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This article is based on research from The War for Talent by McKinsey & Co. and their research on high-performing executive teams, the work of Warren Bennis, and research from Senn-Delaney

Executive Leadership TEAMS

5 Requirements for Breakthrough Impact

By Richard Greenberg, The BreakThru Alliance

“None of us is as smart as all of us.”

The senior leaders of most major corporations are usually highly proficient executives who excel at running their individual business units or functions. They may not, however, work as well together to guide the overall running of the organization. In our society leadership is too often seen as an inherently individual phenomenon. And yet, we can all recognize that cooperation and collaboration grow more important every day—especially executive team collaboration.

The single most important condition to create a successful performance-focused organization is the active involvement of executives acting as a team. If those at the top are not energetic leaders of and for the entire enterprise, change will not take place, strategy will not be implemented, and the oppor-

tunity for breakthrough performance will be missed.

This article will help senior leaders assess their team and identify five requirements for a high-performing executive leadership team. By “executive leadership team” we simply mean: The senior leadership and those one or two levels below the CEO who work together to maximize the value of the total enterprise. That includes making decisions for the greater good, being mutually supportive, and aligning around key strategies and initiatives so they understand them, own them, and speak with one voice to the organization.

Leaders at the top of the company cast a leadership shadow that sets the example for the entire organization to follow. Without good teaming skills at the top,

the organization rarely reaches its full potential. Without alignment at the top that is clear and visible to the entire organization, things aren't executed as well down the line.

QUICK LOOK

- The single most important condition to create a successful performance-focused organization is the active involvement of executives acting as a team.
- This article will help senior leaders assess their team and identify five requirements for a high-performing executive leadership team.
- Leaders at the top of the company cast a leadership shadow that sets the example for the entire organization to follow.
- To have top executives “team” in effective ways requires making a focused effort to increase openness, align on a common vision, build trust, and understand one another's styles and points of view.

What do these senior teams need to be aligned on? Some specific items include:

- How do we best use shared services?
- How can business units work together to gain any synergy or to better serve customers?
- How can we communicate common and aligned messages into the organization?
- How can we collectively shape the culture to best execute our strategies?
- How can we align the organization around our company's vision, mission, and values?

To have top executives “team” in effective ways requires making a focused effort to increase openness, align on a common vision, build trust, and understand one another’s styles and points of view.

This is best achieved by bringing the team together in a well-designed development process to shift ingrained habits. It will increase executive alignment, openness and trust, bond the team, and positively impact organization culture. The following outlines a simple test from this development process to help leaders determine the answer to this question: How are we doing as a team right now?

Senior teams who take the time to work on becoming even better teams are able to tackle strategic issues with focus and alignment, and in so doing, achieve even better results for their organization while creating a stronger culture overall. Performance driven cultures typically have two things going for them: 1) great executives and 2) great executives who exist in a fertile relationship with a great leadership team. In these creative alliances, the leader and the team are able to achieve something together that neither could achieve alone.



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Take the Test!	RATING		
	Often	Seldom	Never
1. Senior team members make decisions for the greater good of the organization rather than for their own self interest	5	3	1
2. Senior team members openly discuss the important issues in meetings	5	3	1
3. When a decision is made in a senior team meeting, all members own the decision as theirs and fully support it outside the meeting room	5	3	1
4. Senior team members fully participate in company initiatives	5	3	1
5. Senior team members know and live their own values and the values the organization stands for	5	3	1