

1. What are some effective strategies for managing conflict within teams?

Clarity of goals and communication are the two most critical elements in managing disagreements and conflicts in teams. Many conflict situations can be prevented if expectations of team members are managed appropriately. This is where communicating and reaching agreement at each stage of a project and next steps are critical. Getting 'buy-in', building rapport and managing disparate interests are key skills everyone should have.

At Everest Motivation Team, we believe that quality facilitation of experiential learning activities to be an effective change catalyst. Facilitation creates a safe environment for teams to share their views and disagreements, and open space to 'grow'. As participants have never done many of these activities or challenges, they approach them in as natural a way as possible i.e. we get to see them expressing behaviours they would normally display. Adventure-based learning is another tool where certain challenges can evoke powerful emotional, and subsequently, effective learning experiences.

However, in recent years, "teambuilding" in my view, has become a dirty word. Many of the activities used by experienced facilitators are also being used by companies which are more into

managing events and entertainment, rather than delivering the skill of facilitating change and self-derived learning in teams. These programmes are great for organizations looking for fun and games. However, you won't achieve a more serious outcome since outcomes-based facilitation is absent – or worse, poorly executed by ill-trained 'instructors'. Some clients also focus too much on an activity's mechanics, rather than the potential opportunity to facilitate learning from the activity's outcomes.

In short, I think people are getting confused between organized 'races', games, competitions, and actual teambuilding.

2. What makes a group into a real team?

In my experience, many 'teams' are merely work groups – groups of people working in an office who only come together, or share resources when the situation requires. Moving them from this stage to an authentic team stage is a process demanding time, mutual supportive behaviours, purposeful communication, and a unifying goal. All these elements must be encouraged and developed to reach the goal of becoming an authentic team. We can now actually track a team's effectiveness after a teambuilding session using a variety of tools, so there can be some ROI that is measurable. We've done over 50

programmes in recent years, and decision-makers in some groups coming back to us have noticed a discernible difference in trust and communication levels after such events.

3. During periods of change, what are the best strategies to manage a team? Please mention examples.

In times of change, the most powerful destroyer of trust is poor communication, ‘catastrophising’, and conflicting agendas. Some of the keys in successfully persuading a team why the change is necessary involves rapport-building skills, and leadership behaviours which address the various motivational triggers of a team. It is vital at this stage that the language used in the office should be positive, and is framed to enhance ‘possibilities’, and ‘opportunities’ as a result of the changes. This helps the process of change rather than the use of dismissive language and belief statements which hold back change rather than promulgate it. Applying a psychological or assessment tool to a team can also help identify (depending on the profile used) differences in values, risk quotients, and motivational drivers which can affect a team. Combining such tools with appropriate teambuilding measures is taking the strategy of managing teams to the next level by closing the gaps between the team members. Subsequently, small group coaching or specific individual coaching is an effective follow-on in helping lessons learnt in a 1 – 2 day programme actually take root.

4. Please mention some instances of great teamwork.

It depends on the context. I can think of: The exciting stages of the development and delivery of the Apple computer in the ‘80s, the recovery of the Apollo 13 crew after a near-disaster, Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary’s final summit push on Mt Everest in 1953 – all are marvelous and very different examples of great teamwork. In my context, my Everest team of 2001 displayed marvellous teamwork, against potentially conflicting personal summit ambitions when faced with a dilemma at a critical stage of the expedition. When people are empowered to behave in a way so that everyone on the team feels great, and want to see others succeed; produce their best work, then that team is fast becoming a high performing team.

5. Name some companies which are reputed for their team building efforts. Please add details about their major programs.

Some companies have included a teambuilding component into the fabric of their human resource development, rather than just a one-off, or an annual event. Clients of ours which qualify for such commitment to this process include AP Moller, whose merchant shipping officer cadre go through a thorough technical, cultural, and adventure-based programme where they derive learning through rigorous facilitation. We’ve run

quite a number of these programmes based on a process and people-based leadership model. Another company which has an admirable belief in the efficacy of adventure-based teambuilding is OSIM. Others I can think of include the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority, Pepsico and Singapore Telecom. Overall, it is still a challenge in working to ingrain new or preferred behaviours through the medium of teambuilding. It's a mountain to climb, but we're getting there!



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and teambuilding consultancy. He and his team of associates combine real-life leadership experiences with industry-validated assessment tools and methodologies to create high-performing teams. David and his team have presented and delivered programmes in 20 countries and 40 cities. He led the landmark 1st Singapore Everest Expedition in 1998, and nearly 60 other climbs and expeditions.

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