

What To Do When Values Cloud The Picture

Define the process. Many values-based blockages to reaching consensus can be reduced or eliminated by up-front knowledge. Teams should talk about how they will make decisions and what they will do when blockages occur. Write down a process or some ground rules for handling these situations.

Learning exercises. Have everyone on the team learn more about values and beliefs. Exercises that dip into one's belief system are valuable training tools. Simple exercises can demonstrate, for example, that each person on the team has different views of the world. As these views are discussed, team members begin to see that thoughts that differ from their own are not necessarily wrong, just different. And this, in no small way, becomes a revelation; because from that point on, members will think first to consider the other point of view before deciding to argue ad nauseam. If they fully understand that there are truly other "right" points of view, then reaching consensus is greatly simplified.

The subject of reaching consensus is broad indeed. Since it is an activity that we will continue to apply as collaboration and teams grow in the workplace, I would like to add your thoughts about what you see that works...or doesn't work when trying to reach consensus.

Barrier 1: Individual agendas

People are use to looking after themselves. We have all probably been told or heard someone say that you need to look after number one. In other words focus all of your attention on your agenda rather than the team agenda.

Solution: When on a team, focus on the unique contribution that you make to the overall team results and put the team results at the forefront.

Barrier 2: Silo thinking

In organizations, the attainment of a result will depend on all those in the process working together. Take for example a hospital. Someone needs to make the initial appointment for the patient to see a doctor. If the doctor identifies that the patient needs an operation, they will have to go on to a waiting list, be notified of when their operation will be, have the necessary pre-operation assessments done. Once they are admitted, arrangements need to be made to get them to the theatre on time, plans made for their discharge, including home support and medication.

Each of these tasks will require contributions from different departments and it is all too easy, especially when people are busy and stretched to fall into silo thinking. In other words, viewing challenges in isolation without considering the impact on other parts of the process and most importantly the customer (in this case the patient).

Solution: Make the time for teams to understand the impact of their actions or inaction on others and in particular the customer.

Barrier 3: Lack of trust

Most people need to be confident that others will deliver to fully embrace team working. In other words they need to have trust. Building trust takes time, effort, commitment and belief. There is no magic formula but actions speak louder than words.

Solution: Commit and follow through on actions that you have agreed to carry out and show that you can be trusted to deliver.

Barrier 4: Vagueness about what is to be achieved

Teams need to know what they have to achieve. In other words they need specific and measurable outcomes. Teams are often formed with vague goals like improve retention, reduce errors or reduce the reporting cycle to name just a few. This vagueness is a guaranteed recipe for a dish called disappointment.

Solution: Set specific and measurable outcomes for teams to address like, for example, reduce sickness levels by 2% by 30 June.

Barrier 5: Absence of conflict

In teams, particularly in organisations who are performing well, conflict is often missing. We are doing well, so we can rest on our laurels and not rock the boat might be the motto. Conflict should not be seen as a something negative but a constructive way of getting the best from everyone.

Solution: Encourage debate and constructive challenge in the interests of achieving the best for everyone.

Successful teams will make a real difference to results achieved. So what barriers do you need to address to get the best results from your teams?

I Remember

You and the others in your group are about to revisit the past and take a trip down "Memory Lane."

1. First, get a coin.
2. Next, look at the year on the coin. Take a minute to think about what you were doing when that coin was minted. Were you in school? Were you a child? Where did you work? Were you married? Where did you live? What was going on in your life at that time? What was the music of the day? Etc. (If you were not yet born or prefer not to discuss your life during the year selected, choose another coin.)
3. After you have had some time to remember where you were, you are ready to play the game. Your goal is to find someone with a coin that was minted at least two years before or after yours. Ultimately, your goal is to have the oldest coin in the room.
4. Once you have found a partner, take three minutes to tell each other about your moments in time. When you are finished, each of you flip your coin. Reveal the results of your toss to your partner. If they are alike (both heads or tails) exchange coins. If they differ, keep your original coin.
5. Repeat the process up to three times as designated by the facilitator.

Materials Needed

Coins

Prize

Time

Allow five minutes for setup. Allow five minutes for each round. At the end of all rounds, call each year in order and ask each participant to stand and give his or her name. Award a prize to the holder of the oldest coin.

Variations

- Use your own coins to ensure an even distribution of years.
 - If using your own coins, incorporate a piece of corporate history with each. Research a fact or figure about each year of your business and include it with the corresponding coins. When the participants exchange their own information, they can also share a piece of the corporate history. When debriefing, call each year in order and ask the participant with the year called to read his or her fact.
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Scavenger Hunt

You are about to begin a scavenger hunt with several members of this training group. The object of the game is to collect all of the items listed below as quickly as possible. You may talk with anyone in the group. You may not leave the room. You must associate each item with the person who gave it to you. You may not get more than two items from any one person. Once the facilitator has assigned groups, you may begin play. When your team is finished, your team should loudly announce the phrase "hunt over" to the rest of the group. Be prepared to say where you got each item. A prize will be awarded to the team that finishes first.

1. A Driver's License
2. A Family Photo
3. A Store Receipt
4. A 1979 or Earlier Penny
5. A Piece of Candy
6. A Ballpoint Pen
7. A Lipstick
8. A Planner, Palm Pilot, Calendar, or Other Organizer
9. A Drink
10. A Coffee Cup
11. A Marker
12. A Piece of Candy
13. A Store Credit Card
14. A Pair of Glasses
15. A Magazine or Book
16. An item no other team will have

Time

Allow 10 - 12 minutes for the game. Once a team calls "hunt over," have them review each of the items, where they got them, and from whom.

Variations

- Instead of using actual items, list activities and facts as the items to find. For instance, "plays piano." The object of the game is to find someone who plays the piano and associate the person's name with that item.
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Getting To Know Your Team Members

We all bring strengths to the team. Have your teammates print their name in the boxes that best describe them. Limit each box to three names

Organized	Creative	Analytical	Good Communicator	Public Speaking
Tech Savy	Good Listener	Problem Solver	Bi-lingual	Confident
Takes Initiative	Enthusiastic	Good Negotiator	Decision Maker	Competitive
Cooperative	Adaptable to Change	Reliable	Flexible	Accepts direction well

