

Team Building: 11 Tips & 5 Myths

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Recommendations

1. Examine yourself honestly. Are you a team builder? Are you a natural leader? If not, hire a team manager or coach – at a minimum to determine the company’s culture. Then provide ways to develop it.
2. Don’t compromise your culture or you will end up building an Edsel or an Aztec.
3. Don’t confuse bravado for leadership. Too many team leaders got there with might, not by earning respect.
4. Build your team around the company name and your brand, not around the individuals. Your company will do better. Your team will work together better. And it will be easier to cut loose the people that don’t belong.
5. Hire slow. Fire fast.
6. Don’t let yourself get strangled by a rogue shareholder or employee. Most people are much easier to replace than you think ... and everybody else already knows he or she is a jerk. They will be relieved.
7. Think about what matters to you: technology, the arts, the environment, flexible hours, hiring the disabled, low visibility, high visibility.
8. Don’t build a team on friendships.
9. Look at your team as a sports team: fill the positions with the strengths you need.
10. Be willing to give up some equity for key leadership, but not everybody deserves equity.
11. Ask what your employees want out of their job. Most owners and managers never ask the question.

Myth busting

1. Culture isn’t created by bringing in free pastries every morning or providing a foosball table in the workplace.
2. Don’t try to emulate another company’s culture – it always comes off fake. Establish your own, naturally.
3. Teams do not form on their own. Cliques do.
4. My personal opinion: team building tricks don’t work. They are short term entertainment. Esprit de corps (culture) is best established by going through hardship together such as: tough, all-day training sessions or working on the big project.
5. It isn’t about the money ... really. People just want to be compensated fairly.

Mark Lundquist founded Fulcrum Edge, Inc. in 2002 to lead companies through growth, transitional change, and preparation for investment. He spent 22 years, most in executive positions, with high technology companies such as Bosch, Mannesmann AG, Norgren, Vickers, and Grimes Aerospace. Mark has founded or co-founded four companies and taken one public via IPO. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is a mentor to Detroit’s TechTown and Ann Arbor SPARK business incubators and sits on the boards for numerous companies. He was recently recognized by Lawrence Technological University as a “Leader & Innovator” in Michigan.