6

Effective Teams Begin with the Self

Life in the organization may feel like a game of pinball but it works more like the human body . . . maybe we are an important part like manager of the heart.

Barry Oshry

Managers, unfortunately, can fall into the habit of repeating themselves over and over, for fear of venturing out into new territory. When the new territory finally comes, it may be too late to change, resulting in being at risk for out-placement. Although change is frightening, there is no alternative. Power in organization is being redefined. Employees are gaining access to information that once was monopolized by management. As wisdom is being redistributed to all levels of the organization, so is influence. The employee needs to be out there, more visible, more committed to teaching others what change is all about. It is not as easy as it seems.

The notion of "teamwork" creates a paradox for many managers. It is exceedingly difficult to subordinate some of the past freedoms imbedded in the traditional supervisory role. A manager must let go of the freedom to act on personal drive and achievement, placing himself secondary to the desires of a team. If this fails, however, the manager may find himself being labeled as an "obstructionist." In the final analysis, those who struggle with team-based management practices often move inconsistently from no leadership to micromanagement.

What is the alternative? Those managers who are successful in the transition to team-based organization are able to lift their thinking from indi-

WORDS *of* WISDOM

Fear is not your enemy but your friend. It keeps you alive and alert in these challenging times. Fear offers you the chance to keep growing and to create in the midst of chaos. To manage you must take risks.

vidual to team outcomes. They confront the ghosts of their past, including old baggage with other people. They understand the difference between negative and positive politics; the former hurts people while the latter recognizes differences in influence. These leaders have also learned how not to be burned up by anxiety. Hence, they do not waste energy in hand-wringing and complaints. They know that their success is deeply imbedded in the success of other people. Because of these characteristics, successful managers in team-based organizations are more optimistic about the future and are committed to activities beyond their own ego needs. As one manager so fittingly described her journey:

"I am now seeing my life as one, long, ongoing process of self-discovery, rather than a series of promotions. The journey is clearly unpredictable. I know now that I cannot really control what will happen. Our organization, its processes, and its people are just too complex for that! So, I have to continually engage in a dialogue with myself about my own potential, what am I here for, and the realities of my current work situation."

A CRISIS OF SELF-ESTEEM IN LEADERSHIP

Contemplation and the willingness to state one's reflections in the public arena require leaders with a particular kind of courage and a strong sense of self. One of the marvels of the human personality is its resistance to prediction. We have observed in our work that one executive's paralyzing trauma is another person's invitation to take control of his or her life. One person's grounds for insanity can be another person's dramatic reshaping of the self (Blanchard, 1996).

To sustain healthy work environments in times of drastic change, health care managers must be able to see and act on the relationship of self-esteem and work, *beginning with themselves!*

The American work week, which shrunk to 40 hours in 1973, is back up to 46 hours per week. There are 10 fewer hours of leisure time per week, as compared with 15 years ago (Schor, 1992). Work dominates healthcare managers' lives and can consume over two thirds of their day.

WORDS*of*WISDOM

One person's grounds for insanity can be another person's dramatic reshaping of the self. It's up to you!

WORDS*of*WISDOM

You can choose to see your life positively or negatively—and if you choose the latter, chances are your self-esteem is not too great.

Not only are we working harder, but our work environments are making many of us sick. Health care, unfortunately, is no exception. What is the quality of your work relationships? Workplaces are traumatized by executives who manipulate to win, no matter what the human cost. They fail to act on the hard work of their people and operate from a perspective where only their objectives count. Accompanying this demoralizing style are often countless short-term fixes, which ultimately erode the very mission of the organization. Such management practices are the source of sleepless nights, migraine headaches, ulcers, and even heart attacks for many of their employees. These managers do not seem to be aware of the impact that they are having on others, when it should be readily apparent that the organization is suffering.

MANAGER BEHAVIORS THAT THREATEN TEAM PRODUCTIVITY*
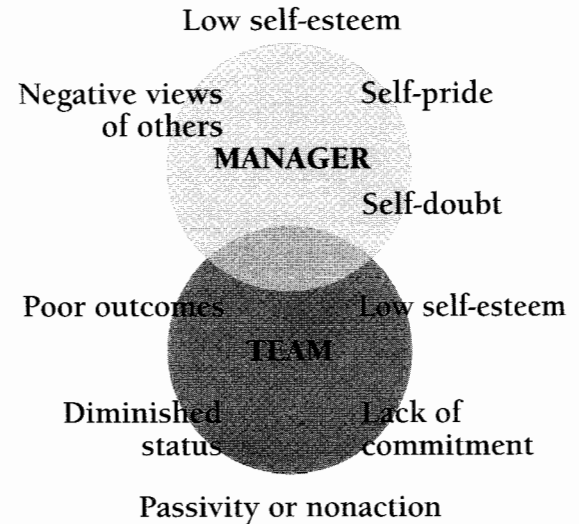
Verbal Assaults to Self-Esteem

Managers with a negative view of people are both distrustful of others and suspicious of their motives. For example, questions posed to team members can be designed to uncover mistakes: "Do you mean to say that you didn't circulate that memo until yesterday? How will people be prepared?" Or "Oh, I see; you did not know that that quality improvement project would have an impact on your objectives." Under the guise of helpfulness, these types of critical interactions serve only to dishearten team members.

Talking Down to People

In this case, insecure managers communicate in such a way as to reinforce their superior position in the hierarchy. Some may even continue to emphasize this superiority, despite the fact that the hierarchy has been dis-

*Cyr R: Maintaining employee self-esteem, *Supervisory Management* 37(6):1-3, 1992.

SELF-ESTEEM TRAP IN TEAM-BASED ORGANIZATION

Low self-esteem

Negative views of others

Self-pride

MANAGER

Self-doubt

Poor outcomes

Low self-esteem

TEAM

Diminished status

Lack of commitment

Passivity or nonaction

mantled! "*My* staff knows *my* way of doing business. *I* know ways to get things done around here that *they* could not possibly learn." Patronizing interaction destroys dignity and reinforces the "we-they" relationships of managers to staff.

Dictating Choices

Here, vulnerable managers can foster team dependency and delay action by providing the team with alternative choices for action. Providing the answers is not coaching but directing. A directive style simply fosters the learned passivity of most people in organizations. Early in a team's development, managers may need to more directly assist the team with exploring suggested alternatives. If the manager remains in this role, the team will never assume accountability for its own actions. When the manager is the team's parent, team members enact childlike behaviors. Because children fear punishment for their mistakes, they will avoid this discomfort by delegating all accountability upward . . . to the manager (Maccoby, 1993).

Petty Criticisms of Major Accomplishments

This constellation of behaviors in the insecure manager is expressed in a series of fault-finding and micromanagement activities. A most frequent place for such managers to aim and successfully fire is in the organizational process of communicating changes. Any person who has led a major change process is aware that no matter how many different ways information is communicated, there are employees who "never heard this before." This is a golden moment for the micromanager, who insists that teams eat up their valuable time recommunicating information that some people will never accept. When such criticism follows hollow praise for past communication efforts, it diminishes the team's efforts, prevents the team from moving on its objectives, and can make team members question their own potential for contribution.

Four Management Reasons for not Giving too Much Information

- It will only upset and worry staff members.
- If I level with people they might level with me.
- It is their job to find out what they need.
- People need to concentrate on their own job and not on what someone else is doing.

Leaving Things Unsaid

An uncertain manager habitually hoards information as a power tool. Uncomfortable in the team setting, their actions surrounding information can be problematic. They may start to share information and then cut themselves off for "sharing too much." They may leave the room during important discussions to take phone calls or answer pages. Their nonverbal behavior may convey that they know something about the topic but are unwilling to share it. Such actions insult the team and strongly communicate that the manager is not open to the exchange of information or feedback on the information.

Denigrating the Importance of an Activity

All of us identify to some degree with our job. Team members enact this dynamic when they connect to the goals of the team. Significant energy is expended to attain quality outcomes. Managers with low self-esteem can lower the importance of this work, as well as the team's perception of its status in the organization. "Well, some people feel you are spending too much time doing this work, instead of patient care."

Carrying a Grudge

Clearly, a member of an organization for any length of time will have a history with another member, characterized by dissatisfaction or disappointment. Employees are extremely sensitive to manager disapproval. In the team setting, the insecure manager may unconsciously express negativism toward team members with whom they have a prior history. On the other hand, this same person may express unconditional support for a different team member's position, in the belief that he or she can stockpile political favors. Both behaviors reduce the manager's credibility, stifle or manipulate team members, and raise significant questions about the need for a manager on the team in the first place.

WORDS*of*WISDOM

People are never made to feel important . . . they simply are!

Assigning Work Unevenly

In the traditional bureaucracy, the assignment of desirable projects is a tool for exerting influence and rewarding others. When this reward behavior continues in the context of a team-based organization, the selection of a "chosen few" or a "team within the team" results. The remaining team members lose interest and commitment. Distrust, defensiveness, reduced commitments, unnecessary conflicts, turnover in team members, attendance problems, and resentment about having to do their work are red flags. Their presence suggests that team productivity is or will soon be seriously compromised by unfair reward practices. *It is a leadership imperative* to make sure people are not overlooked for involvement, that the team has adequate resources, and that teams are formally recognized for their efforts, even in the face of mistakes.

STRATEGIES TO CORRECT SELF-ESTEEM ISSUES IN TEAMS

Be Tactful in the Manner Applied to Check for Accuracy

Regularly ask for feedback and aim for diplomacy. "Can you help me understand how you reached that conclusion?" "Can you tell me more about this?" Use your facial expressions and beckoning hand gestures to indicate that you truly *do* want to understand. One of the most fatal flaws of managers is an abrasive, intimidating, or bullying style, which reflects a habitual insensitivity to others.

Provide the Opportunity for Team Members to Express Their Own Expertise

Managers may be tempted to fill silence with talk. But silence might mean that people are thinking! Therefore managers should not be so eager to rush to action, but rather be aware of how much of the team's time is taken by listening. The manager should take the opportunity to recognize and

WORDS of WISDOM

When everyone has an equal opportunity to grow and contribute, there really is a great deal of control in the system . . . self-control!

~

encourage crucial contradictions made by other team members and to continually ask people what they think. These actions can only build self-determination and team accountability for outcomes. When teams are asked how a problem can be solved, their capacity to handle it is developed.

Respect and Appreciate Reliability, Ingenuity, Cooperativeness, and Determination for All of the Team's Work

All work (even mistakes) takes energy, involvement, and commitment. Team members know how busy managers are. When a manager takes the time to really understand the team experience, what the team's work is, and how well (or not well) it is going, staff members are given the gift of time. This action conveys respect and support for the team more than any words could accomplish.

Never Carry a Grudge, Criticize in Front of Others, or Withhold Crucial Information

The social power of teams is developed or diminished by the supply or withholding of crucial information. Teams need information, even sensitive information, to achieve their outcomes. Managers play a key role in assisting teams to set up information systems that guarantee the right information, at the right time, in the right context. Personal feedback needs to be saved for individual interactions. Also, remember that the manager is constantly being observed by team members for the display of that behavior which is appropriate for the team setting. Grudges and criticism do not value the dignity of the human being and destroy team effectiveness.

Know Thyself Organizationally

Can you see your organization, not as it used to be, but in the context of the health care marketplace? Do you build on these observations in your

WORDS*of* WISDOM

We need to honor our teams more ... and our dynamic leaders and radical geniuses less.

Leaders' skills are best rated not by how well systems run when they are there . . . but how well these systems work after they are gone!

FOCUS

Clarifying Team Expectations

- *Identify desired results.*
- *Facilitate team to set guidelines and parameters.*
- *Identify resources and access to them.*
- *Define accountability standards and time parameters.*
- *Discuss positive and negative consequences of action and nonaction.*

WORDS of WISDOM

Lightning only strikes in one place because that place is not there any longer!

role as teacher-in-chief in your organization? Do you have a clear perception of where your organization is headed?

Leaders' main tasks are to energize their organizations and to display a consistent willingness to act. This means knowing how, why, and when organizational structures, processes, and systems *prevent* action!

Encourage Self-Observation and Self-Evaluation through Modeling, Active Listening, and Feedback to the Team*

These behaviors encourage teams to ask for and gather the resources they need for success, as well as in the setting of appropriate performance goals.

Encourage Self-Reinforcement and Self-Expectations[†]

Expectation setting and reinforcement processes assist the team to generate those team controls which will have a direct impact on performance. The most effective control systems are knowledge induced, are backed by data-driven decisions, and are self-induced.

Encourage Rehearsal So That a Team Practices an Activity Before Implementation[‡]

This activity allows the team to validate their action plan, anticipate obstacles, and modify actions if necessary. This meaningful work is sometimes overlooked in well-functioning teams but is just as important. Avoid the mistake of dodging rehearsal because it feels contrived or uncomfortable. As they practice, people learn how to perform in the context of a team. The information gained is well worth the effort.

*Manz CC, Sims HP: Leading workers to lead themselves. The external leadership of self-managing teams, *Administrative Science Quarterly* 32(1): 106-128, 1987.
†Manz CC: Self-leadership: toward an expanded theory of self-influence processes in organizations, *Academy of Management Review* 11(13): 585-600, 1994.
‡Cohen SG et al: A predictive model of self-managing work team effectiveness, *Human Relations* 49(5): 643-677, 1996.

Foster Self-Regulation

It is tempting to direct poorly performing teams, but such interventions interfere with the development of self-regulation. In fact, Beekun (1989) found that some self-managing teams perform better *without managers*. It cannot be overemphasized that managers must leave behind their supervisory persona when interacting with teams and replace outdated behaviors with team facilitation skills, or their contributions will soon be deemed unnecessary.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT LEADERSHIP?

What you believe about leadership drives your behaviors and is influenced by the general values and issues of your formative work life period. What are your own leadership metaphors? When you describe leadership in organizations, are leaders the head of the living organism? Or do you believe that wisdom is distributed throughout the system in an integrated, holistic, and natural manner?

What Do You Believe about the Work of Health Care?

- *Do you have no doubt that more and more health care work is knowledge-based rather than industrial, creating new demands on the labor force?*
- *Can you give credence to observations that health care services are no longer a consultation of individual services, but the result of an aggregate of cross-functional, interdependent performance arrangements?*
- *Do you believe that leadership in the new organization will pass from person-to-person or from team-to-team? Do you believe that people will come and go as new needs surface?*

What Do You Believe about Leadership and Change?

- *Do you believe that change forces people to create new ways of being and doing?*
- *Do you accept the notion that change makes it possible for organizations to keep up with rapid changes in service and economic demands?*
- *Do you recognize that, in your own organization, people's access to improved information systems results in all changes (once felt only locally) being experienced everywhere in the organization at the same time?*
- *Can you accept that to be an authentic change agent means being willing to risk everything (even your job, if necessary) to accomplish the objectives of change?*

Leadership must be the part of every project team, by managers who stimulate questioning, team self-management capability, and readiness to act. Formal leaders are freed to meet their accountability for integrating, resourcing, and orchestrating the complex interaction of systems, within the context of the business and service responsibility. Teams are not an end unto themselves, but a means to achieve the organizational goals of quality and service, in the context of enhanced productivity.

DYSFUNCTIONAL ROLE ADAPTATIONS

Why do some managers fail while others grow to new levels of vitality? In leadership positions, when the leader's self-esteem is low, we see the twin symptoms of self-doubt and false pride, and an unfailing, consistent practice of viewing others through a negative filter (Blanchard, 1996). When negative perceptions of others persist, manager behaviors become threats to, rather than drivers of, team productivity.

Two dysfunctional manager role adaptations are developing in today's changing organizations. They contribute to the eventual failure of individuals in meeting new manager role demands: the self-doubting leader and the warrior leader (Blanchard, 1996).

The Self-Doubting Leader

Today's health care manager is struggling with uncertainty because the foundations of management practice have been shaken to the core. The recognition that what has always worked in the past no longer produces successful outcomes is at best unsettling and at worst paralyzing. To make matters worse, even if managers do produce good outcomes, circumstances may produce job loss anyway. When managers fail to take a true accounting of their own strengths and weaknesses and do not act on them, the outcome can be a dysfunctional role adaptation described as the *self-doubting leader* (Box 6-1). These individuals may find themselves at even greater career risk because organizations no longer have safe harbors, or "parking places," for risk-averse leaders.