



Why Losing "Us" Will Lead to "Me, Me, Me"

Many organisations have lost "us" – the team mentality – and unknowingly continue to incentivise "me, me, me" cultures. But it is only "us" – the employees who are willing to work together – who can thrive and grow your business, not only "me, me, me." Obviously, individual talent has a key role to play in a company's long-term success, so long as the individuals perform in conjunction with the team effort.

Consequently, it is critical that leadership acknowledge this phenomenon and pay more attention to the kind of behaviour they are actually incentivising in their organisation. Too often, companies spend far too much effort and money on inappropriate and ineffective incentive programmes, ignoring the need for fresh, innovative, and "sustainable" approaches, which are long overdue.

Consider the following simple questions that can help your leadership team assess the situation in your organisation.

1) Does your current incentive programme encourage only individual or only team performance? Or both? If you pause to answer this question, the remaining questions are meaningless, as you truly need a fair amount of reflection time to understand and assess why you cannot answer this question right away. If you can answer the question readily, then what is the rationale behind the incentive programme? Do all your employees clearly understand the programme? And does the programme achieve its objectives?

2) Do you "factually" know if the majority of your employees understand your business strategy? Do they contribute any input at all in defining your business strategy? If they don't, do you still link organisation performance with the employees' variable incentive scheme? Think carefully about this question and consider what actually happens. For example, what happens if the strategy goes wrong? Do employees ever question or challenge this policy? If they do, are you willing to listen to their concerns with an open mind? And if employees do not have any input into company strategy, why not?

”Losing “us” — the true and authentic team mentality — to either the competition or to poor morale and unfulfilled talent is such a waste.”



3) Do you communicate your business strategy to the entire workforce or only to the management team? Do individual employees understand how their job fits into the company's – and the unit's – operation?

4) Do you allow leadership to be appraised by their subordinates? Do employees have a secure platform in which to express their concerns, contempt, or endorsement of their managers on a regular basis – say, quarterly? Or is it a top-down “one-way street”? In that case, no employees can provide constructive feedback about their managers, but managers have permission to say positive and negative comments about their subordinates. As a result, what emerges is the risk of employees potentially providing artificial feedback about the state of the organisation, not only because they believe that is what is expected but also because they feel threatened if they tell the truth. This false testimony can go beyond leadership and reach the ears of the board members, key shareholders, and other investors at large who are not directly linked to the management team. In other words, no one can accurately and objectively articulate how deep is the river!

5) Do you objectively evaluate your managers on their ability to identify, engage, develop, retain, and empower their teams? If so, do you “actually” measure their progress and outcome on an ongoing basis (validating that this process is in fact happening across the whole organisation)? Or, do you simply let managers decide arbitrarily what talent to hire, develop, promote, and retain – thereby significantly increasing the risks blocking potential business, as well as people growth opportunities, by depending solely on the ability of a very small number of people without any systematic process and practice in place for validation and measurement?

In this age of super data flows and advanced technology, which allow us to make fact-based decisions as readily as playing a child's game at a fraction of what it used to cost, there should be no room for individual bias and manipulation. It is the collective power of a network of unbiased observation and assessment that should fuel the energy of your outperforming modern organisation.



Losing “us” – the true and authentic team mentality – to either the competition or to poor morale and unfulfilled talent is such a waste. To ensure long-term sustainable success, encourage both team and individual efforts, match efforts with appropriate incentives, involve employees in company goals, and, most importantly, create an environment in which employees feel safe to speak their minds – and hold everyone accountable at every level without any exceptions.

This perspective on work, available to any leader who wishes only the best for all stakeholders, is the real future of work.

About the Author: Ali Kursun is a Senior Consultant at sparkChief & Co., a consulting firm that helps organisations to engage, develop and retain only the right people to grow their business.

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sparkChief & Co.

25 Route de Lullier
1254 Jussy, GE, Switzerland

Tel +41 22 346 24 05
inquire@sparkchief.com
www.sparkchief.com

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