

Leading Teams: Setting the Stage for Great Performances

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Are teams one of the answers in our quest for greater accountability and achievement?

Harvard Professor J. Richard Hackman uses his extensive research on team dynamics and productivity to help us answer that question. His book, *Leading Teams: Setting the Stage for Great Performances*, offers advice on how to create the conditions for successful teams.

No leader, he says, can make teams successful. Leaders can, however, increase the odds of success by making sure that teams have membership that is clearly defined and stable over time; a common purpose that requires them to work interdependently; direction that is clear, consequential and challenging; structures (tasks, composition and norms) that facilitate good performance; support in the form of rewards, information and education; and expert coaching at key transition points.

Teams with these conditions, he says, are likely to perform better than the individuals would separately. The book could easily provide the basis for a district or building training program or it might serve as a checklist of conditions to consider when forming teams, whether teacher teams, site councils, task forces or district cabinets.

Hackman's book is well illustrated (primarily from business, university and coaching), based on extensive research, and easy to follow. This is the book I needed 10 years ago and one I can put to good use today.

(*Leading Teams: Setting the Stage for Great Performances* by J. Richard Hackman, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, Mass., 2002, 368 pp., \$29.95 hardcover)