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Fundamentals of Self-directed Teams

Agenda

- Self-directed snapshot
- The need for autonomy
 - Trust broken out
 - Accountability broken out
- How to do it
- Issues and Challenges
- How to Celebrate
- Critical professional skills self-directed team members must have

Section One

Self-directed teams

Definition of Self-directed

1. Ability of a system to spontaneously arrange its components or elements in a purposeful (non-random) manner, under appropriate conditions but without the help of an external agency. It is as if the system knows how to 'do its own thing.' Many natural systems such as cells, chemical compounds, galaxies, organisms and planets show this property.
2. Animal and human communities too display self direction: in every group a member emerges as the leader (who establishes order and rules) and everybody else follows him or her, usually willingly

Source: BusinessDictionary.com

“ Why do human communities tend towards a leader?

How does this impact Self-direction and the value it provides?

Zappos example, Holacracy push and attrition impact

Self-directed teams



What is it in reality

- A way to organize a group
- Allows decision making / problem solving to happen at the source of the work
- Increases empowerment which should increase productivity and morale
- Is a significant disruption to traditional management
- Some call it Holacracy

Self-directed... Being an adult?

- A leader must consider the team a group of adults
(Going to work to see the “kids” construct must go away)
- What does it mean to be “treated like an adult”
- Acting like an adult
 - Adult definition
 - N: One who has attained maturity or legal age
 - Adj: Fully developed and mature
 - Adulthood
 - The state (responsibility) of a person who has attained maturity
- **All ties to autonomy**

Section Two

Requirements to be self-directed

1. Autonomy
2. Trust
3. Accountability

Definition of autonomy

Level 1

- Independence or freedom, as of the will of one's actions: the autonomy of the individual

Level 2

- The condition of being autonomous, self-governing, or the right of self-government; independence

- Entire basis of the Self-directed team

How is autonomy driven, two-way street?

- Shared guiding principals
- Common goals
- Communication
- Trust and accountability
- Self-esteem

Great resource

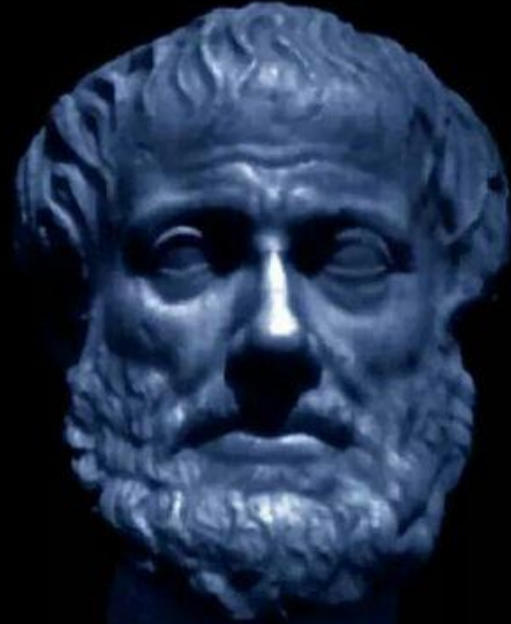
ZAPP! The Lighting of Empowerment:

How to Improve Productivity, Quality and Employee Satisfaction (Byham & Cox ISBN 10:0679400427)

Responsibility of autonomy; employer

- Develop and adhere to core values
 - Corporate and department level
- Align core values to personnel reviews
- Develop corporate and department goals
 - **Realistic** goals
- Communicate goal status, good or bad
- Do what you say
- Provide support and guidance, knock down barriers don't create them
 - Coaching vs. micro-management
 - Empowerment vs. control
- The death of agile would come at the hands of the middle manager

Responsibility of employee: Understand and Believe



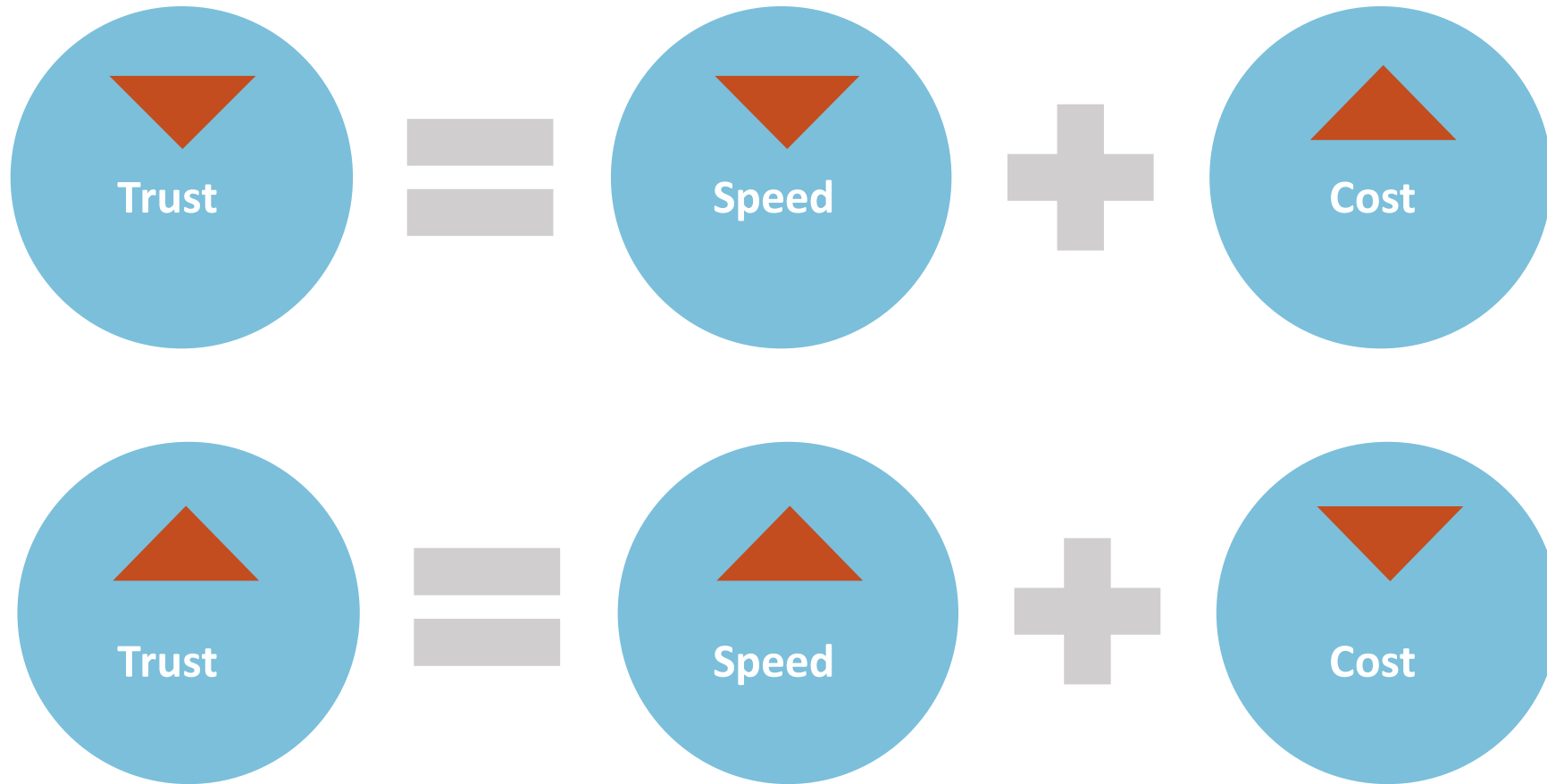
"Educating the mind without the heart
is not education at all."

- Aristotle -

Responsibility of autonomy; employee

- Understanding of and commitment to shared guiding principles (aka core values)
- Understanding of corporate and department goals
- Development of and commitment to personal professional goals that align with departmental and corporate goals
- Commitment to and demand for communication
- “Actualized” trust
- Confidence and commitment to do your job and to ask for help when needed
 - Act vs. waiting to be told
 - Accepting and compromise vs wanting everything your way
 - Accepting the balance between your needs and the group’s

The Speed of Trust



Trust in more detail (employer)

- Provide guidance / advice but allow the team to make the decision
 - On the schedule, cost estimates, work product released, quality judgments etc.
- Foster the ability for the team to test / fail / try again, lean learning
- Give the team opportunities to gain trust and build trust
 - Watch your body language, do you mean what you are saying
- Cut pain points FAST don't allow a "sore to get infected"

Trust in more detail (employee)

- Rational understanding you are not getting everything you want, or think is right
- Rational understanding you will need to delay gratification or accept a decision that hurts you in the short term
- Ultimate acceptance of decision without continuous back seat driving
- Your choice to say means you participate at 100% effort, regardless of belief
 - Less effort because it wasn't your decision is completely unacceptable

Accountability in more detail

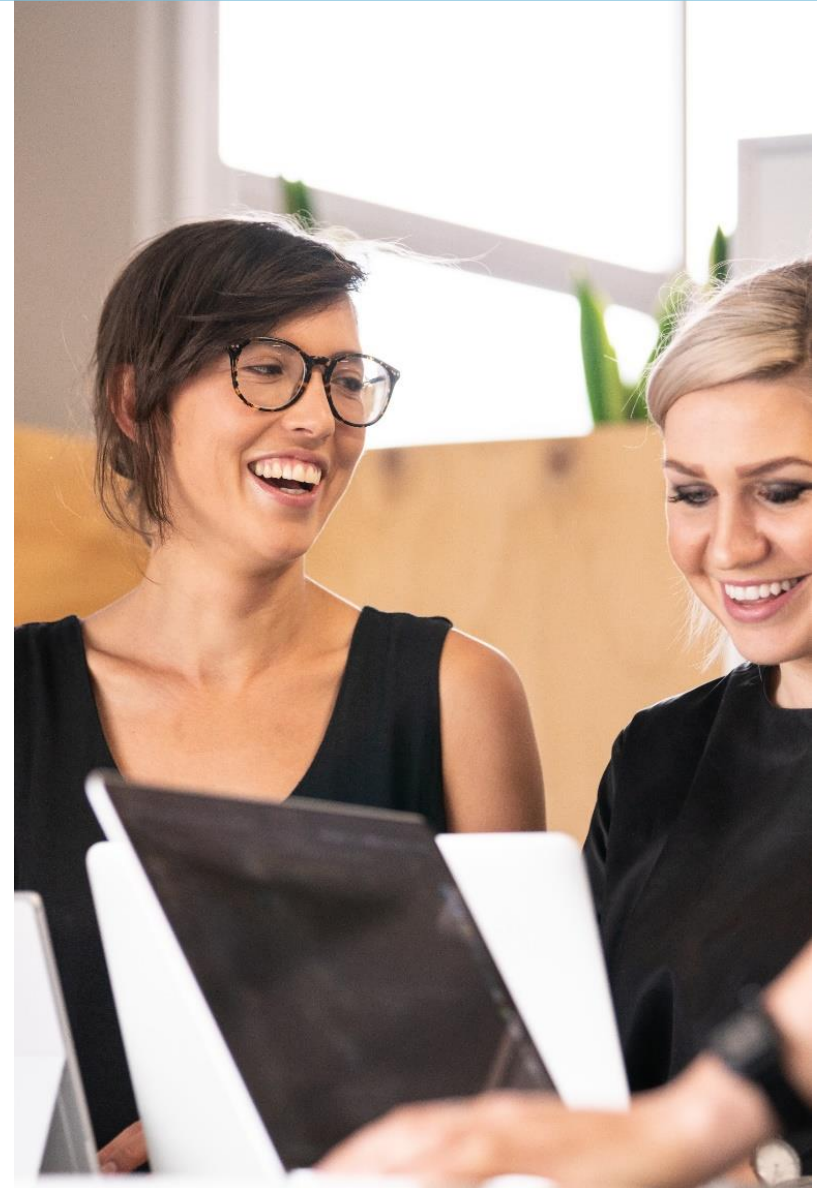
- Account for what you do
- Accept responsibility for your actions
- Disclose results
- Provide honest feedback (good or bad)
 - Expect continuous improvement
 - Require, effort, results and positive attitude
 - The meat of the daily stand-up

Section Three

How to do it: the team

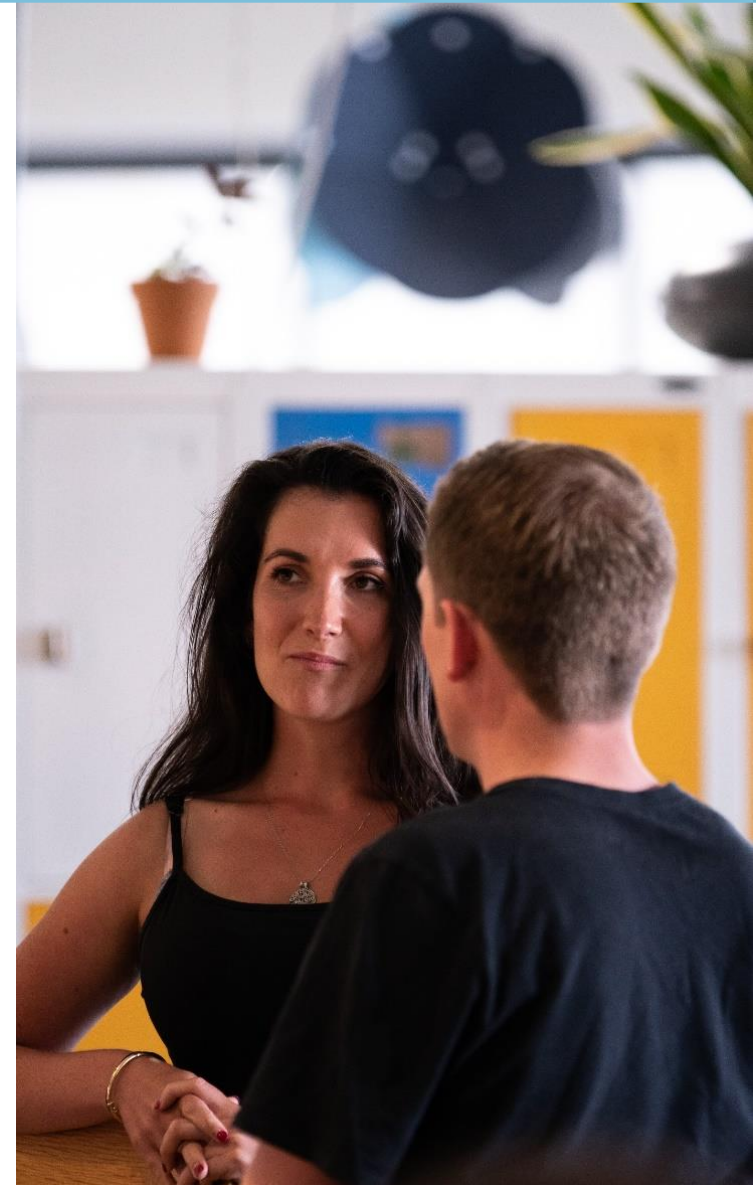
Self-directed team practices

- Start as a team, finish as a team
- **Understand more interaction is needed when remote, use technology**
- Open and honest communication
- Inspect and adapt
- Incremental improvement in product and process
- Focus on work not role
- ***Deal with issues facing output (people, tools, technology)***
- ***Make decisions about output***
- Ask for vision, goals and communication on goal status



Self-directed team challenges

- *Forming, storming, norming and performing*
- Conflict management
- Decision making
- Directing and guiding without authority
- Negotiation (with each other)
- Understanding personality traits and working with team members
- Accepting accountability
- Dealing with evolution that tends toward the group looking for/selecting a leader
- Extra challenge of remote squads



Celebrating WINS

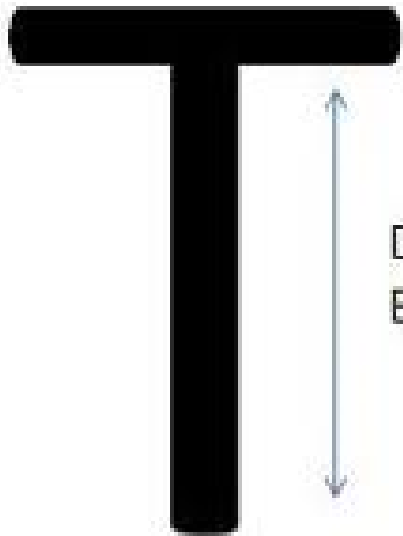
- ***Can be simple as saying THANK YOU and Great job***
- ***IF based on goals, make goals reasonable***
- ***Do what you say you would do, or it is worse than doing nothing***
- Acknowledge publicly
- Awards tied to core values
- Use language WE and US not I, Also there is no owner, it isn't YOUR squad or my squad
- Take time and enjoy, just don't say great and immediately push next targets
- Don't try to point out a few issues in celebration
- Make sure your body language and tone are NOT in conflict with your words (words are only 30% of communication)
- Writing a handwritten note!!
- Giving someone a LinkedIn recommendation
- Giving someone a shout out on LinkedIn
- Telling a quick positive story about team or person over Yammer
- Always remember people LOVE food

Section Four

Critical Skills the Team Needs

Driving self-directed success

Breadth of Knowledge



Depth of
Expertise



Building/ Hire “T-shaped” professionals

Top of the “T”: Breadth of professional skill

Bottom of the “T”: Technical capability

Building “fully-formed” workers who can handle the technical demands of today’s work needs but can also interact within a group constructively solving problems and making decisions.

Big question: Create or hire? Can a “T” shape worker be trained?

Conflict resolution

This is HARD, plain and simple

- Focus on respect and dignity for all parties
- *It is about the action that is the issue not the person. Don't get into someone's personality. Focus on activity that is the issue*
- For any team you work with have a constant that you use as the filter to resolve all conflicts
 - Example
- Must always be consistent
- Better to keep things overt and controlled than passive
- Control commiseration
- How to handle the “fear” of handling conflict
- This is a skill that is developed with practice, it is something that can't necessarily be booked learned

Facilitating and negotiating

- An idea is worthless unless it can be presented
- You can't execute unless parties are in alignment
 - Facilitating — brings people together as needed, to get things done
 - Negotiating — getting teams or sides in alignment, to get things done
- Both are about execution
- Negotiation is not about winning, it is about moving forward
 - The goal is to achieve balance
 - Without balance, ultimately conflict will occur
- Examples:

Section Four

Coaching and mentoring: “management skill” of Self-directed workplaces

Techniques & Attributes

Coaching Techniques

- Open door office — timely and available
 - Proactive by them is better than reactive by you
 - **But** if your “mood” is otherwise, schedule another time
- Direct, to the point and honest
 - Set guidelines in advance to control emotional response to feedback
- Never, never make decisions for them
 - Offer suggestions and ideas
 - Remember they have no commitment to act on your thoughts
- Do a retrospective (review) after each assignment
 - What worked / what didn't / what did they learn

Mentoring Attributes

- Experienced without baggage
 - Been there and done that but not looking to rule the world
 - Doesn't have own agenda
- Consistent, ensure connections are steady and reliable
- Discrete and confidential
- Positive / upbeat
- Communicative, willing to tell stories and discuss issues
- Non-judgmental (critical)

Common mistakes with failed coaching and mentoring

- Autonomy dilemma
 - Give and take to make sure they get feedback but are not micro-managed
 - Have you let them make decisions, really make decisions and accept the results
- Feedback issues
 - Timing / use of words / inability to “understand” person
- Too little too late
- Lack of trust
- Lack of authenticity
- Personality mismatch (mentoring)

Questions?

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