7 Leadership Tips to Ignite Teamwork & Collaboration

INTRODUCTION

It's not easy to lead a team. Especially now. With labor shortages, the Great Resignation, hybrid work and skills gaps, leaders are overwhelmed.

We get it. The following guide will help you foster an environment of teamwork & collaboration with your team so you can work problems and drive results - together!

The stakes are high today. Underperforming teams hurt the business. Everybody loses when teams don't deliver. However, it is possible to build high-performing teams that will fight for one another and drive results. You can lead the way!

#1 Allow things to go off track

That's right. When working problems with your team, allow things to off track or in the wrong direction - at least a little. Your team needs to wrestle with the problem. Problems are not solved in a neat, linear fashion. Sometimes it's the crazy idea - the one from left field - that changes everything.

Some questions to consider:
1. Are you being too autocratic, controlling, or holding on too tightly?
2. Are you providing your team time to wrestle with the problem?
3. Are you creating a safe place for the crazy ideas?

#2 Your tone matters

You've heard that "It's all in how you say it." This is super relevant when it comes to empowering your team to work a problem in a safe environment. If you walk in determined and with a bunch of ideas, it can create a check-the-box environment. If you are upset or angry, it will create fear. Fear and creative problem solving don't mix. Instead, in a calm, but assertive tone, lay out the problem (as you see it), and ask the team some questions, e.g., Am I framing the problem right - what am I missing? What should we do about this - you tell me?

Three questions to consider:
1. Are you aware of how you might come off when stressed?
2. Are you introducing problems to your team or a solution to be rubber stamped?
3. What blindspot might trip you up as a leader?

#3 Set clear guardrails

Working a problem with your team requires clear guardrails. How should they wrestle with the problem? What will happen after? Should they come up with three possible paths? Should they rate them in terms of confidence? Who should they present their findings to? What's the scope of the fix? Is there a short term and long term approach or should it be backlogged? Your team needs to know your requirements for success. With this, you can tap their brain power and unite them.

Three questions to consider:
1.   Does your team have clear guardrails when working a problem?
2.   Is everyone being heard, including the quieter voices?
3.   Are there personalities that are dominating the conversation?

#4 Be willing to do it differently

Your team may come up with an approach that is very different than what you had in mind. That's okay. It's actually a good thing. As long as it's within the guardrails you've set and gets you to where you want to go, does it matter? Before asserting your opinion, be sure to weigh team engagement against your ideas. What's more important?

Three questions to consider:
1.   Did you have an idea in mind that's hard to let go of?
2.   Are you inadvertently steering your team to your ideas?
3.   Are you celebrating your team's ideas publicly in your organization?

#5 Don't die on any hills

We love our ideas. They become our very good friends. Totally get it. However, your hardline position risks cutting into the creative genius of your team. If they can never question an assumption, or probe in a no-go area, they'll feel squelched. Letting them do so actually opens an opportunity to educate as well as prioritize initiatives with your team. In this way, they feel included and will defend the hills they've helped define.

Three questions to consider:
1. Are you holding on too tightly to your ideas?
2. How do you remain open-minded about your hills?
3. In what ways could you let your team know that you're open-minded?

#6 Let your team own It

Letting your team own it starts from the outset. That is, it's not something you tack on at the end of the discussion in a non-committal or threatening way, e.g., "Okay, but you own this." Rather, a better way to tap into the superpowers of your team is to let them know at the outset. It might sound like this: "I want you to do this together. You should all be in agreement. This is something the team needs to own - is everybody cool with that?

Three questions to consider:
1. Have you caught yourself minimizing your team's ideas?
2. Are you creating the space for your team to own the outcome?
3. How are you empowering your team so they can learn and grow?

#7 Good leadership

Employees need to trust leadership. They're looking for authenticity and transparency. Any breach in ethics or trust can crush engagement. Investing in your leaders self-awareness is vital. Leaders need to know their strengths and their blindspots. They also need to know the people they lead and the dynamics at play on their teams.

Three questions to consider:

1. Are leaders of your critical teams aware of their blindspots?
2. Are some teams struggling but it's unclear why?
3. Do you find yourself wondering why a team can't deliver?

SUMMARY

In light of retention concerns, employee engagement, and hybrid work, missteps with your teams are costly. We're in unprecedented times. Leaders are stressed, which stresses employees. This put engagement and productivity at risk. Disruption stretches the cultural fabric of organizations creating turmoil and frustration.

We get it! It doesn't have to be this way.

Leaders have the opportunity to optimize the output of their teams. They can engage their strengths and minimize their blindspots. Be the leader who optimizes teams to drive business results and increases morale and retention no matter the climate.

Contact Us

Ignite your team...

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