

## Business Psychology

By ALAN ETHAN DEZEN

## The great team disguise

*How to transform the group masquerading as a team into an actual team*

Teaming is very much in vogue as the ultimate productivity agent. Many business leaders think that forming a team is nothing more than renaming a group as a team. Once they're a "team," they believe, all of the strength of this powerful work unit is bestowed miraculously upon them as if it was a rite of spring. And they focus on what *has been* accomplished rather than on what *could be* accomplished.

Such complacency is reinforced by a fear of dealing with the major stumbling block that prevents a group from developing into a true team: dealing with conflict.

Company G had recently gone through a downsizing. Its executives sought consultation regarding low productivity from a newly formed multidisciplinary team that had been given the mission of developing a product and bringing it to market. Constant fighting, unsettled turf wars, and unproductive cliques were the underlying causes for this group's poor productivity.

What this group was trying to tell its manager indirectly was that it needed help to resolve those differences so that new group rules could be established. And the rules needed to blend the unique talents and skills of each group member. Until the group dealt with the natural conflict inherent in the combining of many talented people, it would never become a team.

What that group needed to understand is that the transformation into a team requires a four-stage process which I define as follows: form, storm, norm and perform.

The first two stages will occur naturally without

outside interference. All you need to do is put a group of people together, and they naturally will move to the storm stage. The problem is getting past what I call the "conflict-resolution boundary" between the second and third stages.

Most managers avoid the inherent normal conflict that results when a group tries to become a team. Unfortunately, most managers prefer the status quo (what has been accomplished), which blocks the group from developing into a team.

Unless a group deals actively with a conflict, it will never be able to overcome it to form the operating rules necessary to become a high-performance team that focuses on what could be accomplished.

Make no mistake—crossing that conflict-resolution boundary is not for the faint of heart. It requires companies to move outside their comfort zones in new and exciting—yet uncomfortable—ways. In today's highly competitive marketplace, becoming a team is essential.

Managers do things right. Leaders do the right thing. Are you ready to *lead* your group to becoming a team? **SDN**



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