

rB Power of Arrogance | Rod Brace

<http://rodbrace.com/article/arrogance>

From our early days of elementary school, we learn that having the right answer gets us individual recognition. We find that scoring points on the basketball team gets us applause. To our financial benefit we discover that making good grades in college gets us better job offers. In short, we learn to be an individual performer.

I continue to be amazed at the number of organizations that espouse team work yet their organizational vocabulary (which is built on an individual's vocabulary) is heavily peppered with "I, Me and My." Much like we believe we are a law abiding citizen, yet don't notice we are going 70 miles per hour on a 55 mph stretch of highway, we simply don't see the disconnect between individual-centered organizations who claim to desire teamwork.

There is an arrogance of sorts that is rewarded in American culture and corporations that in the end doesn't promote teamwork or long-term organizational success. As leaders, we all have our "go to people" that move mountains, take control, get it done. Their crunch time performance is highly recognized and even appreciated. Yet we can't put our finger on why we have high turnover among the "support staff" or fail to execute on very complex and extended projects. Our American hero, arrogant power base, take no prisoners leadership approach is not sustainable as a successful, long-term management culture.

Teamwork has become a misguided imitation by forcing self-centered individuals toward a common goal that lacks leverage of talents and results in fragmented outcomes. The process is more controlled tolerance rather than inspired collaboration. An arrogant "team member" is (1) not a team member and (2) is counter productive to the success of the organization in the long-run.

The achievement of team, genuine team, is not common. In it's purest sense, teamwork is hard and for that reason, not popular. It does not sell books. Stroll purposefully down the business section of your local bookstore and the titles you encounter in greater abundance are arrogant proclamations of how to be the individual best, the individual success, the individual leader. Arrogance, as a sub-theme, is implied and in many cases, absolutely necessary to become the cookie-cutter, heavy handed, misinterpreted leader that American greatness is supposedly built upon.

Proverbs 13:10 promises that "Arrogant know-it-alls stir up discord . . ." These words are the epiphany of a leader that ruled over a massive empire, noted to be one of the most successful in history. It is a principle that in our era of "rock star" CEO has dropped from sight. Simply put, teams cannot survive arrogance. Arrogance will seemingly survive and even thrive in the short-term, but it is not the sustainable culture to produce lasting success.

Carefully listen to the vocabulary of your organization. Team leaders do not coldly dismiss ideas; they listen intently with eye contact and understanding. Team leaders do not speak often of their individual performance; they speak of "we" and the united impact of the team.

Team leaders do not rule by coercion; they invite participation in the strategy formulation and execution. Team leaders do not seek personal recognition; they recognize generously the effort of the team.

The power of arrogance is a negative power that under the cloak of short-term results has been allowed to "stir up discord" leaving a majority of organizations short of their potential. Listen carefully to the vocabulary of your organization as you seek to be team-centric.