

Urban Putty

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Let's Talk Team Building Part 1

Cubs, Guides, choirs and sports teams...most of us have had some experience with "being on a team." Not everyone's experience was happy! Some of us, in fact, have been completely turned off joining "teams" of any kind.

"We want to preserve our independence."

In a time filled with vigorous pursuit of "rugged individualism" the idea of "team" may seem counter-intuitive. The free market likes to focus on individuals and their productivity, especially the measurable kind. Willy Loman, the hero of Arthur Miller's Pulitzer Prize winning Broadway play, *Death of a Salesman*, was one of the best depictions of this silo-effect half a century ago. "I want to be my own boss" is a mantra for those who seriously question the capacity of anyone else to provide healthy and effective leadership in their work lives.

However, "either-or" thinking serves to sabotage those who champion its use. Furthermore, there is a growing body of empirical evidence that demonstrates that effective "teams" or "communities" do not have to devolve into military models of rigorous discipline and punishment, nor into a reinvention of the high-school model of "stars-and-cheerleaders."

When we all pull on our individual oars, in the same direction, at the same time, to the same cultural rhythm, we will be amazed at the distance, speed, perspective and feeling of unity, support and enhancement which only the experience of "team" can generate in the same dimensions.

"At work nobody really knows what I'm good at, nor do they care!"

The idea that your personal interests, expertise competence and aspirations for your life might have some resonance with the "powers that be" at work may seem somewhat out of sync with the current culture of your workplace. That reality is changing, and it is changing with some speed.

Employers know, from other employers, from their consultants, from their reading and even from their perhaps limited experience, that "our greatest resource is our people" is not just a slogan. It is the absolute truth!

When your company begins the process of formal and informal listening to the personal aspirations of each worker, and then builds a model of its shared vision by using the building blocks of these individual visions, and then includes questions of "personal aspirations" in every performance review, the process will begin to generate new energies in your workplace.

Workers can practice talking about genuine aspirations with each other and about which dynamic will reduce the 'negative vibes' in the workplace - replacing it with pictures of doable, achievable long-range visions for real people. Through sharing, refining,

reforming, re-defining and repeating this process several times, many people actually come to a place where they can claim their life purpose!

This generates an energy and a commitment that is an integral part of the launching of that individual life. Imagine, your own life lifting off the tarmac of habit, or blowing the sludge out of the fuel lines of your imagination, or catching the spark of a picture of “what I’ve always wanted to do and be”...and the implications of that! Why, you might not wish to remain in your current job, because you have different fish to fry, with different fishers, perhaps some of them kingfishers!

Work is the best place for individual people to practice new pictures of new skills, of new stretches and sketches, with new pens, on different canvases, because whatever emerges on our easels will invariably contribute to the improvement of our workplace! Each of us works in a place where individual people can grow. We might have to bring some new light to our conversations, or some new ideas to populate the canvas (the workplace culture) and we might even have to own some responsibility for the smudges that seem to be sucking some of the energy out of our imaginations, our intuition and our inner “artists”.

And team-building which fosters, permits, and grows each individual to her/his full potential is the only kind of team building that is worthy of the name!

If your workplace needs to think creatively, and to co-create with your

leadership, and to grow your people into the healthiest creatures each of them can become, then one place to start is with some formal work in team building. CEOs are often far too busy, and also too close to the scene, to take on the responsibilities of this process. Partners whom they can and do trust are often necessary!

If you are a CEO, or you have the ear of your CEO and you need the revitalizing “On” switch to be activated in your workplace, then you might search for a trusted partner. Inviting proposals from a variety of sources will put different perspectives and different processes before your decision-makers. Some will look like “classical conditioning” in their approach. Others will be more focused on “instant, life-changing, charismatic interventions.” Others will expect the individuals inside the organization to take full responsibility for the process and will seek to facilitate its inception, its unique growth and maturation in order to release new energies never before contemplated by the people whose lives are involved.

Of course, we offer the third option for the very compelling reasons that:

- it works
- it will stretch each person
- personal aspirations are the root of any change energy
- the people, all in the workplace, are the only ones responsible for their culture

- change can never be truly successful when imposed from outside, either in personal or in organizational terms
- effective leadership does not need to kill anyone, either the recipient or the administrator
- effective co-creating is the result of truth telling that includes fears and aspirations, and one without the other will inevitably pour sand in the gas tank and clog the engine
- it takes a long-term commitment from everyone
- it lasts as long as the practitioners want it to
- the vision of your company will be constantly adapting in a healthy manner to whatever challenges arise

To learn more, give us a call at 1-866-511-4769 or visit our website at <http://www.theacorncentre.com/>