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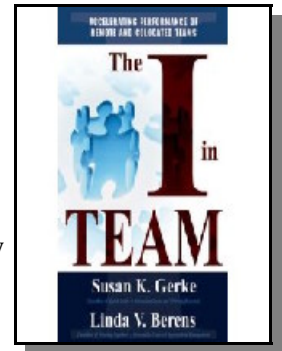
Inside this issue:

Book Corner— <i>The I in TEAM</i> by Susan K. Gerke and Linda V. Berens	1
Group Think—Part II	2
Time Management — Part II	3
Contacting Us	4

Book Corner

The I in TEAM by Susan K. Gerke and Linda V. Berens

Linda and I have teamed up again to write! Our second book is called *The "I" in Team . . . Accelerating Performance in Remote and Co-located Teams*. We combined Linda's deep knowledge of temperament with my extensive knowledge of teams, both remote and co-located to write this book together.



Many say there is no I in Team. We say there is. The I stands for the individual. Teams are made up of individuals who are expected to work together in a way that produces more than they could produce working separately. Individuals bring their talents, goals, role expectations, working habits, and many other characteristics to the team. They don't suddenly become "we." There is always a question of, "Do I have to give up 'me' to work effectively on this team?" Effective teamwork always is a balancing act between independence and interdependence, between the individual and the group. Each individual has core psychological needs, values, and talents that are essential to their well-being and high performance. Each person is unique, yet each has many things in common with others.

Using the framework of the stages of team development (forming, storming, norming and performing), we have identified how people of each of four temperament patterns are likely to experience each of the stages. The storming chapter explores the many conflicts teams experience that are temperament related. We identify them and then provide suggestions on how to deal with those conflicts. We share tips on what the leader should be doing at each stage to help the individuals and the team grow.

The topic of remote teams overlays the whole book. There are many similar dynamics in team development whether the team members are remote or co-located. However, we call out those situations where remote teams will have different or more extreme issues or concerns. The book is now available from www.amazon.com

Group Think—Part II

Question: *In the last issue of Collaborations you responded to a question about "groupthink." Can you talk more about effective decision making?*

Collaborations Response: To summarize, we cited psychologist Irving Janus' description of a process by which a group can make bad, faulty or irrational decisions. He coined the term "groupthink" for this process.

(Continued on page 2)

Group Think—Part II

(Continued from page 1)

His original definition was “a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members’ strivings for unanimity overrides their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action.”

We indicated that in this issue we would discuss more effective decision-making strategies.

The importance of having effective decision-making strategies is rather self-evident. All of us are concerned with making the best possible decisions, not only in our business lives, but also in our private lives.

A note before we delve into possible strategies. Having a public discussion about various approaches to decision-making, what circumstances might drive the choice of the approach to use, and revisiting that discussion when in the throes of actually making important decisions, would in itself probably improve the effectiveness and quality of decision-making.

In many instances, the way decisions are made is a mystery, often disconnected from reality and the issue’s real stakeholders, left to the last minute, etc. The possible pitfalls are numerous. Many of these pitfalls could be avoided or minimized by just having a public decision-making discussion.

So what might more effective decision-making look like? We will examine some of the more common, practical approaches. (Many books have been written on the subject!)

Consensus — Consensus means everyone understands the decision and can explain why it is best and everyone can live with the decision. Consensus does not mean a unanimous vote, everyone getting everything they want, or everyone finally coming to the “right” opinion.

It is a process where everyone airs their opinion and must ultimately agree on the outcome. It is not a

“compromise.” It is a search, through discussion and debate, for the best decision. As more ideas are heard and potential problems discussed, a synthesis of ideas takes place and the resulting decision is often better than any single idea expressed.

Consensus does take time and energy. However, time will be spent getting people on board with decisions either before they are made or afterward. Consensus usually results in people getting on board in the process of making the decision. Without a consensus process you may have to spend time later getting people to buy into a decision they did not support.

Many of these pitfalls could be avoided or minimized by just having a public decision-making discussion.

Voting — Voting is democracy in action where the majority wins. It may be effective when everyone knows the issues and each other’s viewpoints or when a majority can handle the implementation without the active involvement of those who “lose” the vote. It is also important to have a plan for keeping those who “lose” the vote from becoming defensive.

Subgroup — When a subgroup or committee has the necessary expertise and information to make the

decision this can be a good approach. Use it if the subgroup can implement the decision without a lot of involvement from the larger group, or when the entire group is comfortable delegating that authority to a subgroup.

Authority rule without discussion — This process is used when there is usually no room for discussion. It is useful for simple, routine decisions, or when there is little or no time for discussion, i.e. emergencies. It’s also a good strategy when group members expect the leader to make the decision or when group members don’t have necessary information, skills or expertise.

Authority rule with discussion (Participative decision making) — When using this process, the leader makes it clear from the onset that the decision making responsibility is theirs. The group joins in a lively discussion and exchange of opinions and ideas. When they feel they have heard enough to make an educated decision they end discussion and make the decision. In this process members feel listened to and know how their inputs affected the decision.

Compromise — In a compromise everyone gives up something. It is “averaging,” and is the way the U.S. Congress often operates. Group members negotiate an intentional middle position. Extreme positions tend to cancel each out. Individuals who are most knowledgeable may be cancelled out by those least knowledgeable. Commitment to the decision will usually be weak. It is frequently better to let individuals with the greatest expertise make the decision rather than compromising.

Expert — Expert decision making is finding or hiring an expert, listening to him or her and following the suggested recommendations. It is useful only when the expertise necessary is not in the group, or when the group collectively does not have enough expertise.

With the large variety of options available, take time to decide first how you will decide – what’s best for the situation – and then use the process you choose!

Time Management—Part II

Last quarter we offered tips on managing your time. This issue has more tips for you -- these are for creating healthy “To Do” lists and for controlling clutter.

Creating Healthy To Do Lists:

1. Don’t put too much on your list (this is critical).
2. Put some “space” in the list for things that come up during the day.
3. Create the list in a way that you can write on it, change it, etc.
4. Find a format that works for you.
5. Break big jobs into smaller pieces.
6. Schedule breaks, goofs, time-out time, and little rewards.
7. Schedule for long range as well as short range goals.
8. Be ready to abandon the list.
9. Keep the list visible.
10. You don’t have to make a list at all (If a list doesn’t help, or actually makes it worse, don’t do it).
11. Consider a “Not To Do” list.
 - Look at tasks and ask:
 - Does it need to be done?
 - Am I the one who needs to do it?
 - Will it keep me from doing something more important?
12. Put your goal on the top of the list.



(Continued on page 4)



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(Continued from page 3)

Time Management—Part II

Controlling Clutter

Do you tend to be a “clutterer”? Here are some ideas to help you reduce, control and eliminate paper:

1. Keep a notebook for jotting the ideas down.
2. Manage your desktop -- know where everything is.
3. Touch it once -- redirect, act on it, file it, trash it.
4. Toss envelopes immediately -- save the address if needed.
5. Sort it into -- Do, Read, File.
6. Create the file now and mark it.
7. Schedule a time to deal with it.
8. Put it in a pile if you don't know what to do with it; go through the pile once a week and deal with it.
9. RSVP ASAP.
10. Put meetings on calendar.
11. Make it disappear -- get off mailing lists, routing slips.
12. Reduce the number of periodicals you get.



We'd Like to Hear From You

If you'd like to contribute to Collaborations or if you have a question or topic for us, we'd love to hear from you. Send an e-mail to sgerke@sbcglobal.net with your ideas or questions. We will respond based on topics of most interest.