What is Team Building All About?

By Caron J Rose

Team building in any organisation is all about the progression in improving the combined performance level of a group of people who work together towards a common purpose. The importance of team building and its place within the overall provision of a competitive quality service was recognised and generally accepted by many organisations towards the end of the 20th century.

Unfortunately though, it is still not fully understood by every company or organisation. It remains one of those vague concepts that people might consider worth having, if they could only understand what exactly it is first. The result is often that team building is encouraged and even implemented, even when it's not the correct strategy to undertake.

Team building needs to be approached in a methodical way. Perhaps the first step is to understand what a team is.

It is correct in one sense to say that a team is a group of people. The reverse is not necessarily the case though; a group of people is not always a team. However, when a group of people concentrate on achieving a common objective, the group of people then become a team.

Just concentrating on a common objective is not always enough either, and that's where team building plays its part. It takes the raw group of people, who are usually disorganised to a greater or lesser degree, and it shapes them into an efficient team that can work together in a proficient, competent and resourceful manner.

Team building can therefore be defined as a process that makes the accomplishment of a common objective possible for any given group of people. It is a facilitating process that allows them to focus and concentrate on the procedures that will allow them to achieve their goal in the fastest and most efficient way possible. It quite simply starts off with a group and ends up with a team.

There are four basic steps involved in team building. The first step is to define the common objective or objectives.

The second step should seek out any inhibiting or restricting factors that may be preventing or hampering the accomplishment of the common objective.

The third step should minimise the inhibiting or restricting factors identified in step two and introduce counteracting factors that assist and facilitate in the completion of the common objective.

The fourth step should be to monitor the progress made, constantly feeding back relevant information and using it to refine and improve the process.

In team building, poor relationships between individual members can have a limiting and inhibiting effect on the overall success. Traditional wisdom suggests that it is important that they work well together, and so time and effort is often put in to achieve this end. This effort is not always successful, and usually it is only partially successful at best.

It is better to take a different approach, and rather than trying to force individuals to get along together, simply put distance between them. If they are not in close proximity to each other all the time, they will get on together, albeit while not actually together. This approach takes a lot less effort and provides the team building process with much greater success every time.