

By Jeff “Chief” Urbaniak
COLUMNIST (www.AdviceChief.com)

Have you ever been assigned to a team only to feel like you’re stuck on a broken down bus in the desert with 20 confused people and no air conditioning? You sit there watching person after person try ridiculous things to fix the bus until roadside service arrives and saves the day. But then, as you get rolling again, you drive from one unfamiliar road to the next until the driver stops the bus and indicates he is completely lost. Then, even when someone declares they have GPS on their phone, it’s of no help anyway because no one knows the destination address. So you decide to turn the bus around and head back to the location from which you came, then boom! You run out of gas. Sound familiar?

This happens a lot. Teams fail because of the following reasons:

- 1) *Lack of sufficient charter that defines the team’s purpose and how it will work together to achieve that purpose.*
- 2) *Inability to decide what constitutes the work for which they are interdependent and mutually accountable.*
- 3) *Lack of mutual accountability.*
- 4) *Lack of resources to do the job, including time.*
- 5) *Lack of effective leadership and lack of shared leadership.*
- 6) *Lack of norms that foster creativity and excellence.*
- 7) *Lack of planning.*
- 8) *Lack of management support.*
- 9) *Inability to deal with conflict.*
- 10) *Lack of training on all levels on group skills.*

To build a highly effective team, it is important to address each and every one of these reasons listed. A great way to do this is to apply the acronym PERFORM to a team-building scenario.

(P) Purpose and Values. A high performing team shares a strong sense of purpose and a common set of values. They have a compelling vision. It is from purpose and values that mutually agreed-on goals are derived, roles are

defined, and strategies are developed. If a team does not know who they are (purpose), where they are going (picture of the future), and what will guide their journey (values), the team will not develop. Purpose and values are the glue that holds the team together and forms the foundation of a high-performing team.

(E) Empowerment. Members of a high-performing team are confident in the team’s ability to overcome obstacles. They share information and knowledge and help each other. Policies, rules, and procedures enable the group to perform the task efficiently and effectively. Information is readily available, and people have the skills they need or at least know where to get them. They are provided opportunities for growth and performance. They have authority to act and make decisions and choices with boundaries. They have the autonomy, opportunity, and ability to experience their personal and collective power.

(R) Relationships and Communication. A high-performing team is committed to open communication. People feel they can take risks and share their thoughts, opinions, and feelings without fear. They don’t have to like each other but must respect, value, and care about each other. Listening is considered as important as speaking. Differences are truly valued. They embrace the belief that it is from difference that creativity is derived. If differences turn into conflict, the team is skilled in dealing with it in a way that maintains human dignity. Through honest, caring feedback, people are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and their impact on others, and they act in ways that build trust and acceptance. People are committed to each other both personally and professionally. They care and depend on each other. Cohesion is high.

(F) Flexibility. High-performing team members are interdependent and realize that all are responsible for team performance, development, and leadership. In a high-performing team it is often difficult to determine who the

leader is because leadership shifts based on the needs at the time. They engage in both hard work and fun. Feelings as well as opinions are valued. Members recognize the inevitability of change and adapt to changing conditions.

(O) Optimal Productivity. High-performing teams generate optimal productivity, reflected in the amount and quality of the work they accomplish. A high-performing team is committed to producing significant results. Productivity is the bottom line. Without results, little else matters. There is a commitment to high standards and quality. Team members take great pride in meeting deadlines, achieving goals, and getting the job done. They hold each other accountable and strive for continual improvement. They have developed effective decision and problem-solving methods to enhance creativity and participation. Everyone carries his or her weight, and everyone takes pride in team accomplishments.

(R) Recognition and Appreciation. A high-performing team experiences continual positive feedback and recognition on the part of team members, the team leader, and the organization. Recognition and appreciation are powerful ways to motivate and enhance performance. The quickest way to demoralize a team and render it ineffective is for the team to produce and deliver results but not hear anything from the powers that be. Recognition reinforces behavior, builds esteem, and enhances a feeling of value and accomplishment. Both personal and team recognition are important.

(M) Morale. Morale is the result of all of the above. If the other PERFORM elements are in place, morale is high. Members are enthusiastic about their work; they are proud of their results and feel pride in belonging to the team. The team is confident and optimistic about the future, and trust among members is high. There is a strong team spirit and a sense of unity.

High-performing teams PERFORM.

~ The End ~