

TEAMWORK



Teamwork Really Can Make The Dream Work!

The Ryder Cup is the biggest event in team golf, an event which, over the course of three days, demonstrates the power of team work like no other.

Using the world rankings as a guide, "on paper" the twelve players on the American team has historically always been far stronger. But golf, like life and business, isn't played on paper and the fact that the Europeans have secured eight victories from the previous eleven events bears that out.

Team golf does however have all the same human elements that are required for personal and business success including managing complex relationships, excellent communication, openness, honesty, trust, confidence, chemistry, self-belief along with the practical management requirements for preparation, planning, organisation and discipline.

The Ryder Cup repeatedly represents a time when collectively people can achieve heights of performance that they haven't previously or subsequently reached on their own, while others, some of whom are the greatest ever to play the game, have fallen well below expectations. This clearly cannot be an issue of ability but one of engagement, an appropriate platform, and commitment to the collective cause.

Simply hiring the most capable people is not a recipe for success, aligning people and their capability to a shared vision and goal rather than an individual objective, creates a sense of heightened responsibility, focus and therefore performance. A significant shift in mentality clearly can and needs to be achieved so that a fear of letting down your colleagues or teammates drives you to perform, especially when those team mates are people who you spend the rest of your career trying to outperform!

There are so many examples of this, back in 1995, when Seve Ballesteros, who had sadly lost control of much of his incredible golfing powers, but none of his desire to perform for the team, was so driven that he fought and fought to hold off defeat for as long as he could in the singles to offer hope and encouragement to his team mates having successfully guided, motivated and possibly frustrated his partner David Gilford to victory in the fourballs on Friday.

I previously worked with a chairman who had changed sector and as a result was low on experience and in reality, capability in both a different and more modern environment. He was however an amazing character who led with passion, care and personal engagement with his staff. Sometimes people just find a way!

Seve's role in that victory is a great example of the teams that exist within the team. The foursomes, pair's members of the team with a single ball which they play alternately creating a truly shared experience. It is a game where your actions, have a direct impact on the activity of your partner. It is a game without the need for apology and a team built on personality as much as capability. Like a short-term project or bid team, it is the combined, complementary strengths and the ability to support and encourage that is vital to success.

Fourball, similarly played in pairs, but with each player having their own ball provides a shared goal of victory but an individual impact on the route to success. It allows for flair freedom, brilliance, individual and collective momentum to cover periods of poor performance or unrewarded risk. It enables people to play to their individual strengths yet know that there is always the support and reassurance of a partner.

The often talked of performance of Ian Poulter over the final five holes on the Saturday in 2012 highlights this elevation of his performance to such heights that it enabled, partner and world number 1 at the time, Rory McIlroy to be the more than capable support act. Too often in business the character or maverick is stifled



and restricted by the need to conform, rather than encouraged to try new things, find likeminded clients, change the way that things are done. Their difference needs to be channelled not stifled and can build momentum and strike fear into the competition.

The power of momentum to change attitudes and approaches is often talked about in association with this game and in Ryder Cup competition generally but applies equally to the development of a positive and growth focused mindset. It can't necessarily be quantified but it is tangible often as a result of new business success, a positive event and heightened belief in the ability to achieve the objective.

There are however only 4 pairs on course in each set of matches on the first two days. The Captain therefore has the job of not only getting the best from his team but telling some of the best players in the world, who having qualified on merit, they are not good enough to play!

Supporting your staff when things are not perfect for them, ensuring they are ready to perform when called upon is just as important. Helping them understand their strengths and their part to play in achieving the objective is vital to the collective engagement in the ultimate goal.

The importance of the leadership and management skills of the captain cannot be underestimated, especially at the Ryder Cup. The Captains, have not been leaders throughout their career, in the main, they are highly successful in an individual sport. We will likely all be familiar with somebody underperforming after being promoted to do one thing because they are good at another!

Having a view of the big picture whilst focusing on the detail, the Captain has to provide the platform to enable his team and individuals to reach their maximum potential. This is vital as you are only as strong as your weakest link. In the autumn of 2010 in an unsurprisingly very wet Wales, the US team waterproofs leaked. This small but simple chink in their armour of supremacy undoubtedly had an impact on their performance and the overall result.

The Captains are, in the main, picked for their former success and capability, which should secure them the respect of their teams. It is no longer about their ability to perform on the course but be a motivator, strategist, psychologist, father figure among other things while being fluid enough in their thinking to adapt to good or poor results.

The last European team was led by Pdraig Harrington who had played on six teams, four of which were victorious. Like an internal promotion, he is now captaining five players who have previously been team mates. Whilst like a new hire, the captain is selected, they don't get the ability to select the majority of their own teams; they have to work with the individual complexities of the players that qualify.

The European team has been victorious through being greater than the sum of its parts, played incredible golf, created unbelievable theatre and offered plenty to learn to develop your teams.

Action:

Look for areas where you can draw parallels to help develop your teams, either as a leader or as a participant.

Giving you the power to reach your potential.