BLUEPRINT FOR A BRILLIANT TEAM

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The Blueprint for a Brilliant Team

Here is the overview of my six-step system for creating a brilliant team. It's not rocket science; it's just my tried-and-tested approach to getting people engaged and performing at their best. It's relevant to both new and established teams and I suggest it's an on-going process, rather than a one-off intervention.

I've produced this overview to whet your appetite for the full on-line programme, where you get access to specific details of how to do all of this. I'd love to help you create your own Brilliant Team…

Before you begin:

To make this system work, you need regular interaction with everyone in your team – individually and collectively. I recommend that you have a one-to-one meeting with each person each week as well as a weekly team meeting. These might be short meetings, the important thing is that you have a regular weekly slot for each person. That way, if one of you is on holiday or has to be somewhere else one week, your next meeting isn't far away.

It's also important that you have clear goals for your team. They might be goals for the year, longer term goals or specific goals for the period of your working through the system, but you must have goals!

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Stage 1 – Who is doing what and why?

Activities:
- Measure current performance
- Review job descriptions and individual objectives
- Strengths appraisal
- Agree individual contributions

Measure current performance

Before you change anything, it's a good idea to know where you're starting from. For each of the team's goals, establish performance measures and check how well the team is doing right now. Later on, you'll be able to see the progress the team has made by referring to these measures.

Review job descriptions and individual objectives

The purpose of this step is to make sure that each person in your team knows what's expected of them. The job description outlines the person's general responsibilities and their individual objectives highlight current priorities. Without total clarity of role, responsibilities and objectives, few people can perform at their best.

Strengths appraisal

Once you have a clear picture of the responsibilities and objectives of each person, you can ask yourself whether you're actually using everyone's strengths or if there are shifts in role that you can make to capitalise on each person's particular enthusiasms and abilities. It really helps if you understand what motivates each person and what matters to them.

Agree individual contributions

The next step is to discuss your thoughts with each team member and agree with them what you want them to contribute to the achievement of the team's goals.

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Stage 2 - Communication

Activities:
- Assess sensory preferences
- Review communication strategies
- Communication plan

Assess sensory preferences

Effective communication is aided by an understanding of the sensory references of the people who want to communicate. Visual thinkers often like charts, diagrams and email. Auditory thinkers prefer to talk and discuss, ask questions, listen. Mis-communication is often the result of a mis-match of sensory styles.

Review communication strategies

Time to take stock of how your team currently communicates and how well it's working. Are there other methods of communication available that aren't currently being used? What is likely to suit each member of the team?

Communication plan

Having considered what communication is currently going on and how well it's working, you produce a plan for effective communication, starting today. This is probably best done as a team exercise so that everyone gets an opportunity to say what works well for them. Expect that different people will want different things. Not everyone wants to know a lot about what's going on in other parts of the organisation, but for who do it's crucial.

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Stage 3 – Problem-solving

Activities:
- Identify problems that need to be resolved
- Deal with team issues
- Deal with individual issues

Identify problems that need to be resolved

Very few teams operate without any problems arising. In fact, if there are no disagreements or difficulties, there probably isn't much being achieved either! The important thing is to keep an eye on any areas of tension and act before they become major stressors. Part of Step 3 is taking time out to be honest with yourself and your team about what isn't working.

Deal with team issues

Once you've spotted the problems, the next step is to handle them. Any issues that affect the whole team are often best dealt with in a team meeting. Even if there isn't a simple solution, the simple fact that your team now know that you've recognised the problem and you're not shying away from it will help. Managers and leaders who ignore problems lose credibility very quickly.

Deal with individual issues

Any problems relating to a specific individual are best handled in a private one-to-one. That's not to say that the individual concerned won't tell anyone what was discussed, but that's okay – others will want to know to know that you're tackling the problem. Aim to be non-judgemental and keep any feedback factual until you've heard the other side of the story.

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Stage 4 - Mindset

Activities:
- Hold a team mindset session

Hold a team mindset session

This is something I developed with my team during 2011 when we were getting dragged down by tales of economic gloom and doom and needed to create a resilient mindset and stay focused on our goals. It involves being very honest about what you really think and making it okay for others to express their doubts, frustrations and cynicism. Once you have acknowledged the reality of how people are thinking and feeling, you can begin to move on, but nothing will kill a plan faster than lack of belief in it.

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Stage 5 - Reflection

Activities:
- Review Steps1-4
- Review questionnaire

Review Steps1-4
If you do steps 1-4, you learn a lot about the people in your team and how to engage them. Now is the time to review your earlier decisions about who does what and to reflect on the meetings you had. This will inform decisions about how to conduct team meetings, how frequently to hold one-to-one meetings and what forms of communication work best in your team. I recommend that some of this reflection and review is done with the team.

Review questionnaire
I created a specific questionnaire for the on-line programme, you could create your own and if you enrol in the programme you'll get mine.

Stage 6 – Reward and recognition

Activities:
- Measure performance and calculate results
- Recognise success
- Reward contribution

Measure performance and calculate results
In Stage 1 you measured current performance. Now it's time to take the same measurements and calculate your results. How well did you do?

Recognise success
Armed with the results of your endeavours in Stages 1-5, you can give your team the specific recognition they deserve. Remember to tell everyone the results and to acknowledge the part that each person has played.

Reward contribution
Reward is important. Some leaders assume that material reward is what matters, but research shows that a simple 'thank you' and demonstration that you understand what someone has done might mean more to them in the long run. If you are able to give gifts or bonuses, they will no doubt be welcomed, but don't assume that if you can't reward in that fashion that you can't reward at all. Telling someone precisely and specifically what you appreciate in them is priceless.

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Before you go…

I hope you enjoyed this overview of the Blueprint for a Brilliant Team. If you'd like more details of how to do everything in the 6 Stages, you can join the on-line programme by visiting www.brilliantminds.co.uk/brilliantteam

The 12-week programme costs just £297 + VAT and there is also an option to upgrade to a package that includes personal coaching.

I realise that most of what you've just read isn't rocket science. You can probably do most of it on your own. But will you do it?

It will be so much easier to implement if you join the programme. Not only do you get the specific information on how to do it, you also get regular reminders from me and a fortnightly opportunity to ask me questions, live, in a conference call.

Aren't you, and your team, worth it?

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