STAY CONNECTED

Why struggle in the jungle when you don't have to?

STARTING YOUR OWN TIGERS LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

Tips and ideas for creating a circle of support in your organization.

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Henry Ford's accounting of group dynamics is very insightful. Creating a group is one thing—creating meaning and value for group members is another. So is maintaining good group relationships. If group members do not believe their time spent in the group is worthwhile, or if they believe the group wanders off its mission and relationships are poor, they will leave the group. Time is a premium. People despise conflict and leave teams after quickly rationalizing that there are more important things to get done.

> "Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."
> —Henry Ford

This white paper is designed to help keep your TIGERS Leadership Circle intact and moving forward. The tools you will need include a *TIGERS Among Us* book for each member, the discussion handouts available for free download at www.TigersAmongUs.com, flip chart or white board with appropriate marking pens and the desire to succeed. If you are a current TIGERS Team Member, additional resources are available, including completed team survey reports to discuss, important team facilitation tools to catalyze company-wide discussion and decision-making and additional group process coaching support.

THE TIGERS MODEL FOR CREATING AN EFFECTIVE TIGERS LEADERSHIP CIRCLE (TLC) INVOLVES THE FOLLOWING FACTORS:

1. Have a well designed mission.

Why is the TLC being convened? Is it to discuss leadership? Is it to bring the company culture into alignment with the collaborative team culture framework? Is it to resolve systems' bottlenecks?

Create a mission statement for the group. Put the mission statement on all your group communications and start your meetings by stating your mission. This is your reason for being. Never leave it up for interpretation.

2. Have well defined group goals.

What does the group hope to accomplish? Are the goals realistic? Are deliverables and role assignments assigned to achieve the goals? Do group members understand their individual responsibility and accountability for achieving the goals? Lack of clarity in goal definition and lack of follow through on the part of team members causes serious group process problems.

For example, if the group's mission is to read and discuss one business book a month, and members do not follow through with reading and reflection, there is nothing for the group to discuss and compare for potentially integrating into the company operations or procedures. As a result, goal oriented members soon reason the group is a waste of time.

3. Have a well defined group process.

Do group members understand and agree on how they should work together? Once group process rules are known and agreed to, it is important to mention the group agreement right after the group's mission is introduced. Doing so reminds group members how to stay on track and helps new group members understand what behavior supports the group and behavior that does not.

For example, are group discussions confidential? Are group sharing time frames known and adhered to? What process is in place so that everyone in the group is heard? If a group member has no comment are they allowed to announce that they have nothing additional to add? Are they required to?

Lack of agreement or nebulous group norms create unnecessary misunderstandings and conflict.

For example, if members are given 3 minutes in the beginning of the meeting to bring team members up to speed on what their goals are for the week, and the group leader doesn't

hold to the time frame, resulting in some members taking 10 minutes, most members will resent it. Or if cross talking isn't allowed in the meeting so that each member is give time to express their thoughts fully, yet members are still allowed to interrupt, some members will resent the interrupter and the group will begin to split into an "Us and Them" dynamic and go off track.

4. A process for discussing conflict or misunderstandings is defined.

Are there conflicts that are not being discussed in the group? What factors exist that are contributing to the group's ineffectiveness? Is there too much agreement and not enough critical thinking? Are group members motivated by their roles and assignments? What isn't working? What could be improved?

If group members do not have a safe way to comment or resolve these issues, the group will dissolve into conflict. An effective group leader is able to understand patterns of behavior that are affecting the group's effectiveness and raise group awareness in a safe way that pulls the team back on track.

5. Determine if the group composition contains all the required expertise.

Is the group lacking key talent? Can group decisions be trumped by an outsider? If so, how is this decision-maker informed of group progress? What role does the decision-maker have in providing important information to the group?

The elements that contribute to group effectiveness are not random. Teams need to have and do certain things to be effective.

6. Determine how the group's behavior aligns with its elected core values.

If the TIGERS values, together with the company values, are viewed as important, create expectations for group behavior that is aligned with the values. Teams tend to be most effective when their group process is consistent with their core values and appropriate member behavior is clearly understood.

The following is a check list identifying specific functions of team process and team structure.

Group Process refers to how things are done rather than what is done.

- ◎ How problems are resolved is defined.
- ◎ How decisions are made is defined.
- ◎ How conflict is managed is defined.
- ◎ How communications occur is defined.

- ◎ How group rules and agreements are managed is defined.
- ◎ How the group mission is preserved or allowed to change is defined.
- ◎ How the group members join or exit the group is defined.
- ◎ How the team is allowed to dissolve is defined.

Group Structure refers to the stable characteristics of the group and is a re-occurring group process.

- ◎ Goals are clear and achievable.
- ◎ Team members are motivated by their tasks.
- ◎ All the people who need to be team members are included.
- ◎ Team members' roles are clearly defined.
- ◎ Team members have the time they need to accomplish their tasks.
- ◎ How team members report their task progress is defined.
- ◎ The group's culture supports team achievement.
- ◎ Acceptable team behavior is defined, understood and agreed to.
- ◎ The team has a role in place to promote critical thinking and bringing minority opinion or divergent ideas to light.

These criteria assist groups in resolving conflict and problems in a way that builds and maintains good relationships, which is the key to collaborative team success. The TIGERS six values and behavior demonstrations build collaboration and help groups anticipate and prevent problems from the start. Most team problems can be anticipated or prevented if a team spends time getting to know one another, establishes good ground rules, discusses supportive behavior, and clearly identifies proactive and constructive roles and relationships.

There is a natural tendency to blame individuals for group problems. In reality, if the system is under developed and lacks safety for group participation, it is the group's structure or process at fault and not the individual. Most people like to win and belonging is a human motivation. Therefore by starting each meeting with the following group maintenance tasks, many honest human mistakes can be avoided.

1. State the mission clearly.
2. State what behaviors are encouraged and how to avoid discouraged behaviors.
3. State if there are time limits and time constraints.
4. State how important topics that could take the group off track are to be recognized (this is the reason for your flip chart or white board so that you can record what needs to be discussed later) and at what time during the meeting the topic will be discussed so that further decisions can be made.
5. If an agenda accompanies the meeting, go over the agenda.

6. If meeting minutes are to be read and recorded do so and make any adjustments or revisions for the record.
7. Start your meeting on time and end on time.
8. Appoint a team member who is responsible for building and maintaining team relationships if this role does not fall to the team leader.
9. Appoint a team member who is responsible for opposing points of view.
10. Appoint a team member who is responsible for team communications.
11. Appoint a team who helps the team identify individual team member strengths.
12. Create ways outside of the TIGERS Leadership Circle meeting times for members to gather and have fun!

Once your TIGERS Leadership Circle is formed, celebrate your successes. Give rewards for work done, milestones accomplished and results achieved. For some people, a reward is simply having their ideas heard or having their contribution recognized. For others, a reward is an attitude such as respect. For still others, a reward is social time away from collaborative work. The only way to find out what members desire for rewards is to ask them.

According to Leonard Hirsch of the Office of International Relations at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington DC, directly rewarding a person is good idea and one competitive organizations use frequently. It is when individual contributions create team success that indirect rewards build recognition for the entire team, the team member's departments and the company as a whole. The team reward for good collaboration increases the team's credibility, builds reputation and enriches the entire group. I could not agree more.

Here's to your TIGERS Leadership Circle's roaring success.