

LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS: BUILDING A NEW TEAM OR A TEAM ANEW

The New Year often brings new opportunities and challenges that you as an executive may need to embrace. You may find yourself leading a new team or being the new leader of an existing team – a team anew – so to speak. A variety of circumstances can bring this about, e.g., retirements, promotions, reorganization, or other corporate decisions. And such changes are not always welcomed by the parties involved.

For example, when Joe found out he would be reporting to you, he had been thinking that he was going to be the leader. Now, you have to convince Joe that he and the team will be more successful if he is supportive of your promotion over him, even though he is disappointed that he didn't get the position.

While the opportunity to lead a new team is exciting, for the team and you to be as successful as possible, you will need to exhibit intentional leadership. For example, you may have direct reports with historical roots in the old culture, and you intend to create an environment where a new culture will flourish. In some instances with a team anew, there may be team members “on the bus” who are not the ones you would have invited aboard.

Here are seven things you can do to ensure effective leadership of a new team and increase the probability that the team will be successful and achieve results.

1. Establish your own credibility. That is, you want to provide the new team with clarity regarding your leadership style and expectations. Communicate your 30-, 60-, and 90-day plans. Make sure to share your leadership story and allow time for team members to share their stories with you. Take the time to personally assess each team member's strengths and weaknesses. Do your homework and let them engage you in candid conversation. Build a culture of candor and transparency. Show the team what results you are expecting and what team behaviors are required. Engage in a conversation regarding accountability and results. Come in with questions, a plan for candid conversation, rigorous accountability, and an eye toward achieving results. Be prepared to assess your team's readiness to listen, learn, and achieve outcomes.
2. Ensure that the team has a North Star—a common goal. Every team needs an endgame that is clear, compelling, and understood by all. Let people know what end result you expect.
3. Keep an open-door policy. This helps you get to know your team and their unique personalities—and not insignificantly—it lets them get to know you and what is important to you.
4. Be clear on accountabilities from the beginning. Having said that, be sure and engage the team in a conversation about the team's charter, its guiding principles and ground rules, and how the team will work together to achieve goals. It is beneficial to work all of this out within the first 30 days; do it together as opposed to decreeing it from your new throne.
5. Let the team know the consequences of *not* achieving goals. Consequences could be anything from adjusting the goal, to providing more resources, to designing a new approach. Lack of performance would have different consequences. Let them know how communication about the progress and status of goal-related activities will be handled.

6. Ask for input and feedback for yourself. Do it frequently . . . listen to it . . . respond and follow up. Let the team know you are open to challenge, candor, debate, and suggestions to do things differently.
7. Consistently engage in candid, constructive coaching and feedback. This does not have to be top-down. Before you are completely sure of the lay of the land, you can set the tone of the coaching organization you intend to create by asking for team members' input – you can ask them where they think they would benefit from coaching.

I recommend you do this in a somewhat formal manner. For instance, use a form or template; make it clear that all team members are being asked to engage in this process; articulate that the intent is growth, not remediation.

If you do these things, you will jump-start your team with an instant advantage. You will set your team up to avoid [Lencioni's five dysfunctions](#) of a team. Number 1 above addresses the issues of commitment and attention to results; number 2 will help to build trust; number 3 enhances accountability; and number 4 communicates that conflict is safe and viewed as productive. Numbers 5, 6, and 7 keep the ball rolling.

Think about past experiences when you have been a new team leader as a result of any of the scenarios depicted here; what would you have done differently in view of the recommendations above? Looking forward, how can you set yourself and your new team up for success?