

Management and Performance Associates – March 2014 Lights! Camera! Collaboration!

We've spent a lot of time in a television studio over the last few months. Our task – although not challenging – was very gratifying: We observed the interactions between team members as a live program was taking place.

If you've never had the opportunity to be in a studio where a live transmission is taking place, you would think that nothing is going on while the presenters are "on air," and that the crew is silent during the broadcast. Big mistake. There are many actions going on behind the scenes, although the crew does observe a "type" of silence.

The level of action behind the cameras is fascinating, starting with the number of people that are present—many more than one imagines. The real surprise for those of us who are closely involved with corporate life is that every single person present in the studio:

- Was completely clear on the individual and collective results to be obtained, in spite of reporting to different managers.
- Had no question about their specific role. They knew exactly when to start their task, when to stop it and the consequences of not performing it.
- Was fully aware of the available time to perform their task, how much had already been used and how many more minutes were remaining. Far from complaining about the lack of time, they showed great skill in time management.
- Knew exactly where they could stand (and where they couldn't).
- Did not seem to be concerned about performing menial tasks as they were aware each task was as critical as the ones in front of the camera.
- Was open to collaborate with others, at the precise moment needed.
- Was open to make adjustments and on the spot changes.
- Was aware of possible risks and how to avoid them.

- Had the skills to communicate with many others simultaneously, using a low voice face to face or with a communicator or using their own sign language.
- Knew that saying "this is not my job" was completely out of the question.
- Was comfortable in a high adrenaline and high pressure environment.
- Was clear that they could not allow for any colleague to fail.
- Enjoyed, smiled and seemed to have fun with their work.
- Celebrated success.

As we go through the above list we could say that whenever a group of people (not necessarily part of the same department) engage in full collaboration three elements are present:

- 1) **Clarity about the task being performed and the expected outcome**, knowing also the impact of not performing his/her "small" contribution.
- 2) **Enjoying the work**, no matter how menial the task, demonstrating high motivation.
- 3) **Having the right profile**, not just having the desired competencies but also the previously mentioned adrenaline, the commitment—regardless of the repetitiveness of the tasks—and "the show must go on" attitude, regardless of anything.

Let's examine what you can do to generate a comprehensive collaborative environment in your team:

1 | Make their lives easier

- Establish a friendly and respectful connection, using your emotional intelligence.
- Be a good communicator. "What", "why", "because", "when", "who" and "how" should be part of your regular vocabulary.

- Trust and be trusted, delegate, offer them autonomy. They can do it.
- Involve them in the process. They have a better understanding of how to do things than you.

2 | Emphasize diversity

Move out of your comfort zone, seek out and surround yourself with the most diverse team, in terms of personalities, race, gender, sexual orientation, cultural orientation and work-style.

It's not about leading the "Yes Sir" brigade. It's about leading people that are constantly looking for innovation and creativity. Learn from them.

3 | Be a genuinely collaborative leader

- Facilitate collective thinking. It may be hard to accept it, but two (or more) heads are better than one (yours). Share the "What" and "Why" of the task and then involve the team in the "how" to perform it, asking for ideas, different approaches, suggestions and improvements.
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities but allow them to evolve by establishing a job rotation so that employees can develop out of their comfort zone.
- Offer fact based timely feedback, including the impact on performance. Do not qualify. Listen and encourage them to speak.
- Hire well. The trick is for you to know well the job that the candidate will perform. This will allow you to get the correct profile, exploring whether candidates have the required competences *and* the motivation to do the job.

4 | Destroy the silo mentality

In his book "Silos, Politics and Turf Wars", Patrick Lencioni states that "silos are nothing more than the barriers that exist between departments within an organization, causing people who are supposed to be on the same team to work against one another." The key to destroying this modus operandi is to "create a common sense of purpose, and a context for interdependency: they must establish, for the executive team as well as the rest of the organization, a rallying cry". This will ensure that everyone focuses on the same target, such as

increasing the company's operations in order to meet demand.

We haven't been back to that studio for a while, but the lessons are still vivid in our memories. The world has changed. New working conditions, technology, generations and people's expectations have also changed. In short, there is no more room for coercive leaders, the ones who do not value collaboration.

Although the TV show we mentioned at the beginning of this article was a different one, please take a moment to watch this "Behind the scenes of The Today Show" video which illustrates well the topics covered in this article.

<http://youtu.be/IZg4k3ULcfE>

See you next time. We welcome your feedback.

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