

Team Leadership Dynamics

A Short Summary of Themes Regarding Leadership Teams and Gender-Related Matters

Sources: *Leading Teams* by J. Richard Hackman, Harvard Business School Press, 2002
Becoming Colleagues by Carol E. Becker, Josey-Bass, 2000

Hackman and his associates studied working teams in a variety of settings—airliners, orchestras, athletics, etc., to find out what makes good teams tick and bad ones go awry. Becker looks at gender dynamics and offers suggestions by which men and women can enhance partnership.

A. Conditions that enhance a group or team's prospects of achieving its purposes (Hackman)

- It is a real team, rather than just in name
- There is a compelling direction for its work
- Has an enabling structure that facilitates rather than impedes teamwork
- Operates within a supportive organization context
- Has available ample expert coaching in teamwork

B. Essential features of real teams (Hackman)

- A team task: Clarity of purpose, achievable goals
- Clear boundaries: Neither under- nor over-bounded
- Clearly specified authority to manage their work processes
- Stability over some reasonable period of time

C. A provocative statement on teams vs. the influence of an individual leader:

For all the attention being given to top-management teams these days, my reading of the management literature is that successful organizations almost always are led by a single talented and courageous human being rather than by a team, no matter how many well-qualified members the team contains. As numerous senior managers have discovered, bucks rarely stop at teams. Moreover, the most engaging and powerful statements of corporate vision invariably are the product of a single intelligence, set forth by a leader willing to take the risk of establishing collective purposes that lie just beyond what others believe to be the limits of the organization's capability. (Hackman, p. 43)

D. Nine criteria for mixed-gender teams (Becker)

- Reflect: effective teams continually reflect about themselves, teammates, the whole team
- Learn: moving beyond assumptions about men and women; studying, really learning
- Believe: work has meaning; we truly believe women and men are coequal peers
- Name: Deeper knowing; "naming" each other as do Native Americans
- Include: Requires opening ourselves to each other, being open to be changed by others
- Communicate: recognize differing ways of communicating
- Work: Working together, building trust, listening, discussing boundaries, intimacy limits
- Influence: Knowing how to use power positively, non-destructively
- Model: Showing others the way to effective male-female partnerships