Core Leadership Skills IX – Building a Cohesive and Effective Team

> *"Remember, teamwork begins by building trust. And the only way to do that is to overcome our need for invulnerability."*
>
> *Patrick Lencioni*

Every leader wants to build a cohesive and effective team. What does one look like?

Cohesive. A cohesive team is one marked by a deep commitment to the team's goals and where the team members have a deep commitment to each other's success in the accomplishment of those goals.

Effective. An effective team is one which is able to achieve the goals set for the team.

It is possible to have a cohesive team which is not effective. It is very rare to have an effective team which is not also cohesive.

How does a leader build that cohesive and effective team? There is no "recipe", but there are some principles.

Shared Success. The fact that a group of people report to the same boss does not automatically make them a team. They must share a committment to the same outcome.

Interdependence. A pack of "Lone Rangers" is not a team and never will be. For there to be team cohesion, the members of the team must realize, and accept, that they cannot achieve success on their own and that the contribution of each of the other members of the team is essential.

Individual Significance. Although interdependence is crucial, it must exist in balance with the team member's need to feel that they, their contributions and their sacrifices matter to the team and are recognized.

Trust. Team members must have confidence in:

- the competence and character of their leadership
- the competence and character of the other members of the team
- the trustworthiness of the larger organization

Noble Purpose. Team members must be deeply convinced of the intrinsic value of what they are seeking. It does not matter if what they seek is valued in society at large (although that helps). The intrinsic value of a Stanley Cup in human society at large is questionable (apologies to hockey fans everywhere). However, in the universe of a playoff team's locker room, its value is unquestioned. Team members must see their "cause" as meriting their own sacrifices.

In preparation for our next Coaching Conversation I would invite you to consider the team that you lead. If you are not currently leading a team, consider one that you have led or would like to lead. Ponder the following questions:

1.   Do I have a team or a group of independent individuals who report to me administratively? If the latter, is it possible or even desirable to turn them into a team?

2.   Are the members of my team dependent on one another for success? Do they see it that way? If I want them to be more interdependent, what actions could I, as their leader, take to increase their interdependence?

3.   How well am I balancing Interdependence and Individual Significance? Do the members of my team feel that they matter as individuals or do they see themselves as "cogs in the machine"?

4.   What is the level of trust within the team? Do they trust each other? Do they trust me? How will I determine this?

5.   Does my team have a noble purpose that *they* have bought into? If not, what can I do about it?

> *"The achievements of an organization are the results of the combined effort of each individual."*
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> *Vincent Lombardi*