in gym class. As a result, I only know about the World Cup because my wife is Argentine. Instead, my Team experiences come from the US Navy Submarine Service and the BT Global Challenge. After universi-

ty I had the great privilege of serving in submarines, back when things in the Silent Service may have been really interesting. Unfortunately, I can neither confirm nor deny that, but read BLIND MAN'S BLUFF and decide for yourself.

The high-tech world of submariners (in the US Navy, accent on the third syllable, please) is a Team in the extreme. Under the sea, even a group of such highly trained and incredibly dedicated individuals is only as good as its weakest member; a moment of inattention, a valve left open by mistake and the ballgame's over in a wrenching, creaking crush – all that's left is bubbles, oil and bits.

After I left the Navy I went into sales. Then in a mid-life effort to bury gym class ghosts, I spent 33,000 miles in considerable discomfort, racing around the world under sail, west-about, south of both Capes, as crew in the 67-foot cutter Commercial Union Assurance. We finished fifth of 14 identical yachts. Why we weren't first, but didn't come in last either, has more to do with Team culture than sailing prowess.

To do well in a long race some things are easy. You can lighten the boat. Some crews even cut the handles off their toothbrushes – really. But to win a 5,000-mile leg of an ocean race requires continuous focus for a very long time. In fact, when your competitor is over the horizon it's easy to forget you're even in a race. It becomes very tempting to stop doing the little (fast) things, like trimming. Around the Equator, every breath of wind counts. Standing there

in the blazing sun on the burning deck, constantly easing the spinnaker sheet out a couple of metres and grinding it back until the luff disappears takes a committed Team. It makes it hotter, but the boat sure goes faster.

And when the skipper is asleep – who cares? Well, the Team focused on winning does – because every time that chute collapses, a boat length is lost. In a six-hour watch, constant trimming and sweating can mean two or three miles gained on the competitor who's not.

### A Note on DIY

Creating and maintaining a Team that really 'hums' is an art form with tremendous rewards. Unfortunately, managing people is very hard work, requiring skills that don't come naturally to all. People problems are the hardest. As a management consultant, give me a simple old \$10 million cost-of-goods-sold problem, any day.

Not surprisingly then, some people believe, "If you want it done right, do it yourself." You certainly won't succeed as the captain of a superyacht or become the president of GE, but you can write novels or drive a taxi instead. Like so many other complex endeavours, in superyachts you can't do it all yourself. Team-building then becomes vital in project management and in running the vessels themselves. Successful project managers and yacht masters must be able to build and maintain a Team.

*The new Management Report will become a regular column in TYR, looking at the importance of the management role and the relevant issues surrounding management as a whole. Bransom Bean, from Fine Focus Ltd, is the column's writer who works as a Management Consultant and Mariner helping people and businesses identify and achieve their goals specialising in the superyacht market.*

## To Boldly Go, Where?

So, where do you start? Well, like making a voyage plan, or a business plan for that matter, the first step in Team-building is deciding exactly where the Team is going. In the 1996/97 BT Global Challenge I noticed that each of the 14 one-design boats had one of three very different types of crews.

Two types were truly unified Teams with clear missions. One of these was a team comprising only dedicated racers. The other type was equally as homogeneous – all quite happy if they just didn't drown. The third type though was not unified and certainly could not be called a Team at all. Half of the members of each of these crews wanted desperately to win. Unfortunately the rest were just cruising. Major conflict.

Not surprisingly, of the two types of homogeneous Teams, both accomplished their very different missions. Those committed to racing, did well. The Teams that were unanimously happy just surviving didn't place at the top, but were very happy that nobody drowned. But of the others boats, those with crews divided, they not only managed to achieve mediocrity but also ended up being the unhappiest. So, the Team mission should be a clear, succinct and committed to writing: "We all want to win the BT Global Challenge." (Notice that little word,

"ALL".) This picture of Team success must be drawn clearly because each member must be committed to it and comfortable with how they fit into it. For Team members this means not only knowing what they do, but also understanding how other members are going to support them. There's a lot of trust in a Team. In fact, it's not too strong to say, "No trust, no Team."

## The Cut Of Their Jib

Once you know where you're going, who should you bring? Sadly, there is no single comprehensive profile of a Team Player. That's probably good, because to some

extent there is strength in diversity. As a start, because every Team member must understand the Team goal, the strategy and the chain of command, they must be reasonably intelligent. Also, Team members are not excuse-driven.

Enthusiastic is good, making up for other weaknesses. Selfish people should never be on a Team. All Team members should be good listeners, especially the leader. 100% technically competent? Well, eventually yes. But on first joining, besides having the essential basics, there must be the ability and desire to be 100%.

Finally, the Team should comprise as few members as possible; more people than necessary means the Team becomes a committee – and we all know about that camel ...



## Waypoints

Now we know where the Team is going and the members are assembled, but to be a Team, groups must progress through four stages:

- First members are formal, treating each other as strangers. Not surprisingly, little is achieved.
- Then members begin to communicate, probably still not viewing themselves as part of a Team. They argue. Some, including the leader, may not stay.
- Eventually, members start to trust each other and are now feeling part of the Team; they realise they can achieve.

- Finally, the Team becomes open and begins to hum. Magic.

Interestingly, individuals joining an established Team must go through much the same process. So, the successful Team makes it a priority to take new members by the hand.

In the US Navy Submarine Service, a newcomer is assigned a 'sea Daddy' who is a mature and established member of the crew. This understanding Old Salt is always willing to listen to lots of questions on many topics that start with 'why' – without laughing.

## Show Us The Way

But, we're not there yet. We need one final ingredient: leadership. The magic of a successful Team actually comes down to three things: mutual respect, a common vision and leadership.

A Team needs a leader and sadly, not everyone can. Those who can't aren't bad people; they just can't lead. Remember, groups have managers; Teams have leaders.

My good friend Captain Emil D Morrow was my Executive Officer on USS *Philadelphia* (SSN-690) and also commanded USS *Whale* and USS *Providence*. He says, "Managers manage the status quo; leaders adopt and change things."

"Leaders gather round them the Team they deserve – no better, no worse," observes my business partner, Frank Aldred who turned around Edmunson Electrical. He adds, "Where there's good leadership there are no (organisational) politics." Politics are fatal to a climate of trust in a Team. Once you build a Team, you must hang on to this hard earned asset.

So in the end, there's a lot more to be said about Teams – their forming, building and preserving. No points for guessing what we'll be talking about next issue.

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