

# 6 Mistakes when Leading Teams

Leading teams can be fraught with difficulties. Here are just a few of the most common ones.

## 1. Believing your whole team understands and accepts the team goals.

**Issue:** When did you last check that your team understood the overall team objectives and their role within that? Teams are made up of individuals and unless all the individuals are on board with the basic messages then there will always be forces pulling the team in different directions.

**Next step:** Set up meetings with individuals, groups, whole teams and ask them what they believe their goals to be.

## 2. Believing team name does not make a difference.

**Issue:** Your name is part of your identity. So it is with teams. Call a team Complaints Dept and they will. Teams need to be branded in a way that they find acceptable and ideally presents a positive image to the people they have to deal with outside the team.

**Next step:** Conduct a team branding exercise. Ask about perceptions of the team as it stands and what needs to be change. Make the team and brand an aspirational place to work.

## 3. Allowing the latest person to join the team to be trained by the last person to join.

**Issue:** Ever heard of Chinese whispers? Everyone puts their own interpretation on instructions and if training is conducted by someone different each time, then the messages on how to do jobs well is likely to get diluted. Training someone to do their job well needs to be done by someone who understands the job objectives and the purpose of the team. Not paying attention to the messages that people are receiving in the early days in the job means that bad practice gets spread around and become entrenched.

**Next step:** Always be involved in some aspects of the training and make training part of someone's job description.

## 4. Teams need to be controlled

**Issue:** High performing teams have a clear sense of direction, but they do not need to be controlled. There needs to be to be regular check points but not to the extent that they get in the way of the teams' performance.

**Next step:** Set fair performance targets for the team with a way of measuring and rewarding tasks that get done well.



## 5. Teams that appear alright on the surface are OK.

**Issue:** All good leaders should be aware of any underlying problems in their teams and look for ways to tackle them before they become a major issue. Ignoring problems very often means that they will just fester under the surface and inhibit a team's progress.

**Next step:** Build trust with your team, one at a time if necessary. Team members don't necessarily have to like each other, but they do need to respect each other. Make sure respect is one of your teams' values.

## 6. The leader knows better than the team.

**Issue:** Great team leaders know when to listen to their team. Team members are doing the job day in and day out and their opinions are vital to the success of the teams' objectives. As team leader you need to take on board members views and where appropriate act on them.

**Next step:** Set up a listening post – some form of process for allowing your team to pass back vital bits of information about the operation, project, product, customers – whatever - so that you can act on it.