

Unify

As a leader, you want your employees to be happy and fulfilled at work. Keeping a team of professionals motivated to come back each day and produce great work – because they *want* to – is a big deal, though it isn't always easy to ensure. Is it enough to empower employees with autonomy, offer them a flexible work schedule, or provide them access to professional development opportunities to keep them productive and engaged?

All of these things are certainly steps in the right direction, but if you've ever heard someone say – or maybe *you've even said* – that it's the people they work with that keep them there, it's easy to see how there's more to satisfaction and retention than employee benefits. Often, it's cohesion and camaraderie that play significant roles in how we feel about our jobs, as well as the level of a team's overall success.

All in all, having bonded coworkers is the crux of a successful team and building such a team can be attainable. Read on for more information about how to get started.

What it means to be a team

In the same way that a team doesn't exist merely because a group of individuals puts on the same jersey, neither does a team automatically form simply because a bunch of people all show up to the same place of work each day. Fusion requires a sense of connectedness. It's working together toward a common goal and caring just as much about the success of your coworkers as the achievement of that goal.

Create cohesion

As a leader, building a unified team starts with you. Here are four ways to lay the groundwork for a more bonded team of employees:

- *Set clear goals and expectations*

In order for your employees to work toward the same goals, they must know exactly what they're working toward – both as individuals contributing specific skills and expertise, and as a team that understands how each of their collective parts is crucial to the outcome.

- *Get to know your employees*

Knowing even a little about your employees' personal lives – their interests, hobbies, or family, etc. – creates a bond. It shows that you're interested in them as a person and softens an otherwise more formal employee-manager relationship.

- *Regularly bring together team members*

Get together with your employees as an entire group as often as possible. Gathering as a group – to track the status of a project, to talk through a specific issue, or even as a casual check-in – can be beneficial for everyone. Not only can everyone learn from others' experiences or offer feedback on a project, but having regular interaction also helps team members to maintain or strengthen interpersonal relationships.

- *Provide team-based evaluations and incentives*

While it is important to recognize and reward your employees as individuals, it's just as vital to do the same for the team as a whole. Doing so authentically furthers a team-centric atmosphere and serves as a reminder that each person has a role in the success of the entire group.

Bond with other bosses

As a leader, you're a part of a potentially less obvious team – the cohort of other managers and supervisors. Whether or not your agency conducts regular meetings among the organization's leadership, it's a good idea to form relationships within your own peer group. Learning about your peers' best practices with their teams can inform your engagement style with your own team. Plus, all of the benefits outlined above for employees go just the same for managers and supervisors: you'll feel more connected to the mission and vision of the organization, better understand your role and overall contribution, and have a sounding board for problem-solving.

Discover how you can build a more cohesive team with the help of a free, personalized management skills consultation session. Call the program any time, day or night, to schedule your session with a licensed EAP consultant or to receive information and helpful resources.

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