5 MISTAKES IN TEAM BUILDING

ActionCOACH
business coaching

5 MISTAKES IN TEAM BUILDING

D o you have a winning team?

You can't do everything in your business so having the right people behind you is vital.

Building a successful business is a multi-layered task.

Having a great product to sell is just the beginning. If you don't know how to sell that product, you don't have much of a business. More importantly, if you don't have a strong team, you are probably stuck doing way too much of the grunt work.

One of the biggest problems small business owners run into as they build their business is simply working too much IN their business rather than working ON it.

Many small business owners don't think they have the time to focus on the big picture. This is one of the biggest fallacies in the business world.

There is time to focus on the big picture. Instead they are focused on what they have to do in the day to day operations of the business.

This is a recipe for failure.

Small business owners don't go into business to get another job, they do it to realize their dreams and build their wealth. But that is impossible to do when you do every job in the business.

It is important to remember the business owner's job is to build the business.

Business owners have to develop plans to move the business forward, build revenues and grow profits. Without that kind of vision, the business will never reach its full potential.

That is why it is so important to staff your business the right way.

Hiring and training employees is not easy, but it is one of the most important things a small business does.

The employees in a business are the direct conduit to customers. They are indicative of what is right and wrong in any business.

Good employees help build a business' customer base, bad employees can destroy it, so it is imperative that each business trains their team in exactly what is expected and required from their team.

In that spirit, here are 5 mistakes businesses typically make when building their team.

1. THEY HIRE FRIENDS AND FAMILY.

Friends and family are great. Of course you love them and enjoy spending time with them, but that doesn't mean they should be working for you.

Many small businesses hire friends and family because the owner figures they are a better fit than possible employees they don't know. But guess what? Business owners that think that way are wrong.

Sure, we've all heard of the Mom and Pop store and the thought of a whole family working in a small business is almost an extension of the American Dream. But like many parts of the American Dream these days, that vision isn't reality.

The reality of having friends and family work in your small business can be a nightmare rather than a dream.

> "THE REALITY OF HAVING FRIENDS AND FAMILY WORKING YOUR SMALL BUSINESS CAN BE A NIGHTMARE RATHER THAN A DREAM."

Maybe you're close with the friends and family that work for you, but how well do they take direction?

Do they treat you like the owner and boss, or is your work relationship an extension of your personal relationship?

For too many small business owners, the answer is the latter.

Hiring those you know might be easier, but it's not better for the business.

Why?

Ask yourself, how much value do the people close to you bring to your business?

Are they knowledgeable about what you sell? Do they practice appropriate customer service techniques or does it seem like they are just filling time until the end of the day?

Normally when you hire friends and family you get a staff that doesn't look at their job as a professional responsibility. Instead, they see the job as almost a personal favor to you. They are helping you out, or, at least that's how they perceive it.

When a business owner has to fight the perception that they are doing their employees a favor by employing them, it is an uphill battle to have a successful business.

Remember, when you hire friends and family, you are doing them a favor, unless they are qualified to work in your business.

And because you must treat them like any employee, relationships can be strained, both personally and professionally.

This can lead to problems for the business owner, both in the business and their personal life.

Why take the chance?

Hire qualified people through a rigid screening process who have a professional responsibility to the job and spend time with your friends and family away from work.

2. THEY DO EVERY JOB THEY CAN.

There is a saying in business, "Saving a wage can cost a business a fortune".

Simply put, every time a business owner does a job that they can hire someone to do, they are costing themselves and their business.

The logic is simple. The business owner's job is to work ON the business, not IN it.

For all the time a business owner might spend doing jobs in the business, they are forsaking work that can be done on their business.

Remember, the job of the business owner is to build and grow the business, because if a business isn't growing it's dying.

> "A LOT OF THE TIME BUSINESS OWNERS MIGHT SAY THEY CAN'T AFFORD TO HIRE MORE PEOPLE, BUT IN REALITY THEY CAN'T AFFORD NOT TO."

There needs to be a plan to constantly grow the business and it's the business owner's job to come up with the plan and implement it.

The business owner has to oversee the entire operation, not micromanage individual duties.

A lot of the time business owners might say they can't afford to hire more people, but in reality they can't afford not to.

If a business can afford half of a possible employee's salary, they should hire them. They

will find the rest of that salary in other activities that both the business owner and new employee can do.

Each employee is an investment in the business and it is the business owner's responsibility to make sure they get a return on that investment.

Part of that return on investment is the fact that the business owner is freed up to work ON the business, not IN it.

Of course, hiring should never be rushed. If it's handled too quickly, it can lead to major issues that can severely handicap the business.

3. LACK AN EXTENSIVE SCREENING PROCESS IN HIRING.

How do you decide who to hire?

The days of a simple one on one interview after reviewing an applicant's resume are long gone.

It's too easy for applicants to lie on applications or resumes and a short one on one interview usually doesn't get deeper than the surface.

Think about it, how much do you really learn from someone after talking to them for under an hour? And if you're interviewing multiple candidates, isn't all that time spent on interviews a bit of a waste?

Remember, with the proliferation of interview advice for job seekers, almost anyone can find the right things to say in an interview, so how much does a one-on-one interview alone really tell you? Not as much as you should know.

Companies that base their hiring on outdated strategies are going to be burned by new hires more often than not.

Today there are so many ways to go about screening potential employees that a company isn't practicing due diligence if they stick to the old methods.

Hiring should be a process, not a rush to get someone. You need to take your time and learn all you can about possible employees.

One of the best ways to get to know a potential candidate is to use personality profiles. The DISC Personality Profile is a great way to find out if a candidate will be able to fit in with the rest of your team.

DISC breaks down people into four personality types, D, I S and C. Each is a specific type of personality. For instance, a person who is high in the "I" category is friendly, outgoing and has a desire to be liked. A high "D" on the other hand, is task oriented, so their goal is to get jobs done, not to be liked.

A high "S" personality is steady and can be a calming influence. They are generally liked by most people. While these can be positive traits, they also don't rush and can take time to come to decisions, which can be frustrating to some team members. Still, they generally get along with all of the other personality types

Personalities that are predominantly high "C" are information gatherers and detail oriented. A high "C" likes to be perfect at what they do. You might find that high "C" personalities stutter or take their time in choosing their words. This should not be confused with lack of intelligence. In fact, it's just the opposite.

High "C"s are very concerned with learning as much about a particular topic as possible and want to be completely understood, which plays a part in the way they choose to express themselves.

> "BASICALLY EVERYBODY FALLS INTO ONE OF THESE CATEGORIES. MANY PEOPLE HAVE TRAITS OF ONE OR MORE OF THE CATEGORIES, BUT THERE IS ALWAYS ONE PREDOMINANT TRAIT."

Basically everybody falls into one of these categories. Many people have traits of one or more of the categories, but there is always one predominant trait.

Each of these personality types brings their own strength to any company and a solid mix can help provide a pleasant, hard-working culture for any business.

When going over DISC profiles submitted by potential employees, understand that each category has people better suited for particular jobs. For instance, your company's marketing department might be made up of primarily high "I" personalities while your IT team will be mostly high "C" types.

While some of these categories, like "D" and "C" are task oriented, "I" and "S" types are typically more relationship oriented. That doesn't mean you want an office of nothing but high "D" types, but most businesses benefit from a solid mix of personalities based on how well each type will fit in with your existing team.

It takes a little bit of everything to make your company's culture truly strong and every personality type isn't suited to every job, but understanding the personal motivations of a person and what makes them tick can be extremely useful in managing a staff.

After you've had potential team members complete personality profiles, you can decide which are worth a meeting. A group interview in which a number of candidates are briefed on your company and say a little something about themselves is a good way to get to know the person behind the personality profile.

Most importantly, a group interview helps you leverage your time more effectively.

Consider this, if you wanted to interview 10 candidates for employment, it would normally take at least 10 hours to complete the task, but a group interview can be handled in an hour or two, letting you decide which candidates are better suited for the important one-on-one interview.

After you've taken steps, a one on one interview can work effectively because you already have some concept of who the candidate in front of you is.

Knowing what questions to ask is important. Your questions should be tailored to your business, but basically you really want to know how much passion a prospect has for working in your business and what their motivation is. Will they fit in with the team? Is their personality and experience suited for the position?

Remember, you don't hire the perfect employee. You hire the best prospect and turn them into a great employee through training, so once you've gotten all your questions answered and made a decision, the job has just begun.

Now, you have to ensure all your employees know the rules of the game and what is expected of them.

4. FAILING TO DEFINE YOUR CULTURE.

How does your business define who it is? How would your employees describe your business? What about your customers?

One major mistake in team building is failing to define exactly what the company's culture is. Without defining your culture it is very easy for employees to feel lost and unsure about their role and the business in general.

So how can you be sure to define your culture in a way that is easily understandable?

First, craft a vision statement. This is a clear, concise statement of where your company will be when it's finished. It should sum up what you want your business to be in the ideal.

The importance of the vision statement should not be understated because it allows everyone in the organization to know exactly what the team is working toward.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of businesses don't have vision statement, or if they do, the keep it a secret from their employees as if it's a long lost copy of the Magna Carta.

The vision statement is the long term goal of your company. It is a statement about the grand vision of what your business will be 100 years from now and because you should be proud of your vision and company, you have to share the statement with everyone associated with the company.

Remember, a vision statement is a living document, so it's critical that each member of your team identifies and accepts that vision.

Once you've completed your vision statement, you'll want to spell out what is acceptable and what isn't from your team through points of culture.

"REMEMBER, A VISION STATEMENT IS A LIVING DOCUMENT, SO IT'S CRITICAL THAT EACH MEMBER OF YOUR TEAM IDENTIFIES AND ACCEPTS THAT VISION."

These are the rules of the game that the team must play by. After all, you wouldn't play basketball on a football field, why should employees not follow the rules you've set on your field of play?

You may know what you expect from your team, but how do they know what you expect?

If you just tell them something, the message can change from employee to employee. You want a clear, unified message that everyone must follow and the best way to do that is to put it in writing and post the rules in a place that is easily accessible to all team members.

If you don't spell out exactly what is expected from your team, odds are they will not always act in the way that you expect, which can lead to bigger problems.

Don't rely on your team's common sense. Make it clear to them what is acceptable and what isn't, because if you don't, you're sure to have issues which can handicap your business.

5. LET PROBLEMS FESTER INSTEAD OF NIPPING THEM IN THE BUD.

Hopefully in your business you will spend very little time putting out fires based on personality conflicts. Utilizing the methods described earlier should help with many issues, but odds are there will always be a problem or two between employees from time to time.

Your team will spend a lot of time together, so the likelihood is that there are going to be conflicts. As the owner, it is your job to deal with any conflicts and get them resolved as quickly and positively as possible.

Like most aspects of leadership, this comes down to responsibility and accountability.

The owner is always responsible for the output of the company. If there is a conflict that is hampering the business it is always the responsibility of the business owner to resolve the conflict.

You can't wait until the warring factions have made up. That type of resolution could take too long or might never happen at all.

> "YOU CAN'T WAIT UNTIL THE WARRING FACTIONS HAVE MADE UP. THAT TYPE OF RESOLUTION COULD TAKE TOO LONG OR MIGHT NEVER HAPPEN AT ALL."

The owner has to step in and make it clear to the team members at odds that a resolution must be found for the greater good.

We spend more waking hours at work than anywhere else. We spend more time with our co-workers than anyone else, including family.

That doesn't mean we have to be best friends with our co-workers but there does have to be a certain amount of respect given and work needs to be completed regardless of personality issues.

Conflicts that aren't resolved usually end up festering and can last much longer than they should. Worst of all, unresolved conflicts can lead to lack of production which can handicap or even destroy a business.

If two employees are fighting about something, how likely are they to be able to work together as a team? Do you think they'll magically make up because they only care about getting the work done, or is it more likely that work won't get done because the two parties can't come together? You can see why it's so important that problems are dealt with as quickly as possible.

Your first priority is the health of the business. If there is a conflict, fixing it is the only thing that matters.

Just remember, the best way to ensure there won't be huge conflicts at your business is to act preemptively, which is why proper hiring techniques, training and making your expectations clear are so important.

WRAPPING IT UP

Selecting and hiring the proper team members is not to be taken lightly. Your team is a reflection of your business, which is why you need to take great care in making sure everyone you hire fits into your system.

Hiring a perfect employee is not possible, but hiring a good employee and training them to be great is.

If you stay away from hiring family, trust the team you have to do the jobs they were hired for, use an extensive hiring process, enumerate exactly what you expect from your team and nip any conflicts in the bud, you should be able to build a team that will make you proud and grow your business.