
Successful Team Leadership

Whether the title happens to be supervisor, team leader, superintendent, director, coordinator, or manager, you are responsible for overseeing the work and outcomes of fellow employees within your organization. Whatever your specific title, mastering the skills, techniques, and attitudes of an effective team leader are critical to your personal effectiveness and your ultimate success.



Today's team leader is perhaps even more critical to the success of the organization than ever before. Every system, whether it's found in a computer, an automobile, a watch, a human being, or an organizations needs to function congruently. ALL of the individual parts have to work together if its to work at peak efficiency. Just as a piece of machinery works efficiently only when all the parts are working, your organization is effective only when your people - who are the organization - are working together to their full individual and collective potential.

Your role is especially critical to your team's collective unity and to your organizations ultimate success. You are, at the same time, both directly and indirectly responsible for the productivity of yourself AND each individual you lead. The team leader role requires you to wear many hats. You function as a leader, a supervisor, a mentor, a follower, a disciplinarian, and an advisor. Your responsibilities include setting goals, developing priorities, planning, staffing, and motivating your team, all while producing measurable outcomes.

In the early years of business, a team leader's function was much less complex. In fact, the term 'team leader' wasn't even used. Back then, the role was regarded as an overseer both by employees and by management. Ahhh, how times have changed! It used to be so simple; carry out orders from above and if people below you didn't produce, well... you fired them. That autocratic style of management, and the autocratic boss is no longer effective. Times have changed for the better. Employees today have different needs,



work for different reasons, and are more educated and aware than ever before. Competition for talent, technology, economic conditions, and regulations have made most organizations realize that their most valuable resource is in fact their employees.

As a team leader, your primary role is developing the resources, specifically your people resources. For those in a team leader role, more than 50% of their success is derived from getting results with and through others. Sure, you have to be able to train your folks on the technical aspects of their position, and may even fill in for one of them during an occasional sick leave or vacation time. Yet, your success is directly linked to your being able to get them to produce the measurable results necessary to meet the organization's goals. There are five basic tasks required of any team leader. Let's take a look at each in a little more detail:

Planning

Planning involves establishing and planning the goals of your department, business unit, or team. These goals must be aligned with the overall organizational goals, the goals of your boss, and the individual goals of you and your team in order to achieve the best results. It is a proven fact that if team, business unit, or departmental goals conflict with overall organizational goals, or if an individual's goals conflict with either, both the organization and the individual will not be as productive.

Organizing

Organizing is about making sure that all of the necessary processes are in place. These processes should include, or be connected to, providing service that exceeds customer expectations or to produce the products your customers (both internal and external) requires. Organizing could involve providing customer support or technical assistance, scheduling machine time and ordering raw materials, assigning priorities and routing workflow, as well as developing new products and services. Once your goals are established and action plans are developed, it is your responsibility to organize the efforts and energies of your team to execute those plans in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

Staffing

Staffing is about choosing, selecting, or involving the right and best team members. As Jim Collins found in his landmark study *"From Good To Great"*, having the right people on the bus is critical to an organization's success. You also have to have the right butts in the right seats on that bus! The most critical stage is at the point of employment. Since

the mid 1980's many organizations have made the conscious choice to shift much of the time, money, and effort necessary to manage a traditional new-hires to their pre-hire process... making sure they get the right person for the position and the organization BEFORE bringing them on board. Team leaders are involved every day in staffing decisions, deciding who should be assigned to a particular job for project, who should be scheduled for a particular training session, or how many new people might be needed in the future. The team leader is THE key leverage point for organizational success.

Motivating or Directing

Motivating or directing may be your most important function as a team leader. Remember your role is about *getting results with and through others!* Ultimately, every team leader is judged by the results of their team, department, or business unit. All of the sophisticated planning, organizing, and staffing will be of little use unless you create an environment where your people are motivated to generate the desired outcomes. There is both good news and bad news relative to motivating people. First the bad news... *it is impossible to motivate anyone!* Now, the good news... they already come motivated. It is the team leader's responsibility to discover the key or button for each of their people, and then create an environment that unleashes the power of that internal desire in a way that is aligned with the organization's objectives.

Evaluation

As a team leader you are responsible for evaluating what goes on in your team, department, or business unit and the results generated. You must constantly observe how your team is proceeding toward the desired outcomes. You are responsible to take corrective action when things are not running well. Proactive evaluation of results involves constant monitoring and measuring processes, resources, and team members to ensure all activities and plans are yielding the results that you are responsible for and the organization expects.

If you look at these five functions carefully, you'll discover that they really operate as a continuous cycle that is never-ending. The successful team leader is a master of consistently and constantly planning, organizing, staffing, motivating, and evaluating.