

## Building High Performance Teams in a Transitioning Industry

Building a team has never been difficult for those managers who know how and are willing to put forth enough consistent developmental effort to do so. There are countless examples of successful team building managers and leaders who have forged effective philosophies and strategies for us to follow.

***“Let’s make a dent in the universe!” - Steve Jobs***

And yet as things change, even “tried and true” methods of management and leadership may not produce the team building results that many transitioning organizations are hoping for.

In order to successfully and consistently build teams today we need to factor into the team building strategy equation the impact that change has on employees and our team building strategies must be altered or improved to include “transition leadership.” Unfortunately, many managers are not prepared or educated to incorporate this required leadership style.

Let’s examine the historical team building formula and consider the transition influences that have direct impact on its components.

The historical formula for team building is:

1. You must start with the right people
2. You must have a strong belief that each team member can succeed
3. The team must share a large common purposeful goal
4. The team must be put under some pressure

Now let’s consider what’s changing. If we understand the changes required to meet our new business objectives and we also understand the predominate changes occurring with our employees and customers, then we can amend the formula to become successful team builders in our quickly transitioning industry.

In a high level overview of our industry transition from the historical “copier” environment to our new “print management” environment, these are some of the common impacting transition influences that can make team building even more difficult.

1. MPS is an emerging concept that very few customers understand and very few salespeople are proficient.
2. Profitably selling and servicing MPS is very different than any process or model used in the past.

3. Selling has moved “up-stream” to the C-Level as a first time decision for many customers who are considering an MPS strategy for their organization and salespeople are not prepared or experienced in C-Level contacts and commitments.
4. Multiple influencers and decision makers are almost always involved in MPS decisions and many salespeople are not experienced in managing the delicate nuances of multiple influencers or decision makers.
5. Customers have developed procedures to protect themselves from “copier” salespeople in order to turn solution selling approaches into “transactional” purchase decisions.

There are other impacting transition influences, but these are the primary influences that need to be addressed if we intend to build and sustain a high performance team in our transitioning industry.

### **Start with the right people:**

We certainly need to be vigilant in doing whatever we can to hire the right person for the job. Effectively hiring those who have the right “stuff” is always a great place to start building teams. And yet when you also consider transition influences, hiring procedures alone may not be enough. The truth is that the products of great transition leadership are people willing to change! The right people then are those who have the right mix of behaviors, competencies and characteristics but also a burning desire to learn, change and improve!

### ***“The only real improvement is self improvement”***

Whether they are new hires or tenured reps, if salespeople are going to acquire needed skills and master a new selling process, they must have a tremendous appetite for education, development and improvement. If managers are to leverage the time, talents and capabilities of a transitioning team then they must start with the right people... people who desire change!

### **You must have a strong belief that each team member can succeed:**

If we consider the before mentioned transition influences when implementing this strategy then it should read: *You must have a strong belief that each team member can succeed, or you must develop them to a place where you believe each team member can succeed.*

### ***“The growth and development of people is the highest calling of leadership”***

***– Henry S. Firestone***

Building teams in a transition industry requires true interdependence. All team members must have confidence in their abilities, in the abilities of co-workers and in the abilities of the manager. In order to accomplish this each manager must continue to educate,

monitor, manage and develop every team member to become proficient in the behaviors and activities that produce the best results while consistently encouraging them to improve. Employee development must become the guiding priority of every manager who wants to create and sustain a winning team! Only through daily, developmental management can leaders improve their staffs abilities and confidence while in turn learning to trust each team member to work effectively. Managers must have a strong belief that each team member can succeed, or they must develop them so they believe!

**The team must share a large common purposeful goal:**

In order to build a team in a transitioning industry, leadership must provide a visionary goal that stirs every team member's heart to action! Change can be painful. Change can be hard. But with the right shared goal, team members can overcome personal challenge and inconvenience in order to help the team in service of the greater good. We've all seen examples of people who performed selfless acts in order to improve another's condition. The acts we need our team to perform are those of transition, change and improvement. The other person's condition is the customer's condition. If the reason is great enough then motivation follows and committed action results!

***"The greater the vision... the stronger the call to action!"***

People need and want leadership. But they want leaders to provide purposeful vision and guidance. In order to build and sustain a team in a transitioning industry, leaders must share with their team a large purposeful goal. This goal must inspire employees to press through the momentary pain of change in an effort to achieve a greater and yet mutually beneficial good. Helping many organizations over the years successfully transition, I've found that one purposeful goal that serves this intention is:

***"We're going to be the very best at helping our customers improve their business condition!"***

This transition goal seems to say, "I want to do right by my customers by improving their business condition with the high quality products and services we offer." "We have great solutions and I know I can help!" In order to accomplish this, team members must learn to work effectively with any new process, competency or attitude that will help them to accomplish the team goal. Any team that focuses on achieving a large purposeful goal will be much more adaptable and more likely to press through and achieve the team goal. Managers need to define their vision and share it frequently with team members. Managers also need to consistently review team and individual employee progress being made to achieve the goal.

**The team must be put under some pressure:**

Here's the good news. The pressure we need to forge our team into a successful goal achieving phalanx already exists! Pressure exists all around us at work. It's in the plan. It's in quota. Hopefully it's in personal and team development. And last but not least, it's in the desire to be successful in a transitioning industry. The high quality men and women we manage continue to feel the pressures of a transitioning industry as well as the pressures to improve themselves and their customer's conditions!

These transition leadership strategies are the cornerstones of building and sustaining elite high performance teams in a transitioning industry. By following this simple formula and amendments, most of the industry transition influences that may weigh heavy on companies, managers and employees can be overcome.

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