

## The essentials of good team management

Management and leadership are not the same thing, and it takes careful consideration to be effective at both, explains Dr Richard.

Scientists have long known that the brain has two distinct hemispheres: In the left hemisphere of most people's brains, the operation appears to be largely linear, processing information sequentially, while the right hemisphere appears to operate in a more holistic, relational way. With this in mind, Professor Henry Mintzberg, author of the classic article 'Planning on the left side and managing on the right', poses three questions:

Why are some people so smart and so dull at the same time, capable of mastering certain mental activities yet so incapable of mastering others? For example, some of the most creative thinkers cannot comprehend a balance sheet, and some accountants have no sense of product design. Why do people sometimes express such surprise when they read or learn the obvious, something they already must know?

Why is there such a discrepancy in organisations, at least at the top levels, between formal planning on the one hand and informal managing on the other?

Mintzberg suggests that an individual may be smart and dull at the same time simply because one side of his or her brain is more developed than the other; that is more complicated, since what one hemisphere 'knows' the other may not 'know' and arises from since planning is linear and informal managing is holistic.

This helps us to understand something of the complexities of team management, the first of which is to distinguish between management and leadership. Many people confuse leadership with management, yet the two are very different. In a simple way, management is about planning, organisation, directing, controlling and coordinating. The activities of management concern not only the people in the organisation and its teams but the physical aspects of it as well, plant, equipment, materials, and money. The team manager's job is to blend these diverse assets together to form an organisation moving - more or less together - toward a commonly defined objective.

Leadership, however, is a management tool for influencing the people in an organisation, influencing the way people behave. Therefore, management is a much broader function dealing with the co-ordination and direction of things as well as people, toward the attainment of given objectives. A good leader may not be a good manager, though a good manager will probably be a good leader.

I have suggested that leadership is a management tool for influencing people's behaviour, while management is a broader function involving the co-ordination and direction of people and resources toward the attainment of objectives. From this it follows that successful team management can be observed not only in the results the team achieves but also in the manner in which the team gets those results. The following properties and performance characteristics should be looked for when seeking to identify a well-managed team:

The manager is skilled in leadership, in understanding membership roles and in fostering interaction both within the team and with other groups, resulting in relaxed working relationships developed over time. Loyalty, high trust and confidence rest on group values and goals satisfactorily integrated from individuals' values and goals.

Members are highly motivated to achieve the goals of the team, have an active interest in optimum solutions, and are supported by an atmosphere for group work built on group and individual values. The manager fosters an atmosphere of 'participative safety' in which goals are high enough to challenge but not create anxiety, and with high expectations of each member to perform. Emphasis on mutual help creates a supportive atmosphere for constructive criticism.

Team members demonstrate creativity, are clearly not 'yes' men, and the group are keen to develop members' potential. There is 'constructive' conformity, e.g. on operational and administration procedures. Relationships allow for full and frank communication both within the team and with other groups. Flexibility characterises the team and its members. There is a strong motivation to influence others and allow their influence.

Good upwards communication to the team leader and high receptivity to others' information. Important information is 'pushed', unimportant information excluded.

A well-managed team generates a feeling of security which in turn promotes initiative and delegation. Such teams do not 'lose' a good manager easily and will want to take part in the careful selection of a new leader.

The team manager must address four functions necessary to the accomplishment of the team's objective:

- Control of internal activities
- Enforcement of group values
- Linking with other teams
- Protection from outside pressure

Their success in these areas has two principal effects on the team:

First, the team's productivity or output: For example, a good sales manager will ensure that sales and service visits are balanced across the sales representatives in his team. Similarly, the good transport manager sees that vehicle routing is balanced across the drivers in his team. Both will ensure that the routing patterns meet fully the needs of best customer service. (Remember that for 200 people working together in a call centre the climate has much in common with a factory situation, with consequent good, bad or indifferent influences on customer satisfaction.)

Second, the leader has a strong influence on the team's stability and the satisfaction of individual members. A leader influences the individual members' satisfaction with the team. This satisfaction influences the individual members' willingness to show up on a regular basis to perform.

Finally, a good leader may not be a good manager but a good manager should be a good leader.

Managing a team means being clear about why you are there, what the group is required to produce, identifying who does what best, how to set and manage deadlines and how to encourage people, including when to move them on and/or out. It does not mean vying with every subordinate over the best way to do things or trying to turn the group into 'our gang'. It means knowing and showing what you are really good at and freely acknowledging that in some areas some people really do know better. Motivating others means knowing yourself and not trying to be something else.