

Thinking Together: Important to Leadership Team Success



I love to think. I find regular pondering of important issues sharpens my skills as a leader and entrepreneur. However, in my work with leadership teams I've discovered that others don't value thinking as a leadership skill in the way that I do. I find this interesting since the ability to "think together" as a team of leaders is necessary to achieve business goals and outcomes.

In my work with leadership teams I frequently invite them to "think together" about issues they face. This invitation is often met with puzzling looks and questions. However, I submit that "thinking together" is possible and a necessary skill for people who share leadership responsibility within organizations.

Far too often leadership teams waste time because they don't take the time to think through important factors and issues before they act. Leadership teams rapidly converge on problem solving without knowing if they are doing the right work. This happens because leaders fail to think first. There are strategies leadership teams can use to ensure proper "thinking" occurs before taking action. I offer the

following ideas for your consideration.

1. Include strategic questions about important items on the agenda. Strategic questions spark thinking between members on a team. What is our general reaction to the issue we are confronted with at this time? Do we know all we need to know to address this issue? Who should be involved in working on the issue? What will success look like once we've addressed this matter? Fear is often a factor in leadership, as we prepare to lead our way out of a problem. What will we do to remain courageous during this time? These questions make people think together. The answers often yield important information and strategies that facilitate problem solving.
2. Engage in "strength based" thinking, inviting a leadership team to address issues from a position of shared strength. Strength based thinking focuses on the strengths that exist among team members enabling them to effectively address presenting issues. This approach activates "thinking together" as teams spend less time beating themselves up for what they can't do. The emphasis is placed on what the team can do to address issues. Something powerful happens when teams realize the answers are in the room. Strength based thinking is energizing and empowering as every leader's strength is applied to addressing issues.
3. Invite someone to play Devil's Advocate to open solutions to other points of view that spark the leadership team to "think together" one more time with feeling. The Devil's Advocate should be a trusted colleague who understands the issues enough to respectfully challenge ideas and present new points of view. Ask them to present the team with new questions to consider. The insertion of this information can take a good solution to a greater place.

We are working in difficult times. Leaders don't have time to revisit issues repeatedly due to poor thinking. When leadership teams practice "thinking together" prior to acting, they create an opportunity to problem solve with the right focus, actions, and energy at the onset of addressing an issue.

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