



The Importance of Connecting with Your Team

By Hal Johnson

The July-August Harvard Business Review has a very good article on being a collaborative leader. The focus of the article is about how highly effective Senior Executives keep their teams connected. Typically, an article in the HBR is about big business. However, there are a few concepts that certainly have application to where we work – small to medium sized businesses.

The idea of Leadership Teams collaborating certainly is not revolutionary. But in the press of business, it is surprising to me how isolated department heads can become from what is going on in the whole business. As a result, what I call “partial pictures” develop of the business. And when that kind of isolation develops, we lose access to a bigger pool of creativity and insights for the future.

My colleagues and I at LeadershipOne have twice-monthly strategy meetings. We dedicate a certain amount of time to share insights about what is happening in our various client companies. Our objective is to identify what other possible insights and improvements we can develop as a team that we then can share with our clients. We collaborate to mine additional perspective and insights. We don't want to miss an opportunity to add value.

We have found collaboration to be an enriching process. However, the chemistry has to be right for the team to pull it off. Believe me, it is a learned set of skills.

We see many, many dysfunctional leadership teams. Mostly they are groups, not teams. They have not learned how to “team.” They are groups of managers, each focused on their departmental goals, but not collaborating for the overall good of the enterprise. To get there, it takes a leader who understands what teamwork is as well as how to enable and lead a team.

Great companies tend to be created and led by people who are determined to build something bigger than themselves. Interestingly, the definition of leadership changes as an organization grows. In the early stages, managers focus almost exclusively on “running the business.” As the business matures, the focus changes to the leaders developing coaching skills and strategy skills. And a major element of effective performance is dependent on the way the Leadership Team works together.

Finally, what enables companies to become great, and sustain their greatness, is when the Leadership Team stays in renewal, aims high strategically, and holds themselves accountable. For that to happen, the business leader has to be connected with his team. He is providing a style of leadership that establishes effective collaboration, communication and support. That is being connected!

If this is an area of leadership you would like to read more about, email me and I will send you my white paper on *The Role of the Leadership Team* (Best Practice Summary). What a great time to concentrate on building effective collaboration into your Leadership Team.

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