

## **Growing Interdependent Team Members**

by Dennis Hooper, copyright © 2007, published in the Houston Home Journal on Saturday, Nov. 17, 2007

The best teams are not filled with well-rounded people. Teams are well-rounded when filled with a variety of very capable people, each willing to volunteer his or her unique capabilities to accomplish the objectives of the team.

Think of any successful team. Is it composed of individuals who all do the exact same thing to the same level of competency? Of course not. An orchestra requires more than violins! A football team would never be successful with eleven wide receivers on the field.

This past weekend, my pastor asked me to read the scripture relevant to his sermon. The passage, 1 Corinthians 12, refers to the various abilities provided by the Holy Spirit to a congregation. An analogy is made to our physical bodies: "The eye can never say to the hand, 'I don't need you.'"

So it is with your organization. You have objectives you want to accomplish with the individuals you have available to you. And each individual has a variety of different capabilities.

When I work with leadership teams, we typically conduct two different assessments. One of them determines natural talents. These aren't talents like painting, singing, or dancing. These are naturally recurring patterns of thought, feeling, or behavior that can be productively applied. You might characterize these patterns as "personality traits," and they are likely not going to change, no matter how much training or feedback you provide to the individual.

For example, let's contrast two ways of relating to people. You may prefer deep relationships with a few close friends. You want to understand your friends' feelings, goals, fears, and dreams, and you want them to understand yours. Someone else on your team may prefer the challenge of meeting a large number of new people, learning their names, and asking them a few questions to find areas of common interest.

Both talents have a place in most organizations. Can you see how your team would be limited if every person preferred one extreme or the other? Each ability has value for the team, and the greatest value occurs when each person's talent is applied in an appropriate role.

The other assessment we conduct measures the degree of competency each individual has in a variety of leadership attributes, such as listening, business acumen, delegation, and conflict management. No leader has superb competency in all of the attributes. Yet all these skills are learnable. Any individual can improve these skills with the proper education and practice.

So what does this all mean for your leadership team? First, as Jim Collins writes in Good to Great, "get the right people on the bus." Further, the "right person has more to do with character traits and innate capabilities than with specific knowledge, background, and skills."

Then, with the right people in the right roles, encourage each to build their skills in areas that you and they agree will better equip them for their roles. There is no reason to be theoretical about this—research shows that the best development occurs right on the job. Which existing strengths should be enhanced to provide greater satisfaction and results? And which limitations are impeding current success? These questions define the predominant focus of any development effort.

Your objective is an interdependent team, composed of confident, capable players. Each individual knows the abilities and interests of each other team member. Individuals willingly volunteer for challenges they know they can handle. The other team members encourage their stepping forward, complimenting their willingness and achievements. Egos exist, but they are stroked by appreciative team members who put the success of the team ahead of personal pride.

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