

Thought Leadership



Banyan Tree Strategies

Turning Your Group Into A Team

Part I – Creating Alignment

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Peter Drucker is often quoted for saying that culture eats strategy for breakfast. This is quite a statement coming from one of the 20th century's most noted business strategists. Our work with companies has led us to concur with Mr. Drucker and to follow up on his statement with a question:

How does a company build a winning culture?

In pursuing the answer to this question, we have noticed the stark cultural differences between a group and a team which has led to our follow up statement. If culture eats strategy for breakfast than a team eats a group's lunch.

We have found few objections to our statement but more than a few puzzled faces when it comes to how to turn a group into a team. **What is a group, and what is a team? For definition purposes here are some of the fully researched differences between a group and a team:**

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- *When in a group, you seek out the authority to address conflict.*
 - *On a team conflict is handled member to member with a common language.*
 - *Groups of people often do not share a common goal while Team's create common goals.*
 - *Groups are independent while Teams are interdependent.*
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To further illustrate this think of being on a 737-800 airplane. You and 174 other people follow the rules established by the federal government and enforced by the airline company's representatives. Most of you are going to the same destination but unless you are traveling with someone your goals are all independent of each other.

Of real interest is that when someone decides to break the rules and stay on their phone as the plane is going down the runway, if you confronted that person and enforced the rules that everyone already knows, the social research shows that most of the other passengers will think poorly of you.

The appropriate course of action at that moment is for you to hit attendant button above your head and then non-verbally signal to them of the bad actor and allow them to handle the confrontation. This thinking, while confounding for some, just reaffirms that you are in a group and groups have norms, but groups don't win highly contested events or survive in competitive business environments. Teams do.

G2T Step 1 – Let's Figure Out Who Everyone Admires

Companies hire people from different walks of life, with different strengths and different personalities. These differences can be obvious and group dynamics can take over if the leadership doesn't take an active role in helping people understand how they are aligned and the things they have in common.

A great way to do this is the admiration exercise which takes about 60 minutes for a group of 15.

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- *With a facilitator or leader at the white board and [this template](#) ask them to write down the names of three people they admire.*
 - *Then ask them to write down three traits that they admire about those three people.*
 - *Then ask them to rank the nine traits they have come up with top to bottom.*
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This should take you 15 to 20 minutes. You are not in a rush; this personal thinking time is vital to the process of turning a group into a team.

Your next action is to create a cohorts Hall of Fame, the one or two people out of the three they wrote down who they share with the group which the leader writes on the white board. In addition to the name of the person, you then ask them to share one trait about that person they admire. We typically list the HOF on the left side and put the traits to the right of the name.

This will take you another 20 minutes and quite often just the act of talking about people they admire and the traits they admire will start to bring the room together. Moms, Dads, Grandmothers, and civic leaders will be brought up by many people. Traits like hard-working, loyal, loving, and determined will be said multiple times.

Your next 20 minutes is spent helping the team identify with three to five of the traits as ones they really want to emulate while working together. We call these traits the MOST VALUED VALUES. At this point you have started turning that group into a team in one hour just by helping everyone see how much they have in common.

G2T Step Two How Are We Going to Live Out These Most Valued Values?

Your next step is to get the cohort together again and start by outlining the MVVs and honoring the Hall of Fame. It resets the tone that you are on your way to becoming a team. Then you launch into the challenging process of creating a question that will help define each of the values you have chosen. A dynamic question allows everyone to understand what the value of hard work means at your company.

A dynamic question allows both a tortoise and a hare to understand what the value of speed means on this team. Words like speed and hard work get used all the time, but until you have defined it with a question that is active you will not be able to bring new people on board and up to speed at the optimal pace.

Allocate 60 minutes for your first dynamic question session and use the following questions to get the juices flowing.

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- *How are we going to define speed here?*
 - *What question can we create to allow a new hire to quickly come in and understand the meaning of our values?*
 - *What about this question makes it dynamic and empowering for everyone on the team?*
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As the facilitator, be patient yet firm with your team, this can be very difficult. The return on time spent is well worth it for your team. These questions can end up on the walls in cubicles and the kitchen. They call the team to their best as they honor the people who they admire most with their behaviors.

The best part about the MVV to DQ process is that these values and questions came from the bottom up and are everybody's joint call to glory. They also are inherently customer focused and allows you to share with your team a new revelation or secret.

Every single action they take at work is governed by these values and questions. These questions are there for them to move with real pace as they solve problems. It empowers them to think, choose, and act. The dynamic questions act as a blanket of protection that you, as the leader, will support. Allow your team to leverage the questions to make choices without speaking with you.

Challenge all of them with the notion that not a single action or decision they will face on this team will exist out of the boundaries of these questions. If they do get stuck, come to you and you will work on tying it back into one of the questions so they can keep moving or you will meet with the team and further clarify for the repurposing of everyone's effort.

Summary

The group to team process changes the pace with which your unit moves. It changes how people perceive each other and it creates a new language. These are the very beginnings of forming a culture and allow you to add new people and integrate them efficiently.

The next step in leveraging the G2T process is to take your alignment and budding culture and focus on a business process that needs improving. We will cover that in G2T part two, identifying MOMI's and building SWAT teams to constantly improve business processes.

We help companies pursue the path to re-mark-ability with their best clients. This includes being both architects and anthropologists of customer acquisition and success. We look forward to helping you tinker with and build a winning culture that will transform the financials of your company, and the lives of those who work there.

Banyan Tree Strategies Team Library

Secret Ingredients of Winning Teams Series

- [Ingredient #1 - Humility](#)
- [Ingredient #2 - Commitment](#)
- [Ingredient #3 – Following](#)
- [Ingredient #4 - Vulnerability](#)

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