

Article - North Country Business

Team Problem Solving – How Do You Rate?

By Jim Stewart

Jim Stewart is a regular contributor to North Country Business on topical business issues. Jim has now turned his attention to a series of articles on organizational effectiveness.

How company owners or managers execute some of the more fundamental principles of management – e.g. make decisions by consensus, hold effective meetings, listen ‘engagingly’, brainstorm, problem solve and give/receive feedback - can all have a significant effect on organizational effectiveness.

Problem solving as a member of a team or designated work group can produce outstanding results, or if the dynamics don’t work sometimes the results can be disastrous. The following questionnaire is designed to enable individuals involved in group problem solving to evaluate their own behaviour.

Take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. 1 implies very little, 2 is some, 3 is considerable, 4 is very great. Answer each question, then total your score (each question is assigned to value of the number selected i.e. 1, 2, 3 or 4).

- | | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Are you friendly and easy to talk to | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Listen well to others whether you agree or disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. State the points of view of others as well or better than they can, even though you disagree with them | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Encourage others to express their ideas fully and frankly | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Encourage others to express their feelings frankly | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Display confidence and trust in others whether or not you agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Share information frankly | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Expect others to do their very best | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Expect a high quality job from yourself | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Think what you and your group are doing is important | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. Encourage innovative and creative ideas | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. Are willing to take risks | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. Are not defensive when criticized | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 14. Avoid treating others in a
condescending manner | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. Avoid insisting that your views be accepted | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16. Avoid belittling the contributions of others | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17. Avoid dominating the discussion | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18. Avoid being impatient with the progress
being made by the group | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19. Encourage group to discuss disagreements
and resolve, not suppress, them | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20. Use “we” and “our” rather than “I” or “my” | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21. Show no favourites, treat all members the same | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22. Give credit and recognition generously | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 23. Accept more blame than may be warranted
for any failure or mistake | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 24. Avoid imposing a decision on the group | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If your total score is greater than 80 you are doing an outstanding job of problem solving. Your team is operating in a productive and efficient manner, and team members are motivated and feel rewarded for their participation.

Scores ranging between 48 and 79, indicate that you are making a number of successful attempts to utilize many of the effective problem solving techniques, will be experiencing a degree of success, but some improvement is needed.

If your score is less than 48, chances are your team may be operating in a somewhat dysfunctional and non-cohesive manner, and results may be less than satisfying. Take a look at your style and modify behaviour as appropriate. You may also want to get feedback from team members by having them complete this questionnaire on your behaviour, then solicit their ideas as to how you could/should alter your style. Good luck!

The bottom line...in effective organizations people feel they are on a winning team and they believe they're doing something important. They are proud of the organization they work for and they feel they're making a contribution to something that's important to them. Effective team problem solving can help to make these desired outcomes become more of a reality.

Jim Stewart resides in Muskoka, Ontario, Canada and has extensive corporate, entrepreneurial, small business and consulting experience. Jim owns and operates TriNorth Consulting Inc., a company providing professional consulting and corporate training programs and services.

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