



The Insider's Guide to Boosting Team Performance

The 10 Secrets of Successful Teams



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Executive Summary

Boosting Team Performance

Teams are the lynchpin of modern business life, yet when they don't deliver, failure, low productivity and missed opportunities abound. Management is then left with a problem on their hands and there are no easy solutions. Successful team building is a hard task to accomplish and very few can claim to have mastered a repeatable formula delivering guaranteed winners. At present, the vast majority of team building efforts are based on years of experience and the gut instincts of the individuals assigned with the task. While the experience of management is a good starting point for team building, very few are able to successfully boost team performance in a predictable and sustainable fashion.

The ability to boost team performance brings with it numerous benefits for team members and management, not least of which is the continual ability to achieve and exceed results. As markets change, competitors strengthen and customers demand more, the ability to sustain and increase performance is critical to the ongoing success of the business. The only business constant is change itself! While teams fight to keep pace, the price of failure is high. Companies that can't boost team performance end up with lost revenues, lost customers and reduced morale.

Successful individual and team performance is driven by three factors, remuneration, skills & relationships. Firstly, whilst employee remuneration is an obvious motivator, it is hard to alter and change quickly. Secondly, the skill sets that people have and their match to a specific role are again hard to alter quickly and return inconsistent and unpredictable results as a tool in boosting team performance. The third factor is the relationships that individuals establish in the workplace and includes all the associations that take place both inside & outside of the company. Whilst the first two factors are easily quantified and various tools and techniques exist to assess remuneration and skills, the specific nature of these factors make them difficult to alter and even harder to use as predictable factors in boosting team performance.

With the above in mind, Four Groups introduces 4G, a unique tool that focuses on people's relationships in the workplace and how these can be predictably managed and engineered to boost team performance. This document presents the following information to help you manage and engineer the relationships that make up your teams and give you an insight into how this boosts team's performances;

- The 10 Secrets of Successful Teams
- The Four Groups Approach
- What's Your Company's TQ?
- The Bottom Line Benefits of 4G



Section 1 – The 10 Secrets of Successful Teams

Team Building and Management Myths

As business increases in complexity and the pressure for results intensifies, team building and managing team performance become increasingly important. The changing business environment places increasing significance on business strategy & operational effectiveness and teams play key parts in both. Four Groups understands this and has identified the three most popular factors that are often used to respond in such situations. Additionally, we have identified the misconceptions and fundamental drawbacks associated with each one.

- Employee Remuneration
- Employee Skills & Job Matching
- Business Relationships

Employee Remuneration

Management Myth; “Remuneration and performance related pay will boost results and enhance team performance, people will always work for more money”.

Whilst it is readily acknowledged that remuneration and financial incentives provide a motivational tool, there are numerous issues that blunt their effectiveness when dealing with team performance. Of initial consideration is the simple fact that altering remuneration is easier said than done, certainly for anything other than a token gesture from management. Any modification to salaries needs approval from numerous internal actors, they must be made in line with prevailing market conditions and are heavily influenced by previous company performance. Furthermore, dramatic alterations in remuneration (to the tune of 10% or greater) are usually impossible to achieve given their effect on the company's economics. Whilst financial incentives are a proven tool for team performance and in extracting results, their inflexibility make them impossible to boost team performance on a regular basis and in a predictable fashion.

Employee Skills & Job Matching

Management Myth; “As long as you get the right person for the job, you don't need to worry, those people will always work the hardest”.

The second tool available to companies to assist in the management of team performance is the match between individual and team skills and the jobs that are required to be done. It is well known that short term switches in function (whether via a team or via an individual) are likely to bring about a short term increase in performance. However, despite this initial fillip, long term results are hard to obtain and in many instances are just not practical. Quite simply, given the need for companies to match skilled employees with the duties to be carried out, there is a limit to the number of times that such changes can take place, the ease with which people can re-train or adjust to new roles and the number of different job roles that people can undertake.

As with remuneration, there is a clear link between performance and people's skills – people tend to do what they are good at, but by the same token, increasing performance and boosting results is something far harder to achieve. The limits to boosting team performance



in a predictable fashion through matching people's skills to a specific job function are all too obvious to the experienced manager.

Business Relationships

Management Myth; "Relationships in the workplace are subject to office politics and are always impossible influence and control".

The third factor in boosting team performance is derived from people's individual business relationships. It is well known that teams and individuals deliver their best results when they are able to draw on strong, supportive and productive relationships. This is equally true inside the workplace as it is outside – consider the impact of office politics, marriages, friendships, bosses and colleagues on your own performance at work! There will always be positive and negative influences that affect your own productivity. It is also well known that top performing business teams are able to draw on strong relationships, shared visions, supportive colleagues and regularly contribute value greater than sum of the team's parts. As the speed of change in business continues to make its mark, relationships are constantly shifting. 4G provides the antidote; a unique approach to managing business relationships, enabling companies to undertake the engineering of strong teams and by giving management a tool with the ability to boost team performance.

The 10 Secrets of Successful Teams

The secret to successful teams and boosting their performance is to understand that teams are founded on basic principles, hard work and by building on the strengths and relationships of the team members. Four Groups has distilled this into the following 10 secrets of successful teams.

Ensure that individuals' strengths and weaknesses are known

Successful teamwork requires management to know and understand the strengths and weaknesses of individual team members. This understanding of skills, individual's perspectives and the ability to combine and engineer team composition is critical in managing team performance. Only through a thorough and systematic appreciation of team members can performance be successfully influenced and optimised.

Ensure remuneration is fair and equitable and if possible, transparent

While remuneration isn't the best tool in the team builder's tool box (see Employee Remuneration, above) it still has a part to play. Teams function when people are rewarded for their efforts and successes. Equally, payment must be equitable and fair to ensure optimum results. However, remuneration can also be highly divisive and people have a nasty habit of discovering what their colleagues are paid¹! For the sake of performance and morale, transparent pay structures amongst teams builds credibility, trust and provides a new source of leverage for productivity (also see number 9).

Ensure team and individual skills are matched accordingly

As with remuneration, it is important that team members are able to carry out the work specified and that each individual is capable of performing to the limit of their potential. Additionally, teams must be well suited to the work and it is the job of the team builder to

¹ For example, see details of Julie Bower's sex & pay discrimination case against Schroders.
<http://www.eoc.org.uk/cseng/news/bower.asp> & http://www.hrmguide.co.uk/diversity/city_analyst.htm



ensure that an appropriate match exists. Building on number 1, once management is aware of individual's and team's strengths, matching jobs and skills is the next step in boosting team performance.

Build teams based on people's relationships with other team members

People work well when they are surrounded by people with whom they have good relationships, this then creates a self reinforcing cycle of increased morale and increased productivity. The ability to forecast, manage and predict relationships within teams gives management its number one tool for improving productivity. Given the ability to alter and influence people's relationships, management is well positioned to ensure targets and deliverables are met.

Review and refine team composition as membership alters

While team building is best carried out through insights into individual's strengths and weaknesses, as team members come and go, it is important to review team membership and adjust according to strengths, weaknesses and relationships. When people do leave the team, there is a good opportunity to actively recruit members who will compliment the existing setup.

Ensure team leaders are receptive, equitable and diplomatic

Leadership is a critical factor for success in any endeavour and this is no less important when considering business performance and team results. Selection of the appropriate leaders given their own characteristics and that of the team is of equal importance to team membership. By ensuring leaders are receptive, equitable and diplomatic, teams deliver results and can be easily managed.

Set quantifiable targets for teams

Building on the right leadership is important when it comes to the seventh item, setting quantifiable targets for teams. The ability to measure and quantify team performance is important not only for the ability to monitor results but it can also be used to set new goals and targets for specific individuals and teams. Targets serve as incentives to boost team performance and increase existing levels of productivity.

Create a sense of shared space

Successful teams are known to operate when they have access to a shared space. This is critical for fostering a sense of cooperation and co-working whilst building on the foundations of the individuals involved. Shared spaces can be virtual but the best shared spaces are found to manifest themselves in physical locations.

Ensure shared beliefs, credibility & trust exist

Building on number 8, teams function at their best when all members can actively relate to shared beliefs, credibility and high levels of trust. Of course, these are all elements of good relationships outside of the work place and their replication inside business teams enhances performance. Finally, this item has much in common with items 2 & 3 – in all environments, equity, trust and respect go a long way.



Develop and invest in high performing teams

The final element for consideration is that of investing in and developing your best performing teams. There are many popular analogies which relate directly to enhancing investment in productive teams and high performing individuals. Ongoing investment encourages further improvement, sustainability and increased levels of retention for top teams and top team players.

The Four Groups Approach

In light of the 10 secrets of successful teams detailed above, Four Groups systematic approach to team building highlights how such benefits are attainable and what you need to do to achieve them. This approach consists of four steps that take a group through the various elements of the process. The following details this process and provides a breakdown of each individual step.

Step 1 – Engagement

What problems are faced over human resources and team performance?
What, if any, existing systems are being used to manage teams?
What goals are set for team performance, personnel & internal culture?

Step 2 – Planning

Four Groups submits a proposal detailing the team building work
The client ensures that the work matches company goals
Once the client is happy, sign-off takes place and the plan is executed

Step 3 – Execution

The systematic profiling of individuals and potential team members
Reviews on behalf of team supervisors and management
The implementation and establishment of new teams and new members

Step 4 – Results

An initial 1 month review period conducted with management
A review period at 3 months and an initial estimate of ROI
6 – 12 month final review and full ROI realisation

Conclusion

It is clear to see that the secret of successful teams is a complex and difficult issue to tackle head on. There are numerous variables to consider and only through a systematic approach to team building, coupled with a firm understanding of team member's strengths, weaknesses and knowledge of people's business relationships can such a goal be achieved. Successful team building is difficult and only a systematic approach can yield long term benefits.



Section 2 – The Power of Teams

What's Your Company's TQ?

Given the importance of teams and team performance in every company's overall business strategy, now is a good time to assess the quality of your own company's Team Building Quotient, or 'TQ'. This simple test will help you determine just how healthy your company's team building strategy really is and allow you to pinpoint where it could use improvement.

TQ Evaluation Questions	Yes	No	Don't Know
Team Building			
1. Do individuals and prospective team members know their strength's & weaknesses?			
2. Are teams built in a systematic fashion as a result of knowledge about people's strengths & weaknesses?			
3. Are teams reassessed when team membership alters and people move on?			
4. Are you able to measure and forecast people's relationships in the workplace?			
Team Performance			
5. Do you measure team performance and correlate this with staff morale?			
6. Are you able to review and boost team performance in a predictable fashion?			
7. Is remuneration an effective, long term driver of team performance and does it offer predictable results?			
8. Are all of your teams able to contribute to value that is greater than the sum of their parts?			
9. Do teams regularly exceed performance targets?			
Team Strategies			
10. Are you able to retain staff and maintain consistent levels of performance & morale?			
11. Do you have an adequate pool of talent from which to draw from for internal opportunities?			
12. Do skills and job matching take place on a regular, reviewed basis?			
13. Do teams represent an efficient means for executing business strategy and improving operational effectiveness?			
14. Are your teams able to free management from day-to-day			



personnel concerns?			
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If you were able to answer “Yes” to ten or more of the questions above, congratulations! You’re well on your way gaining the maximum from your team building strategies. If not, then it’s probably time to take a second look at your existing approach to teams and re-evaluate what you can do to improve – before your competition gets too far ahead of you!

The Bottom Line Benefits of 4G

Fortunately, there is an effective, easy to implement solution for companies who want to boost team performance. 4G allows companies to boost team performance and add to their bottom line in three areas; improved team performance & increased results, increased staff morale & retention and improved management efficiency.

Companies can expect improved team performance as a rapid and tangible benefit from 4G. New teams built on new relationships increase productivity levels and spur on team members to increase their results. A common complaint in the workplace is the nature and ever present curse of ‘office politics’. By systematically building teams based on people’s strengths and avoiding the mistakes of old, productivity rises and in turn, so do results.

Staff morale & retention is the second area of benefit for companies using 4G. As people’s business relationships improve as a direct consequence of the team building work and team members experience increased results, the knock on effect is higher levels of staff morale. In other words, people enjoy doing what they do well and when they do it well, their morale increases. Tied to this is the issue of increased retention and the fact that happier staff are far more likely to remain with a company than unhappy staff. Staff retention and increased morale is the second benefit of 4G.

The final business benefit is that of increased management efficiency. Precious time can be lost to management in dealing with personnel issues and issues that surround business relationships. With the improved morale and performance of new teams, these problems diminish, freeing management to concentrate on issues of greater priority. The reduction in non-core personnel issues allows management to increase their own operational efficiency, productivity and performance.

Four Groups unique approach to team building is designed for quick and simple implementation across companies, departments and individuals, regardless of the current state of existing teams and business processes. As the importance of teams and the results obtained from teams grows, companies in all markets need to continually evaluate and improve their team building strategies. Companies that want to fully leverage the business potential of 4G must move ahead quickly and intelligently or risk losing out to their more efficient competitors.

Optimise Your Team’s Performance Today!

There are few doubts about the power of teams and their ability to offer companies superior performance and achieve tasks of increasing complexity. What is in question is how best companies can fine tune, optimise and boost the existing performance of their teams. While current team building approaches achieve their goal of assembling collections of individuals, the question must be asked – ‘are these teams achieving the optimum’? In many cases the answer is a resounding No! Try Four Groups Now. If you’d like a first hand view of how Four Group’s systematic approach to team building can radically improve your company’s team performance, staff morale and retention, visit us at www.fourgroups.com Alternatively, call us on +44 (0) 20 7250 4779 or email contact@fourgroups.com and request a sales presentation. You too can create efficient, high performance business teams via 4G!



Section 3 - Industry Opinions

Industry Opinions

“One recent study, by academics at Sheffield University, attributed a variation in performance of 18 percent in productivity and 19 percent in profitability to people management. Yet separate research shows that three quarters of managers find attracting, motivating and retaining staff a perennial problem.” *Elizabeth Judge, The Times Business Section, August 6th 2002*

“It’s an urgent question today, particularly when it comes to an organisations workforce. A lot of cost pressure these days are relieved through head-count reductions. However, unless companies balance these reductions with new kinds of employee enabling programs, they are likely to have workforces that are not only smaller but also dispirited and less motivated, which will make hitting financial targets all the more difficult.” *Dorothy V. VonDette, Mission Critical, Accenture Outlook 2002, Number 1*

“Most companies are poor at developing their executives and most of them acknowledge this: only 3 percent of the 6,000 executive occupying the top 200 positions at 50 large US companies examined by a recent McKinsey survey strongly agreed that their organizations developed talent quickly and effectively. In no area of executive development – job rotation, traditional internal and external training, or mentoring – did a majority of these executives believe that their employers were doing a good job.” *Helen Handfield-Jones, How Executives Grow, McKinsey Quarterly, 2000, Number 1*

“Never has the level of performance expected of the small group of managers at the top of large organizations been higher. Today’s challenges demand not only great personal effort but also first class collective leadership. Never, therefore, has the reality at most companies, including yours, been more troubling. Very few so-called ‘teams at the top’ really work. Even fewer are real teams.” *Jon Katzenbach, Memorandum – Teams at the Top, McKinsey Quarterly, 1994, Number 1*

“The options for boosting team-like performance at the top level of your corporation are more various and flexible than you may appreciate. There is no value in artificially limiting the range of choice. Keeping that range open, however, means being willing to change comfortable behavior patterns, test and try out new approaches, reach out for real team achievements and enforce real team discipline. Merely applying team labels and rhetoric can be counterproductive. The goal, after all, is not to paper over lackluster performance with fine language, but to improve – by being more sensitive to the range of possible approaches – performance at the top.” *Jon Katzenbach, Memorandum – Teams at the Top, McKinsey Quarterly, 1994, Number 1*



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