

The Scoop- July 2009

À La Mode Teams: *Ideas to enhance creativity, effectiveness, and positivity on teams*

In a recent dream, I was pouring clear water into a bucket that had mud caked on the bottom. The fresh water stirred up the muddy water but remained murky regardless of how much new water I poured. The mud always settled, comfortably at the bottom and the water stayed cloudy.

It is a great metaphor for dealing with conflict on teams. Unresolved issues are like the mud in the bucket. Resentments, grudges, and disagreements will muck up team interactions and results delivery no matter how much new team development work you pour into the system. Instead of wasting energy, time, and resources on trying to displace the muck, what if you clean the bucket out first?

Try this exercise as a first step to get to the bottom of conflict constructively:

1. Invite team members to identify all the conflicts they are wrestling with in two categories. Positivity/Relationship issues (the way they show up and interact as a team) and Productivity/Task issues (what, why and how work gets done). Have each person create a chart individually.
2. Then on another piece of paper, ask team members to make three columns using Eckhart Tolle's method from "The Power of Now" with the labels: Accept It-Change It-Leave It.
 - In the **ACCEPT IT** column, ask members to list the items they are willing to accept. *Consider factors and constraints that are not likely to change no matter what you do.*
 - In **CHANGE IT**, ask team members to list the items they want to improve, resolve, enhance, or fix. *Look for what you believe is possible to influence.*
 - In **LEAVE IT**, ask team member to list items they are willing to let go of fully and completely. *In the extreme "leave it" means you find another team to work with. In this case, consider things you can stop giving your attention to even though you can't fully accept it.*
3. Focus your work as a team on the CHANGE IT column. Create a compiled list of everyone's ideas in Positivity and Productivity columns on a flip chart. For each item start the conversation by inviting team members to discuss, "What is wanting to happen? Let all voices be heard then decide which items deserve the team's attention.

Constructive Interaction is a common opportunity area on the Team Diagnostic Assessment™. To get to the bottom of your team's potential; contact shawn@brainstormingalamode.com.

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