**Work effectively as part of a team**

**1. Leadership**

We often think of teams as highly democratic entities whereby each member contributes equally to ensure a project is completed. However, without a clearly defined leader, the whole foundation could dissolve which is why a team leader is essential for success. And although the terms leadership and management are often used interchangeably, there is, in fact, a huge difference between the two. A Manager plans, organises and controls a certain department and group of employees. But are all Managers leaders? Most do tend to be but only if they successfully undertake leadership responsibilities, which include communication, motivation, guidance, encouragement and inspiration.

Building an effective team requires more than just an abstract commitment to teamwork; it requires input from leaders to foster it. Moreover, leadership isn’t about taking control, on the contrary, it’s about giving power away. It centres on trust and empowering your team to work as well when you’re not present as to when you are and isn’t about asserting authority, rather fostering trust through honestly and transparency.

**2. Roles and responsibilities**

When team roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, duplicated work will be significantly reduced, as will conflict, last-minute ‘scrambling’ and finger pointing. And, when a team is performing at its best, you’ll usually find that each team member has clear responsibilities. It’s important to make sure each and every employee is clear on who does what, who collaborates with whom and who contributes to each deliverable. However, it’s also important to share duties and help others when a team member is absent or unable to complete their task on time. Without clarity, team cohesiveness and effectiveness is compromised.

It goes without saying that teams can become unbalanced if all team members have similar styles of behaviour or team roles. If team members have similar weaknesses, the team as a whole may tend to have that weakness. If team members have similar strengths, they may tend to compete (rather than co-operate) for the team tasks and responsibilities that best suit their natural styles.

**3. Establish a relationship with your team**

As a leader, do you really know your team? What are their skillsets, strengths/weaknesses and what motivates them? This information is invaluable to leaders as it enables the matching of expertise to specific tasks which will ultimately result in increased productivity, motivation and job satisfaction. A valued employee is a happy one and this attitude will resonate throughout the entire team.

**4. Build solid relationships between your employees**

Until a team actually starts working together, it’s hard to see what works and what doesn’t. But intrapersonal relationships are key to your success as a team. Scrutinise the way they work together, spend time observing, listening and communicating. There are bound to be conflicts and conflicting opinions and this is healthy because it shows an element of passion about the work and role they’re undertaking. Act as a mediator and try and flip the issue into a positive and brainstorm solutions to empower your employees.

The term ‘team building event’ more often than not can provoke a hostile reaction from employees. Whether it’s a day out hurtling around a Go-Karting track, or attending an organised team building event, these corporate away days often appear to bear little or no relevance on an employees’ role. However, there is a place for such activities. But think about your goal - For example, if a project is about to commence, take the time to share previous experiences and perspectives on the challenges which lie ahead. Mix activities which include brainstorming, problem solving and recreational challenges and you really can enhance camaraderie among your team members.

**5. Purpose and goals**

A successful team cannot exist without a common goal, so make sure this is clearly defined. What is your team supposed to deliver? Map out the actions needed by working backwards from your desired outcome and setting deadlines for each step. Involve your team in this process where possible. Giving voice to each member of the team will give you the best shot at getting commitment and clarity of purpose. Who will manage the work in each step? Enlist the people needed in each step and provide clear expectations. Communicate this clearly with your team and then work together to achieve your objective/s.

**6. Communicate, communicate, communicate**

Poor communication hinders each and every aspect of life. A team which communicates effectively will complete projects in a more efficient amount of time than those where lack of communication is prevalent. When you have effective team communication, as Aristotle once said ‘the whole is more than the sum of its parts’. Skillful communication creates awareness and understanding and enables team members to complete their tasks efficiently and of course, skillful communication also includes the art of listening.

The team leader needs to communicate roles, responsibilities and expectations to everyone involved and it’s imperative for any leader to promote the need for effective communication. We mustn’t forget that ‘effective’ communication may be different from one individual to the next as we all process information differently. Remember also that the spoken word using tone of voice and intonation etc. can be taken very differently to that of the written word over email and messenger. Encourage your team to talk!

Communication is key as it builds trust and relationships therefore creating a ‘safe working environment’ and will lead to a healthy group climate and an effective work process.

**7. Make decisions together**

making decisions should be based upon an open dialogue with all team members in an open environment whereby they feel able to offer their ideas and solutions to problems. Each individual should have their team’s support and commitment not only when making the decision but when carrying them out. When it comes to important, big decisions, make sure you include your entire team. Not only is this empowering to every member, but they may have something really important to contribute which you may not have thought of…

**8. Celebrate success**

What happens when your team experiences success? Do you acknowledge what’s been achieved or does it disappear into an abyss? Do you share a quick ‘well done’ and then return to business as usual? The speed in which we’re all working means that we’re often onto the next task with no time, attention or reflection on what’s already been achieved.

As a leader, it’s so important not to miss the wins (no matter how small) of your team. It will inspire your team to even greater successes and will also strengthen your leadership. It can have a huge impact on how your team think and feel about you and believe it or not, can make or break your success. It will serve to inspire your team and unifies them around a positive outcome, ensuring they concentrate on the positives and strive for individual success within the team environment.

**9. Continually review your processes**

Your team’s progress should be regularly reviewed. What’s stopping them from moving forward? Constructive feedback is key here and any issues or conflicts should be dealt with in a timely manner. Feedback should be focused on ideas and positive where possible, providing suggestions for improving work processes. Everyone should help one another in developing and using strategies to achieve their goals.

**10. Facilitated coaching**

Sometimes, input from a third party may be required. Is your team just not working cohesively? Are they locking horns and unable to move forward as a department or within a project? If so, it may be worth considering a coaching programme over a number of structured sessions. Instead of focusing on the problems, individuals can describe what their roles and workplace would look like in an ideal world. They can then be taken through a process to help them acknowledge one another’s efforts in the areas which are already going well. They can then identify simple changes which could be made in each area which would move them closer to the future they have described.

How realistic would it be to make these changes and who would take responsibility? How would they measure improvement as a team and what steps would individuals be prepared to take to bring themselves in-line, for example, individual coaching. You can then create a charter for each party to sign and roll-out the charter to each team – No fuss, no blaming and no fall-out.

Over time you will find team members become more positive, accepting and inclusive of one another and as a result, production, quality and profits should soar.

Teamwork creates an efficient working environment, whereby employees learn from one another and innovate faster. A team is more cohesive than a group as it has a unity about it. Teamwork success is not automatic. Team member selection is vital, as is ensuring the team purpose is clear and agreed. The difference between team failure and success depends on the behavior of team members.

**Reference:**

https://www.peepshr.co.uk/resource-centre/our-top-10-tips-for-effective-teamwork/