



As you wrap your final presents, mingle at the company party, and bid your team “Happy Holidays,” what does your “year in review” look like for you? How can you leverage the team strengths and learnings to become an even more extraordinary team? Will you focus on more open and clear communication? Manage conflicts more constructively? Create a more positive work environment?

As we move into this new year, please let me know what you’re up to!

Kristin

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THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EXTRAORDINARY TEAM

Are you part of a team? If you play on a sports team, work with a bunch of people, or simply come together for family dinner...that’s a team! Whenever you bring two or more people together for a desired outcome, you have a team.

All these teams have an equal potential to be an extraordinary team — a high-performance team that accomplishes the desired results quickly, efficiently, and effectively. An extraordinary team is set up for success with the right people working on an important, meaningful issue with solid support from the sponsors and an agreed upon process to proceed. Additionally, there are several other elements that make it truly extraordinary.

Clear Goals. Everyone understands the purpose and direction of the team. Everyone pulls in the same direction for success.

Shared Roles. Team task and maintenance roles are clearly defined and easily shared between team members. A key shared role is the team leader. (See more in the Quality Leadership characteristic)

Valued Diversity. Members are valued for the unique contributions they bring to the team. A diversity of thinking, ideas, methods, experiences, and opinions is encouraged. Whether you are creative or logical, fast, or methodical, team members recognize each other’s individual talents and tap their expertise — both job-related and other skills they bring to the team, such as organizing, clarifying, creating and team building. Flexibility and sensitivity are key elements in appreciating these differences.

Open and Clear Communication. Poor listening, poor speaking, and the inability to provide constructive feedback can be major roadblocks to team progress. For success, team

members must listen for meaning, speak with clarity, engage in dialogue and discussion, and provide continual feedback through the communication process.

Participation. In an extraordinary team, people not only talk, but they participate in a meaningful fashion with every individual contributing when appropriate.

A Cooperative Climate. The atmosphere encourages participation, trust, and openness. Members of the team are equally committed and involved. They know they need each other's skills, knowledge, and expertise to produce something together that they could not do separately. There is a feeling of cooperation in an extraordinary team because the members know they need each other's skills, knowledge, and expertise. There is a sense of belonging and a willingness to make things work for the good of the whole team.

Positive Atmosphere. Extraordinary teams have a positive atmosphere where people are comfortable enough with each other to be creative, take risks and make mistakes; there's a climate of trust and openness. It also means you hear plenty of laughter and the team members enjoy what they are doing.

Conflict Managed Constructively. Members of the team are committed and involved, which means you'll hear plenty of laughter, but there will also be **conflict**. An extraordinary team manages that conflict by confronting the issues rather than confronting other team members. Problems are not swept under the rug. They see conflict as a healthy way to create new ideas and to solve difficult problems. They're aware of and they use many methods to manage that conflict and arrive at difficult decisions.

Some may compete to have their opinions heard, while others may accommodate the stronger team members or avoid the conflict altogether. A successful team has discussed its philosophy about how to manage conflict.

Effective decision-making. Extraordinary teams use various methods to make decisions. Consensus is often touted as the best way to make decisions — and it is an excellent method — but the team should also use command decision, expert decision, majority vote, minority control or a command decision with the input depending on the time available, the amount of commitment and resources required.

Quality Leadership. Finally, the Litmus Test of an extraordinary team is whether the leader is a good coach, teacher and if they share responsibility and the glory. They're supportive and fair, creating a climate of trust and openness. This leadership role shifts at various times and in the most productive teams, it's often difficult to identify the leaders during a casual observation.

When you put all these elements together, a clear vision, diverse and shared roles, open and clear communication, participation, cooperation, a positive atmosphere, commitment, conflict, effective decision-making, and quality leadership, you have a truly extraordinary team.

HOW TO PREPARE TO BE A BRILLIANT PANELIST

You just agreed to be a panelist at your organization's annual meeting, and you are wondering, "What was I thinking?" Perhaps you said yes because this will be good visibility for you and your company. Or you're a well-respected leader and/or supporter of the organization. Or you are a sponsor and a seat on a panel is part of the sponsorship package.

Whatever the reason, it is your responsibility to do your homework and deliver some amazing value and insights for the audience. You can't just show up and expect miracles to happen. You have to put a little bit of thought and rumination into it before you show up. (I crassly call this "show up and throw up!" You don't want to do that either). Have a chat with the meeting chair, planner and/or panel moderator to discuss the following items so that you can be brilliant on the panel:

Event Details:

- Event Title
- Event Theme
- Date of the Event
- Location
- “Sponsor” or Business
- Organization’s Past Experience with Panels?
- Attire

Panel Details:

- Date of Panel
- Start Time
- End Time
- Location/Room
- Time to be on Location
- Panel Topic
- Panel Title
- Panel Objective(s)

Who Is in the Audience:

- Expected Level of Expertise?
- Key Interests?
- Needs and Concerns?
- Questions They are Hoping to Find Answers To?
- Panel Impact on Their Work/Lives?

Panel Format:

- Formal or Informal?
- Describe the Vision
- Success Criteria
- Names of Other Panelists
- Evaluation Forms?

Other Associated Activities for the Panelists:

- Book Signing
- Professional Videotaping of the Session
- Extra Press-Only Session
- VIP/Meet the Panelists’ Reception/Dinner
- Ability to Share a Successful Case Study
- Any Promotional Prohibitions

Room Logistics:

- Room Size and Layout
- Furniture Set up/Types of Chairs
- Color of Backdrop

Audio-Visual:

- Microphones
- Multimedia Projection
- Wi-Fi connectivity
- A/V Release Form for Panelists to Sign?

Event/Panel Promotion

- Brainstorm how you can help get the word out through social media and your network
- Get Copy of Marketing Materials
- Event Website URL

- Event Social Media Pages/Groups
- Twitter Hashtag

Once you have all this information, now is the time to go to work! Take a few minutes to think through:

- Key Message
- Key Points with Example/Story
- Memorable Phrase
- Supporting Visuals/Props?

As you get closer to the actual date, the panel moderator will probably reach out to you either by phone or email to confirm some of the above details. This is a good time to check in with the moderator on the style and flow, check out a few of the questions he or she might ask and to fine-tune as needed. As a panelist, when you prepare well, you'll be brilliant during the panel discussion!

FROM THE BOOKSHELF: THE CARPENTER: A STORY ABOUT THE GREATEST SUCCESS PRINCIPLES OF ALL

I was recently facilitating a strategic planning meeting when the CEO announced that she had read the book, "The Carpenter: A Story About the Greatest Success Principles of All" by Jon Gordon - and that she wanted to lead the company based on the three core principles of the book: Love, Serve, and Care.

This CEO is already a pretty remarkable woman, so I had to buy the book, and I'm glad I did!

The core concept of this short fable business book is that you'll be more successful and lead a more fulfilling life when you focus on the process vs. the end results. By loving the work that you do, serving others, and caring about each and every person you connect with, the results will follow.

If you can get past the biblical allusions (the mentor is a carpenter named J. Emmanuel - wonder if he was born in a stable?), this book packs a punch. Reading time is less than an hour, and I highly recommend some reflection time in between a few chapters.

Here are some of the key points:

Don't just be a carpenter; be a craftsman. Rather than approaching work as a job that needs to get done quickly, be concerned about what you are creating. "I pour my heart and soul into everything I build, knowing that all I create is a reflection of me."

Be optimistic. "What you believe will become what is true."

Talk to yourself rather than listen to yourself. Feed yourself with positive words and encouragement rather than listen to negative thoughts.

Do everything with love. "Do not fear failing. Do not fear losing clients. Do not fear that you won't be successful. Do not fear that things won't go your way. Instead, do everything with love and you will cast out fear, you will flow instead of stress, and you will create more success than you could ever imagine."

Look for opportunities to serve others. "Ask your employees what they need and serve them. Anticipate their needs and serve them before they even know they need it. Ask your customers what they need from you to be the best."

Teach your team to serve each other. "Great teammates serve the team more than themselves. When a team is more committed to serving one another rather than their own selfish desires, they become very powerful and accomplish amazing things."

Find unique ways to show you care and make it a habit. "It may seem like a small gesture, but it means everything [to the recipient]."

It starts with the leader. "Great organizations that care are composed of people who care greatly - and it starts with you. Not because you are the leader of the company, but because one person who cares inspires everyone around them to care."

The carpenter/author cautions that this is not a quick-fix solution to an organization's problems, but by having the courage to persevere and continue to love, serve, and care, you'll see great results.

At least have the courage to read the book and have your team discuss how it might apply!