



CUTTINGS...

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Compiled and edited by Geof Cox

In this edition

Welcome to Autumn!!

Summer seems some time ago now - autumn colours are setting in and the training season is back in full swing. So this newsletter comes to you from the Netherlands where I am running a workshop for a client. Teamwork and coaching are on the agenda for the workshops I am running over the next weeks, and the subjects for discussion in this edition of Cuttings.

Enjoy

Geof Cox

The Latest on Teams

A couple of articles from Global Integration looking at some of the latest thinking and research on teams...

More than 6? Then your team is probably too big

Debbie Marshall-Lee points out that the trend for larger and larger teams from across the organisation is flawed. It's easy for teams that start out aiming to be agile and nimble with 3-4 people who have relevant specific expertise... but then add one or two more people to try to get buy-in across the organisation and represent affected functions and ensure that all relevant people are consulted. Before we know it the team is growing to 12, 15 people.

Research into teams by Professor Hackman at Harvard University shows that for most issues the most effective teams are made up of 4 to 6 people – with 10 usually being the absolute maximum. And as Stanford Professor Bob Sutton adds, “as a group expands further, each member devotes more time to coordination chores (and less time to actually doing the work), more hand-offs between the growing cast of members are required (creating opportunities for miscommunication and mistakes), and because each member must divide his or her attention among a longer list of colleagues, the team’s social glue weakens (and destructive conflict soars).

So - if we really want teams to be effective, keep them small and focused. In one example of de-sizing, a hospital A&E department dropped their patient throughput time by 3 hours, or over 40%, after they divided up their teams of 30 into 'pods' of 6.

Cross functional teamwork on the rise...

Whilst teams might need to be small and focused, they are also becoming increasingly complex when focusing on more "horizontal", matrix approaches to

The latest on teams - a couple of articles commenting on what makes teams be more effective...

Most managers think they are good coaches - They are not - a reflection on some research from EDHEC Business School

Do you listen or just hear? - some tips for better listening

Plus details of **2018 Public Courses, Book Sales, and Snippets** to further provoke your thinking and reflection

Snippets

A collection of thought provokers and quotations...

"Once you replace negative thoughts with positive ones, you'll start having positive results."

Willie Nelson

"A surplus of effort could overcome a deficit of confidence."

Sonia Sotomayor

"We know what happens to people who stay in the middle of the road. They get run over."

Aneurin Bevan

"Just because a person is silent doesn't mean there's no message."

Frank Sonnenberg

"If you cannot explain something in simple terms, then you don't understand it"

Richard Feynman

"If your actions create a legacy that inspires others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, then, you are an excellent leader."

providing value for consumers. This leads to increased need for collaboration to cut across the traditional functional silos.

What Kevan Hall points out in the second article is that we should look at these cross-functional teams as being different from traditional team thinking.

Firstly in these cross-functional teams, coordination is needed more often than deep collaboration. When you come from a different function to your colleagues, then they may have little ability to evaluate recommendations made on your own functional expertise. Whilst you may coordinate intensively with colleagues who have their own expertise and responsibility, you will tend to be individually accountable for the quality of your own deliverables. Failure to understand this can lead to poor decision-making and unnecessary meetings where people without the necessary technical expertise meet to evaluate your work and make decisions they may not be qualified to do.

Collaboration normally only happens when you are actively working on a common issue "live" in meetings, which tend to be only a small part of the time spent working in the team. The rest of the time we are delivering our own functional commitments which need to be coordinated but don't require in-depth collaboration with other team members.

Secondly in cross-functional teams, cultures are a factor. We often find that functional differences lead to more differences and clashes than national cultures. It is often easier to get a group of accountants to collaborate than get a team made up of people from finance, sales and marketing, manufacturing, R&D to work effectively together. Functional cultures are strong and pay attention to very different metrics and information. So we need to recognise these differences and not fall into the trap of interpreting them as individual personality issues.

Thirdly, it is likely that you are a member of multiple cross functional teams. This can be an advantage in bringing variety and learning, but it also leads to inefficiencies and costs in "switching" from one team to another where team practices, norms and uses of technology may differ.

So it is important not to take a traditional team development approach to cross functional team working - tailoring the development to take into account the complexity and reality of cross functional teamwork will bring much better results.

USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to read the article 'Bigger than 6?' [Click here](#) to read the article 'Cross functional teamwork on the rise?' by Global Integration.

New Directions offer workshops and consultancy on teams and team working based on over 30 years of research and experience. [Click here](#) for more information

Most managers think they are good coaches - They are not.

Do you think you are you successful at coaching your employees? Many executives say "yes", but they're wrong. Why? First of all, managers tend to think they're coaching when they're actually just telling their employees what to do, albeit nicely. This is not an effective way to motivate people and help them grow, and it can result in wasted time, money, and energy. Sir John Whitmore, a leading figure in executive coaching, defines coaching as "unlocking a person's potential

Dolly Parton

"The most powerful leadership tool you have is your personal example"

John Wooden

"The most courageous act is still to think for yourself. Aloud."

Coco Chanel

"It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop."

Confucius

"The question isn't who is going to let me, it's who is going to stop me."

Ayn Rand

"Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible."

Francis of Assisi

"A desk is a dangerous place from which to view the world."

John le Carré

Howard Schultz, who built Starbucks into a multinational giant, visited at least 25 Starbucks and other stores per week: "I try to be a sponge to pick up as much as I can."

"People are very open-minded about new things... as long as they're exactly like the old ones!"

Charles Kettering

"Spend all your energy building the new not fighting the old."

Socrates

"A promise made is a debt unpaid."

Robert W. Service

Do you listen or just hear?

Listening is the communication skill many of us use the most. Yet, many people listen poorly. Poor listeners "hear" what's being said, but they rarely "listen" to the whole message. They get distracted by their own thoughts or by what's going on around them, and they formulate their responses before the person they're talking to has finished

to maximise their own performance... *helping them to learn rather than teaching them.*"

In practice, when asked to coach, many managers simply tell the other person what to do or provide them with advice or a solution. We regularly hear comments like, "First you do this" or "Why don't you do this?" This is more like micromanaging-disguised-as-coaching.

A couple of researchers at EDHEC Business School in France looked behind this phenomenon at the skills that managers have that are essential for leadership coaching. Where managers typically scored poorly was in the areas of "recognising and pointing out strengths" and "letting the coachee arrive at their own solution." The skill they found the best was listening, but that was only rated as "average". There is a large skill gap. But the good news, as evidenced by the research, is that you don't necessarily need to invest in months of training to see a difference. Even short workshops targeted at the right skills can markedly improve managers' coaching skills. I can support this observation with my own experience of training managers to become better coaches. Recognising that coaching is not telling is a great start point.

USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to read the full article from HBR

New Directions offers workshops and training for managers on how to coach. For more information [Click here](#).

speaking. Good listeners fully understand what other people are saying.

Good preparation is essential for effective listening. Remove anything that may distract you from it, then you can focus, and show you are giving your full attention. Switch off your cell phone, turn off instant messaging and email alerts, put your work away, make sure that you won't be interrupted. If you can't offer the other person your full attention, schedule a better time to speak.

Listen actively: make a conscious effort to understand the whole message. Read people's body language and tone, so that you can identify "hidden" nonverbal messages. Don't interrupt, and don't become distracted by your own thoughts or opinions. Don't formulate a response until people have communicated their whole message.

Listen empathically: put yourself "in other people's shoes," and try to see things from their point of view. Then, summarise what they say, in your own words, to show them that you understand their perspective.

Public Courses 2018

New Directions runs a small number of public training programmes in association with partners. 2018 dates are below.

Human Competency and Capability Development

A 4 day course in human resource development strategy for the oil and gas sector. Run in partnership with petroEDGE.

Kuala Lumpur 29 October - 1 November

International Oil & Gas Executive Programme

An intensive 5 day workshop in strategic business management, designed specifically for managers in the oil and gas sector. Run in partnership with petroEDGE.

Kuala Lumpur 22-26 October

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[New Directions consultancy and training services](#)

Book sales

Getting Results Without Authority is available at the special price of **£10.00**

Ready-Aim-Fire Problem Solving is priced at **£7.00**

Bundle both titles for **£15.00**

Price includes p&p in the UK, for deliveries outside the UK add £1.00.

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Cuttings

Cuttings is a bi-monthly collection of ideas and comments published elsewhere which have attracted my attention over the past couple of months. It is designed for readers who are interested in individual, organisation and management development and is free. It has been published continuously for more than 20 years by *New Directions*, an international network of consultants and trainers who work together to learn, research, design and provide consulting and training in individual, management, and organisation development.

USEFUL LINKS

[Past issues of Cuttings](#)

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Contact details

T: +44 (0)117 968 1451

M: +44 (0)7753 626284

Skype: GeofCox.NewDirections

E: geofcox@newdirections.uk.com

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