



LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS: KEEP TEAMING DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Holiday time is a high stress time. During the holidays, people get distracted, have greater demands on their time on both the personal and professional fronts; they might be partying too much, some are traveling to places they could not go last year, many are depressed or are just very tired by now—in other words, there are a variety of reasons why people may be burned out.

Particularly in times of high stress – like during a pandemic, or even under more mundane pressures, such as the quarterly close, a big marketing push, or the holidays – it is absolutely critical to ensure that everyone on your team can rely on each other without question, that you can trust each other without doubt, and have each other's backs without hesitation.

Think about what happens to your own ability to function in extremely high stress situations, regardless of whether the stressor is positive or negative. Under stress, what happens to your memory? What happens to your ability to focus on your job and ignore distractions? What happens to your attention span, your response time, your creativity, and even your ability to think straight?

To overcome the challenges presented by crises, you need a team comprised of individuals who will guard against any lapses on the part of other teammates and will offer help and step up when needed. You want that at all times, of course, but my point is that, if you don't have it during times of high stress, you could end up with a disaster on your hands. High performance teams will be aware when there is a lot of stress in the system, and will be extra vigilant and watch out for each other.

We have seen teams that come together and perform better as a team in the midst of a crisis. Ideally, though, you want a team to be ready before a crisis hits. You want a team to already be a high-trust, high-performance team before times get tough, so that when the pressure is on, the team is well-positioned to act with agility.

In our Strategic Team Coaching® practice, we help teams raise their performance to be crisis-ready. To do that, we suggest leaders:

- Ensure alignment around the mission and shared values.
- Identify ideal operating principles as a team, and ensure both the leader and the team members hold each other accountable for practicing them.
- Develop behaviors that support productive behavior, e.g., candid and consistent feedback, encouragement of diversity among players, equitable promotions, transparency, etc.
- Either coach or remove non-compliant team members from the team even if labor is in short supply. It is very important to address obstacles on the team as soon as possible.
- Find ways to build team cohesion, even if still working in remote or hybrid mode.

Consistently engage in team dialogue to keep your toolkit sharp. It is at times of high stress that the need for a strong team becomes apparent.

Is your team ready to rise to the occasion during a crisis? Are your team members attuned to when they need to step up and fill any gaps? What do you need to do to make sure they are ready?