



Creating High-Performance Teams

By Rob Faw

There are many dimensions to consider with respect to creating high-performance teams. How do the best companies in the world thrive in an environment of increasing competition and dramatic change? What are the people-priorities for best-in-class businesses? Are high-performance teams the norm or exceptions?

World-class companies consistently create high-performance team cultures and look at the development of human capital as a mission-critical objective. Michael Dell, founder of Dell Computer, for example, has been widely reported making people the number one priority on his list of 10 most important things at his company. Companies like Dell cannot get enough smart, talented, hard-working people to execute their business strategies.

Companies such as Intel, Cisco, and Google, create high-performance teams by acquiring talent through acquisition or establishing tightly coupled relationships with universities to create a flow of new talent into their companies.

Cisco's high-performance team culture, for instance, is very competitive and demanding. Employees are expected to produce outcomes according to plan. If Cisco employees do not produce, the employees are just as likely to be replaced or given opportunities to contribute somewhere else in the company. McKinsey, Deloitte, KPMG, and other consulting firms are well-known for creating similar results-oriented environments.

Bob Herbold, Microsoft's retired executive vice president and chief operating officer was reported as saying his company's number one competency is recruiting. A key factor for developing high-performance teams at Microsoft has been the hiring of an estimated 40 percent of Microsoft new-hires from referrals. Netflix, Amazon, and Apple have been building their cultures around high-performance people from different backgrounds and environments. Brainpower is what counts. High-performance team cultures thrive on the acceptance of new ideas and people.

High-performance teams get things done. High-performance people take advantage of company sponsored education and training programs. People who invest in themselves are developing their potential and capacity to serve customers. FedEx, for example, typically invests three-percent of total operating expenses into training, or six times the proportion of most companies.

In summary, a high-performance team has specific roles and complementary talents and skills. The team is committed to a common purpose and show high levels of commitment, collaboration, creativity, and innovation. High-performance teams embrace healthy conflict resolution and produce superior results. They build trust, master conflict, achieve commitment, embrace accountability, and produce results.

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