

Avoiding the Enemies of Team Unity

“When I started this company, I didn’t want any **employees**. I still don’t. Instead, I’ve got a great **team** of people who are passionate about our company mission!”

-Dave Ramsey

A Successful Team to Carry Your Vision

Most companies have employees – that is, people who come to work a job and collect a paycheck. EntreLeaders understand that a team is so much more valuable. According to Brian Tracy, “Teamwork is so important that it is virtually impossible for you to reach the heights of your capabilities or make the money that you want without becoming very good at it.”

A team is made up of people who are real believers in the company vision. These folks are zealous advocates of what you’re trying to achieve. The paycheck is the benefit of their hard, passionate work – not their sole reason for being there. Money alone is never enough.

But now indeed, there are many members yet one body.

- 1 Corinthians 12:20

An EntreLeader also knows what it takes to pull together a great team and keep it executing at peak performance. He knows that unity is at the heart of any successful team and he knows what it takes to protect that unity. Have you ever seen a team of really good, smart people, but as a group they just couldn’t get the job done? Whenever you see a team like that, you can be sure they suffer from one or more of the following Five Enemies of Unity:

- 1) Poor communication
- 2) Gossip
- 3) Unresolved disagreements
- 4) Lack of a shared purpose
- 5) Sanctioned incompetence

Let’s take a quick look at two of the most overlooked unity-killers.

The Eroding Effect of Gossip

On October 1, 1876 a new lighthouse began operation on Morris Island, SC – just outside of Charleston Harbor. The light from the 161-foot tall lighthouse could be seen 19 miles out at sea. Set about 1200 feet inland, the light was surrounded by 15 buildings including three very large Victorian homes for the lighthouse keepers and a schoolhouse for their children. Livestock and vegetables were grown on-site to feed the three families.

By 1938, erosion had caused the lighthouse to stand at the water’s edge. Several of the buildings had been washed away. The remaining buildings, including one of the majestic keeper’s residences, were dismantled for safety’s sake and the lighthouse was automated.

Today, Morris Island lighthouse stands alone and abandoned about 300 yards off the shore amidst the cold waters of the Atlantic Ocean. Such is the effect of erosion.

Within a business, gossip will cause erosion that is just as destructive as that which destroyed the land around the Morris Island lighthouse. Gossip, defined as discussing something negative with anyone who can't help solve the problem, is rampant in American business today. Often seen as harmless, gripe session lunches and water cooler whining are accepted forms of blowing off steam. According to Psychology Today, "Employees often snipe about their superiors to gain control over their powerless situation." However, part of being an EntreLeader is making sure your team members feel empowered to always report problems up the leadership chain to people who can actually address the situation. Unchecked, gossip is an acid that will eat away at the unity you've built with your team.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

- Psalm 133:1

Gossip is also unfair to everyone involved. It's unfair to the gossipers because they're continuing to have to toil in a problem situation with no hope of resolution. It's unfair to others who hear the gossip because it undermines passion for their work, confidence in their leadership and belief in your vision. John Maxwell says, "Once our minds are 'tattooed' with negative thinking, our chances for long-term success diminish." It's also unfair to the EntreLeader who isn't given the opportunity to address a problem within their business.

The Antidote for Gossip

Dave Ramsey's company, The Lampo Group Inc., has zero tolerance for gossip. Alright, that's a slight exaggeration. Team members will get a warning – ONCE. However, Dave's team values the unity created by a "no gossip" environment so much that the policy has been embraced as a core value. Simply put, it is a core value to hand negatives up and positives down. Team members are expected to hand their suggestions, frustrations, anger, gripes and ANY NEGATIVE issues – and they WILL have all of these – up the leadership chain. A team member griping about a computer problem to the receptionist, who doesn't buy or work on computers, will bring a warning. If they do it again, it's grounds for termination. This team is serious about unity!

Setting the Path

Another unity-killer is a lack of shared purpose. If you don't give your team a roadmap for achieving your vision, they will have to find their own way. This is a great plan for an explorer, but a terrible plan for an EntreLeader and his team. The EntreLeader's roadmap is made up of carefully and deliberately crafted vision, mission and goals. These will lay out the foundation of where your team is going and how they get there. This roadmap will keep you and your team from getting off the trail along the way as well as keeping everyone focused.

Where there is no vision, the people perish.

- Proverbs 29:18

Stand back and take a look at your company. Do you have a vision? Have you explained that vision to your team? Do they understand the values that helped form that vision? Have you formed goals to help you achieve that vision?

The Lampo Group Inc. has the following mission statement:

The Lampo Group Inc. provides Biblically-based, common sense education and empowerment which gives hope to everyone from the financially secure to the financially distressed.

Well, isn't that nice? They have a cute little mission statement, but do they take it seriously? Yes! Stop any of Dave's team members and ask them about the mission statement and they can recite it from memory. Why? It's so important that learning it is a requirement for working there. Then, if a team member has a plan for a new product or service, the first thing that an EntreLeader does is to sit down with the team member and analyze if and how that plan fits the mission statement. Notice the statement is clear, concise and specific. Author Joseph M. Dodge notes, "What every man needs, regardless of his job or the kind of work he is doing, is a vision of what his place is and may be. He needs an objective and a purpose. He needs a feeling and a belief that he has some worthwhile thing to do."

Furthermore, that purpose must be shared among your team. If you show them the finish line, but don't note the race route, they may show up, but they'll all get there at different times in different ways. They will have missed out on the synergy of a unified team experience. And you will have missed out on a triumph that just can't be accomplished without a team fused together by your vision and their shared passion.

The Antidote for a Lack of Stated Purpose

EntreLeaders share the vision of the company early and often. Author Rick Warren says you must restate your vision to your team every 21 days. Each project or new idea developed by your team should have its own mini-mission statement that is a reflection of the main company mission statement. In addition, each department should have written goals created by and shared with the whole team. The goals should be specific and have a clear time limit. Each team member should then write what work they will do to contribute to reaching those goals. This way, everyone experiences and understands that they are an integral part of the project, the team, and – yes – even the mission of the company.

Protecting Team Unity

The EntreLeader will fiercely protect the unity of his team by frequently going to battle with any of the Five Enemies of Unity. EntreLeaders understand the dangers posed by losing unity and will jealously guard against them, reacting at the first sign of trouble. In addition, the team will value being a part of a successful team and the power unity gives the group – and they will also act to keep these Five Enemies from the gates. In turn, this generates an intense loyalty among team members to the team and to the company as a whole. When that loyalty is returned by an EntreLeader, confident in his team, it becomes a perpetual cycle that continually strengthens the team.

Would you like to learn more about unity, loyalty and how to stop the Five Enemies? You can learn these important lessons and more at Dave Ramsey's EntreLeadership event!