

Leadership

Building Cohesiveness, Be a Teacher, Not a Trainer

by AJ Powell | 1 Comment | 5 min read

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It is not difficult to imagine that most high performance teams share many of the same aspects. Individuals are highly self-motivated, highly dedicated, and highly trained, and together, they collectively bond and form a top-notch cohesive unit. Of the many aspects of teamwork development (Technical, Educational, and Interpersonal), often focuses are shifted squarely within two – Technical and Educational – leaving many leaders to wonder how to develop the interpersonal side of things.



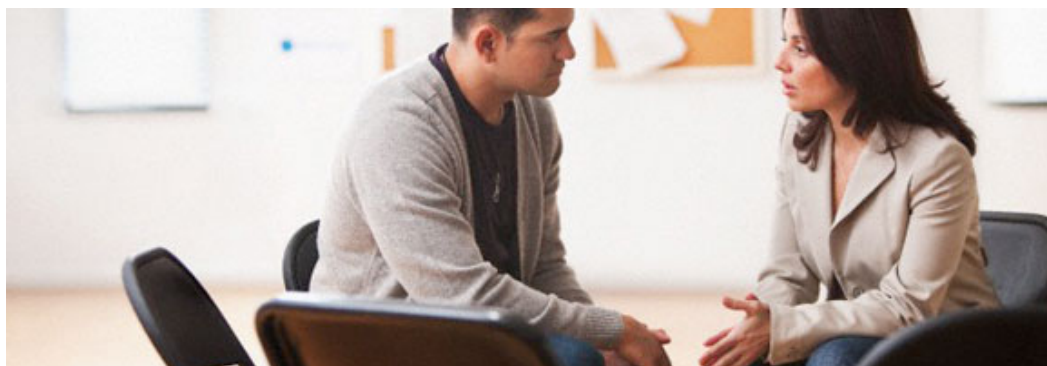
Building cohesiveness within a team should – rightfully so – be thought of as one of those chief aspects at the top of every leaders list. Real leadership should always encompass a “complete” approach, focusing on, not just the skills building (or professional skills) of an individual team member(s), but also must include personal development of individuals as well. It is well-known that a person’s personal issues can very well turn into professional problems, and that even the best trained team members problems – or lack of trust in bringing them to the table – can destroy a team from the inside out. Cohesive units are those who, not only work well with and compliment each other technically, but more so those whose members trust and respect each other, so why would we leave a team members personal life, issues, or problems out of our focus?

Focusing only on the skills of the individual does not make you a leader, it makes you a manager, a trainer. And since the two primary responsibilities of all leaders are both the accomplishment of the mission, as well as the welfare of their team members, it makes sense to avoid becoming a trainer, as we should strive to become teachers instead. Trainers are the Managers of the Educational World, they focus on specific areas, leaving much to the wayside, and a vast amount of untapped potential behind with it. They will tell you what to think, but not how, when in fact, leadership development, and teamwork development, are both all about the “How”. No, leaders should not be trainers, they should be teachers, which encompasses coaching, mentoring, and guidance along side with the principles and methods of instruction.



Why is this so important? Why must we be teachers and not trainers? It is important because if we are to ever create a cohesive team, focusing on only the professional side of things deep-sixes the development of the majority of the teams potential. Indeed, technical skills are required for any job, but those can be taught, refined and honed at any time, or are already on a continuous basis. Yet the majority of what makes a team a “Great Team”, a cohesive unit, is left up to the interpersonal side of things. Just how well does your team get along? Do you know your team members families? Do you know if they are experiencing problems in any areas? Do your team members trust and respect each other? When was the last time you really listened to

their concerns, or made serious efforts to address them? Do you encourage after hours organizational activities? Are the families involved, and if not, have you made real efforts to get them involved?



The most cohesive units are often those whose members trust, respect, and know each other, both professionally as well as personally. As leaders, it is our job to assure our teams are taken care of so that they can perform at their best. We need to place them in the best possible positions and situations so they are able to accomplish the mission. We can achieve these things by exerting our influences not through a vertically structured chain of command, but laterally, across the organization, at an equal level on par with each member of the team as well as with the team as a whole. If we are teachers, then we are coaching, mentoring, and guiding to build our team members into becoming future leaders as well. It is when we teach, mentor, coach, and guide our team members towards leadership development (the development of the “Self”, both personally as well as professionally) themselves – taking on a “total”, or “complete” aspect approach – that we see the bonds of cohesiveness strengthened, and improved capabilities of the team as a whole become more apparent.



Simply by leading through teaching, are we able to complete both tasks – the accomplishment of the mission, and the welfare of the team – at once. Thus we can simplify our jobs as leaders while yet still reinforcing unit cohesiveness – the bonds of comradeship.

SOUND OFF!

What are **YOUR** thoughts? We WANT to hear from you!

In what ways do you think you might have acted simply like a trainer in the past? In what ways do you think your leadership capability could improve by learning to be a teacher instead? Can you think of any examples where the acts of coaching, mentoring, and guiding might improve a leadership experience? How about an organizational experience? What about the overall quality of a team or its teamwork?

Take a few moments to think critically about these questions and collect your intelligent, reasoned thoughts, then let us know what you think in the **comments below!**

Open discussion helps everyone learn and grow.

cohesiveness Effective Leadership Instruction Instructor Leadership Leadership Development Teaching Team Teamwork Training

About the author



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AJ is a retired U.S. Army NCO who served in both the U.S. Navy and U.S. Army. He is a combat veteran, and has participated in contingency operations around the world. AJ is the Owner of Veteran Leadership Solutions, the Founder and Editor in Chief of The Warfighter Journal, and is a published Sociological Analyst, Researcher, Guest Lecturer, and Public Speaker. He is a graduate of Pennsylvania State University with a focus on Sociology and a science degree in Organizational Leadership, and is published in the field of sociology. AJ is an inductive analyst; public figure; researcher/writer; aviator; a certified advanced operational diver; professional instructor, trainer, mentor, and adviser; snowboarder; motorcycle rider; world traveler; he enjoys long distance endurance events, and much more.