



TITAN TIMES

The monthly Titan Business Development Group, LLC newsletter
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January, 2012

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6 Tips to Maximize Your Team's Performance



A leader must focus on both the production and the positivity of his team because one without the other is not enough for long term success. Think about a team you have been a part of that was extremely successful. A team you really loved being on. While on this team you were invigorated, motivated, productive, and excited to be a part of what the team was working on. Take a moment to reflect and relish in the feelings you had about being on that team.

High functioning teams are don't usually just happen. The leader and team members work together to continually build and renew them. If you're a leader (or a team member with influence) here are six simple tips to maximize team success.

- **Establish expected behavior.** The best teams work together to define specific norms on how they will interact. It creates consistency and structure which can eliminate miscommunication. One example of a team norm is: We go directly to the person we have an issue with to attempt to resolve it before escalating it to a higher up.
- **Clarity on roles.** Each team member must be clear on their role as well as the roles of their teammates. Without role clarity there is confusion, frustration and sometimes competition. Spend time discussing roles and defining boundaries.
- **Communicate regularly.** Be sure to create a communication structure that works for your team and ensures important information is being shared with the right people at the right time. This might include a weekly staff meeting, using an intranet/bulletin board, or scheduling one-on-one meetings.
- **Define vision and goals.** When we are clear on what we want, we will attract it. This Law applies to your team as well. If you were to ask each team member individually, "What are the vision and goals of our team?" would they all say the same thing? Or would you hear a variety of answers. The team must all be very clear on their purpose and their goals.
- **Get to know each team member personally.** Do you know about your team member's lives away from work? What is important to them? Who is significant in their lives? What do they do for fun? Don't forget to let down some walls and be human with your staff.
- **Have fun with a purpose.** Even senior executives like to have fun at work. The key is to make sure it is not (at least not always) fun for fun's sake. There should be a purpose to it.

If you would like information or help with team building or, possibly, even on mapping individual and collective behavioral profiles to help identify potential team members by natural tendencies, contact us today!



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The Home Office Deduction

With unemployment still near the highest rate in decades, it is not surprising to find many people working out of their homes. Now may be a good time to review the criteria for claiming a deduction for the business use of part of a person's residence.



Your home office must be used in a trade or business activity. You cannot take a deduction if you use your home for a profit-seeking activity that is not a trade or business. For example, if you use part of your home to manage your personal investments, you cannot take a home office deduction.

The home office must be used regularly and exclusively for business. You must regularly use a room or other separately identifiable area of your home only for your business. You do not meet this requirement if you use the area for both business and personal purposes. (You do not have to meet the exclusive-use test if you use part of your home to store inventory or product samples or as a day care facility.)

Your home office must be one of the following:

- Your principal place of business. Your home office also will qualify as your principal place of business if you use it regularly for administrative activities and you have no other fixed location where you conduct substantial administrative activities; or
- A place to meet with patients, clients or customers in the normal course of your business. Using your home for occasional meetings and telephone calls is insufficient; or
- A separate structure not attached to the dwelling unit used for trade or business purposes. The structure does not have to be your principal place of business or a place where you meet patients, clients or customers. For example, John operates a floral shop in town. He grows plants in a greenhouse behind his home and sells them in his shop. He uses the greenhouse exclusively and regularly in his business. Even though it is not his principal place of business, because it is separate from his dwelling, he can deduct the expenses for its use.

If you are an employee, you must use your home office for the convenience of your employer.

If the employer does not require the employee to work from home and provides an office or work space elsewhere, a home office is likely to be considered a matter of the employee's convenience and therefore not deductible.

Even if the taxpayer's home office meets the above rules, the deduction may be limited.

Expenses attributable to business use that you could deduct even if the home were not used for business, such as home mortgage interest and real estate taxes, are fully deductible. Otherwise, home office expenses are deductible only to the extent of gross business income, reduced by other allowable business expenses unrelated to the home; any expenses that are not deductible due to the income limitation may be carried forward.

Editor's note: A version of this article appeared in the Oct. 13, 2011, issue of the AICPA Tax Insider e-newsletter



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“The great accomplishments of man (and woman) have resulted from the transmission of ideas of enthusiasm.”

– *Thomas J. Watson*

“To think creatively, we must be able to look afresh at what we normally take for granted.”

– *George Kneller*



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