



“Is your team leadership flexible, shifting in style... to suit the needs of the situation and the people involved?”

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Team Assessment: High Performance

Part I and II of the Team Assessment appeared in the last two issues of Collaborations. This final part of the assessment goes deeper into the essence of the team.

Does the team look at itself and work together to improve? Does the team truly have an open, trusting, collaborative environment?

While a score of 4 or 5 on each of these items doesn't guarantee high performance, we think you will agree that all high performing teams demonstrate each of these key behaviors and approaches.

Using the following scale, assess your team relative to high-performance.

1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Don't Know; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree

High-Performance

___ The team creates a positive environment which supports a relatively high level of disclosure and openness.

___ Members attend to the “how” (process) as well as the “what” (content) of their meetings.

___ Mistakes are viewed as opportunities to learn.

___ Members show appreciation, support and encouragement to one

another.

___ Team leadership is flexible, shifting in style and among members to suit the needs of the situation and the people involved.

___ Members are aware of their interdependencies and foster collaboration rather than competition.

___ The way the team functions together fosters creativity.

___ The team is quick and flexible in responding to changes in the external environment.

___ The team anticipates changes that could affect them.

___ Members are committed to the success of each other member as well as the team as a whole.

___ Overall trust is high, as evidenced by a healthy amount of confronting, spontaneity and risk taking.

___ Members teach each other and learn from one another.

___ The team collaborates with other groups for the benefit of the whole organization.

If you would like to purchase copies of the Team Assessment, contact Susan. See the contact information on Page 4.

Non-directive & Directive Counseling Techniques

Question:

There are several people with whom I work whose performance is slipping -- one who works for me, with whom I must speak. Two are peers and I feel I ought to speak with them. Another is senior to me in the organization and, although I work closely

with her, I'm not sure what to do. None-the-less, I'm not very comfortable doing this in any case, and particularly with those outside of my work group. What are your thoughts on if I should, and how I might try dealing with these issues?

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Non-directive & Directive Counseling Techniques

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Collaborations response:

Our experience is that almost no one is comfortable dealing with performance problems. So don't feel too alone in your discomfort. Counseling is divided into two general categories, non-directive and directive. Non-directive counseling deals with problems or issues which are not performance related. For example, child care, financial, health, or marital problems are in this category. Directive counseling generally deals with issues such as performance, discipline, behavior or use of inappropriate language, etc. Each requires different techniques which are discussed below.

Non-directive Counseling

The technique for non-directive counseling is highly facilitative. Ultimately, what you are trying to do is have individuals arrive at their own conclusions and develop their own plan of action. The problem is theirs, they must own it and, if they arrive at a course of action, there is a high probability that they will in fact take that course of action. If, on the other hand, you tell them what course of action to take there is a correspondingly high probability that they will not take the action because it was your solution not their own.

For example: You become aware "A" is having significant problems with her spouse. You could use open-ended questions (questions which cannot be answered with a "yes" or a "no") to explore the situation a little. Ask who she has considered talking with about it. Suggest perhaps another resource or two, ask her preference for seeking help, reinforce her preference, ask when she might seek that help, and ask if you might check back in with her after that time frame. There is a reasonably good chance that she will actually do what she said she would do.

Or you could listen for a while, tell her to go and see a marriage counselor, ask when she might do so and tell her you will check back in with her after that time frame. There is a VERY good chance that she will NOT do what you have suggested, regardless of the fact that your suggestion might have indeed been the best course of action and one she might have chosen on her own.

Directive Counseling

The technique for directive counseling is usually just that, directive. Suppose someone is using inappropriate language at work. Tell that person clearly what the expectations are, that those expectations must be met, and then hold them accountable. Reward even incremental improvement and continue to hold them accountable. If the situation doesn't change, begin taking appropriate action which ultimately could lead to dismissal. That's pretty simplified; however, it demonstrates the point.

We find that if you try to make the session a two-way conversation you will be more successful. In other words, ask for their view of the problems, their reasons for the situation, their suggested resolution. Different from what we suggested above for non-directive counseling, in this case

the solution is yours to agree to, change or dictate. None-the-less, it is most often appropriate for people to have a part in developing remedies for themselves.

Finally, in directive counseling, stick to facts and specific behaviors not your judgments and inferences. For example: "In the XYZ report there were two conclusions which were not supported by facts and one important set of data which was not included" or "You have been late with the last three reports you submitted." Use very specific, clear, factual, hard-to-argue-about facts.

Following are examples of what not to say: "You were careless in the XYZ report" or "You don't care about deadlines." It's much easier to argue (and many will) about whether or not they are "careless" or "don't care." Those are judgmental statements which will get you in trouble every time. Stick to the facts, specific behaviors. (Often one of the "flies in the ointment," particularly in the area of performance expectations, is that expectations aren't clear. However, we trust you read and took heed of our discussion on "Performance Appraisal: Art or Science?" in the Autumn 1999 issue of Collaborations, so you've been able to dodge that bullet.)

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Ultimately, what you are trying to do is have individuals arrive at their own conclusions and develop their own plan of action.

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Interaction Between the Two Types of Counseling

Now it doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that many of the issues which are best handled by non-directive counseling could well have a direct impact on job performance and so end up becoming mixed into a performance counseling session. Indeed that is the norm rather than the exception. If that is the case, you have two choices. One is to recognize that an issue has come up which will need to be discussed separately, in a different fashion. Set it aside and finish the performance counseling session. Or two, you will need to switch between techniques as the session progresses. That is relatively easy to do. The pitfall is that you might get distracted by the switch from directive to non-directive counseling and fail to return and resolve the performance issues which prompted the session in the first place.

...and finally to answer your question directly

Yes, of course, you really need to address performance issues with your direct reports. Hopefully the discussion above will be helpful to you. Make notes before hand so that you have your facts clearly in mind

We also encourage you to speak with your peers and the person who is superior to you, although the latter may have other implications. Base your decision on your relationship with that person. If it is a very good relationship and you work together closely and frequently, a discussion probably would be quite worthwhile. If the relationship is not good, we don't encourage you to commit organizational suicide.

In all of these cases be alert for a shift in the conversation from directive to non-directive and remember that your original objective was to improve performance.

A Model for Giving Feedback

In the last issue we gave you a model for giving positive feedback. Here is a model for giving developmental feedback.*

Developmental Feedback

1. State Your Expectations
2. Describe Your Observations
3. Discuss Consequences of Performance
4. Emphasize Desired Performance
5. Express Optimism for Future Performance

Developmental Feedback Examples:

"Mary, as you know, we expect all project plans to include objectives, tasks, a time line and a budget."

"Your plan for this project was missing a time line for completion."

"Unfortunately, I cannot approve your request for funding until the project plan is complete."

"What can you do to insure that the plan is completed within the time remaining? How will your team overcome the delay? So our goal is to..."

"I know that if your team works hard you will succeed."

*Feedback Models developed by MTV Networks, Center for Education & Training

The Bookshelf: *The Lemming Dilemma*

Book Number 3 is now available! We encourage you to read David Hutchens' third and recently published book *The Lemming Dilemma* in which he introduces us to Emmy the lemming. In this wonderful story, Emmy wakes up to her own purpose and vision and defies the age-old urge to follow the other lemmings off the cliff. Emmy shows us along with her fellow lemmings the value of personal mastery and inspires us all to pursue our own visions.

David is a master at using metaphor to make organizational learning disciplines come alive. Whether through the sheep in *Outlearning the Wolves*, who show us what a learning organization really is, through the cavemen in *Shadows of the Neanderthal* who clarify the concept of mental models, or through Emmy the lemming, David has a wonderful way of making complex subjects clear and approachable. In each book David follows the story with a very clear and useful discussion of the concepts.

David's books are published by Pegasus Communications.





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commitment and dedication to reach

Discussing High-Performance

One way to start a discussion in the team about moving to high performance:

- Ask everyone to remember his/her best team experience.
- Ask each member to jot down what made it best for them.
- Post people's input to flip chart.
- Lead a discussion on "What keeps us from becoming a best team?" or "What can we do to become more of a best team?"

Check out David's web site at www.David.Hutchens.com.

Moving to High-Performance

Think of the best team experience you have ever had. What made it that way? If you are like the hundreds of people we have asked about their best team, you probably said things like "we had a common goal," "we had a variety of skills and talents," "we capitalized on each other's differences," "we trusted each other," "we helped each other," "we celebrated together," and so on. We find what people remember most is how the team worked together--the interpersonal stuff.

So, if you have a team that is doing good work and you would like to spur them on to do great work, you have to examine more than just the work. The team needs to look at itself and make a commitment to go for a "Best Team" experience.

All three of us have had the privilege of being members of high-performing teams as well as facilitating sessions for those reaching for high-performance. We know it takes