Together Everyone Achieves …

The word "team" is one of the most abused words that I hear used in corporate environments

Teams are, apparently, everywhere; the design team, the product development team, the sales team, the project team, the management team, the leadership team ….. and, unfortunately, Together Everyone Achieves More is more often than not, Together Everyone Achieves Miserably.

At best these are, "*groups masquerading as teams*", and in the worse cases they are simply collections of individuals reporting to the same person; very few of them have a collective objective (or deliverable) and there is little interdependence between the team members.

Just recently I was asked by a VP if I was available for a teambuilding event for his team of senior managers; he felt that they needed to support each other more and work together more effectively.

When I asked what the team actually does together, what's their reason for being a team; the answer was, "they are my direct reports"

The team had very few of the commonly accepted team "descriptors"; and, when it came to Vision, Mission, Purpose and Values; I realised I had gone too far.

This was my third exchange of this kind this year.

I find it hard to understand that with all that has been written about teams, with all the models of team development, with all the frameworks of team effectiveness, with all the guidelines for team efficiency; that so few leaders actually apply it to their teams.

Teams are created, at least in the corporate world, for a need, for a reason. Something has to be achieved that needs the integration of different technical & human competencies; the something can't be achieved by simply "summing up individual contributions".

Teams need to be both efficient & effective when working together; what I call E^2 teams.

Being efficient is all about organisation, structuring, objectives, planning, milestones, deadlines, deliverables, validation ……. and, being effective is all about sharing, supporting, listening, trust, understanding, cohesion, empathy ……

Some teams tend to overconcentrate on being efficient and become a kind of productive "lean & mean" team – stuff gets done but the "ambiance" often leaves a lot to be desired.

Some teams tend to overconcentrate on being effective and become a kind of social "caring & sharing" team – a good ambiance but not a lot gets done.

And, of course, some teams manage to integrate both aspects and become truly performing teams; achieving their tasks and ensuring everyone's wellbeing.

The journey from focus on individual objectives to the integration of individual and collective objectives, is not easy.

The journey from each person doing their own thing to interdependency, is not easy.

The journey from trusting oneself to trusting the others, is not easy.

The journey from low involvement to beyond the call of duty involvement, is not easy.

The journey from “I” to “WE”, is not easy.

People are not machines; they can’t be programmed to work together; even when the team is created for a clear reason it will take time for the team dynamics to ensure minimum dysfunctionality within the team.

The journey from Groupthink to Teamthink is not easy, but it it is worth it!

I’ve been fortunate in my professional life to have been part of (and led) a number of, what I consider to be high performing teams, and, once you have been there, you don’t want to be anywhere else.

There is a wealth of extremely practical and down to earth advice out there – USE IT!