



香港特別行政區政府商務及經濟發展局  
COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BUREAU  
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE HONG KONG  
SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION



HKACE

香港優質顧客服務協會  
Hong Kong Association for  
Customer Service Excellence



# 14

Guide to Customer Service Excellence  
**BUILD A WINNING TEAM**

## ABOUT HKACE & PREFACE

In the past decade, the Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has teamed up with service enterprises and their service providers to promote quality customer services.

Pursuing similar goals, the Hong Kong Association for Customer Service Excellence was established in 2000. Our mission is to promote customer service excellence in Hong Kong and among our members. We have thirteen founding members and sixteen corporate members, and up to a total of one hundred and eighty thousand service providers. We put a great deal of effort into promoting "Customer Orientation" as our service culture, and aim to continually improve customer service.

According to the official statistics of March 2007, there are two hundred and seventy-seven thousand small and medium enterprises (SME) in Hong Kong, which is over ninety-eight percent of all registered commercial units, and fifty percent of Hong Kong's total workforce. Out of these SMEs, many are involved in the service industry including the wholesale, retail, food and beverage and hospitality sectors. It is inevitable that service excellence will become increasingly significant in the contribution to Hong Kong's economic success.

In order to promote service excellence, the Hong Kong Association for Customer Services annually organises "Quality Customer Service Seminars" in which members, SMEs and other professional service enterprises gather to share best practices of quality customer services.

Globalisation in the 21st century demands that organisations use the power of synergy across various teams. Comprised of diverse talents, each team needs to be independently effective but able to fluidly adapt and collaborate with each other to meet the increasingly complex service expectations and operational challenges. Thus, building a winning team becomes of paramount importance as this lays the foundation for achieving service excellence through seamless service across all touch points.

In view of the above, our focus this year is "Build a Winning Team". The critical elements that must be in place for successful teamwork include effective management; clear vision and mission; application of learned skills; team spirit and adaptive leadership.

In order to aid service organisations in the building of winning teams, and encourage service providers become better team players; we have produced this practical booklet as a guide to team building. Building up a team is like organising a dragon boat race team. Our book uses a Dragon Boat Model to consolidate the eight critical elements of successful teamwork and checkpoints of team development.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank The Government of The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Commerce and Economic Development Bureau for their continued support and sponsorship, with which we organised two Quality Customer Service Seminars in September and October. I would also like to extend my gratitude to all guest speakers that have shared with us their organisations' best practices and personal management experience to demonstrate the key learning points and critical elements of team building. Some best practices have already been consolidated in this booklet.

In fact, the Hong Kong service industry is one large service team. May I appeal to all of you to unite together to erect the concrete foundation of service excellence for Hong Kong. Let us team up both internally and externally to deliver a total quality service experience.

Quince Chong  
Chairman of Hong Kong Association for Customer Service Excellence  
January 2008

## MISSION

To foster customer service excellence in Hong Kong and among members

## OBJECTIVES

1. To share best customer service practices among members and with other service sectors in Hong Kong and overseas
2. To pursue continuous customer service improvement among members
3. To promote the benefits of customer-focused culture in Hong Kong
4. To establish and maintain relationship with service excellence providers and advocates
5. To act as catalyst of positive changes and improvements in Hong Kong service culture
6. To interface with the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on customer service matters and research findings
7. To advise the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on customer service issues



## MEMBER LIST

## LIST OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OFFICERS YEAR 2006 - 2007

### FOUNDING MEMBERS

	American International Assurance Company (Bermuda) Limited
	Cathay Pacific Airways Limited
	Centaline Property Agency Limited
	CLP Power Hong Kong Limited
	Dah Chong Hong (Motor Service Centre) Limited
	Hewlett-Packard HK SAR Limited
	Hongkong Post
	The Hong Kong Jockey Club
	The Kowloon Motor Bus Co. (1933) Ltd.
	Motorola Asia Pacific Limited
	PCCW Limited
	Shell Hong Kong Limited
	Standard Chartered Bank (Hong Kong) Limited

### HONORARY PATRON

Mr Frederick S H MA, JP  
Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development

### HONORARY ADVISORS

The Hon Mrs Selma CHOW, GBS, O.B.E., JP  
Legislative Councillor

The Hon Mr James TIEN Pei-chun, GBS, JP  
Chairman of Hong Kong Tourism Board

Mr Allan CHIANG, SBS  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Hong Kong Design Centre  
Chairman of HKACE (2000-2006)

Mr Patrick WONG  
Partner, KEEP Consulting Limited  
Treasurer of HKACE (2000 - 11.2007)

Mrs Sandra MAK  
Chief Executive Officer  
A-World Consulting Limited

### HONORARY COMPANY ADVISORS

Price Water House Coopers  
Kao, Lee & Yip

Ms. Quince CHONG  
Chairman

Mr. Bustin CHU  
Vice-Chairman

Ms. Pauline CHAN  
Secretary

Mr. Cally CHAN  
Treasurer

Mr. Patrick WONG  
Treasurer  
(2006 - 11.2007)

Executive Committee Member

Mr. Jan Zen JIM

Mr. Alex TANG

Mr. Simon SIU

Mr. Peter TSANG

Ms. Margaret FUNG

Ms. P Y CHAN

Mr. Alan SHAM

Ms. Mei NG

Mr. Michael VRONTAMITIS

Director Service Delivery  
Cathay Pacific Airways Limited

General Manager - Marketing Division  
Dah Chong Hong (Motor Service Centre) Limited

Assistant Vice President - Customer Relations  
PCCW Limited

General Manager -  
HP Services, Technology Solutions Group  
Hewlett-Packard HK SAR Limited

General Manager -  
HP Services, Technology Solutions Group  
Hewlett-Packard HK SAR Limited

Vice President, Agency  
American International Assurance Company  
(Bermuda) Limited

Director (External Affairs)  
Centaline Property Agency Limited

Senior Strategic Planner -  
Customer Service Planning  
CLP Power Hong Kong Limited

Head of Betting Services (Off-Course)  
The Hong Kong Jockey Club

Senior Manager, Customer Service  
Hongkong Post

Head of Customer Service Department  
The Kowloon Motor Bus Co. (1933) Ltd.

Senior Manager, Customer Service  
Hong Kong and Taiwan Mobile Devices  
Motorola Asia Pacific Ltd.

Marketing Manager  
Shell Hong Kong Ltd

Head of Customer Experience Management  
Standard Chartered Bank (HK) Ltd

### CONTACT INFORMATION OF HKACE

Mailing address  
GPO Box 6800 Hong Kong

Telephone  
(852) 8100 9978

Fax  
(852) 8100 9966

Email Address  
general@hkace.org

Website  
www.hkace.org

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to the people and organisations below for their support and assistance in making the two Quality Customer Service Seminars for SMEs, "Build a Winning Team", a success.

### LIST OF SPEAKERS

Mrs Jo CHANG Senior Training Manager	Swire Resources Ltd
Mr William CHAU Managing Director	B2A Consulting Ltd
Mr Kevin CHUC Hotel Manager	Langham Hotel Hong Kong
Mr KWOK Jing Keung, Joe, FSDSM, JP Director of Fire Services	Fire Services Department
Mr Raymond KWONG Director	Coerver Coaching (HK) Ltd
Mr Li Chan Wing	Communication Specialist and Seasoned News Anchor
Mr CK LIU Chief Staff Officer and Deputy Commissioner (Operations)	CMI Aid Service

(In Alphabetical Order)

We would also like in particular to thank the following project committee members of the Hong Kong Association for Customer Service Excellence who gave their time and support in taking part in this project and the production of this book:

### RESEARCH & BEST PRACTICE COMMITTEE

Ms. Cally CHAN   Mr. Jan Zen JIM   Mr. Simon SIU  
Mr. Peter TSANG   Mr. Alex TANG

### PROJECT & PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

Ms. Pauline CHAN   Ms. P Y CHAN   Ms. Margaret FUNG  
Ms. Betty NG   Mr. Alex TANG   Mr. Peter TSANG

Special thanks to Mr William Chau and Ms Mary Suen of B2A Consulting Ltd. for their commitments to excellence in the design of the programme and throughout the whole course of it. Although the last, not least, to Ms Sylvia Liu, the Editor, who is an experienced consultant in team building for both service and education sectors.

## CONTENTS

p.1 / p.2

### 1. THE MAGIC OF TEAMWORK

- 1.1 TEAM – TOGETHER EVERYONE ACHIEVES MORE
- 1.2 ORIGIN OF TEAM
- 1.3 WHY TEAMWORK : 1+1>2  
1.3.1 / 1.3.2 / 1.3.3
- 1.4 WHY NO TEAM WORK : CONFLICTS

p.3 / p.8

### 2. HOW TO BUILD A TEAM : A DRAGON BOAT MODEL

- 2.1 A DRAGON BOAT MODEL
- 2.2 KEY ELEMENTS FOR BUILDING TEAM
  - 2.2.1 Mission is direction.
  - 2.2.2 Goals bring clarity.
  - 2.2.3 Accountability is a division of labour.
  - 2.2.4 Communication is knowing each other.
  - 2.2.5 A supportive team environment
  - 2.2.6 All team members are well trained
  - 2.2.7 Aligning rewards with goals
  - 2.2.8 Adaptive leadership is how far to let go

p.7 / p.10

### 3. CHECKPOINTS OF TEAM DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 UP : THE FORMING OF A TEAM
- 3.2 DOWN : THE IDEAS ARE STORMING IN THE TEAM
- 3.3 ROUND : SETTING NORMS AND STANDARDS
- 3.4 GO : LET GO TO PERFORM (TEAM DYNAMICS)
- 3.5 MANAGING EVER-CHANGING ENVIRONMENT
  - 3.5.1 New Members Joining
  - 3.5.2 New Team Head
  - 3.5.3 New Mission
  - 3.5.4 Adjourning and Transforming

p.11

### 4. STAR PERFORMERS AND AVERAGE PERFORMERS

- 4.1 DEVELOPING TEAMWORK AMONG STAR PERFORMERS
- 4.2 DEVELOPING TEAMWORK AMONG STAR PERFORMERS AND AVERAGE PERFORMERS

p.12 / p.13

### 5. TEAM UP WITH OUTSIDE TEAMS

- 5.1 TEAM UP WITH THE PUBLIC : PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE
- 5.2 TEAM UP WITH CUSTOMERS : CUSTOMERS ARE ADVISORS
- 5.3 TEAM UP WITH GOVERNMENT BODIES : A BIG ECHO
- 5.4 TEAM UP WITH SUPPLIERS AND CONTRACTORS : 1+1>2
- 5.5 TEAM UP WITH COMPETITORS : YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURHOOD

p.14

### 6. POSITIONING YOUR TEAM

p.15

### 7. CONCLUSION

# 1. THE MAGIC OF TEAMWORK

Magic mirror, am I the most welcoming member of my team?

Yes, you are. You have team player personality traits:

- Co-operation** is the ability to work smoothly with others;
- Politeness** let others know that you care about them;
- Patience** is important for you to remember that not everyone will catch on the routines at the same rate;
- Enthusiasm** is a very contagious feeling;
- Interdependence** where teamwork is based on the ability of one worker to depend upon another;
- Loyalty and Faithfulness** to your team members.

Reference :  
Max Taylor, *Effectiveness in Education and Training : the Theory and Practice of Personal Development.*

## Professionalism in Customer Service – Build a Winning Team

"Many studies show that your ability to succeed in the workplace depends upon how well you get along with your coworkers. On the job, getting the work done is a team effort."  
Adapted from H.R.Wallace and L.A. Masters, *Personality Development for Work.*

"In a job world in which assessment of a candidate's ability to communicate, work in teams, problem solve and adapt to changes are as important as their technical skills."  
Adapted from *Human Resources Journal of the Hong Kong Institute of Human Resource Management, Oct 2005.*

### 1.1 TEAM = TOGETHER EVERYONE ACHIEVES MORE

"A team is a group of people who share common objectives and who need to work together to achieve them."  
Adapted from H.R.Wallace and L.A. Masters, *Personality Development for Work.*

A group itself does not necessarily constitute a team. Teams normally have members with complementary skills and generate synergy through a coordinated effort which allows each member to take full advantage of his or her strengths and diminish his or her weaknesses.

To be team-players, you have to build up the key characteristics of social and emotional competences, effective communication and positive behaviours within groups. Group behaviour is important because whatever you do will affect how someone else in your group performs.

"A team can accomplish much more than the sum of its individual members."  
Adapted from Mike Woodcock, *Team Development Manual.*

### 1.2 ORIGIN OF TEAM

The emergence of the team idea can be traced back to the late 1920s and early 1930s with the classic Hawthorne Studies. These involved series of research activities designed to examine in-depth what happened to a group of workers under various conditions. After much analysis, the researchers agreed that the most significant factor was the building of a sense of group identity, a feeling of social support and cohesion that came with increased worker interaction. Elton Mayo (1933), one of the original researchers, pointed out certain critical conditions which were identified for developing an effective work team. These research findings spurred companies to seriously consider the idea of grouping their employees into effective work teams. Theorists in business in the late 20th century popularised the concept of constructing teams.

Reference :  
J. L. Dyer, *Team research and team training: A state-of-the-art review.*

### 1.3 WHY TEAMWORK : 1+1>2

1.3.1 Service is a total experience; service excellence comes after a range of services. Global competition demands us to make today's organisations more flat and flexible.

1.3.2 Teams are especially appropriate for conducting tasks that are high in complexity and have many interdependent subtasks.

1.3.3 A team can gain the synergy among a pool of human resources with diversified experience, skills and knowledge. The winning factors are:

- Reduce costs
- Improve quality of services
- Increase employee involvement
- Reduce absenteeism and improve continuity
- Reduce conflicts
- Enhance creativity and innovation
- Create better adaptability and flexibility in the organisation

"Synergy is the highest activity of life; it creates new untapped alternatives; it values and exploits the mental, emotional, and psychological differences between people."  
- Stephen Covey

### 1.4 WHY NO TEAMWORK : CONFLICTS

Simultaneously, the pool of human resources with diversified mindsets, characters and culture will have different personal values and goals. Not every time one person can play all the roles, teaming up with other parties are essential. Each of the team members has to contribute and behave or else the team efficiency and effectiveness will be adversely affected. Just one spot of dirt can spoil the whole pot of clean water.

- Common potential problems in conflicting teams:
- Vested personal interests – there may be hidden agenda in favour of oneself instead of the overall mission or objectives.
  - Longer consensus time – it may take longer time to arrive at compromises.
  - Pro-management or anti-management – there may be different standpoints where some members agree with management decisions while others will be against.
  - Pressure to conform – there may be forces on members to obey the rules.
  - Disregarding contrary evidence – there may be members who are subjective and overlook reasonable but contrary viewpoints.
  - Suppression of disputes – there may be controlling atmosphere disallowing any differences in opinions.
  - Informal gangs – there may be groups with high cohesiveness to work in favour of their own group objectives instead of the company objectives.

This is a fact of life that there are conflicts in working teams.

"A camel will be turned into a horse by a committee" when conflicts ruin teamwork. Achieving quality customer services, leaders have to put efforts into building a team.

"Conflict is inevitable in a team... In fact, to achieve synergistic solutions, a variety of ideas and approaches are needed. These are the ingredients for conflict."  
- Susan Gerke, IBM, Leadership Development

1.3.3 BEST PRACTICES:  
Mr. Li Chan Wing, Communication Specialist and Seasoned News Anchor in Hong Kong, interestingly explained the concept of 1+1>2 by a "noodle" metaphor :  
A bowl of noodle with 6 fish balls = \$20.  
A bowl of noodle with 6 meat balls = \$20; but  
A bowl of noodle with 3 of each variety=\$22.  
Two people go to restaurant, one order fish ball noodle, one order meat ball noodle, each cost \$20.  
When they exchange 3 fish/meat balls, they can have two variety of selection and saved \$2.  
This is the power of TEAMWORK.

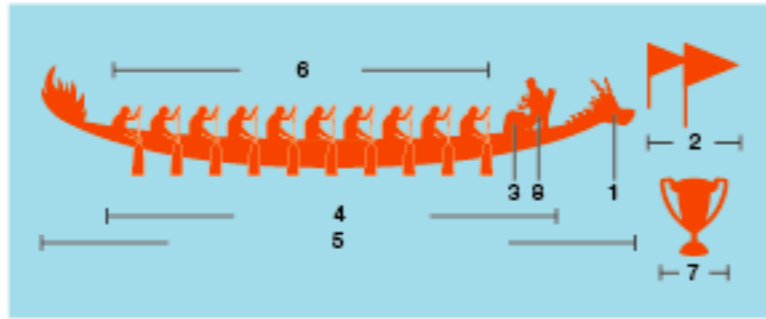
1.4 BEST PRACTICES:  
When Young Meets Elder  
Langham Hotel, Hong Kong shared their experience during an HKACE Seminar in 2007 in handling conflicts among experienced staff and new staff. They are facing high staff turnover in newly recruited young staff. They launch core value programmes and organise talks for experienced and established staff to understand the mindsets and behaviours of newly recruited young generation. They facilitate the two generations to understand and respect each other so as to eliminate conflicts at work.



## 2. HOW TO BUILD A TEAM : A DRAGON BOAT MODEL

Team spirit is called upon when challenges and competition take place, like in dragon boat races. What a winning team will face:  
 What if key competitors arise to challenge your Champion position?  
 What if the weather changes drastically to jeopardise your initial planning?

### 2.1 A DRAGON BOAT MODEL - EIGHT CRITICAL ELEMENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL TEAMWORK.



1. A unifying **MISSION** statement is the **"Dragon Head"** leading towards the goal. Dragon boat racers always chant a slogan to cheer up the morale before starting the competition.
2. Specific **GOALS** are to win what types of local contests in the short term and winning what international contest in the long term.
3. The entire crew is held **ACCOUNTABLE** for the race, including the drummer, the steerer and up to twenty paddlers. "I am Nobody" vs "Not One Less" : Everyone has a role to contribute the team success, not one less
4. The drum beats are the continuous **COMMUNICATION SIGNALS** with different meanings.
5. The 'hull' (the body shell of the dragon boat) and the team spirit is the **SUPPORTIVE** inner **ENVIRONMENT** for the team to face the challenging outside environment.
6. All racers are **TRAINED** with indoor and on the field rowing, drills and practices before the boat race.
7. Rapport, medals, trophies and **REWARDS** all go along with achieving the goals.
8. The drummer, being the **LEADER**, controls the rhythms of the beating drums, different rhythms at different stages throughout the race.

References :  
 Robin Eledge and Steven Philips. Team Building for the Future : Beyond the Basics.  
 K. Gawziar. Teamwork.

### 2.2 KEY ELEMENTS FOR BUILDING TEAM

Play Eight 'Magic' to Make Teamwork Successful

1. An inspiring and unifying mission
2. Concrete and specific goals
3. Accountability of both individual and Team
4. Communication within and among teams
5. A supportive team environment
6. All team members trained
7. Aligning rewards with goals
8. Adaptive Leadership

#### 2.2.1 Mission is direction.

Your mission statement should be a 'yardstick' for making decisions and setting priorities. It is the glue that holds disparate people together and inspires them to work as a team to achieve common goals.

The mission is the direction for the team which either newly formed or is undergoing significant changes, to have a shared view of its purpose, also for the individual members to understand how they contribute towards the shared purposes or goals.

**TIPS** for forming mission:

- clear direction
- short and sweet
- easy to understand and remember by all members

#### 2.2.2 Goals bring clarity.

Specific goals facilitate team members to know exactly what success looks like in future and what they need to do to achieve it right now.

**TIPS** for defining goals:

- aligning with the mission statement
- short-term and immediate
- measurable.

#### 2.2.2 BEST PRACTICES: Aligned mindsets, common goals

Langham Hotel, Hong Kong has set clear goals for all employees through "Our Promises – the 6 Ms" : My Brand, My Guests, My Colleagues, Myself and My Hotel. Based on "Langham Logic Foundation" as the norm of customer services mindset, they provide thorough communication and training programmes to guide all hotel employees to contribute to the same goals.

#### 2.2.3 BEST PRACTICES: Working Together – Even When Apart

Established in 1981, Giordano is well known for being the pioneer in customer service in Asia apparel retailing, employing over 11,000 friendly staff with over 1,700 shops operating in 30 territories worldwide. Every position, from sales representative, designer, buyer to brand manager, has clear job specification and description. The system is in place to facilitate every staff to be accountable for providing customer service experience and to contribute to the sales. They echo and communicate their job positions with the fellow staff members within the shops, deliberately share responsibility and help each other. Most importantly, staff members take pride in their achievement and have the satisfied customers showing interest in what they are doing.

## 2. HOW TO BUILD A TEAM : A DRAGON BOAT MODEL



### 2.2.4 BEST PRACTICES: A Room With A View

Companies name the conference / meeting room as "TEAMWORK ROOM" where every meeting is considered as a communication plus team building.

### 2.2.5 BEST PRACTICES: Talk Safe

Many winning service organisations endeavour to provide an encouraging working environment where staff members are open to discuss and safe to talk. Further than regular staff meetings, collecting staff feedback and staff gatherings, winning organisations encourage all staff to become sales teams to upsell the company's products as well as public relations teams to collect customer feedback directly.

### 2.2.3 Accountability is a division of labour.

Everyone has a position / role to play well and trust other team members to do the same. In winning teams, members are accountable for both individual performance and team goals. Periodical performance reviews can measure the personal accomplishments against their contributions to the team goals.

Team self-evaluation is important for team members to know not only how well they are doing and working together as a team, but also encourage continuous improvement to find better ways to get the job done.

- TIPS** for sharing accountability :
- clear job roles and individual performance indicators
  - specific team performance indicators
  - periodical reviews and feedback

### 2.2.4 Communication is knowing each other.

Good teamwork requires absolutely good communication within and among teams. Team members hold productive meetings, get the jobs done properly after discussion and idea exchanges.

Disclosing personal values and goals and checking for congruence, help the team members to clarify each other's personal values and their mutual relationship in their major business or operational decisions.

- TIPS** for effective communication in teams:
- initiatives to know each other's strengths and weaknesses
  - open to criticisms, focusing on the subject not the person
  - right time, people and place

### 2.2.5 A supportive team environment.

A supportive team environment makes enough room to tackle new challenges and mistakes at the same time.

- TIPS** for building a winning working environment
- Respect and value each team member's opinions
  - timely and accurate information to update company status
  - increasing levels of trust and responsibility
  - clear performance indicators and achievement status

### 2.2.6 All team members are well trained.

There is an old joke about how to tell the difference between a training issue and a motivational issue: If you hold a gun to someone's head and ask him to do something and he cannot, then you can be sure it is a training issue!

- TIPS** for winning teams to set up:
- orientation for each new member to meet all key team members
  - formal training programmes
  - coaching from senior team members
  - performance feedback system for individual member to improve

### 2.2.7 Aligning rewards with goals.

Training and motivation go hand in hand. In successful teams, there are rewards for both individual and team goal attainment:

- financial incentives
- public recognition
- positive reinforcement

### 2.2.8 Adaptive leadership is how far to let go.

To be effective in a winning team, the leader has to adapt his / her leadership styles along the team development checkpoints, from highly directive to highly participative.

A helpful assessment tool for leaders is the 360 degree feedback mechanism. Team members express their views about their leader anonymously in a form so as to encourage honest feedback to help their leaders to improve.

- TIPS** for leaders of winning teams:
- being role models and "walk the talk"
  - make sure that the team has challenging tasks to keep them engaged
  - ensure that rewards are geared towards the team's increasing contributions, not only individual accomplishment

### 2.2.6 BEST PRACTICES: Trainers are Parents

Trained employees are human assets. Mr. Liu Chi-Keung, Chief Staff Officer and Deputy Commissioner (Operations) of Civil Aid Service said, "We train our volunteers as if they were our full time professionals; in fact, when they carry out their duties, they perform as professionals." Mrs. Jo Chang from Swire Resources Limited once said, "We train our colleagues as if they were our children." Their commitments to employee training are significant and thorough. They set up Swire Retail Academy in 2000 to provide a wide range of fundamental training for all employees, and further training upon their promotion. They also organise recognised development programmes with the Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

### 2.2.7 BEST PRACTICES: Sales Targets are Game Scores

Winning organisations provide timely and accurate information of achieved sales targets as if game scores. Both supervisors and employees are involved in setting targets, allocating the roles of team players and sharing key performance indicators. All team members enhance their enthusiasm and motivation to keep on trying. Both individual and team targets are displayed through regular meetings. Every member has to contribute. Not one less.

### 3. CHECKPOINTS OF TEAM DEVELOPMENT

#### 2.2.8 BEST PRACTICES:

*American Express, one of the most famous international credit card incorporations, adopts the 360 degree feedback mechanism. Feedbacks are collected from all perspectives on the one who participates in the test : his/ her direct supervisor, colleagues, direct subordinates as well as himself/ herself.*

Reference:  
Michael Hammer (1997)  
*Beyond Reengineering: How the Process-Centered Organization is Changing Our Work and Our Lives.*

Reference:  
Bruce Tuckman, *Developmental Sequence in Small Groups.*  
Robin L. Eledge & Steven L. Phillips, *Team Building for the Future : Beyond the Basics.*

Teams normally do not function to their full capacity immediately or automatically upon their formation. It is natural for teams to gradually develop into maturity over a period of time, very much like a human body.

Before the team is mature and dynamic, who can contribute to the development?

Team members can. Leader can.

Being a leader, at which checkpoint are you standing? To lead your winning team, you need to adopt different leadership styles along the team development checkpoints.

Just like a dragon boat race, the leader motivates the team through the rhythms of beating drums and leads the crew passing all checkpoints in the development journey.

There are four checkpoints: **UP**, **DOWN**, **ROUND** and **GO** :

#### 3.1 UP : THE FORMING OF A TEAM

**UP** "Nice to meet you, not sure why we're here, it looks like a lot of work!"

The spirit is **UP** and high when a team starts to form, but the common goals may still be unclear or fluid. At this checkpoint, the members tend to seek clarification of their personal identity within the team. Commitment to their roles and team goals may vary from one person to another.

**Leader's strategy : Telling= Guidance and Direction**  
\* Be a directive leader to encourage active and equitable participation and begin focusing on project.

- Team Members' **DOs** :
- meet and learn about the challenges;
  - agree on mission and goals;
  - define team roles and accountabilities; and
  - begin to tackle the tasks.

- Team Members' **DON'Ts** :
- tend to behave alone and independently and focus on self only; and
  - try to impose their preferred 'appropriate' behaviours without consensus.

#### 3.2 DOWN : THE IDEAS ARE STORMING IN THE TEAM

**DOWN** "Do I HAVE to work with this team???"

Conflicts may let the team members **DOWN** when their different ideas compete for consideration. It can be contentious, unpleasant and even painful to members of the team who are averse to conflicts; but this is necessary to the growth of the team. The maturity of some team members can contribute to the proceeding and moving out of this checkpoint and going to the next one.

#### Leader's strategy : Selling=Coaching

\* Be a leader to help team focus on team members' strengths, not weaknesses, in working towards the tasks at hand and ahead. The leader must be more accessible but still need to be directive in decision-making. If the situation is allowed to get out of control, it can become destructive to the team's effectiveness and lower motivation at this checkpoint.

- Team Members' **DOs** :
- address problems directly that they are really supposed to solve;
  - function interdependently and together;
  - open out to each other;
  - accept individual differences and needs;
  - focus on the real issue and not the person; and
  - have a sense of humour when facing pressure.

- Team Members' **DON'Ts** :
- confront each other's ideas and perspectives rudely;
  - stick to minor issues and sidetrack without moving on;
  - act out to persuade and show off; and
  - have no tolerance and patience.

#### 3.3 ROUND : SETTING NORMS AND STANDARDS

**ROUND** "Maybe we'll be able to pull this all together, if we stop fighting and start listening to each other..."

Team members can **ROUND** up their values and behaviours to each other so that they can develop norms and standards together. Motivation increases as the team gets more acquainted with the project. Individual differences can be transformed into unique contributions of the individual team members. They are able to identify ways to resolve their conflicts effectively. The team members are gradually able to align their systems, procedures, rules and methods within themselves and in conjunction with other teams.

#### 3.3 BEST PRACTICES: Benchmarking

- *Winning teams do benchmark on some best practices in order to adopt, save the trial and error time and arrive at Checkpoint Three quicker and earlier.*

- *For example, banks and fast food shops save the long queuing time by filling up the order forms for the customers along the queue.*

- *Make good use of consultants who can provide professional advice on reference standards and bring in the best practices.*

- *Researches can provide findings and solutions learned from other organizations or teams with similar settings.*





### 3. CHECKPOINTS OF TEAM DEVELOPMENT

↑ **Leader's strategy : Participating = Facilitating**  
 \* Be a leader to facilitate the team members towards group accountability, collective decision to behave professionally and agree to norms.

Team Members' **DOs** :

- display professional behaviours to each other;
- agree on rules, values, shared methods and working tools; and
- try to build up mutual understanding and trust with each other.

Team Members' **DON'Ts** :

- lose their creativity when compromising too much;
- suppress healthy dissent; and
- try to cherish interpersonal accommodation at the expenses of better practices.

#### 3.4 **GO : LET GO TO PERFORM (TEAM DYNAMICS)**

**GO** "We've got a great plan, and let's go for it!"

High-performing teams are able to function as a unit as they find ways to get the job done smoothly and effectively without inappropriate conflicts or the need for external supervision. Team members have become interdependent and motivated. The members can solve their problems creatively and effectively and generate the desired outcomes. The team has reached full maturity at this checkpoint.



↑ **Leader's strategy : Delegating = Empowerment**  
 \* Be a leader to let **GO** the team members' energy and delegate as far as possible when they are performing. This is to enable true teamwork and co-operation, encourage individual commitment and become multiple leaders. Address individual's needs properly while the team is striving for common goals.

Team Members' **DOs** :

- monitor their own outputs independently;
- expect and channel dissents through positive means;
- continuously improve to stay competent, autonomous and decisive without undue supervision; and
- evaluate how fellow members have worked together and examine how to produce better results.

Team Members' **DON'Ts** :

- be complacent with the current achievements without continuous improvement.

#### 3.5 **MANAGING EVER-CHANGING ENVIRONMENT**

Teams, like everything else in the world, cannot forever keep on its own way. All elements of a team are actually subject to change, including its goals, priorities, systems, as well as its leadership and membership. Whenever there is a need to change, the team has to re-start the team development cycle to re-think and adapt their teamwork elements so as to re-position the team appropriately.

Even the most high-performing teams will revert to earlier checkpoints under certain circumstances. Many long-standing teams will go through these cycles many times as they respond to the changing circumstances and new challenges.

##### 3.5.1 **New Members Joining**

A change of team mix may revert to **UP** and **DOWN** Checkpoints when new inputs and new compromises are required.

##### 3.5.2 **New Team Head**

A change in leadership may cause the team to revert to Checkpoint **DOWN** as the new leader might challenge the wisdom or necessity of the existing norms and query the dynamics of the team.

##### 3.5.3 **New Mission**

A change in mission may sometimes be required due to the market forces, such as merger, acquisitions and other turbulent changes. This may cause the team to go back to the initial checkpoint too.

##### 3.5.4 **Adjourning and Transforming**

When projects are completed and goals are achieved, teams may need to adjourn or dissolve. The members may be amalgamated with other individuals to form new teams with different sets of goals and priorities. Feelings of loss or stress may persist if not handled properly.

Team development cycle starts again.

↑ **Leader's strategy : Supporting = Understanding**  
 \* Leaders of both old and new teams have to recognise the sentiments of the individuals and provide adequate support for them to adapt to the change.



## 4. STAR PERFORMERS AND AVERAGE PERFORMERS

### 4.1 BEST PRACTICES:

#### *We are all BIG STARS*

*Mr Kwong Hiu Ming of Hong Kong Coerver Coaching Soccer Academy gave us tips on holding whole team responsible for results.*

*Being stars, international soccer players with different nationalities, ages, characters and cultures have to compete to outstand their performance. But, they are united by the only goal of "winning this football match". Everyone in the soccer team has a role/position to play. Their roles/positions are all inter-dependent. Their roles are clear and all people in the team, be on the field or in the back-office are held accountable for the game score and the final victory.*

### 4.1 DEVELOPING TEAMWORK AMONG STAR PERFORMERS

Many a time, we are facing a team of professionals in their own fields or disciplines. Sometimes, we are facing a team of star performers competing among themselves. These will somehow create some problems to the teamworks as these professionals are willfully or un-willfully sacrificing the team goals for their own agenda.

Making use of the "Character Strengths" may be one of the solutions. "Character Strengths" can be defined as habitual emotional responses to action, or to its prospect or continuance. Like all habits, they are developed by repetition. While character strengths are emotional habits, skills are mental or physical habits. To make teamwork successful, positive character strengths are identified and respected by the leader who starts playing the eight "Magic" elements from unifying the team with mission and goals. This is to achieve team effectiveness through mutual respect, i.e. leaders can build up the star members' cohesiveness through treasuring and encouraging their individual positive character strengths.

Reference :  
Max Taylor, *Effectiveness in Education and Training : The Theory and Practice of Personal Development.*

### 4.2 DEVELOPING TEAMWORK AMONG STAR PERFORMERS AND AVERAGE PERFORMERS

While star performers strive to win, average performers may easily give up. Star performers may even feel resentful at working with the average performers.

#### TIPS for managing this type of teams

- Setting rewards aligning for both individual and team goals. Other than individual's rewards, there should be rewards for supporting individual team members' contribution to the team goals.
- Interdependent relationship: average performers are assigned roles according to their abilities, share the workload and achieve goals together with star performers.
- Mutual trust and respect: building rapport among performers through staff activities and gathering.
- Succession planning: star performers are encouraged to coach, train and support average performers, which might be set as a pre-requisite for promotion to higher rank.



## 5. TEAM UP WITH OUTSIDE TEAMS

Teamwork is magic! Successful team work becomes more rewarding. Building teamwork can be extended outside the organisation as well.

### 5.1 TEAM UP WITH THE PUBLIC : PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE

The Fire Services Department actively teams up with the community to promote the public awareness on fire safety. They set up public co-ordination units to liaise with the community leaders effectively under their mission of protecting life and property from fire. Fire protection can be more effective than fire fighting. Annually the Department strategically involve members from the community to plan different campaigns and public education programmes. "Fire Safety Ambassadors" programme is one of the Department's remarkable projects that have successfully mobilized the local citizens in reporting potential fire hazards to them so that some preventive measures can be taken.

### 5.2 TEAM UP WITH CUSTOMERS : CUSTOMERS ARE ADVISORS

In order to encourage all sales teams to get hold of the ever-changing and diversified product knowledge of more than 20 sports brands, the Swire Resources Ltd has launched the "Giga Sports Specialist Program" to accredit employees' knowledge in seven categories of sports products. The Company even involves the customers in the design of training programmes. This teaming up activities not only increase customer satisfaction, but also allow sales team to serve better by understanding more about the customers' needs. This is a win-win teaming process that builds up trust and confidence between customers and sales team.

### 5.3 TEAM UP WITH GOVERNMENT BODIES : A BIG ECHO

To help the small and medium enterprise (SME) survive from the keen competition with the great enterprises, Professor Edward Chen, former vice-Chancellor of the Lingnan University, encourages them to make use of the Government's assistance. They can team up to voice out their peculiar needs to the respective departments. Trade and Industry Department (TID) is in fact one of the helpful government bodies that provides invaluable support to the SMEs. They have set up and effectively run the Support and Consultation Centre for SMEs.

## 5. TEAM UP WITH OUTSIDE TEAMS

### 5.4 TEAM UP WITH SUPPLIERS AND CONTRACTORS : 1+1>2

The success of some retail firms highly relies on their suppliers to replenish the stock on time so as to maintain the availability of merchandise on sale, thereby keeping the quality of customer services. To realize this idea, mutual trust between them is the key of success. They have to develop and keep timely communication on customer requirements, exchange statistics over order history and updated market trends.

Another example is Rock Island Arsenal's Contracting Office in the UK. It has established planning teams that include suppliers and contractors who work together to configure the final supplies contract. The contract development process is based on the Government representatives highlight, project requirements and constraints, and suppliers/ contractors consider their own capabilities to meet these requirements. If the contract is successfully awarded, the selected suppliers and contractors continue to participate in the Arsenal team effort to monitor performance.

By early 1997, this teaming approach covers approximately 60% of all non-routine or non-standard contracts.

The benefits achieved include minimised inspection, testing, and acceptance costs; projects completed ahead of schedule; and projects completed below awarded contract price and government estimate.

Teaming up with customers and suppliers has already become a commonplace in the business world.

### 5.6 TEAM UP WITH COMPETITORS : YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURHOOD

Competitors can team up to share solutions and tackle problems together. For instance, hotels solve their problems for irregular large banquets and meetings within their pre-set networks. They set up a 'borrowing' network among themselves, especially within the same region. Each member only needs to stock up the minimum quantity of large equipment, banquet tables and chairs, and even banquet crockery and cutlery. The hotel network members will check availability of certain equipment items at other hotels before purchasing.

Also, this can also solve the problem of overbooking hotel rooms. Within the network, they can secure availability of rooms for customers, at least a close substitute in the same level.

## 6. POSITIONING YOUR TEAM

Winning teams can check how far they have achieved. Positioning the team and moving along the team development checkpoints.



## 7. CONCLUSION

There is nothing magic about team building; similar approaches have been tried in big and small enterprises, with notable success. The Dragon Boat Model summarises different models and practices that have evolved over decades. To stay competitive and be a team player, you have eight 'magic' to turn your team into a winning 'dragon boat racing' team: an inspiring and unifying mission, concrete and specific goals, communication within and among teams, accountability of both individual and team, a supportive team environment, all team members well trained, aligning rewards with goals as well as adaptive leadership throughout the four checkpoints of team development.

Team development is practically essential for smooth transition from company growth stage to maturing stage. Such team competency also lays a concrete foundation for continuous company expansion with a higher complexity of working members both internally and externally. Team competency is a major business competency. Team development enables members with different capabilities to meet their continuous challenges in this competitive and ever-changing world. This can also retain valuable human resources in our highly mobile working environment. Without doubt, team development has been a powerful organisational tool in contemporary enterprises.

*"Getting good players is easy. Getting them to play together is the hard part."*

*-Casey Stengel*

*"Coming together is a beginning.*

*Keeping together is progress.*

*Working together is success."*

*-Henry Ford*