Winning with Team Balance

Two things must be in balance for an effective team: content and process. Content is the work, tasks, agenda, and goals of a team. Process is how team members interact, treat each other, and behave. Many teams focus on content, but let problems with process sabotage productivity. Diagnostic question: Does each team member feel valued, respected, included, energized, and happy to be a member of the team? If not, try this fix: Create a tradition that team members actively observe team process and point out team behaviors that impede work. All agree to be evaluated on how well each member helps manage process issues. At every meeting ask: “How do we feel about our productivity and how well are we working with each other?” Then decide how to make improvements for the next meeting.

Your Personal Action Plan

If you are motivated to pursue a goal, put together your personal action plan. Its purpose: to put the goal into action and make its success more likely. Successful plans are written, and include breaking the goal down into distinct actionable parts. Each part or step must answer how, what, and when action will occur. If any one of these measurements is missing, you will be more vulnerable to procrastination and distraction, the two villains of every worthy pursuit. Here’s a step from a larger list of steps toward establishing a fitness routine.

Not specific: I will exercise this week after work.

Better: This Friday, at 5:00 P.M., I will go to the ABC Gym and exercise for 45 minutes.

National Depression Screening Day

Did you know that depression is the leading cause of disability in the United States or that it affects 9.9 million American adults in a year? National Depression Screening Day is scheduled for Thursday, October 7, 2004. Free screenings will be held on this date in the Cumberland Room, Ground Floor, Cordell Hull Building from 11:00-2:00 P.M. You may take the paper and pencil screening and receive your results from a mental health professional during that time. Call the Office of Consumer Affairs of the Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities at 532-6700 for an appointment. Walk-ins are also welcomed. You may also take the screening online by pointing your web browser to www.mentalhealthscreening.org/screening — the key word is: tnscreen. Telephone (1-800-433-4468) and online screening is sponsored by the Employee Assistance Program.

New Coworkers Need Inside Track

A new hire can take years to learn everything about an organization necessary to maximize his or her productivity. Shorten the learning curve by sharing information with a coworker about work culture, traditions, and important communication expectations within the organization. Don’t forget sensitive political issues crucial to successful networking. Provide a list of key relationships to develop, and build in opportunities to interact and obtain feedback to avoid workplace mistakes and pitfalls.

Important Notice: Information in this newsletter is for general information purposes only and is not intended to replace the counsel or advice of a qualified health professional. For further questions or help with specific problems or personal concerns, contact your employee assistance professional.
Support for Returning Troops

A significant percent of troops returning from war reportedly face mental health consequences of exposure to combat (post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety) according to a New England Journal of Medicine study (July 2004). One out of two Americans knows someone serving overseas, so it makes sense to know a few tips to help a veteran readjust to civilian life.

• Listen carefully if your vet wants to talk.
• Be patient. Don’t take anger or other strong feelings personally.
• Don’t make statements such as, “You’re lucky you made it back.” This is not re-assuring because it can invoke guilt over friends or acquaintances wounded or killed.
• Spend time with your vet, but also give him or her private time.
• Encourage the troubled vet to take advantage of mental health resources in the community or from the military. Two-thirds of vets with PTSD refuse help because of concerns about stigma, but may change their minds later.

The “Boomerang” Generation

Millions of parents have at least one adult child living at home, and the number of empty nesters welcoming an adult child home for a temporary stay is growing. These adult children have been called the “boomerang generation.” Divorce, unemployment, financial troubles, mental illness and chemical dependency, and other problems help explain this phenomenon. For most parents, the goal is helping the adult child gain independence as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, many parents worry about the meaning of “a temporary stay.” If you have an adult child at home, or one on the way, consider the following tips early on to keep your relationship healthy and help facilitate a transition back to independent living:

• Discuss mutual expectations, house rules, chores, and shared financial responsibilities.
• Consider a written agreement on these issues and the length of stay.
• Avoid the trap of parental guilt that can fuel a lengthier stay, financial dependency, and the avoidance of responsibilities.
• If relationship conflicts emerge, talk to the EAP. Don’t wait.
• The same goes for a substance abuse issue. The EAP can lead you to intervention help.

Good communication, clear expectations, and a willingness to keep boundaries will help both you and your adult child look forward to a successful future.

Workplace Hazards and Teens

Teens are injured on the job at a higher rate than adults. Studies show that most teenagers don’t recognize workplace dangers as easily as older workers who have more experience in recognizing hazards and understanding necessary protective measures. Teenagers are also more reluctant to ask important safety questions that can prevent injury or death. Encourage younger co-workers to follow safety precautions, ask questions, wear proper protective clothing and shoes, and resist taking chances that may endanger them.

Source National Institute of Safety and Health (NIOSH)