

Team Relationship Management

What to Learn:

- How to develop good relationships within the team
 - Identify mistakes made when managing teams
 - Create strategies on how to better relationships within the team
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Team Relationship Management (TRM) is an approach to improving the effectiveness of an organization's teams and the wellbeing of the people in those teams. It uses **feedback** and **data analysis** about key relationships: between team members and their team leader; among teammates; and with related, interdependent teams to understand and influence critical team processes and behaviours (Hurley, 2017).

There are various aspects of Team Relationship Management that you need to look into:

- Team Motivation
- Team Performance
- Team Engagement

Have you ever heard a teammate complain that what they expected was different from what they experienced while at work?

Well, expectation management is one critical area that can diminish relationships within the workplace.

Self-Reflection

As a team leader, think about the following:

- Are your teammates motivated enough to do the job delegated to them?
 - Do they believe in your vision?
 - How is their experience so far?
 - Are their expectations being met?
 - Do they openly communicate with you?
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If you have noticed that from the above self-reflection task that there are issues here and there that potentially diminish the relationships within the team, then it is time to change that.

Did you know that your team's energy and outputs are a reflection of who you are and what you do?

Let us have a look at the **principles of Team Relationship Management**:

1. Understand the **expectations of the team members and the expectations they have of each other**. Compare that with their actual experience, in the context of achieving the team's goals. It is important that you have a culture of collecting feedback regularly so as to be in the loop of what is going on.
2. **Map the experience-expectation gaps to ensure team effectiveness and wellbeing**. Unaddressed experience-expectation gaps across key relationships lead to deteriorating relationships and disengagement. As a team leader, it is critical to have a heads-up on team dynamics that indicate issues that will impede effectiveness.
3. **Get feedback often** and use it to create individual and team coaching conversations that lead to actions that close gaps. Closing gaps build strong, trusting relationships that lead to better performance and wellbeing.
4. **Make the above process a cycle**. This will lead to a healthy team and increased performance.

Expectations Setting

Take an example of your personal relationships e.g spouse, girlfriend, boyfriend etc. Did you set expectations with them e.g How many dates you will go on each month? What kind of places you would like to visit? How often you would like to communicate with them? Etc.

Now reflect on how you feel about your actual experience in the relationship.

If your experience meets or exceeds your expectations, how does it make you feel? How does it affect the level of energy and engagement you express in the relationship?

If there is a large or growing gap between your experience and your expectations, how does it affect your energy and your level of engagement?

This is the same analogy that you need to incorporate when it comes to the team. So let us look at some tips on how you can manage the team's expectations:

a) Provide the structure

Here, you need to look at what is expected from them and how they contribute to the vision of the company. This should be done as early as possible when the person joins the team. This should also include the guidelines and policies of the company. How should they behave? What channels should they use to communicate? Etc.

b) Clear Roles

Sometimes the team could be conflicting because the roles are not so clear to them. If they know what their role is, do they understand what your expectations are and what is the bare minimum?

c) Set motivating goals

It is important to get goals right. When goals support key initiatives and are aligned with the department or organization's strategic goals, they have a lot of power to direct work almost effortlessly. To be motivating, goals should make a difference, be fairly urgent, have a measurable accomplishment tied to them, and sound challenging.

d) Give and Receive Feedback

A conversation that includes two-way feedback is one of the best ways to ensure continued improvement, upward progress, and ultimately, better performance. Additionally, an honest conversation where you seek and accept feedback without defensiveness or excuses builds trust and your relationship with your team. Therefore, it is important that you make a feedback culture within your business.

Ask yourself these questions to know if you have set the right expectations with the team:

1. Does your team know what's expected of them?
2. Have you told your team what they can expect from you?
3. Do employees know what is expected of each other?

Evaluating the Performance of the Team

After understanding what the team's expectations are of and of you, now look into how you will be evaluating their performance. Here are some aspects that you need to look into:

-Establish a baseline. This means that the team should know the bare minimum of what they need to deliver. If they are not delivering, find out why so that you may look for solutions. Getting into arguments or playing blame games with them will not solve a thing. It is also important that they develop solutions for those problems.

-Take note of the successes and the areas of improvement. It is important that you talk to your team about what they are doing well and what they need to improve on. This means that your focus is on their growth.

-Be involved. If the team has meetings, sometimes show up to see what they are improving or changing. This helps you see where their motivation is at. Sometimes, ask if they need support. This will help them open up to you more.

Coaching is also an important aspect of team relationship management. Coaching involves understanding where the team's motivation comes from. Coaching is guiding a person in the right direction. Here are some tips on how to go about it:

a) Clearly describe why something needs to change or be done. Answering the "why" question is a key motivator--it gives meaning to our work. Be *proactive* by answering the fundamental four questions employees ask, whether or not you actually hear them:

- Where are we going? (Strategy)
- What are we doing to get there? (Plans)
- What can I do to contribute? (Roles)

- What is in it for me? (Rewards)

Clearly explain to the team member how his or her performance affects the team and how that ultimately affects job security, promotional opportunities, recognition, credibility, chances for new projects, and financial rewards.

b)Confirm that your employee understands. Don't proceed until you and the employee are both perfectly clear. Listen more and speak less. Do not react emotionally. Reserve judgment until you've listened to his or her answers.

c)Involve the team in the conversation. Discuss ideas for potential solutions and approaches. Continue your discussion to identify the root cause for the performance gap (focus on performance, not the person). Solving symptoms is easy (and futile)so ensure you identify the root cause.

d)Collaborate with the employee to set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-framed) performance goals for improvement. Then, ask yourself, "What can I do to prevent this in the future?" Winning leaders always look inside to see what they can improve. If performance does not improve, your discussion should focus on the team member's ability to keep commitments to you, rather than on the performance problem itself.

e)Recognize positive movement or effort in order to encourage continued progress toward the agreed-upon goal. Look for things they are doing well and reinforce them. Demonstrate your appreciation for who they are, not just what they are doing. Accountability will be built through this and increased performance.

Additional Reading

-How to coach employees-

<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/use-coaching-to-improve-employee-performance-1918083>

-Performance Evaluation-

<https://for-managers.com/performance-evaluation/>

-Good Relationships-

<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/good-relationships.htm>

-Setting Expectations-

<https://us.experteer.com/magazine/expectation-setting-is-a-critical-leadership-skill/>