

Wonder Widget learns about team management

Good things were happening at Wonder Widget. Harry Huddle of Consult-a-Corp had begun training company managers to apply DISC behavior profiling to their departments. Already, their awareness of how different behavior styles affect human interaction was opening long-closed lines of communication and reducing the friction that had built up between several departments.

The 360-degree evaluations Harry had done on Wonder Widget's executives had resulted in reality checks about their relationships with subordinates, colleagues and superiors.

Walter Wonder was pleased. His sense of gloom over shrinking profit margin was lifting.

Walter was looking forward to talking to Paula Paradime, the consultant from TeamTime Strategies Inc. who would help Wonder Widget transform itself from a traditional hierarchical management model to one based on teamwork.

"Hello, Mr. Wonder," Paula Paradime said as she entered Walter's office, shook his hand and took a seat in front of his desk.

Paula took two books from her briefcase. "I'm recommending that you get copies for each of your managers," she said.

Walter nodded and pulled the copies she sent him from his desk drawer.

"*Team Basics* by Kristin Arnold will be our guide for setting up and launching Wonder Widget's teams," said Paula. "*The Team Coach* by Donna Deeprose will be our handbook for training your managers to make the transition from supervisor to coach in their departments."

"Excellent," Walter said.

Paula then handed Walter a paper containing two lists:

High-performance team characteristics

- **Goals:** Team members understand the team's purposes and work together to accomplishing them.
- **Roles:** Team members supply specific skill sets that fulfill the requirements for meeting the team's mission. Members also occupy roles that promote team effectiveness, such as supporting, confronting, gate-keeping, mediating and summarizing.
- **Communication:** Team members work at developing good listening and speaking skills, especially when providing feedback during team interaction.
- **Decisions:** Team members use a variety of methods to make decisions, selecting the best method for each decision.
- **Diversity:** Team members are encouraged to express their ideas, methods, experiences and opinions. Every person's unique contribution to the team's make-up is valued.
- **Conflict management:** When disagreements or problems arise, team members employ problem-solving strategies to resolve conflict in a fair and productive manner.

- **Climate:** Teams promote a positive atmosphere of participation, trust and openness. There is a sense of synergy that leads to superior solutions to problems.

High-performance team benefits

- **Creativity:** Teams can solve problems that baffle experts, improve inefficient processes and cut costs by reducing waste.
- **Cooperation:** Teams break down boundaries between departments.
- **Capability:** Teams can respond more readily and productively to corporate challenges by generating the synergy that comes with sharing burdens and rewards.
- **Commitment:** Teams evoke the "all for one and one for all" ethos. They bind people together until a common goal is attained.
- **Camaraderie:** Teams provide emotional support and build relationships among employees, which can contribute considerably to morale.

"There are many kinds of teams," Paula said when Walter was finished reading. "I like to think in terms of four categories. There are task forces that are temporary problem-solving teams that often cross over departmental boundaries. There are quality circles that may focus on process effectiveness, product improvement, customer-service enhancement and so forth. There are project groups that have a specific focus such as a new product launch or a public-relations event. And there are committees, which are often investigative or advisory in nature."

Paula explained that she would report back to Walter with a list of suggested teams for Wonder Widget and then begin the work of helping each team develop a team charter. She would also begin working with team leaders, training them to coach their teams effectively.

A few days later, Harry Huddle knocked on Walter's door. "Time to talk about the last piece of the puzzle, Walter," he said, handing him a business card. "By next week, I'd like you to start working with a business coach — someone who can help you grow into your role as head coach of Wonder Widget."

"Why wait?" Walter said as he began dialing the number on the card. **IB**



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Look for part four of the Wonder Widget tale in two weeks.

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