Six Conversations for Team Success

A ClearWorth whitepaper on developing high value teams

ClearWorth means learning
CW means

High value not high performance

Teams are often described in terms of performance - so a high-performance team is the aim. We disagree.

Unless your performance is what the organisation, customer or client wants and needs you're not delivering value. **The aim must be to become a high value team not a high performance team**

Intelligent conversations for teams help them to focus on what really matters. Team development events, away days and team meetings are opportunities to review how the team works. The danger is that the team only focusses on what they're doing, a project review approach, rather than thinking how the team works and how they can better deliver.

The most value comes from making sure the team is equipped to satisfy their customers' and stakeholders' expectations rather than just updating each other on what has or has not been done.

Six Conversations for Success ensure that the focus is not just on how the team works together but what the outside world thinks and feels about them and their work. In the commercial realities of today's world, teams and organisations are entirely dependent on the support and investment of outsiders.

What do teams need to talk about?

Teams need to explore the vital external relationships and the internal processes which together help them thrive in today's turbulent markets and economies:-

Success Criteria - The value judgments the customers and stakeholders use when investing time, energy and money in the team's work and products.

Stakeholder Management - The practices that engage the outside world in the team's work, successes and challenges so that they feel part of the action.

Delivering on Promises - The reputation and record the team has for fulfilling expectations of them, their work and their outputs

Look Outside First

The external focus is about building and maintaining working relationships so that the stakeholders and customers are engaged, involved and connected to the team or organisation and its work. This relationship can be explored in each of three areas or facets: -

Success Criteria - Any investment or purchase has a set of criteria by which the investor or buyer decides whether or not they have got a good deal. The intelligent conversation here should be to verify everyone understands what those criteria are and that the processes and products meet expectations.

Stakeholder Management - Anyone who has sat on a delayed flight with no word from the captain or crew as to why there's a delay or what this means for their plans will know what this means. Keeping stakeholders up-to-date with the news, good or bad, builds a trusting and honest relationship. Nasty surprises are always unwelcome.

Delivering on Promises - To what extent does the team have a track record of meeting or exceeding the client or stakeholders' requirements? Every team or organisation's product or service has an implied promise. This conversation checks that that promise is relevant, valuable and being met.

What do teams need to talk about?

How the team works together is only relevant to delivering the value that's required. At the same time, these dimensions are like building fitness or stamina. Without them it is much more difficult to deliver the outputs required - and sooner or later the lack of fitness for purpose will show.

To build resilience, maintain team health and be ready to deliver value, the intelligent conversations for teams are about: -

Organisation and Structure - The way the team is arranged to be able to deliver the products or services and provide a reliable process for creating the value stakeholders want. Chaotic working can occasionally yield results but not in a reliable, sustainable way.

Working for Each Other - How team members' work processes, routines and attitudes or mind-sets are focussed on supporting each other. In high performing teams there is a sense of commitment team members feel toward each other and the way their work flows makes it an easy place to be around.

Continuous Learning - Unless the team is willing to keep track of what is happening in the marketplace and the world at large and make changes in the way it works and the products and services it delivers there will come a time when the work is irrelevant and the team will no longer be needed. It could be gradual or sudden - but it will come.

Key Questions for Teams

There are fundamental questions that any successful team or organisation pays attention to on a regular basis. These twelve questions cover six areas and together ensure a balance between an internal and external focus. Both are important in sustained success and if the team doesn't know the answers this should act as an early warning signal that the team's performance is out of line with stakeholder expectations.

Success Criteria

- Who are our sponsors, customers and stakeholders and what are they looking for from their investment in us?
- What criteria are they using to compare us with other ways of achieving their objectives?

Stakeholder Management

- What are we doing to keep interested parties up to date with developments?
- How do we engage stakeholders in what we are doing so that they feel part of our work?
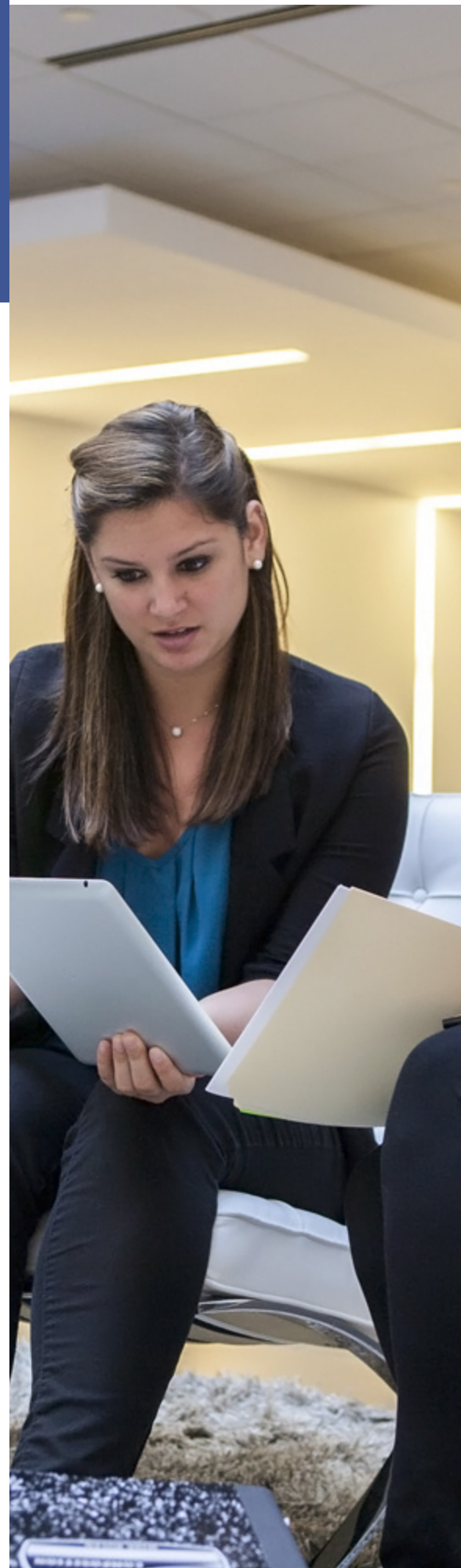
Delivering on Promises

- What is our track record for delivering against what is expected?
- How consistent are we in delivering on time, on budget and in line with expectations?

Structure and Organisation

- How do our processes and structures make delivering our outputs easy or difficult?
- How does our structure help the customers and stakeholders get what they need from us?

Working for Each Other

- How are we supporting each other in our work processes and delivering to customers?
- How do our working relationships and processes increase our customers' confidence and trust?

Continuous Learning

- What feedback are we getting that tells us what we need to do more or less of?
- What new skills or capacity are we developing that helps us consistently deliver quality outputs?

Find out more

Developing a high value team needs time, energy and resources. Find out what we can offer you that will make your job easier

Show me what you've got on teams

made with
Beacon