# EA Insights

**EXECUTIVE ADVANTAGE** LLC

## In This Issue

There's No WHY in Team

"Quotes"

## Quick Links

EA Home Page

About Us

News

Contact Us

Join our Mailing List

## "Quotes"

*"We are a strong team with ability to achieve strong results."*
**~Janusz Bednarski**

*"This is a very special group because they are very unselfish and everyone really understands their roles. The biggest thing with this group is just winning.... The team goals always supersede the individual goals."*
**~Joe Bline**

*"Every Web team has its own take on dividing up roles and responsibilities and implementing processes for design and development."*
**~Jesse J. Garrett**

*"It's always good to have a strong team that supports you and backs you up and is getting those results besides you so you don't feel like the entire team rests on you. I think it's a very good thing that our whole team is doing well."*
**~Lindsey Kildow**

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**Dear Friend,**

**Going Rogue**

If you're like me, you've seen the movies. There's always some exceptional, truly gifted, secret agent or athlete or soldier or dancer or whatever. However, even though that person is supposed to be a part of a group...a team..., he or she goes rogue. This great talent is out there, attempting to do it alone, and messing up royally in the process.

Enter a president or coach or commanding officer or choreographer (whoever's in charge for the particular story line). He gets it; this is tremendous ability staring him in the face. But, he also gets it that, when ability doesn't recognize its limitations and doesn't utilize the strengths around it, it becomes neutralized and useless. And, so with music poignantly rising in the background, here comes the climactic line: *There's no I in team*. Whoa, the fog clears.  The star suddenly gets it too, plays nice, team wins...the end! Applause!

Okay, that was a little dramatic, I admit. But, you get the point.

It was an interaction with a prospective client this week that brought all of this to mind and got me thinking. Yeah, there is no "*I*" in team, but all too often, there's also no "*WHY*" in team. Too often, teams are just formed. There's little or no thought about why a team approach is appropriate in a given setting, why that particular team is necessary, or why the individuals are chosen.

So, in this month's *EA Insights*, let's explore some "whys" around teams. With hope, this will help you to examine the groups that you form and/or of which you are a part, and we hope it will help you create winning teams!

All the best,

*June*

June Melvin Mickens
Executive Advantage, LLC

## There's No *WHY* in Team

### June Melvin Mickens
### Executive Advantage, LLC

One of the services we provide through *Executive Advantage* is staff development support. That means that folks call on us to facilitate retreats or to come in for in-service staff trainings to help them overcome nagging hurdles that are impacting performance or outcomes. Typically, the conversation starts something like this: *"June, we've got some issues with our people in the XYZ unit. Can you do something on teambuilding for us?"* And, I must admit; requests like these always make me smile. That's because the speaker has no idea what he or she has just asked.

Today, although there certainly is an individual component to the work people perform on a daily basis, the reality is that so much of what is accomplished in organizations occurs as a result of collaboration. So, for many people, when there's a glitch in accomplishing collective goals, or when there's friction in a group, the natural fix must involve teambuilding. Right?

Well, maybe not. The traditional notion of teambuilding usually brings to mind teambuilding activities. (Be honest. Did pictures of trust circles or kayaking adventures flash before your eyes?) Don't get me wrong. Such exercises can be helpful, and I do intersperse many of my favorites into client sessions routinely. However, without more, such activities simply skim the surface. While they may make people smile or perhaps encourage one to learn something new about a colleague, they rarely address *why* and *how* people work together. Moreover, they seldom challenge leaders to evaluate the impact of their role in creating an environment that is conducive to productive and healthy team performance.

So, in building successful teams, leaders and participants should devote time and attention to three areas and not just one. Consideration should be given to:

**Becoming familiar with organizational goals** - No team exists in a vacuum. Teams are created in the context of a larger mission. Thus, to strengthen teams and their outcomes, it's imperative that everyone understands the organization's overarching mission and its current direction.

**Becoming familiar with specific team roles** - Once there is clarity regarding organizational direction, teams should examine the specific parts they play in accomplishing those overall goals. Each team has a critical role in moving the organization forward. The team must be staffed in a way that carries out that role, with people who are skilled for the various tasks and who understand how the team fits into the plan as a whole.

**Becoming familiar with one another** - It's not until a team understands *why* it exists that it can begin to examine, and if needed adjust, *how* it exists. Team exploration may start with, but should go beyond, traditional teambuilding exercises. It also should encourage team members to get to know each other as individuals, to appreciate the knowledge and skills each person brings to the group, to build trust, to explore ways in which team members are motivated to perform, and to recognize and learn to work with the behavioral styles of team members in order to achieve results together.

So, why do I smile when I get that call for help with a team? I do so because this is a tremendous opportunity for that organization, that team collectively, and each member. They have the chance to examine the core reason for employing teams in the first place -- that is, to carry out the varied organizational responsibility areas. They have the opportunity to put the team concept into perspective in order to utilize it more appropriately and effectively. And, ultimately, they become positioned to accomplish more individually and jointly. Teambuilding, anyone?

*"They have such a strong team chemistry and such a great culture, committed to winning and to the team more than the individual."*
**~Kevin Malone**

*"The nice thing for us is we have a team that [he] has really brought together with his team-building and coaching style, and we have to be careful with the chemistry of the team[.]"*
**~Jim Rutherford**

*"Everybody wants difference makers and everybody wants great players. Sometimes, you get a great player that's not a team player and then you have a great player on your team and he might not help you win games."*
**~Mike Shanahan**

*"It turned out to be an incredible team-building exercise, where everyone was contributing to a larger company initiative, working with people they would not work with ordinarily."*
**~Mike Soltys**

*"The biggest plus for me is I'm coming into a situation where they already have a good team. They're just adding a good player. I'm going to be surrounded with talent. I'm not going to feel like it's my job to win games. I just have to do my part."*
**~Ricky Williams**

## About Executive Advantage

At *Executive Advantage*, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

To learn more about *Executive Advantage*, contact us **online** or at **(301) 280-5950**.

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