How to Build a High Performing Team

By – Louie V. Larimer

Do you know the difference between a work group and a team? Do you lead a group of executives or a highly functioning team?

I think the answers to these questions lie in the definition of a high performing team. As reported by Katzenbach and Smith, in their book, *The Wisdom of Teams: Creating The High Performance Organization*, a highly effective team is a "small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable."

This simple definition hits the basics, but it leaves a leader without much more to go on with respect to knowing how to create such a team.

As a result of my research on this topic, I have been able to compile a simple list of what I refer to as the 14 Universal Principles of what it takes to create and lead a high performing team.

Here are the principles I think are the foundation for greatness in team work.

1. **Shared Purpose** - Each person knows and buys into the mission of the team, why it exists, and the results it is expected to produce.

2. **Shared Vision** - All team members have clarity about the desired future state of being of the organization; i.e. what the organization will look like in some agreed upon time in the future, e.g. 5 years.

3. **Shared Goals** - There are specific, measurable, attainable, time limited and results oriented team and individual goals that are monitored and reported upon at regular intervals; e.g., at quarterly review meetings.

4. **Shared Plan** - Team members have developed and agreed upon an annual business/operating plan, as well as, a 5 year strategic plan.

5. **Each Member is Competent** - Each team member possesses the knowledge, skills, and experience to perform his/her job competently.

6. **Each Member is Motivated** - Each person has the inner drive to exceed, to perform, to achieve and be at their personal best.

7. **Clarity about Each Member's Role** - There is absolute clarity on each person's role, duties, responsibilities, goals, methods, and procedures.

8. **Each Member Performs as Expected** - Team members do what is necessary to get the job done. Each person does what he/she says they will do. People keep their promises.

9. **Effective Communication** - All team members actively listen, speak clearly, and engage in difficult conversations with each other.

10. **High Levels of Trust/Credibility** - Team members rely upon each other with feelings and beliefs that their teammates will perform and not let each other down.

11. **Mutual Accountability** - Each person holds his/herself, as well as, other teammates responsible for failures. They report and explain poor performance in ways that lead to learning, and each person changes their behaviors to correct deficiencies.

12. **Subordination of Self for Common Good** - Team members are willing to work for the common good knowing that each may need to sacrifice from time to time to achieve team goals.

13. **Celebrations and Rewards** - The team recognizes each other for their contributions and achievements.

14. **Time for Regeneration** - Team members take time to rest, regenerate and restart - begin again, sometimes with new talent.

Building a high performance team involves much more than knowing the definition of a high performing team and the 14 Universal Principles. There is a specific methodology and a discipline that a leader needs to follow to bring about extraordinary results from work groups and teams.

If you would like to learn how to create and sustain a high performing team, give me a call so we can set up a day of training for you and your team. You won't be disappointed.