

Turning PointsSM



Fast and flexible tips for new managers and emerging leaders

Timeless Tips for Teams

Tip Sheet No. 2

As a leader, it is your job to mobilize people, and that means managing teams. But even experienced managers can underestimate the importance and complexity of the task. For this reason here are my favorite tips for getting and keeping teams on track.

1. **Design and Selection** – Like strong buildings, effective teams begin with quality architecture. Team members should be chosen not only for their technical abilities but for their complementary knowledge, experience, people skills and diverse perspectives. Some managers take this principle so seriously that they use hiring tools (e.g. applications, interviews and tests) to ensure quality people placement.
2. **Leadership** – Team leaders are often chosen because of their deep technical knowledge of the subject, but this is overrated as a criterion. While team leaders certainly need some level of proficiency in this regard, more important criteria include emotional intelligence, conflict resolution and consensus building skills. Effective team leaders are also participants in the project, and their role should be complimented by a facilitator, process consultant or team coach.
3. **Sponsorship** – Every team needs external support to be successful, which is why I recommend a “sponsor.” This person is often a more senior manager and is frequently the person who originated the team. Their responsibility is not only to monitor progress but to help get needed resources, break down barriers, and foster communications with internal and external stakeholders.
4. **Alignment** – Alignment is an initial and on-going challenge for every team. It cannot be assumed and must be fostered proactively. While this is the result of many actions, alignment begins with creating and communicating a compelling vision for the future. Even if it begins with the sponsor or team leader, the more that team members can be involved, the harder they will work to make it a reality.
5. **What** – Every team needs a “charter” that describes its vision, purpose, goals, timelines, stakeholders, budget and other constraints. Whatever information is not initially supplied by the sponsor needs to be discovered and documented.
6. **How** – An equally important section of the charter should deal with *how* team members will work together. “Ground rules” are explicit norms for decision-making, communications, confidentiality, processes and procedures. If they are not established deliberately they will evolve accidentally, a risky proposition for any team.
7. **Road Map** – Every project needs a plan for getting from “point A to point B.” Depending upon the challenge, this might involve broad phases, specific action steps or both. After the charter, an initial game plan is the next order of business. While it is best for this to be developed as a team, the leader will need to initiate the process.
8. **Check-ups** – Teams need to have regular maintenance check-ups, not just progress reports on the task itself but an assessment of how well the team is operating as a unit. Only naïve managers see this as a distraction from the work itself; experienced ones know that process checks are essential for a quality outcome.
9. **Roles and Responsibilities** – Even the most well-meaning teams can “step on each other’s toes” and “drop the ball” on occasion. This can result in inefficiencies, hurt feelings, and missed deadlines. A *responsibility chart* can prevent this, especially when it is developed as a team and visited regularly.
10. **Tool Kit** – Teams and team members need appropriate tools for the job at hand. In addition to equipment and supplies, it also means team participation skills such as data-gathering techniques, problem-solving models and decision-making methods.



Tom Davidson, SPHR
Professional Certified Coach

Fast Fact

90% of all U.S. employees
spend part of their day
in a team.

© Copyright 2008 by Davidson Leadership.



For additional *Turning Points*, visit
www.DavidsonLeadership.com

4860 Cox Rd., Ste. 200, Glen Allen, VA 23060
Reprints with permission. 804-217-8365

Executive Performance Packages ~ New Manager Performance Packages ~ Team Performance Packages

Call today to discuss your leadership challenges.