

Leading Through A Crisis: Team Building

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What do you look for in building a team?

Understand the issue you are facing and make sure you have the appropriate people and skills around the table with you: speciality areas, experience and background.

Have people who think differently from you. To get the best outcome you want people who have different thought processes to you. Know your own thought process and get people with complementary skills to your own (big picture versus detail example).

Create a common purpose, know what you are doing and why you are doing it.

Ensure each person:

- Knows the part they are playing, i.e. knows why they are there.
- Knows why others have been included in the team.
- Understands that their role is essential to the common purpose.

Powerful and effective teams are those where each person has clarity of the purpose and knows what role they play.

How do you keep the momentum going?

- Remind people of the purpose, what they are there to achieve.

In practice: In a crisis, hold a morning and afternoon meeting. Begin frequently with “we are all here because we are trying to achieve.... <Insert the common goal>”.

- Create a team environment where it is safe for people to raise concerns.
- Utilise team strengths. Back to the point of having people who think differently, think about team strengths and weaknesses, recognise how you work together.
- Celebrate successes and milestones. (e.g. morning tea). This highlights the success or milestone reached and helps keep the wider momentum for others in the same project.

How does this apply in the school context?

(Drawing from experience as a school board chair)

- Communication is key.
- Bring in the right expertise from your board – they are part of the team, they are there to work with you or unlock connections for you.
- Find out about the experiences of your wider lead team and staff. They will have background experiences which you can utilise. Don't get stuck on their current job title.
- Keep everyone up-to-date on what you are working on, along with key messages which they can talk about. School staff engage with many people, they will be able to share the messages that you want to be conveyed. Not being kept informed can be disenfranchising and disempowering. The detail is not required, but give key messages that can be communicated.

Final tips

- Celebrate success, make sure you appreciate the people in the team, acknowledge the effort and outcomes.
- Take care of people as individuals. Know what is going on for them as individuals.
- Be careful as the leader to not take the team for granted. It is the team who achieves the outcome.