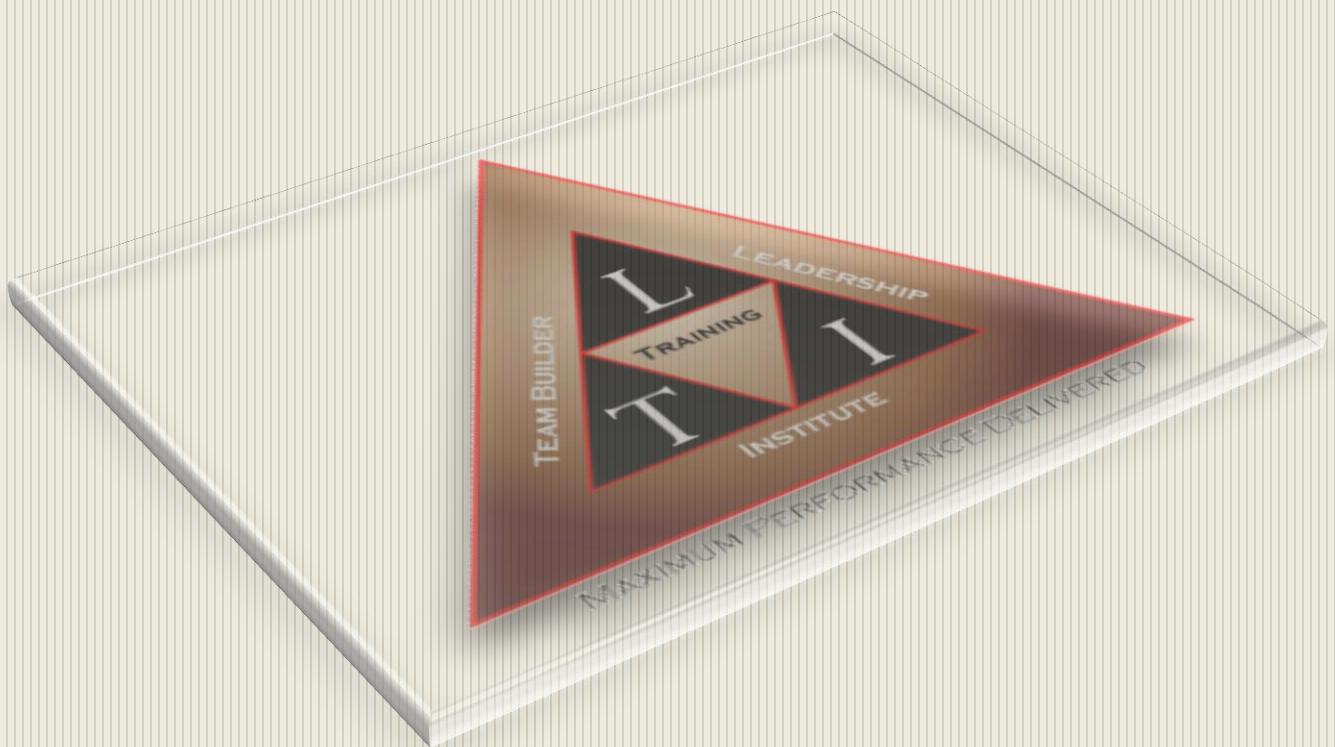


Four Steps to Building Team Success!



**THE TEAM-BUILDER LEADERSHIP
INSTITUTE**

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Forward:

Congratulations on your promotion! Life as you know it has changed. Your success going forward is dependent on not just the technical success and skills that got you promoted, but also on your acquisition and employment of the leadership skills that will get others to perform their technical positions to the required proficiency level. In fact, as a leader, that's what will get you your next promotion as well.

This guide provides key skills and behaviors that will help you quickly build your team around you, get their commitment, earn their loyalty, and enjoy success.



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Your First Days with Your New Team

You just got promoted to a new team and position or you are now in charge of people who in many cases, used to be your peers. Promotions are wonderful things but can bring unwanted stress and conflict. Being promoted to lead a new team as opposed to being promoted over your peers and having them assigned to you, are two totally different scenarios and required a different approach for smooth assimilation and a productive start.

Laying the ground work

From the very first minute you report to your new position, there are four paramount responsibilities you need to focus on to get off to a rapid and productive start:

- Determining the goals and expectations you require from your team
- Assessing the team's processes and results
- Assessing each individual team member's skills and proficiency
- Evaluating the team's operational environment for cohesion, cooperation, goal focus, and outlook or culture

Determining the goals and expectations you require from your team

Often times, leaders will simply show you your new desk and work area and then assume you know what to do from there. To have maximum impact in minimum time—you *must assume nothing*. Take the time to find out from your leaders EXACTLY what they want and expect for your results. What do they consider standard performance? What would they consider superior performance (your minimum standard)?

Your purpose for these conversations is to become totally informed and comfortable with what you must produce, accomplish, create, etc., to meet and exceed your individual as well as your team's required expectations. You cannot hit a target if you do not know where it is. With that in mind, you must get the information from your leaders whether they want to take the time to give it to you or not.

To get the required information from your leaders without upsetting them takes persistence and focusing on their needs and desires. Meaning you do not go to your leaders and say, "I need, I want, I feel, I think, I require, etc., you go to your leaders and focus on what they want or "what's in it for them." When you ask them for clarification of an expectation, instead of saying, "I need to know the parameters if I am going to get this done," you would instead say something along the lines of, "Bob, one of the things you mentioned as important to you is this....., If I do this... this... and this... we will get this (his desired result), will that work for you?"

The point is, make their needs and desires your focus when you speak to them and they will be much more interested in the conversation. Keep in mind, I'm not saying get their coffee and pick up their dry-cleaning. You focus on their needs as those needs pertain to the organization's goals. Everything you do



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must be leading to a desired result of the organization or you're doing the wrong thing. Your communication focuses on the leaders' needs but your focus is on the organization's goals and your team's actions that lead to the accomplishment of the organization's goals. If you go about this persistently and consistently, you will know the goals and expectations of your position and how to exceed them within a week or two at the most.



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Assessing the Team's Processes and Results

Besides finding out what your required expectations are, you will also need to spend as much time as you can manufacture to spend with your new team in their work environment. You'll want to observe each individual to find out what they do, how they do it, and what they produce. Work with them a little, just enough to really understand what they do and to determine if there are potentially more effective ways to get the required result.

Your goal is to see what works well and what could use refinement or adjustment. You never want to change the current processes unless the new process can be shown empirically to produce the required result with less expenditure of manpower and materials. IF IT'S NOT BROKE, DON'T FIX IT! One of the quickest ways to destroy a team's morale is to change the processes they produce with, for no other reason than you want to! Change takes people out of their comfort zones. While they can usually live with the change if it improves their positive results, they will resent it if the change does not prove to increase their achieved results they desire.

Spend a couple of weeks; observe each member at work. Know what they do, how they do it, and the results they achieve. Measure that information against the required results and adjust as necessary to achieve superior results. Any process used by the team that isn't the most effective must be adjusted.

At the end of your assessment period, get the team together; brief them on the current processes and their results. Discuss what the requirements are in those results areas and ask for input on ways to enhance or refine the processes to increase the delivered results. Use questions to help them identify potential changes (ones that you should have already identified as necessary), and try to get them to suggest the needed changes. When they do identify the changes, adopt them and congratulate them on the process improvements. If they fail to arrive at the needed changes, suggest the change in the form of a question, i.e., "what would be the result if we did this...?" Help them to see the advantage and suggest the change be adopted. Then take their suggestions when they work.

Distribute the new processes in writing very quickly and get everyone moving in the same direction. Team members will have to break old habits to incorporate the new procedures and processes. YOU WILL have to ask them to use the new processes multiple times (on average- research shows six times). Do not become impatient or upset be persistent, professional, and consistent with your expectations and it will happen quicker than you think.

Assessing each individual team member's skills and proficiency

One of the factors that will greatly determine your success or failure is your ability to assess each individual team member and determine if they can and will be a productive member of the team. Not everyone is in the right position and not every leader corrects the deficiency when a team member is not in the right position. As the new team leader, it falls to you to correct any instance where a team member doesn't fit because they can't or will not do what is required to be one hundred percent productive.



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Each member must be assessed on their skills and their attitude or outlook. This is not a gut determination but an evaluation based on empirical evidence, observation, and performance evaluation based on achieved results.

Begin with their skills, review what results are required by their job position. Through personal observation determine if they can produce the required results and to the required standard. This is a thorough evaluation of their technical skills. Do not take anyone else's input as to their competency. Not the old leaders, not your leaders, no one's. All determinations must be based on the required productivity standards for each task and your personal observation as to their meeting the required standards for each task.

Assessing the individual's skills in competency for their technical skills should be accomplished within the first couple of weeks for all team members. Once you have made your evaluation using empirical evidence, you can share your findings with the individual. Compare current performance against required performance; it's time for a one on one performance counseling session. In this conversation, share the data you compiled, comparing actual performance results *as you have observed* versus actual requirements based on their job description and/or department's and organization's mission.

Together, identify the needed training to produce performance changes (actual steps), and time lines for the changes that will produce the required results as well as lead to the employee's success. Be sure to focus the conversation so the emphasis is as much about their individual success as it is about meeting the positions required results.

Attitude or outlook

This is an area that can produce a tremendous amount of resentment and conflict. Most leaders make the fatal mistake of trying to make their team members think and feel the way they themselves think and feel. In other words, they try to clone people. Anyone who is married or ever has been, knows that the whole "changing people" thing is not nearly as easy as it sounds. In the work place, it's also a waste of valuable time. That is not why we (leaders) are there. As a leader, we are there to lead a group of people to use their skills to achieve pre-defined organizational goals.

Our team members on the other hand, are there to use their skills to help the group they are a part of to achieve its assigned goals, both departmental and organizational. To assess their attitude or outlook we have to look at their interactions with others as well as the behaviors they use in the work place. We ask ourselves; is the team member positive, goal focused, and do they interact well with others? These are the standards we use to determine if the person's attitude or outlook is effective. There will be times when you may not necessarily like a person. It could be that they believe different things than you do. Or, you may not like the behaviors they use.

To determine if their outlook is ineffective or whether we just don't necessarily like them, ask yourself these questions and observe the person to determine the answers.



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First, are they positive? Are they goal focused and focus on what can-be-done instead of what cannot be done? Do they deliver solutions instead of problems? If the answer to these questions is that they are focused on the goals and how to achieve them, so far so good. Second, do they interact well with others? Does the way they interact with others create cohesion and results or conflict and a lack of productivity? If you find that their behaviors do support cohesion and positive results but you still don't like their attitude, then the problem is yours not theirs. The solution at this point is simple; continue to get them to provide quality results and stop judging them. As soon as you do stop judging them, you will be able to focus on the work and achieve a tremendous boost in productivity.

Evaluating the team's operational environment for cohesion, cooperation, goal focus, and outlook or culture

The final assessment needed is the overall dynamics with which the team members interact. How do they behave toward one another? Do they look for ways to assist one another or do they avoid or refuse to help one another? Do they treat every other member with dignity, respect, honesty, and professionalism at all times? Do the behaviors they use in the work place create cohesion and a positive teamwork environment or not?

The answer to these questions tells you what the team's "culture" is. Meaning, do the accepted behaviors, actions, and shared team norms promote mission accomplishment and mutual success or do they lack cohesion and positive norms? The team's culture is, to an extent, created by the larger organizational culture but the first line supervisor has a much more profound impact on the way the team operates, what its members consider as success, and what are right actions versus wrong actions in the work place. The truth is, as a new leader, you have the power to build a highly productive and success driven team culture by setting positive expectations and constantly, consistently, and persistently enforcing those expectations. Always remember though, the first rule in creating the positive success driven culture is that you, the leader, must lead by example! Anything you ask of them you must first give to them to get it.

Establishing expectations

In the last paragraph, I gave you the first key to building a success driven team; as a reminder I'll tell you again—you must be what you want them to be. You get what you give in behaviors, performance, sense of urgency, creativity, positive focus, determination, goal focus, etc. They will give you what you give them.



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A great man once said:

You are what you repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an art, but a habit.

Aristotle

You must admit, he is a pretty sharp fellow for an old guy.

One of the keys here is that people cannot give you what they don't know you want. Expectations can only be met if they are known and understood by all. A challenge here is that people are emotional creatures who can think logically, not logical creatures who can think emotionally. The research shows we operate through our emotions about 90% (ninety percent) of the time.

This includes assumptions about what people should or should not know and about what they can or cannot do. If we want specific behaviors and productivity, we MUST not make assumptions about what they know to do. We actually have to find out what they do know and teach them what they do not know that we need them to. How well you do this is what will dictate how productive and success driven your team becomes.

Tell them what to do, tell them how to do it, and get their commitment

Team success is built by all the team members knowing what to do, knowing how to do it, knowing when to do it, and wanting to do it. All of that comes from you the leader. The who, what, when, where, and how must be specific too. It is the main function of any leader to provide these operating instructions for the team. All the good intentions in the world can't replace knowing what to do and being willing to do it.

There are three ways expectations must be given to the team:

1. Privately
2. Publically
3. Based on results

When a leader first takes over the team or gets a new team member, they do the initial assessments in skills and outlook I spoke about earlier in this manual. Once their assessment for each individual team member is complete, it is time to sit down with them one-on-one and discuss the findings. This conversation must be focused on the individual's success with the organization (how to obtain it) and how, by making the adjustments in behaviors and techniques that will be covered in this conversation, the individual will make the organization successful while obtaining their own individual success.

You let them know that the path to their success is through them helping the team achieve its required objectives. This conversation must be very specific. All performance standards must be clearly identified



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along with an agreement as to how the standards will be accomplished. This works best if you, as the leader, ask them how they will go about achieving the required objective (a required standard). If the way they identify will accomplish the standard to the required efficacy level, then simply thank them for their input and get their commitment to that standard and method. Example: “Excellent idea, will you do it?” The only acceptable answer is, “YES.” For instance, you cannot accept, “I’ll try, I’ll do my best, I’ll do what I can, etc.” Any response of this nature leaves the employee room to fail and have a built in excuse because they never actually agreed they would meet the required standard.

If the individual responds, “I’ll do what I can,” then your next question should be, “is there a reason you cannot meet this standard?” If there is a lack of training—provide it. Other than that, it comes down to will they do it or won’t they do it. If they will not do it, this is where you let them know they cannot be on the team if they will not commit to the actions that ensure the team’s success. Bottom line, take the time to get their commitment to the required goals and standards or get them off of your team.

After you have had this conversation with your team members, from that point on you, refer to the standards and expectations constantly and consistently as you interact with the team on a day-to-day basis. “When we do this, we get this...etc.” You must make knowing what to do, when to do it, how to do it, and wanting to do it, normal operations on your team. The more you refer to and talk about the goals and how to achieve them and the more you recognize the team members for meeting and exceeding the standards and goals, the more effective and efficient your team will become.

Assigning tasks and delegating

If you want success fast, you must ensure you never send anyone anywhere to do anything that you are not one hundred percent sure of what they are going to do. When you first begin working with your new team members, you must assume they don’t know anything, regardless of their title, work experience, seniority, etc. Making assumptions leads to conflict and failure. It’s a lot more efficient to find out, up front, what they intend to do and provide training if necessary on how to do it effectively than it is to go back and fix it later.

If you have never actually observed the individual do what you need them to do and do it to your required efficacy level, then you must find out what they are going to do after you have given them the task. Here’s an example: I once asked an individual to change a light bulb in a bathroom. You would assume that anyone knows how to do it and it would be really hard to mess it up. I quickly learned—it’s not quite as easy as you would think it would be. The individual I assigned the task to was a tall person. They decided that since they were tall they would just stand on the toilet and reach out and take out the bulb. Instead of changing the light bulb, they broke the seal of the toilet in the upstairs bathroom. Where do you think all that water went? If you said to the downstairs ceiling and walls, you are correct. Had I asked the individual, “How are you going to do it?” after assigning the task and they responded, “I’m going to stand on the commode to reach the light bulb.” I could have given them a plan “B,” that would have worked out much better for all concerned—use a ladder.



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We can all think of times where by giving poor instructions or making assumptions as to if they understood us and how they will go about the task, we ultimately created more work and difficulties for ourselves. As convenient as it is to blame the other person, the fact is, it is the leader's job to ensure that those they lead know what to do, when to do it, where to do it, and to what standard to do it to.

Enforcing Expectations

Once the team all know what's expected of them at all times, it falls to the leader to ensure those expectations are consistently met. This is where you hear people say things like, "well, I told them how to do it or I told them what to do!" Understand, there is no doubt that they were told. Unfortunately, people aren't quite so easy to get a result from as telling them one time and they are changed from that moment on. It's a nice thought but not based in reality at all. Research shows the average person will need six exposures to information with reinforcement in between exposures (practicing with the information they were exposed to), in order to retain up to ninety percent of the information they were exposed to. In essence, it must be understood, that a leader *will* have to tell a person more than once in order to get them to change the way they do something or to learn the way it needs to be done initially. In order to make the transition time short as possible, we as their leader must be very persistent and consistent with our expectations.

To enforce expectations and help team members develop positive habits that give us the results we want, we use a tool called 'on-the-spot-correction'. On-the-spot-correction is just what the name implies; when we as the leader see a team member not performing to the agreed upon expectations, we address the shortcoming—on the spot. You don't have to pull them away from the work area to speak with them. You do however want to speak with them in a location and tone so they alone hear your feedback. There can be others around, which is fine, but the others should not be close enough to hear the conversation.

To provide the on-the-spot-correction, you compare the observed action and result to your previous discussion and agreed upon standard for that action or behavior. For instance, "Bob, what did we agree was the appropriate way to greet our customers?" Then you have Bob explain, "We agreed we would say...".

Always keep in mind that the average person will need six exposures to information with reinforcement in the middle (practicing the information they were just exposed to) in order to retain up to ninety percent of the information. So, yes, you will have to tell them multiple times and each time you do you must ask for their commitment to do it the way you both agreed it would be done. Ex. "In order for us to get our desired result we must perform the action the way we discussed, do you agree" (accept only yes). Once they agree then ask them, "Will you do that for me?" *Again, accept only yes or yes I will.* Do not accept, "I will try, I will do my best, I'll do what I can, or anything else that is not a yes. If you do then you have already accepted their excuse for not doing what you asked them to do the way you asked them to do it.



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Consistency is king

In order to establish and enforce expectations effectively while creating no resistance or conflict within your group, the expectations must be based on the organization's goals. All instructions and expectations must be attached to and lead to the completion of the team's goals and towards the organization's mission. In addition, as the leader, we must set the example consistently by performing the way we have defined for our team members to perform. Double standards create conflict. Your "perks" for being a leader is that you are paid more, not that the rules and expectations apply only to others. More teams have been destroyed this way than any other probably.

Every minute of every day, the team's performance must be observed and when someone on the team is performing below the required expectations, the shortcoming must be addressed immediately by us as their leader. They must get the same message every day or every time it is necessary, "in order to get this result going toward our goals, this is the action that is required..." Consistency is king here for creating behavior change, not emotional outbursts or anger.

Creating the productive team work environment

The productive team environment is all about us, us, us and we, we, we. In order to have a team, we as the leader must build a sense of team identity. It has to feel as though it means something positive to be a part of the team. Our goal is to build a "unified sense of purpose" where everyone knows what to do, whom to do it with, and wants to do it for their success and that of the other team members.

The team environment must be, at a minimum, free of conflict, have a positive atmosphere, and be focused on the goals of the organization as well as the success of the team as a whole and each individual member of the team. We must constantly remind the members that when the team reaches its goals and is successful, the members, in turn, achieve their success. The path to their personal success is through the success of the team.

To keep team members fully engaged, the environment must be individually challenging and support individual growth. It must be stable; the performance requirements are challenging, yet consistent. Everyone on the team knows exactly what is expected every minute of every day and is provided the tools and guidance that will ensure their success. Some team members will require you to spend more time and training than others require, it's part of the job. No negativity or substandard performance is accepted. Team members are pushed to perform to the required standard for their success as well as the team's, or to find something they want to do. Accepting mediocrity from any member will discourage and deteriorate the entire team's performance. They cannot think of themselves as highly performing successful professionals, if they know they are not.

If they know they are not giving the appropriate effort and it's being accepted, they will begin to justify why they don't give 100% to make themselves feel better about their sub-standard effort. Our job as their leader, is not to teach them values but rather ask them for the expected and required performance and



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ensure they give it. Everyone feels better about themselves when they give 100%, are successful, and are recognized for their performance regularly.

A positive team environment is:

- Cooperative
- Consistent
- Challenging
- Competitive
- Comfortable

Each member is treated by everyone on the team with dignity, respect, and honesty all day, every day. Positivity and performance are requirements, not options, and shortcomings are addressed immediately and consistently. Behavior correction is brought about with training and consistency, not intimidation, threats, or anger. If an employee gets fired or leaves, it is through mutual agreement that you will not stop asking for the required performance and they, for whatever reason, cannot or will not give that required performance.

Prolouge

Leadership is the most rewarding position you will ever have IF; you undertake it in a manner that builds team, performance, and positivity. Use the above skills. Continue to learn and enjoy your success. This manual contains many other volumes that will help you hone your skills and quickly succeed as a leader! For those of you who want a more intense training on how to master leadership, go to theteambuilderadrc.com and you will find many ways to drastically and quickly obtain your success. Your comments are appreciated. Contact me at adr@adroberts.com.