TEAM BUILDING

Purpose and Importance of Team Building

It is expected that in a team-oriented environment that all members of the organization / enterprise will work together, in an effort to help the organization to produce results and achieve success; through the attainment of the goals and targets set.

In team building, it is expected that all members would be acquainted with the mission and vision of the organization, and what it wants to achieve. Without the knowledge of these expectations, and a clear understanding of the strategies to be employed towards achieving the desired results, the possibility exists that the goals, aims and objectives may not be realized. Commitment to the organization therefore becomes an important factor if it is to achieve its goals.

Developing a Culture of Team Work

The culture of team work is nurtured in an environment where there is collaboration and cooperation. It is expected that the environment would be predisposed to encouraging thinking, planning, decision making, the building of trust and openness, and the practice of good human and interpersonal relations.

Team building will more than likely be driven in an environment where employees are motivated. The environment should enable employees to

enjoy good working conditions, a range of benefits and security of tenure. Employee recognition, regard for the professional and personal development of employees, opportunities for advancement and promotion, and the fact that work can be made interesting and rewarding, will contribute to cementing a culture of team work.

The importance of motivation is supported by Frederick Herzberg: Motivation-Hygiene Theory. He opined that 'Motivation factors aren't necessarily expected, but when they're in place, they produce feelings of satisfaction and drive employees to succeed. (The Motivation to Work, 1959)

Marcelino Sanchez in his work 'Keys to Building a Strong Team or Organizational Culture,' identified three critical factors on which a productive team is built. In doing so he opined:

"My thoughts on building a productive team culture (subculture). For a team to do what it needs to do in a way that they like to do it and be effective, they have to develop certain norms of behavior. Norms of behavior are a function of many things but three critical factors are:

1. Leadership – how the team leader leads and interacts with others (in the team).
2. Values/beliefs held by the team – most teams have ground rules but they rarely make a difference because they are task oriented (be on time, don't interrupt, etc.) and only written on a flipchart page. Mutually espoused values and beliefs have to be written on individuals' minds and hearts.
3. Consequences – a well defined accountability process is necessary to reinforce desired behaviors and attitudes. "

Key Characteristics of Team Building

It must be reemphasized that the role played by each member of the team is vital to the success of the organization. It therefore requires that each team member is required to contribute. Failing this, the overall success to be attained can be undermined in the absence of the collective effort. It is expected that there will be a high level of interdependence amongst team members. For a team to be effective, it requires that the team has leadership. The team leader should be an individual who has good people skills and is committed to the team approach.

Communication stands out as a important factor in team building. Its effectiveness is best recorded within a relaxed environment, where information sharing and participation of individuals is the norm. Good communication system and practices will contribute to the buy in of employees, where they have a clear understanding of the goals, targets and objectives of the organization. Most importantly, it helps to develop trust amongst the members of the organization.

Defining of the roles of team members is necessary. This would help team members to know how they can influence the team agenda, and make a valuable contribution without fear and malice. In the case of the latter, it is expected that the incidence of personal attacks and negative responses to criticism, will be reduced, if not eliminated. Where the roles of team members are clearly defined, and the confidence and enthusiasm of individuals in the team are high, these would lend to the team's capacity to create new ideas.

Team Ethics
These are built on the foundation of professional standards and ethical code of conduct, the existence of a corporate culture, corporate policies and procedures, and personal and team values.