

# 29

## TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A HIGH-PERFORMANCE WORK TEAM

### **Tyrone A. Holmes**

*Tyrone A. Holmes, Ed.D., is the president of T.A.H. Performance Consultants Inc., a full-service human resource development consulting firm specializing in the enhancement of individual and organizational performance. As a dynamic speaker, trainer, consultant, and coach, Holmes has helped countless individuals enhance their ability to communicate, resolve conflict, and solve problems in culturally diverse settings. He has created and copyrighted numerous training systems, and speaks on a variety of communication, diversity, and consulting topics including creating culturally empowered environments, improving communication in culturally diverse settings, and leading teams in the 21st century.*



### **Contact Information:**

T.A.H. Performance Consultants, Inc.  
30307 Sterling Drive  
Novi, MI 48377  
248-669-5294  
[tyrone@doctorholmes.net](mailto:tyrone@doctorholmes.net)  
[www.doctorholmes.net](http://www.doctorholmes.net)

**Overview** Over the past 20 years, there has been a significant change in how organizations structure themselves to do business. Whether they are corporations, governmental entities, educational institutions, or nonprofit agencies, more and more organizations are moving away from traditional hierarchical work structures and toward team-based approaches to work. Teams offer many potential benefits including increased involvement, development, and empowerment of employees; more effective use of a diverse array of employee skills and capabilities; improved problem solving and decision making; increased creativity; and improved work processes and performance. However, many teams have failed to achieve these successes. This can occur for a variety of reasons, but the most significant reason is the failure to develop the conditions necessary for the creation of a high-performance work team (HPWT).

An HPWT is a group (two or more) of interdependent individuals who work together in a specific manner to achieve a common objective.

As its name indicates, what separates an HPWT from any other team is its ability to perform at the highest level for an extended period of time and to accomplish its work in the most efficient and effective manner possible. Although purposes, objectives, and roles can change from one team to the next, HPWTs do the following on a consistent basis:

1. Develop goals and plans.
2. Enhance communication among members.
3. Develop and maintain positive relationships among members.
4. Solve problems and make decisions on a timely basis.
5. Successfully manage conflict.
6. Facilitate productive meetings.
7. Clarify roles for team members.
8. Operate in a productive manner.
9. Exhibit effective team leadership.
10. Provide development opportunities for team members.

This handout defines the ten characteristics of a high-performance work team.

# TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A HIGH-PERFORMANCE WORK TEAM

- 1. Develop goals and plans.** An HPWT begins with a clearly defined mission that describes the specific purpose for the team's existence. In addition, the team sets goals on a regular basis and is effective at developing and implementing plans. The team members are clear about goals and priorities, and consistently act in ways that support the team's overall mission and goals.
- 2. Enhance communication among members.** An HPWT has members that freely share information, are open and honest with each other, listen to each other, and provide each other with both positive and constructive feedback. The team also employs a specific process to facilitate the dissemination of information on a regular basis (e.g., informational meetings).
- 3. Develop and maintain positive relationships among members.** An HPWT has members that respect, support, cooperate with, and trust each other. Such teams proactively work to build positive relationships by providing opportunities for social interaction, by giving assignments that put staff into contact with individuals they don't normally interact with, and by providing cross-training opportunities.
- 4. Solve problems and make decisions on a timely basis.** An HPWT is effective at identifying and resolving problems, as well as making successful group decisions. In addition, the team involves all members in the problem-solving and decision-making process.
- 5. Successfully manage conflict.** An HPWT is effective at identifying and resolving conflicts in a timely and mutually beneficial fashion. High-performing teams also minimize the occurrence of conflict by implementing communication and conflict resolution training, by incorporating ongoing team-building activities, and by encouraging the active participation of all team members.
- 6. Facilitate productive meetings.** An HPWT has effective, productive, well-managed meetings that efficiently use team members' time. Every meeting is focused, timely, and necessary, and is used to solve problems, make decisions, disseminate information, and enhance team member skills.
- 7. Clarify roles for team members.** An HPWT has members who know their responsibility and authority, understand the roles that are played by others, and use everyone's skills and abilities. Team members are also clear about the connection between team goals and their day-to-day activities.
- 8. Operate in a productive manner.** An HPWT has the resources and skills needed for success, is able to complete its work in a timely fashion, and utilizes quality and productivity measures to evaluate overall *efficiency* (how well team processes are operating) and *effectiveness* (the quality of the team's products and services).

---

To customize this handout for your audience, download it to your hard drive from the accompanying CD-ROM. The document can then be opened, edited, and printed using Microsoft Word or another popular word processing application.

- 9. Exhibit effective team leadership.** An HPWT has leaders that define team goals and priorities, facilitate collaboration among team members, manage team performance, and generate opportunities for success. Successful team leaders encourage active participation, clarify priorities on a continuous basis, and work to create a supportive team environment.
- 10. Provide development opportunities for team members.** An HPWT provides ongoing development opportunities for team members in technical, interpersonal, and team-building areas. This includes the application of a variety of developmental interventions such as classroom training, coaching and mentoring, development assignments, feedback-based activities, and self-directed learning.

---

To customize this handout for your audience, download it to your hard drive from the accompanying CD-ROM. The document can then be opened, edited, and printed using Microsoft Word or another popular word processing application.