Cultivating high-performing teams for hard-core business results

After hitting twenty straight points, basketball super-star, Michael Jordan, comes off the court and Coach Tex Winter comments to Michael, that there is no "I" in team. Michael responds, "There's no "I" in "Team" but there's an "I" in "Win.""

This story presents an interesting consideration for teams. Is there an "I" in teams, whether on the basketball court, athletic field, in our workplaces, or whatever environment that calls for teams? What is the purpose of forming a team? Research suggests that the best teams maintain the "I" while also being a "we."

Whether on the athletic field, in the workplace, or in other contexts, developing high-performing teams is critical to success. Teams and committees are the basic work units of organizations.

Focus, characteristics, and qualities of high-performing teams

- Results oriented; focus on getting the job done
- Trust between and among the team
- Clear goals, expectations, and the resources to meet them.
- Deals with differences and conflict in healthy, mature ways.
- Communicates and collaborates effectively and often.

- Knows and leverages their strengths for outcomes, while managing around their weaknesses.
- Engaged and committed to quality.
- Knows how to honor "I" while also being "we."
- Has common values and norms.
- Is more than the sum of its individual parts. The team can do things together that it cannot accomplish apart.

Team performance can be the difference between success and failure, high achievement and no achievement, winning and losing, exceeding goals and benchmarks and falling short of them.

Questions to ponder:
- How is your leadership of the team inviting and modeling high-performance?
- What about your leadership might be counterproductive to high performance for your team?
- What are your team's strengths and how are you naming, claiming, and leveraging them for results? What are the weaknesses they need to manage around?
- How do you acknowledge the "I" and the "we" in productive ways? Is there an "I" and "we" in your team? Do you spell team with "I"?
- How do you nurture and build trust on your team and in your organization?

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