



TEAMS CHANGE

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Teams are a highly valued component of today's modern workplace. And there is a variety of books and courses out there to prove it dedicated to how you can get the best of out your team and how to build an effective team.

Teams are a critical element of any business and there is no doubt that behind most successful businesses, you will find a strong, cohesive team.

But how do you know if you really have a strong team? And if you do believe you have this strongly desirable team, then how do you reconcile that belief when team members want to leave your team?

When I was pondering this topic, I recalled situations in the past where a business has had a strong team one minute and then just months later, the core of that team no longer remained.

So, is it possible to have an employee who contributes strongly to the team, but who is not on the same path as your business? And more importantly, are there any tell-tale signs of this phenomenon?

At first glance, these are illogical questions or observations. 'Of course,' I hear you say, 'all my employees are committed to helping the business achieve its goals, and isn't this a true indication of a team?' But is this all there is to a team?

One of the key components of a team is a reference to people striving towards a common goal. In business, that goal is usually achieving business results. But if this is the only way in which we judge whether we have a team or not, is this enough.

Too often, I have found myself consoling a business owner who has been blindsided by the resignation of an employee who they saw as a core part of their team. There has been almost a sense of betrayal and a personal hurt as the business owner tried to think of what could possibly have gone wrong. But the reality is that nothing necessarily had gone wrong.

What is often the case in these situations is that the employee, while working towards a common goal, was not actually on the same path as you. They were on their own path, which had some similarities to yours. An easy way to think of this is a parallel path that at some point diverges in another direction.

'How is this possible?', I hear you say, 'I would have seen signs of this'. It may be that an employee's ultimate goal was to achieve a target or reach a milestone as part of

a career move, not to actually grow your business. Growing your business may have been a minor goal on the way to achieving their larger goal. They are not the same end goal. So, if we re-visit the definition of a team, do we really have a common goal and, if not, is that necessarily a bad thing?

This may be a somewhat controversial statement, but the members of a team who have worked well together and performed well may have quite different goals. If we can acknowledge this concept, then we might not feel that sense of betrayal when an employee leaves the team.

It is a fact of life in business that employees will come and go — some may even come back again. But if we damage a business relationship due to feelings of hurt, then this will close the door on any future business relationship. Remember also that employees can be ambassadors for your business, even once they have left your employment.

Too often, I see business owners take it personally when an employee leaves their organisation. This hurt can manifest itself in ways that can make an employee's last working experience with your business one of negativity. Many good years working at your business can be ruined by a less than ideal end.

Is this how you would like to leave an organisation? If the answer is 'no', then ensure that you do what you can to make a resigning team member's last days respectful and let them know that you appreciate the contribution they have made to your business in the time they've worked there.

Remember, too, the negative impact that a person's leaving can have on the remaining team members. For this reason, when someone moves on, it is important to keep motivation high for those team members still with the organisation.

Is there a tell-tale sign that a team member may be preparing to exit?

The unpredictability of people is the one aspect of people management that will never change. Sure, there may be pointers such as a sudden change in motivation levels or signs of distraction at work. But equally, there may be absolutely no sign at all.

Control your emotions — employees come and go. If you don't burn your bridges, that great employee might very well come back to the fold in the future — and next time around, they will probably bring even more knowledge and skills to the table to again help you achieve your business goals. ■

Robyn Anderson is a Fellow of Australian Human Resources Institute and the Managing Director of HR Navigation Australia, an HR and workplace relations consultancy, specialising in providing outsourced HR manager services to small and medium businesses. To contact HR Navigation, call 1300 669 747 or visit www.hrnavigation.com.au