

How to Build a Winning Team

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In today's healthcare environment, the HIM manager must tackle an endless stream of projects, daily and long-term system and process issues, and the ongoing challenge of employee motivation, all of which demand effective and flexible strategies. One strategy that HIM managers in any healthcare setting can apply is the use of "teams" within a HIM department or organization.

Team building and the integration of work teams can provide managers with tools that yield high performance, employee bonding, personal empowerment, increased competition, growing diversity in the work force, and flattened organizational structures while meeting customer expectations.

What is a Team?

A team is a small number of people with complementary skills committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and an approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable. They are formed to solve problems, manage projects, and redesign or reengineer a workflow or process. Team building is the process of enabling a group of people to reach their goal.

What are Team Benefits?

In the 1980s and 90s, many companies recognized team building as an important part of providing a quality service and remaining competitive as well as a boost to the bottom line. Further, using work teams can improve employees' productivity, increase morale and job satisfaction, and foster an interactive community of employees to whom the workplace is a shared environment. As a result, each challenge can be met with distributed ideas and problem-solving communication. Teams can produce benefits at both the organizational and employee level. For example, for employees, teams can foster individual growth and development, pride and a sense of ownership in outcomes, and camaraderie, plus provide opportunities to take part in decision-making processes. At the organization level, teams can lead to increased productivity, improved work quality, customer satisfaction, organizational effectiveness, cost savings, and reduced levels of management.

Building a Team

Employees are often brought together and proclaimed to be a team but have no idea what is expected by their leaders or the team members. That's why the building of a team is vital to its success. Keep in mind when building a team that it is a continuous process and its success is the responsibility of every member. Team building should be focused on a clear and consistent set of goals while concerned with the needs and ambitions of each team member, recognizing the unique contribution that each individual can make. Further, team building should explore the potential of the team as a unit with a clear and unique identity. Finally, during the team building process, make a distinction between the characteristics of a groups and a team. (see [Are You a Group or a Team?](#))

Also important in the team building process are the characteristics of a staff versus a team, as illustrated in [Are You a Staff or a Team?](#)

Before You Build A Team

For teams to be successful, there are several basic steps that need to be considered before formation of your work team. The following steps provide a framework for the development of internal work teams:

- Choose a meaningful problem to solve, a goal to meet, or a new idea to implement
- Decide who need to be involved or represented in order to achieve the highest team synergy
- Establish goals

- Provide time and space along with overall direction and vision-then let the team go to work
- Provide resources along the way in the form of information, tools and financial investment
- Measure results and reward success

Teams are successful based on their commitment to a common, meaningful, challenging goal. Without it, they can fail. This goal should be both clear enough so that all team members can recognize and work toward it. Further, the goal must be attainable to maintain the team's focus by measuring the success or failure of smaller goals along the way. The combination of purpose and specific goals is essential to a team's performance.

Why Teams Work

Teams create an atmosphere of employee empowerment, which enables employees to take charge, make choices, and believe that the future can be influenced by personal actions. The development of work teams provide employees with an avenue for creativity, to stay motivated, and feel a true sense of contribution to the organization. Creating an environment that allows teams to develop and mature is both challenging and rewarding. Fully mature, high-performance teams require minimal direction, enabling a manager to move into a leadership role.

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Are you a group or team?

Groups	Teams
Little Communication	Plenty of opportunity for discussion (brainstorming)
No support	Plenty of support from management and fellow team members
Lack of vision	Process of discovery supported by openness and honesty
Exclusive cliques	Tactical and work groups combine easily into a single team
The whole is less than the sum of its parts	The whole is greater than the sum of its parts
Seeks to hide identity	Seeks to discover its identity

Leaves new members to find their own way but insists on conformity	Welcomes new members by showing them existing norms and openness to change leader seeks team decisions by serving the team as a focus for two way communication
Leader manipulates team to own ends	

Are You a Staff or a Team?

Characteristic	Staff	Team
Goals and decisions	Made by the boss	Made jointly by team and boss
Assignments	Made by the boss	Made jointly by the boss and subordinates
Communications	In a meeting are primarily between the boss and subordinate	Are open among all team members
Role of subordinate	Primarily to carry out assignments	Team members initiate action, make suggestions, and help in planning
Primary virtues	Loyalty and being a "good soldier"	Trust, helping, and creativity
Sharing of data	Data shared on the basis of what people feel the boss wants	All relevant data shared
Critical feedback	Rare and anxiety provoking	Regarded as important to improvement
Differences and conflicts	Avoided or smoothed over	Regarded as enriching, worked through
Work	Each staff person responsible for own work	Team members feel responsible for one another
Goal	Boss' primary goal is to get the job done	Team works to get results and develop team

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