



In this issue:

- COMMON TEAM OBSTACLES
- BUST PROOFING YOUR BUSINESS
- COOKING UP GREAT TEAMS
- INVITATIONS
- INTRODUCTIONS
- FREE STUFF

the "what you need to know to improve your business" newsletter. Fall 2008

5 Obstacles To Team Success

By Duncan Brodie

Teams like individuals, encounter a number of obstacles. So what are 5 common obstacles to team success?

Obstacle 1: Lack of direction

Team success depends on everyone having clarity about what they are trying to achieve. Where there is a lack of clarity on the direction of the team, there is a major obstacle to achievement. Make sure that the team has a clearly defined goal.

Obstacle 2: Unequal commitment to team performance

Teams need to be collectively committed to performance. Sometimes there will be individuals who are highly committed while there may be others who are passively committed. In other words they say the right things but when it comes to action, there is a disconnect. Conditions need to be created that encourages equal commitment to team performance and results.

Obstacle 3: Major skills gaps

Few teams start off with every required skill in place. If these skills gaps are not addressed, then ultimately performance will be less than optimal. If you want optimal performance from the team, make sure that skills gaps are addressed.

Obstacle 4: Hostility

Healthy conflict and constructive challenge are vital ingredients in any successful team. Hostility on the other hand can stop a team ever getting started or if does drain all of the energies of the team. Create a space to clear hostility by having it voiced then focus on creating healthy conflict and constructive challenge.

Obstacle 5: Leadership skills gaps

It is easy to fall into the trap of believing that just because someone is leading a team they have all of the necessary skills. All team leaders will have areas where they excel and areas where they struggle a bit more. To address this, other team members need to be encouraged to fill the skills gaps.



Just like individuals, teams face challenges and obstacles. What obstacles are getting in the way of your teams success and what are you doing about them? **R**

Duncan Brodie of *Goals and Achievements (G&A)* works with individuals, teams and organizations in the UK to develop their management and leadership capability.

With 25 years business experience in a range of sectors, he understands first hand the real challenges of managing and leading in the demanding business world.

Sign up for Duncan's free e-course and newsletter at: www.goalsandachievements.co.uk

BUST PROOFING

By Tim Sweet

While Canada might not be facing a full-blown recession, the boom is sputtering and a slow down is on the horizon. Before things get tough, now is the time to ready your business.

Don't panic, but don't be lulled into a sense of false security by politicians and wishful thinkers who live in a constant state of denial. Change is inevitable, and having a lean, agile business will make it easier to handle.

Here are 12 steps to help bust-proof any business:

1) Plan for the worst: Assume your revenues dropped 15-20 percent – what changes will you make? It's better to know now what you'll do, so you're not scrambling later.

2) Become more sensitive to changes: Review the financials more frequently and be sure to measure, track and graph the results so you can see negative trends.

3) Improve measures and metrics: Identify leading indicators of change, lead with facts and be proactive.

4) Get lean: Every operation in the business, must be earning its salt. Expect lean behavior from your Inventory, Supply Chain, Customer Service, Administration and Human Resources departments.

5) Stop participating in un-profitable arrangements: Don't subsidize someone else's failing business. If that sounds too heartless, offer a little guidance to help them improve. If they seem beyond your help, introduce them to your competition. (Landers, *BusinessWeek.com*, Oct./Nov., 2007)



6) Keep customers closer: Open a dialog with your customers to discuss what is happening and face challenges together. Lower the costs of doing business and identify new opportunities and markets.

7) Get ready to battle it out: As the market shrinks there are going to be fewer customers to share, and survival will depend on market share. Throw out any notions that there are enough customers to go around and get aggressive.

8) Turn your attention from hiring to keeping the right employees: Across Western Canada the boom has made it an employee's market. Focus on the "cream of the crop" in your organization and plan to keep them. Keep your eye out for the best workers and managers being laid off by failing competitors.

9) Right-size your organization: Trim the staff who don't want to be there, and ditch the "warm bodies" that you hired just to get through the boom. Tough times mean "all hands on deck," so, be frank about your expectations. Long-term employees not up for the challenge may want early retirement or a reference. But don't focus on age: those who want to be there should be embraced. Young employees will have new energy and fresh perspective, senior employees will have been through it all before, making their skills and experience more valuable than ever.

10) Innovate: Dream up a new offering that can be easily delivered. Target new customers and markets and keep things fresh. Not only can this bring in more business, but challenge and creativity will create a fresh, exciting environment.

11) Curb personal spending, and limit visible executive perks: Even if you are sitting pretty, spending less personally will build discipline and keep the situation real for you at home. Talk to your executives and top managers about the image they portray. Opt for the lake, not the Caribbean, when booking the next retreat. When you're asking everyone to keep it lean, now is not the time to be buying new vehicles and flaunting wealth. It's a "we're in this together" mindset, and there can be no mixed messages.

12) Spend Less-Get More: Your brand has to look like a superstar in the eyes of the customer. Give employees a crash course in being courteous... a smile, a handshake, saying thank you and an ironed shirt go a long way while your competition is complaining to the customer about how rough times are. If your market is local, get active in the community: let the Scouts use your parking lot for a bottle drive, judge a 4 H competition, sponsor local events. These little things make a bigger impact than spending heaps of cash on a billboard at a "National League" arena and they create a reason to "feel good" for staff. R

Sources:

Klien, Karen E. "Recession Proofing Your Business" *Business Week* 30 Jan. 2008.

Vickers, Frank "Recession Proofing Your Business", Frank Vickers, 2006

check out our improved website:
WWW.REVOLVECONSULTING.COM

COOKING FOR GREAT TEAMS

Revolution's regular food column features easy "team building" meals that blow the buns off a hotdog party. Get a few volunteers (both frontline and management), dust off the ghetto blaster and put-on a free lunch for staff. The result is an inexpensive and memorable event that builds relationships.

ELOTES *ASADOS* (roast corn)

Elotes (*Eh-LOH-tess*) are a common street food throughout Latin America. This corn on a stick is boiled, roast or grilled. What makes Elotes great for groups is the fact that they can be easily prepared, held hot until everyone is served and can be enjoyed standing up. This inexpensive meal is not only delicious to the North American palate but offers a real cultural experience. It takes advantage of the great corn grown here in Western Canada on sale from the backs of trucks everywhere. Don't be surprised if after you try it, it becomes your favorite way to serve corn at home.



HERE'S WHAT YOU'LL NEED FOR 60 PEOPLE:

- 100-120 ears of good local corn (look for Taber or Jensen's Trucks, or a local producer at a farmers market)
- 1 950g jar of REAL mayonnaise (I like the superstore NN brand, because it has more yolk, Don't use Miracle Whip!)
- 2 750g containers of good sour cream (the best I've found is Olympic Premium, 14% MF)
- 6 limes (pick smooth heavy fruit, don't use plastic limes)
- 2 tsp of Salt

FOR THE CONDIMENT TABLE

- Chili Powder (Make sure it is a FRESH bag or shaker, I like to by from the 'Indian Cuisine' section at the supermarket, as these inventories turn more frequently)
- Hot Sauce (an assortment of your favorites)

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Paper plates (cheap and flexible), Napkins, Toothpicks
- Extra heavy skewers (almost pencil thickness) or bamboo chopsticks (1 per cob)
- Propane Picnic burner (commonly known as turkey fryers.) Check with employees (someone usually owns one of these) or buy from Canadian Tire or Wal-Mart
- A really, really big pot (often sold with the burner)
- A BBQ, coal or gas, pre heated and set low
- Full propane tanks for picnic burner and BBQ
- 2 Baking sheets or big roasting pans to hold the corn.
- A butchers block or stout table.
- Bowl, Whisk, Rubber Spatula
- Stereo (and Latin American music perhaps?)
- Garbage Cans

METHOD:

Plan on 4-6 volunteers

2 Hours before the event:

- Get the water boiling with the pot 2/3 full. Add enough salt to make the water taste like tears.
- Husk all the corn ahead of time, being careful to remove the silk.
- Make the dressing: Juice the limes, removing the pulp and seeds. Mix the juice with all the mayo, sour cream and 2 tsp of salt. **DON'T ADD ANY CHILLI OR HOT SAUCE.** Retain the containers. Blend completely with the whisk. Pour back into the empty containers (You'll use these for dipping the corn). Refrigerate until needed.

½ Hour before event

- Start boiling the corn. The water should be a rolling boil when the corn goes in, and completely cover the corn. Get it in as fast as possible, as you want it to cook evenly.
- Light the BBQ, pre heat at medium, then set to low. Set the condiment table with spices, sauces, napkins and toothpicks.
- After 10 minutes since the last piece went in the water, remove all the corn and stack tightly on the cookie sheets or roasting pans
- Get water boiling, add water if necessary, and Add next batch of corn to the water and repeat
- Start to push the skewers into the end of the cobs. Holding the corn with a clean dry towel or oven mitt and use the cob as hammer. Drive 1/3 of the skewer into the center the corn by striking it against a solid surface.

10 Minutes before the event:

- Put corn on grill and slowly turn to toast and keep warm.

When the first employee arrives

- Dip the corn into one a container of dressing covering the corn almost completely. Let the excess run back into the container. Don't waste it.
- Put on a plate, and show the guest where the chili powders are (which they can add themselves based on taste and heat preference).

TURN UP THE MUSIC AND HAVE A GREAT TIME!





"Brown In Hand", oil on canvas by Derek DeYoung
See more of Derek's fantastic work at CanvasFish.com

INVITATION:

Some companies golf...
We fish.

- We would like to take you fly-fishing sometime soon
- Expert or trying something new, you'll have a great time
- We guarantee: no pitching, no pressure, just fun.

For more information: 1 (877) LEAN BIZ
fishing@revolveconsulting.com

REVOLVE would like to introduce you
our new associate consultant.

Eduardo Moncada, BSc, Eng.

Eduardo has managed portfolios for companies such as FedEx, McDonalds Corp., Procter and Gamble and SNC Lavalin. His specialties include Transportation, Logistics and Inventory Control. He has trained with Toyota in Total Productive Maintenance, and has expertise in lean manufacturing, construction, purchasing, HACCP, GMP's and more.

Eduardo is an experienced project manager, skilled at enrolling others and building strong improvement teams. Eduardo speaks English, Spanish, and French making him a great asset to clients with international operations or supply chains. He has worked for clients in the Middle East, Asia, Europe, North and South America.

Revolve is thrilled to offer its clients the world-class experience Eduardo brings to our projects.

Read more about our associates at:
revolveconsulting.com > [our story](#)

Here's what we're working on for the
Winter Edition of the REVOLUTION:

- Revisiting Your Purpose / Proposition
- Talking Lean, Walking Lean
- How To Say Thank You At Christmas
- And Much More

FREE STUFF on the Web:

Our "Action Plan" template
is a simple document that
can help teams keep track
of project deliverables.

The format provides a
record of the Who, What,
Where and When for tasks.

This document can help
team members meet
commitments and maintain
momentum.

Get it at: revolveconsulting.com > [tools and freebies](#)

If you would like to opt-out of future issues,
send an email with "OPT OUT" in the subject to
newsletter@revolveconsulting.com

If you like what you see, and you think others
will benefit, please forward it to your friends,
family and colleagues.

Questions? Comments? Ideas?
Email: info@revolveconsulting.com
Toll Free: 1 (877) Lean Biz
Fax: 1 (403) 241-5876
Sign-up at www.revolveconsulting.com

