

MAKING TEAMS GREAT

Learning the keys to inspiring your team can move your company beyond the ordinary.

Building a culture that allows teams to thrive is critical to being a best place to work. The physical work environment is important, but the employees' daily experience, both with their direct leaders and the teams they work on, is what differentiates "best" from the rest.

Traditionally, team success has been evaluated by one simple metric: Is the team producing what it's supposed to produce? But a more progressive lens encompasses success in terms of how much a team propels overall growth. Effective, high-performing teams—what we at InspireCorps call inspiring teams—take on ambitious goals, know the competitive landscape, innovate, clear the toughest obstacles, and own the idea of building a better future for the firm. They sustain and grow the team's and the firm's capabilities in the process.

What makes inspiring teams different from ordinary teams? Through our work with clients and interviews with more than 70 high-level executives, we've found that such teams have four core capabilities that are consistently kept front and center.

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1 Clear Boundaries and Focus

Inspiring teams have goals and roles that are clear and agreed on, and members are held accountable. Roles reflect team members' strengths and aspirations. Together, members focus on the highest priorities and achievement. If your team is lacking this drive for results, ask yourself:

- ▶ What ambitious goal should we be more focused on?
- ▶ Which of our individual strengths can each of us use to achieve them?
- ▶ What obstacles must we overcome to succeed?

2 Communication and Alignment

Inspiring teams adopt practices and build systems that support strong coordination, high integrity, and the sharing of information. They develop a culture of trust, encouraging each team member to be open about goals, progress and achievements, obstacles and struggles. The team self-regulates and is locked in on the highest priorities while declining pursuits outside the larger vision. If your team is

lacking alignment, ask yourself:

- ▶ To achieve our goals, what information do we need to have and share?
- ▶ How do the team's goals align with the company's larger goals and mission?
- ▶ What methods and channels of communication do we need to strengthen to better our performance?

3 Connection, Trust, and Inclusion

Inspiring teams appreciate diversity and social sensitivity. They promote emotional safety, so all members can be themselves and feel confident to contribute. They identify and acknowledge one another's strengths—and those of the team collectively. They ask for and offer help; and they are willing to sacrifice for the greater good if needed. Teams high in connection and trust make the experience of working together energy-giving as they advance their collective aims. If your team is lacking connection and trust, ask yourself:

- ▶ What binds us as a team, and how can we lean on one another more when we need it most?

- ▶ How can we know one another in new ways?

4 On the Hunt

Inspiring teams are never satisfied. They are always looking for a better way or a greater opportunity. They have a healthy competitiveness, knowing when the status quo no longer works, and they look for ways to stay ahead of the curve. Visionary and innovative teams understand that experimentation, failure, and bouncing back are essential to sustainable success. If your team is lacking in vision and innovation, ask yourself:

- ▶ If there were no constraints, what could we achieve?
- ▶ How can we iterate, experiment, and learn together?
- ▶ What beliefs or assumptions do we hold that are blocking us? What alternative beliefs could spark creativity?

And as a final note: Don't forget to spike the ball! As humans, we are tribal, hard-wired to need one another and to be needed. Sharing experiences, whether they're big milestone wins, meals, or volunteer work, builds a positive collective memory and connection.

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