FAST FIX   It's possible to develop a team-oriented culture in your office.

Problem: I've been noticing some seclusion between some of my employees. Is there a way I can effectively promote team building?

Fix: Susan Hodinko, founder and director of Susan Hodinko & Associates, a Baltimore-based management consulting and executive coaching firm says trying a weekly "Town Meeting" with your employees is one way to encourage team building.

For companies interested in implementing a "Town Meeting" to develop a team-oriented culture, Hodinko lists the following tips:

• Set aside a specific time once a week or once a month, where it's a time to honor the time. If it's 9:30 a.m. on a Friday morning, it's then and only then.

• Sit in a circle and discuss whatever is on your mind. Whether it's a difficult client, or somebody had a baby, this is a good way to express your current thoughts. It is important to sit in a circle for this meeting, so there is no hierarchy and everyone is viewed equally.

• From there, use whatever mechanism you want to select one employee randomly where you put their name on a flip chart. Employees then call out positive things about that person and someone writes them down on the flip chart.

At the end of the meeting, that person is presented with the flip chart. This promotes teamwork because you spent quality time together as a whole unit and it puts everyone in a good mood. This creates a natural environment of feeling good about each other and makes people reach out, which in essence creates teamwork.

Brian Gallagher, vice president of Structural Group, a Hanover-based specialty contracting firm, lists the following tips the firm uses day in and day out that helped to establish a team-oriented setting within the company.

Gallagher

• Give up control — Relinquishing control empowers the members of your team to rise to their potential. This allows you to create an environment based on shared leadership and a team structure that, by nature, is not a hierarchy structure, rather a gathering of employees to share and build success.

• Focus on opportunities — Another important element in creating a team culture is how you deal with challenges.

Encourage team members to collaborate when faced with a challenge. They should be asking "How can we improve on this?"

• Engage your team — When in a meeting, everyone should feel that their opinions are valued as equally as everyone else's opinion.

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