A WEEK IN Learning

A HIGH-PERFORMING TEAM IS THE IDEAL DREAM
Lara Tardo, Lead L&D Consultant

Do you enjoy coming to work every day? Are you thinking, "I HAVE to go to work" Or "I GET to go to work"?

We spend a lot of time with our team throughout the week. Whether you are sitting or standing next to each other, attending meetings, collaborating on projects, the work we do is supported by teamwork. The way we choose to interact and behave with our team members directly influences how we achieve our results. It also translates to how effective we are at performing at a high-level.

To be a high-performing team, you need to go beyond teamwork. A high performing team has a clear vision of where they are going. They know what they want to get done, and share responsibility to achieve desired results. However, high performance is not just tied to numbers or specific results, but is part of a bigger picture.

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- **Lara Tardo**

I have worked on teams at previous employers where it was more of an "every man for himself" mentality. People were guarded about what they did, and if there was any threat to them not looking good, everyone around them would know. I've also worked for a leader that had their own agenda. They were always more concerned with just telling people what to do. It wasn't hard to figure out if team members on either of these teams wanted to help each other out, or just do enough to get by.

I am fortunate to work with a team that not only works well together, but genuinely cares about each other too. Everything takes effort, though, and this culture does not happen overnight. Each individual does his/her part to work toward a shared vision. We exhibit positive behaviors that cultivate a healthy team dynamic. I want to share with you all some key factors that have contributed to our overall success of becoming a high-performing team.

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• **Trust and respect** – Be professional, kind, and show respect. Specifically, here at Goodwill, use the Trust Pledge to manage conflict and business relationships effectively. Without trust and respect, team members will not feel comfortable working with each other and may become more defensive or reserved. However, if you are kind and talk with one another when you have an issue, it shows you both care about each other and want a positive outcome.

• **Leveraging each other's strengths** – We all have knowledge, skillsets, and abilities that can help us succeed and do our job well. The challenge is to let each other shine, use your skillset for a new task, and ask for help when a task may not be within your own natural ability. You can also ask your team for ideas or a better way to perform a task.

• **Challenge each other** – Provide a new perspective or suggestion on how a task is performed or how to resolve an issue. You don't have to agree or even take the suggestion. However, you never know if it will help you improve or even grow. Make sure to maintain a professional and respectful tone when demonstrating this behavior.

• **Open communication** – This includes talking to one another in person, via email, or whichever method works best for your team and location. Demonstrate vulnerability and admit when you are wrong. This is definitely not easy, but is easier to do than to make up something inaccurately.

• **Commitment** – Establish commitment across all members of the team. Expand everyone's mindset beyond "That is not my job" to "How can I help my team achieve the best outcome?".

What happens if you realize your team is not performing as well as you'd like? Here are some practical tips to move towards becoming a high-performing team:
• Identify gaps
• Brainstorm together to create a plan to fill the gaps
• Build relationships – team building exercises are a great way to start this step
• Step in to help – if someone is stressed about a task or deadline, ask if you can help
• Lead by example – when others see your commitment, they'll want to do more
• Establish clear expectations

Remember to work towards the same goal, not your own agenda. Step in to help whenever you can, even if the task is beyond your comfort zone. Do not be afraid of owning up to mistakes and doing what is right. Be vulnerable, real, and do your best every day. You can leverage each other's skills and strengths, while still challenging the status quo. Be kind, treat each other with respect, and have fun!

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