

Teamwork Trumps Talent for Strategic Advantage

By Kelly Tyler

“Talent doesn’t always win. The team that shows the best teamwork will win it.”

Phil Jackson, NBA Coach of the Los Angeles Lakers
(SOURCE: www.ESPNLosAngeles.com September 23, 2010)

Phil Jackson, winner of the most championships in NBA history as a player and a head coach, knows success comes from teamwork, not individual talent.

No matter how many talented people your company has, no matter how smart your executives are, no matter how service-oriented each person is, your organization will be successful only if those talented, smart, service-oriented people perform well as a team.

There may have been a time when one superstar could make or break a team, or company. But those days are over.

There may have been a time when one person could dictate to the rest, leading to high performance, but those days are over.

There may have been a time when teamwork was just a touchy-feely option, but those days are over.

Organizations competing for revenue, employees, and life today must rely on teams to propel themselves forward. High performing teams win championships in basketball and in corporations, and they have five characteristics in common, as shown in the model below:



5 Characteristics of High Performing Teams Brief:

1. Frequency of communication: Share freely and often
2. Reliance on others: Structure in a flexible environment, ensuring everyone is always on the same page.
3. Professional trust: Determine the best way to move forward, based on results not resentment
4. Knowledge exchange: Collaborate for innovation and problem solving
5. High energy: Focus on team success more than self-interest

Research on high performing teams consistently reveals the same five characteristics, although sometimes worded slightly differently. You do not have to conduct research. You can rely on the existing model and emulate champions.

“They got great talent,” Phil Jackson said in an interview with ESPN 1000 in Chicago when asked about the Miami Heat. “There’s no question about the talent they have. But, talent doesn’t always win. The team that shows the best teamwork will win it. We think that (the Lakers) have established something. But, if (the Heat) can unite – and build quickly – they might be able to do it.”

If your organization can unite and build quickly, it might be able to do it too.

So, how can you do it?

If you are a company leader who manages teams, the first step is to understand your teams’ behavior as it relates to the five characteristics of high performing teams. The STAR assessment uses network analysis to reveal the following:

- Who’s talking to whom
- Who is not talking with whom & why
- Who’s trusted, who is not & why
- Who relies on each other
- Who exchanges knowledge & innovates together
- Who does not exchange knowledge or innovate together
- Who energizes the team
- Who depletes energy among the team

Your gut might tell you that your teams, and company results, are impacted by...

- Disengagement – people on the periphery
- Organizational bottle necks
- Over- and under- reliance on certain individuals
- Inefficient communication patterns
- Trust issues
- Inter-office knowledge exchange
- Silos, cliques and factions

The STAR Assessment puts facts in place of intuition, so you can make decisions about teams.

If you need to structure teams and their objectives, budgets, and schedules, the STAR tool provide the facts upon which to base your decisions. STAR also has a predictive ability, which can help your teams avoid issues which slow progress, cost money, and damage internal and external relationships.

The best thing about STAR? It helps you leverage an asset which already exists within your company – an invisible but impactful asset. You can leverage existing relationships, trust, communication patterns, reliance, knowledge exchange, and energy for strategic advantage. You can give your teams the ability to collaborate and innovate, so your company can move forward, grow revenue, attract the best talent, and thrive.

If your company lives and dies by its teams' performance, if you have exhausted commonly known improvement methods, if relying on intuition is too risky and expensive, and if you're fed up with outdated tools and obsolete assessments, rely on cutting-edge network analysis to build your teams' performance of the five characteristics of the high performing teams.

Coach Phil Jackson knows talent alone does not make teams successful.

In the same interview mentioned earlier, Jackson pointed out that the Lakers who already had Elgin Baylor and Jerry West, traded for Wilt Chamberlain in a major trade in 1968. "(Those three were) three of the top scorers in NBA history – and they never won a championship together the four years they were together," Jackson said.

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(For more information or research about STAR or The 5 Characteristics of High Performing Teams Model, which was developed by MORF Consulting in conjunction with Dr. Paul Chinowsky, Professor of Civil Systems, University of Colorado, contact Kelly Tyler directly. 816.353.8786 www.KellyTylerTrainingServices.com)