Partnering

What is Partnering?

Organizations need people to work effectively both within groups and between groups. Bringing a product to market requires close coordination between engineering, design, marketing, and other groups. In these situations, very strong teamwork within teams can actually get in the way of their effectiveness together. It can lead to an "us against them" attitude in which teams resist each other's demands and even compete with each other for resources, rewards, or credit.

There are a variety of ways that people can work together. For a working partnership to exist there must be mutual goals. In any cooperative work relationship, people are motivated by the benefits they receive or expect from working together. Sometimes groups have individual goals that are unique to each party, but can be satisfied through temporary cooperation. But for a genuine working partnership to form, a clear mutual goal is a necessity. It is this mutuality that makes partnering unique as a form of cooperation.

There are four key components of partnering: one "what" and three "hows." The "what" of partnering is mutual goal; partnering cannot work unless groups recognize some mutual goals. The three "hows" are openness, respect, and shared responsibility/risk.

The principles of partnering provides a base for building solid working relationships between groups or organizations that have different interests, agendas, or objectives – but that must nevertheless work together to achieve mutual goals. They can be used at the beginning of a relationship to develop clarity and forestall misunderstandings, or at any time during the relationship to resolve or prevent problems.

Partnering works. It has resulted in significant improvements in the working relationships between internal departments, customers and vendors, manufacturers and distributors, contractors and subcontractor, parties to a joint venture, and unions and management.

And it can produce substantial savings and efficiency gains by reducing duplication of effort, errors and rework, misunderstandings, and "patch" wars.

Partnering Features:

Survey

A Partnering survey is distributed to members of the relevant departments. It helps to measure the effectiveness of working relationships between or among teams.

Report

A Partnering report provides feedback, from one or more other teams in your organization, about your group. It summarizes these perceptions of you as partners and includes advice for improvement.

Training

Accompanying the Partnering survey is a module that can be used for follow-up training based upon the survey results.

How Do I Know If I Need It?

An organization should consider measuring working relationships with the Partnering survey whenever it:

♦ Wants to increase quality, reduce time and costs, and increase productivity in areas that require the effort of more than one department.

♦ Has long-term relationships with its customers and wants to increase customer retention or serve customers more effectively and efficiently.

♦ Has tried to implement the concept of "internal customers" and has had limited success.

♦ Is engaged in an effort to re-design interdepartmental processes.

♦ Is involved in a joint venture with another organization.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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