



Is There an I in Team

As a general business consultant I will admit guilt that my professional colleagues perhaps created the “buzzword.” This is the word that sounds so good, but few even understand or care about its’ meaning. Now more news bytes, the instancy of communications, and books and theories with economic woes, how to build a better company, prepare for a new job, have taken us to new lows of ad nauseum. These “in” or “buzzwords” have taken over how we talk and think business, almost to the extreme. We are starting to believe them to be **REAL**.

Every office seems to have a number of cheap posters housed in cheaper frames strategically posted to help show the mission statement (buzzword) and the attitude (buzzword) of the team (buzzword) that is there to “service the customer”-buzz word. As I enter offices as a consultant and see plaques, signs, and picture frames I am surrounded by the new “motivator,” giving us such words as **teamwork, service, excellence, attitude, make it happen, believe and succeed.**

It’s enough for a consultant looking at the big picture (buzzword) of a company to want to vomit (future buzzword?). Each of these success sayings vary in their approach, but each intend to state intent and motivations. Always for the greater good of the company, or with innuendo, expected of all employees.

There are few, if any, posters I’ve seen that say “Listen to the employee,” or “Respect those that question facts.” These show merit, understanding, and might even allow the employee to feel part of it all, and not just a cog in wheel of corporate cow manure.

Thoughtful statements would take thought, and help one see that their industry is not built on lies and false optimism; instead, we have employees just blindly walking by these words of wisdom, ignoring the propaganda, or merely rolling their eyes.

Here’s one of my favorites, built around the ubiquitous “non compete agreement”:
“All customers belong to the company that built the relationship with the customer, and are not the partner or relationship with any one person in the company,”

That is the perfect buzzword statement, as it is dead wrong, and a dream of managers.

The reality is that most customers buy from the salesperson first, and that on average over half the business the company has with the client will be lost when the salesperson

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leaves.

This fault statement, provided to me just recently by a “proud” employee at a struggling company leads my concerns. She said:

“There is no ‘i’ in team.”

This just sounds good. It seems ONE. Synergy=1+1=3.

Sounding good is not the same as **being real**. There are plenty of I’s in teams, and there must be, because it is the grouping of different personalities and skill developments, intellectual capacities, and human frailties that make a team perform.

There must be “I’s” in teams, and that we seldom recognize who the “key” players are, or what we must be focused on, is half the issue of trying to be something that is really **just a word**.

Business Dictionary defines “team” as:

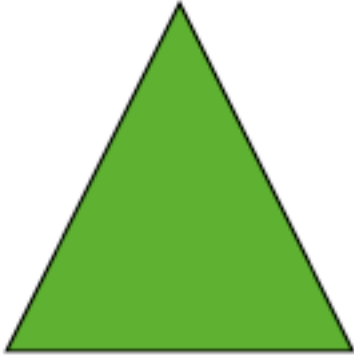
“A group of people with a full set of complementary skills required to complete a task, job, or project. Team members 1) operate with a high degree of interdependence, 2) share authority and responsibility for self-management, 3) are accountable for the collective performance, and 4) work toward a common goal and shared reward(s). A team becomes more than just a collection of people when a strong sense of mutual commitment creates synergy, thus generating performance greater than the sum of the performance of its individual members.”

Does anyone really believe this? Does this truly happen, or is this a definition of what should be?

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As a consultant, if building a team, my first rules would be:



1. Do not throw sand while in the sandbox.
2. Share the sandbox toys or I'll throw you out
3. Don't be mean, talk too much, or take over the sandbox
I'll be back in a week to see how you are doing.

A week would pass, and my second set of rules for a TEAM would be to:



1. Know your own assets
2. Know your own liabilities
3. Share them with other kids in the sandbox, and ask them what their strengths and weaknesses were

Another week would pass and the sandbox team is now starting. We are identifying strengths and weaknesses, and the realities of our own liabilities, and what the consequences will be of our working together.

This is where governments and companies, run in much of the same protocols of "procedure with execution," begin to believe themselves with these motivational or open-ended statements.

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Of course there is an I in team. There are many I's. Of course we are only as good as the sum of our parts, and of course these parts can increase in value by fine-tuning. Don't be fooled. The motivational stuff just says it. And it might even be wrong. Learn what is **real** about the work situation and develop **what should be real**.

Here's an example: in the foodservice equipment and supply industry, as with many others, recent years have brought the buzz word "valued added."

Value added has been classically interpreted as: "lower the price, make it do the same function, but let the form vary." This is easily translated by "it's on sale" Americans to cheapen the product, substitute if necessary, but lower the price.

Correctly interpreted first comes from what the true and correct definition is of the user. To the client that says "value engineer" this is he or she truly saying "improve the value and function, or "lower the price."

To the foodservice supply salesperson, and company, does this mean sell what is "value added" that is in their buying group, so that they gain a price advantage, or does it mean even more, to change the specification so broadly that it truly means "product changed". Or are there actual business standards and ethics within the industry group that knows to play fair with their competitors and truly "define" value engineering the same way.

Sorry, it goes back to the sandbox. To the rules that are set. To who the bullies are, and to our understanding that the majority of business axioms we read, hear and say are not real, true, or any part of what we really do.

Don't trust those posters. Motivate and become motivated by form and function, and by wanting to. This leads to cause and effect, and is how effective long-term ethical sales are made, and customers taught that "on sale" has nothing to do with the price of something.