

## **Don't forget the Values!**

Many teams go straight into task once they have agreed what the team purpose, mission and goals are. This can be very counter-productive as they have missed a very important aspect of teamwork. This important aspect is the need to discuss values and behaviours. Without discussing what values and behaviours the team aspire and subscribe to, the team will become dysfunctional in times of pressure and in some cases the actual mission and goals will not be realised.

Values are simply the things that are important to us and it is vital that each team member is given the opportunity to highlight what values are important to them in relation to how the team is going to operate. Examples of values are honesty, integrity, openness, challenge, sincerity, etc. The team needs to know what values are to be the cornerstones of everything they do so the conversations need to happen. The team should agree on perhaps say, six - seven core values that each team member can subscribe to and work by.

Every value will have a set of behaviours that goes with it and it is vital that the team works on working out what behaviours have to be demonstrated in order to live out the values. If one value is honesty, then aligned behaviours maybe that everyone tells the truth about situations; that everyone gives feedback when appropriate; that people own up to mistakes; that team members say what they are feeling. etc.

To get a team to highlight what values are important to them simply get them as individuals to write down (on 'stickies' – one value / behaviour per sticky) what is important to them in working effectively in a team. Get them to list all the things that must happen for them to be comfortable working in that team and once this is collated, get them to do the same for the things that happen that annoys and frustrates them about working in teams. Get them individually to come out and stick their 'stickies' on a flipchart. Getting them to do this individually increases the awareness of what motivates and de-motivates each individual and also verbalises what each person wants to happen. Once all the values / behaviours are highlighted then the team can construct these into a form of team agreement or 'charter' which will provide a framework for a healthy and productive working relationship.

Once the team has agreed what values they are going to aspire to, and what behaviours have to be demonstrated to make the values live, then each team member will have a greater understanding of what is expected of them. Bringing the values and behaviours to the fore means also that they have committed to living the values and demonstrating the behaviours.

Once the mission, values and behaviours have been discussed and agreed then the team can get down to agreeing the more tangible aspects of their mission in that they can then discuss strategy, roles and responsibilities and specific performance objectives.

Finally review on a regular basis how the values and behaviours are being implemented and if there is any deviation from the team agreement sort it out quickly!