Developing an Identity as an Organization

Overview

Organizations increase their effectiveness as their identity is enhanced. Developing your organization's identity provides ways in which your organization can help nurture its bond. These activities require consensus building, which help to create trust and create connections among the members of your organization.

Materials Needed

1.   Pen and paper for each member of your organization
2.   Poster board, markers, masking tape

Time needed

Each of the four activities listed here are fairly simple to coordinate and take 15-20 minutes each to complete. Should you choose to complete these activities in one meeting, allow at least 2 hours for your meeting so that your members can take a couple of breaks.

STEP 1: DEVELOP A LIST OF YOUR ORGANIZATION'S MEMBERS

Description/Background

Listing the names of your members is foundational. It is a declaration of how things are going to operate. This list of team members is the new organizational chart. It may be a little oversimplified, but this list communicates who is responsible and accountable for the organization's activities. Most importantly, this is a tool that communicates the importance of every individual to the life and success of your organization.

Purpose

- A list of team members communicates that everyone is needed for the accomplishment of the group task
- Keeping the list up to date communicates that teams are vital to the success of the group

Activity

1. Print a list of all of your organizations members, using their full names spelled correctly.
2. Make sure that everyone in the organization receives a copy of the list.
3. As changes occur, update the list.
4. Use this list as a way to check who is at each meeting of your organization.

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STEP 2: DEVELOP A NAME FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

Description/Background

Finding a name is a key way to encourage your organization's identity. Naming your organization becomes a way to assume ownership of your organization, of acknowledging that each person is now part of a group. The name may be somehow related to your group's activities, for example, in which case it incorporates the organization's focus. Otherwise, the name may represent a quality or characteristic that the members want their organization to embody.

Purpose

- The organization's name can remind each member of his or her connection with the others in the organization
- The organization's name formally identifies your new organization
- The organization's name can communicate your organization's unique gifts and personality

Activity

1. Split your membership into smaller teams of equal number. There is an added impact to this process when a larger group breaks into teams to create each team's name. When you bring the total group together and hear the team names, it creates a lot of momentum and spirit.
2. Ask each team to come up with a team name.
3. Suggest to the group that the name might come out of the particular team's purpose, planned activities, or out of the personalities or skills of the members.
4. After each team has chosen a name, bring all the teams back together to hear team reports.
5. Clap or cheer to acknowledge each team name.
6. Process the activity by asking:
    a. "How did your team work together by to choose its name?"
    b. "As all of these names were announced, what did you hear or what did you think about?
    c. "What has happened to us through this team naming process?"

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STEP 3: DEVELOPING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S SYMBOL

Description/Background

Choosing your organization's name in the previous activity drew upon the verbal intelligence of your organization. Translating the identity into a visual symbol draws upon the visual/special intelligence of your organization, thus cementing its identity in an additional mode.

Once your organization's symbol is created, it can become a permanent part of your organization's public identity—your symbol can capture visually what your organization wants to be about.

Your symbol can also be a tool to remind your organization of the big picture. A quick glance at the visual symbol can tie a person to the original purpose or goal of his or her reasons of being a member of your organization.

Purpose

- An organization symbol proudly portrays your organization's pride to others

- An organization symbol can include unique aspects of your organization's activities or focus

- Displaying a symbol can remind people of the significance of your organization's activities better than words can

Activity

1. Ahead of time, gather appropriate materials to assist your organization in this activity, such as chart paper or poster board, markers, and masking tape.
2. Split your organization into teams of equal numbers of members.
3. Give each team 10-15 minutes to create its preferred visual symbol for your organization.
4. Ask each team to choose a reporter.
5. Walk around and note the progress as a way to judge how much more time is needed on this activity.
6. Appropriately acknowledge each presentation
7. Ask your organization to vote on the symbol or combination of each team's symbol elements to create your organization's symbol
8. Ask your members in what ways they would like to see their symbol portrayed (i.e., on flag, a pin, a tee shirt, key chains, banner, etc.) and work with members of your organization who will create the "official symbol design" and will have it reproduced in the way that your organization agreed.

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STEP 4: DEVELOPING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S MOTTO

Description/Background

A motto or slogan is a further piece of identification for your organization. A short phrase or sentence can hold some crucial part of your organization's activities or its hopes and visions. The nature of a motto or slogan is upbeat. No one writes a depressing motto! In this activity, you are providing a vehicle for affirmative team spirit to be declared. The very process of choosing a motto helps your organization focus, through the power of language, the unique essence of your organization's spirit.

Purpose

- A motto can capture in a few words just what your organization is all about

- A motto, which can be remembered during times of stress and difficulty, can provide just the right motivation to keep your organization going until the task is finished.

- A short, well-written motto is hard to forget.

Activity

1.   Have some possible mottos or slogans at your fingertips to use as examples. Have people suggest catchy slogans from companies or advertisements.

2.   Split your organization into teams of equal numbers of members.

3.   Give each team five minutes to come up with their own motto or slogan.

4.   Have each team assign a reporter who will share the motto with everyone.

5.   After each team is finished, call on the reporters to share the mottos with the whole group.

6.   At the end have your group vote on the motto they like best, or on a combination of mottos. You may need to ask your organization some guiding questions in order to help them build consensus:
    a. Which word or phrase do you remember?
    b. Which mottos did you like?
    c. What are some of the important themes communicated by these mottos and slogans?