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WHAT IS 'UBUNTU'?



CAN YOU SAY YOUR TEAM IS A GREAT TEAM?



Dear Roxi

[Click here for the article about the above TEAM picture.](#)

It's February 29th, a LEAP YEAR. So even if you are reading this on a different day, let's

take a leap together to look at some beliefs about what constitutes a "GREAT" or highly effective team.

Here are some attributes I hear frequently from leaders:

1. **We get the job done.**
2. **Everyone on the team is really smart.**
3. **We like each other.**
4. **Our meetings are well organized.**
5. **Our leader is competent.**

It is true that GREAT teams generally have many or all of these attributes. What is not true is that these attributes guarantee such a team or are even necessary to create a highly effective team. These are indeed 5 MYTHS. There are plenty more. However, before you roll your eyes or think I'm crazy, consider:

1. Getting the job done is important, but getting it done on time, with the team intact, and with commitment to the outcome is also important.
2. Being smart just means being smart. In fact, it has little to do with the ultimate success of a team. In fact, putting a bunch of exceedingly intelligent (IQ) people on a team could doom that team.
3. Liking, even respecting, each other outside the team is laudable, and maybe fun, yet it's how the team *works together*, when they are together, that leads to success or mediocrity or worse.
4. Well-organized meetings are important, yes. However, that is not an indicator of whether or not the team members are invested in those meetings, in each other, or even in success of the team.
5. A competent leader is helpful. The question is...competent at what? Is she able to inspire each member to contribute his and her best to the team? It is also true that great teams may not even have a formal leader.

In the **Sunday NY Times Magazine (February 28, 2016)**, there was an article by Charles Duhigg I'd like to share with you. It's about the gazillions of hours and dollars **GOOGLE** spent in 2012 to understand how to build the "perfect team" and learn why some of their teams were GREAT and others were not so great. Their leaders believed things like this: *put the best people together to get the best team, or put introverts together, or put friends together*. They looked at every factor you can imagine - IQ, personalities, education, friendships outside of work, age, the assignment, demographics, hobbies and lots more. They collected a boatload of data and found few if any patterns...until they started looking at "**group norms**".

[To read the entire NY Times article by Charles Duhigg, click here](#)

The conclusions from the **GOOGLE** study point right back to the **[Step Ladder of Group Dynamics model](#)** that loosely follows Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

They learned that the most vital factor in successful teams is creating **psychological safety for team members**.

Beyond the clear winner, two group norms stood out in the research. I would suggest that creating psychological safety (including feeling physically safe) requires that at least these two group norms are present:

1. Communication, on average, is shared equally.
2. Empathy is present among team members - they genuinely demonstrate that they care about each others' well-being

For more than a couple decades, I've been teaching my leadership course in universities,

communities, non-profits, and corporations. One of the biggest take-aways for the individuals, teams, and organizations I work with has been the [Step Ladder of Group Dynamics which you can read more about by clicking right here](#). It is often one of the most spirited discussions in the opening days of the course. When the "ah-ha" moment happens though, it really sticks. It seems that we intuitively know how important it is to pay attention to the well-being of the people on our teams.

Believe it or not, even good leaders are out of touch with their team's dynamics and needs. Often our work cultures operate with norms that create a constant sense of urgency that leads to a "jump to task" norm, denying the FACT, not assumption, that teams that have psychological safety, build real trust in each other, and have a deep sense of group identity, complete their TASKS predictably **faster, better, and cheaper** than other teams where that investment has not been made at all or regularly enough. **This IS a bottom line reality.**

To paraphrase Stephen Covey - when we sacrifice what's truly important to the tyranny of the urgent, we all lose. We must put first things first!

GOOGLE spent a lot of time and money to figure this out, so please don't feel too badly if you have forgotten or just were not aware. Now you know. [Contact me if you need some help building GREAT teams!](#)

To learn more about the Step Ladder and Building Teams, download [Lead Like It Matters...Because It Does](#) or sign up for my on-line course, [Leading With Impact: Your Ripple Effect](#). There are lots and lots of helpful tools in both.

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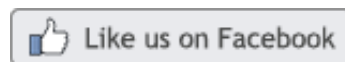
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QUESTION OF THE MONTH

"Will 'blind hiring' will help me grow a more diverse workplace?"

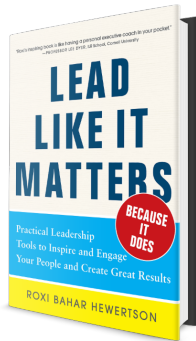
ROXI'S ANSWER

Not knowing the person's name, gender or ethnicity before choosing who will be interviewed can and has increased diversity in some industries like orchestras for instance. I don't know if it will work in every industry, however. I am wondering if we can devise a highly effective hiring process by creating work cultures that are 'blind without being truly blind' until the interview? I don't know my answer to that yet. Research for my new book on hiring and firing well will help me discover that answer, I hope! In the meantime, here is my opinion:

We carry our beliefs, biases, experiences, memories, opinions, and instincts with us as closely as our own skin. And often we are **as** unaware of them as we are of our skin, *until it hurts*. The tricky bit is becoming aware of those biases, etc. when they are aren't hurting anyone by creating an unfair advantage for one person over another.

I think it's a good exercise, and can do no harm, to eliminate the names and addresses of all candidates, the specific college attended (if it is there) and anything that indicates age, race, or gender before those involved in the search and hiring process see the resumés or the people. Once you have everything you currently require of all candidates whom you wish to interview, then evaluate how this has or has not influenced your process.

To have YOUR question answered personally and perhaps chosen for this spot, go to:
www.AskRoxi.com



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