Characteristics of Team Culture

An Overview

When bringing together a team and creating a culture for that team, there are some overarching characteristics to consider. These common features of a team culture can take on a variety of shapes, so it is important to understand each one separately. You must also consider how the characteristics will influence each other.

- **Purpose.** Teams must have a common purpose. You should have this clearly established before recruiting any team members. Team members must understand and feel committed to this purpose if they are going to engage productively.

- **Success.** Team members must have a shared vision of what success will look like. This is important as everyone needs to be on the same page as to what the desired outcomes will look like.

- **Power structure.** If you don't want to have team members vying for power or challenging each other's power, the power structure must be clearly identified and communicated from the start. How will decisions be made and who sets the direction?

- **Communication tools and flow.** Outline how the team will communicate and which technology tools will be used. Where does the flow of communication start and end? Be specific about these expectations.

- **Contribution.** Each team member needs to know what and how they are expected to contribute. You need to clearly define everyone's role and what is expected of them on this team. Think back to your purpose and make sure you have the appropriate roles that will support that purpose.

- **Recognition.** You need to have an intentional plan for how you will acknowledge both individual contributions and team achievements. Meaningful recognition goes a long way in sustaining motivation for continued effort.

- **Environment.** You need to take into consideration the environment your team will be working in. Will interactions be in-person, through conference calls, video conference, or other? How much will be group work and how much will be individual? Is this team virtual, physical, or mixed? Make sure the expectations you set will function effectively in the environment.

Too often leaders leave the development of culture to chance and expect that it will happen organically. To a certain degree it can. But if you want a high functioning, productive team where team members are engaged and effectively working together, you need to provide the foundation for that culture. It is your responsibility as a leader to create the space where success can thrive.