
Value-Added Selling Is A Team Sport

by TOM REILLY



Value-added organizations believe that serving customers is a team sport. Some teams succeed and others fail. Successful teams offer value-added solutions that satisfy customers' needs while contributing to their company's profitability. These results-oriented work groups offer team members the opportunity to feel like they are an important part of something bigger than themselves.

Teams fail when selfishness or personal interests overshadow the team's efforts. Hoarding vital information weakens the team spirit and its effectiveness. Selfishness is also a problem when one team member is more focused on creating a job for himself than cooperating with the team to serve customers better.

Teams fail when there's active or passive sabotaging of their efforts. Passive sabotaging is letting others fail when you could step in to help. This sin of omission hurts the team spirit and efforts. Active sabotaging is creating barriers that prevent someone from doing the kind of job they can do.

Teams fail when team members sharp-shoot or discount another's ideas. It's easy to criticize another

person's idea. It's an act of teamwork to support it. You're either building up your teammates or breaking them down.

Attributing motives to another person's behavior is a reason teams fail. It's difficult to know what's in another's heart. Second-guessing a team member's motivation is a waste of your energy and it hurts the team dynamic. It's a more positive use of energy to think well of teammates and assign benign motives to their efforts.

Why Teams Fail

Teams fail because of mission creep. Mission creep is losing sight of the mission. "Why are we really doing this?" When you find your team wandering aimlessly trying to get back on track, you're experiencing mission creep. You've lost your focus. The primary mission of most businesses is to make a difference for the customers, not just a deal. When you lose sight of the mission to bring maximum value to the customer, mission creep has set in.

Teams also fail because of infrastructure problems. If you lack the resources, the systems, or the

time to perform your job the way it should be done, your team will fail. Even successful teams struggle at times. How they deal with the struggles, the obstacles, and the temporary detours determines whether or not they will be successful in their efforts. When one team member fails, the team is weakened. You are only as strong as your weakest teammate. How you support each other defines the character of your team.

On a more positive note, teams succeed under these conditions. First, there must be mission clarity. Everyone on the team must understand the mission, what's expected of them, and be committed to that mission. It is management's responsibility to clearly articulate to employees their mission.

Balancing the Load

Teams work when there's balanced participation by everyone on the team. The failure of one person on the team to pull his load means that others must pick up the slack. When all team members pull together, it is a powerful source of energy.

When everyone shares in the decision process they contribute their ideas to the team. They are an important part of the process. It may not result in a committee decision, but everyone has input on that decision. This builds commitment to the ultimate decision.

Teams work well when there are clearly defined roles utilizing everyone's strengths. The collective, unique strengths of the team members are what make the team concept so powerful. "We" is greater than "me."

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Every team must have a leader. This is someone who can make the tough calls. Typically, it's a team member that everyone respects. The team leader influences the actions of the team. Team leaders help others see what's possible.

Checking Egos at the Door

There must be a team attitude or a team environment. This means that individual team members must be willing to subordinate their egos for the greater good of serving their customers. Part of the team attitude is a problem-solving environment. This is where you focus on fixing the problem, not the blame.

Teams work well when there's a mutual trust and respect for other team members. Trust is the currency of all great relationships. Respecting fellow team members builds this trust. When people trust each other, like each other, and want to work together, they figure out the rest.

Frank, open communication among team members is critical for the team's success. Team members must feel that they can speak openly to other team members. If there's a problem, they must discuss it. The team leader sets the tone for this openness.

Teams work well when management provides clear access to information. Everyone involved

must share information with peers. There's no holding back. Share openly. It's the synergy of one team member working selflessly with another team member toward a common goal that captures the spirit of teamwork.

Strong teams are made up of strong team members led by a strong leader. The collective strength of the team is a powerful force. This strength comes from a clarity and commitment to mission; mutual respect and support; and a balanced participation built around a simple principle — everyone has value. This results in a powerful and profound dynamic force: "we" is greater than "me." Teams succeed or fail on the backs of team members. As a value-added team member, your efforts influence the success of your team.

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