

How to Build A High Performance Team

By Stephen A. Saenz, March 2003

In order to build a great business, you have to build a great team. Not just any team, you have to build a High Performance Team. A High Performance Team is a group of people who are committed to anticipating the needs and exceeding the expectations of their customers AND each other. When people come to work with a high performance mindset, extraordinary things begin to happen. Clients turn into raving fans, productivity goes through the roof, and stress begins to dissipate.

To prevail in today's marketplace, you have to do more than simply "satisfy" your clients. You have to exceed their expectations, satisfying them in a way that captures and maintains their loyalty. The only way you can bridge the gap between service that simply satisfies and service that exceeds expectations is to have a team who is willing and able to provide the extra measure of dedication, care and effort that represents the difference between average client service and EXCEPTIONAL client service. We call this DISCRETIONARY EFFORT. If you want your team to put forth the discretionary effort that ensures loyalty, you need to focus as much on your employees as you do on your best clients. In future articles, we will share with you our process for building a High Performance Team. For this newsletter, we will set the foundation of how we define a High Performance Team.

There are three **primary benefits** to building a High Performance Team:

1. Allows you to stay focused on your "highest and best use"
2. Enables you to get to higher asset/revenue levels faster
3. Enhances your ability to land larger accounts through added "depth"

A High Performance Team is one in which you have:

1. The right **PEOPLE**
2. Doing the right **THINGS**
3. The right **WAYS**
4. For the right **CLIENTS**
5. At the right **TIMES**
6. For the right **REASONS**

I know that's a mouthful, but we must set the bar high if we want to achieve greatness. It will not be easy to achieve this goal but it is a good target to shoot for. What do you suppose a team of this caliber can achieve? That is right...ANYTHING!

Listed on the next page are a series of statements to clarify our definition of a High Performance Team. Evaluate how you rate in each of these areas and determine where you can improve the team...

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The right PEOPLE...

- We have the SKILLS required to perform our jobs at peak potential.
- We have positive ATTITUDES and are motivated to perform our jobs at peak potential.
- We have the KNOWLEDGE required to perform our jobs at peak potential.
- We are able to achieve synergy through COMPLEMENTARY skill sets and capabilities.
- Our working ENVIRONMENT is free from internal conflict and inappropriate behavior.

Doing the right THINGS...

- We spend most of our time on activities that we are NATURALLY good at, i.e. core competencies.
- We spend most of our time on activities that help our team achieve its GOALS.
- We are EFFECTIVE and spend most of our time on important activities.

The right WAYS...

- We have clearly defined STANDARDS for all important tasks and activities.
- We have SYSTEMS in place that enable us to be highly efficient in all important areas.
- We have the TOOLS in place to perform our work at peak potential.
- We receive adequate TRAINING in all areas required to perform our jobs at peak potential.
- We have access to and know how to get firm or external SUPPORT when we need it.
- We COMMUNICATE with each other effectively.

For the right CLIENTS...

- We work primarily with clients who are or will be PROFITABLE.
- Our clients TRUST us implicitly.
- Our clients VALUE our advice and are willing to pay for it.
- Our key clients are in a position to REFER us business and DO, i.e. significant circles of influence.
- We ENJOY working with our clients.

At the right TIMES...

- We RESPOND rapidly to CLIENT requests.
- We RESPOND rapidly to other TEAM MEMBER requests.
- We spend the MAJORITY of our time with HIGH POTENTIAL CLIENTS.
- We get our work done right the FIRST time.
- We get our work done with plenty of TIME to spare, not at the last minute.
- We are more PROACTIVE than reactive.
- We ANTICIPATE the needs of our clients.

For the right REASONS...

- We are clear about and embrace our FIRM'S VISION and MISSION.
- We are clear about and embrace our TEAM'S VISION and MISSION.
- We are clear about and embrace our TEAM'S GOALS, STRATEGIES and TACTICS.
- We are clear about our ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES, i.e. what we are supposed to be doing.
- We are clear about what is EXPECTED of us and how our performance will be measured.