

## **CEO Tip of the Month: The Senior Management as a Team—Is It Really Necessary**

by Guido Quelle

Let's get right to the point: the answer to the question above is an unequivocal "no!" That was the short version of this month's article.

Now for the long version: the word "team" is likely one of the most overused terms there are when it comes to collaboration, projects and interaction. The strategy team, the accounting team, the project team—everybody's on the same team, and we're all one big, happy family. Besides the fact that the constant inflation of the word "team" isn't remotely helpful, the idea of a team can be extremely out of place at the Senior Management level. For example, some management authors claim the Senior Management should be a team, and should present itself as one. The question that remains unanswered here is: why?

A team is a small group of people who work together toward a shared goal, often for a fixed period of time, and who support one another in reaching that goal. That may not be an absolutely precise or detailed definition of the word "team," but let's take it as a working definition. Now you could argue that above all young companies that were founded by two or three people tend to have a highly team-like Senior Management. The founding of a company is often based on private ties and friendships, and especially during the initial phase of these start-ups the Senior Management very often truly is a team.

So much for the exception, now let's talk about the rule: in most cases, the Senior Management is something that has grown and evolved over years, and the CEO often only works with the other members for a few years—in some cases, because the CEO him- or herself switches companies. The top level of companies is usually populated by self-assured personalities who already have successful career paths behind them and who have very clear notions about what they want to shape in the company and how. Needless to say, the members of the Senior Management very often have to come to an agreement, and of course it can't hurt if individual members have an interest in the success of their fellow members. But in most cases these concerns about their fellow members' success definitely have their limits—just as they should.

Neither should CEOs go to any great lengths to ensure the Senior Management becomes a team, nor should the remaining members waste too much energy on making it happen. It's much more important that the members of the Senior Management agree on a way of working together, actively live out shared leadership principles within the company, and ensure that agreed-upon results are actually delivered. If these actions are based on a shared foundation of values, then there's nothing to keep the Senior Management from successfully cooperating as a "work group." If a CEO can successfully keep the animosities often found in the Senior Management in check, if they also succeed in increasing members' interest in the success of their counterparts, and if by so doing they manage to channel energies in the right direction, namely growth, then they've done a good job. Generally speaking, at the Senior Management level classic team-building is neither necessary nor helpful.

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