



ESTABLISHING A TEAM-FIRST MINDSET

JONATHAN WILLCOCKS
EO VANCOUVER

I started my leadership and team-building company, Pinnacle Pursuits, from the back of my truck. I had no capital and no formal business experience. All I had was a heart full of passion, unique skills from working as a wilderness boot camp counselor for young offenders and a vision I couldn't ignore. Ten years later, my business is one of the leading experiential training companies in the world. What makes us successful? Our team approach. "People – Passion – Performance" acts as our guiding principle. But following these principles isn't always easy, especially when it comes to developing a productive and inspiring team culture.

HERE IS WHAT I DO TO KEEP MY TEAM FOCUSED:

ALIGNMENT

We continue to excel because our work culture supports listening, teamwork and accountability. I ensure my team is fully aligned in this area, both internally with each other and externally when working with clients. This requires reflexive listening, the ability to understand the situation, ask clarifying questions and be open and curious to possibilities. This strategy ultimately leads to better results when achieving desired outcomes.

MEANING

I know that people love to be a part of something meaningful when everyone is challenged; they have a sense of responsibility, insights are shared, learning occurs and positive change takes place. I do two things to facilitate meaningful engagement with our team. First, each employee is connected to

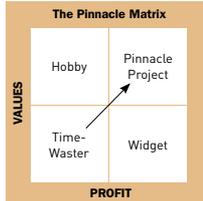
one of our three business units: youth, family and corporate. As a team, they must think critically about their projects when it comes to business strategy and finances. This creates a sense of ownership and empowers them to become more entrepreneurial in their thinking. Second, instead of the traditional hierarchy reporting structure, we have a co-creative working environment where team managers and staff can communicate respectfully, work together and are accountable to the team for their overall performance.

VALUES

Our values are People, Integrity, Excellence and Innovation. It is from these values that we base our decision making and our programming standards. When deciding on whether or not we should commit to a project, we do a "Values/Profit" analysis. We call it our Pinnacle Matrix. It is a decision-making model that's adapted from the original McKinsey Model, though ours places Values over Profit. This has helped us establish a team-first mindset, simplify and focus while keeping us accountable to our values.

WHAT IS THE PINNACLE MATRIX?

We evaluated each of our projects based on the matrix. If a project was high on vision and was profitable, it was a winner. If it was high on vision, but low on profit, we either changed the project so it became a winner or we dumped it. Also, we try to avoid "Time-Waster" and "Widget" projects, those that aren't really connected to personal vision and value. Using this matrix framework, we managed to reduce our projects and discovered the power of simplifying and focusing.



Case in point: In 2001, we proposed to design and manage a large adventure race. We ran this event for several years and, in 2003, it became North America's largest urban adventure race with more than 440 racers. However, it consumed a great deal of time and resources during a very busy time of year. Using the Pinnacle Matrix, we concluded this project fell into the category of "Hobby"—it was cool, it had some marketing value, but in the end, it didn't make us money.

In order to take advantage of our experience and unique expertise, we turned this race concept into a high-profile "Pinnacle Project." We began to offer customized corporate adventure races around the world, which gave us the revenue we desired.

We continue to use this model to this day. It is simple and objective, saves the team time, keeps us moving forward and upward, and ensures we are in alignment with our values and vision.

All in all, maintaining a productive and inspiring team isn't always easy. Then again, I've learned that nothing important comes easy. But when it comes to staff retention, performance, client satisfaction and overall growth, it is well worth it. ☺



Jonathan Willcocks' company, Pinnacle Pursuits, offers action-based, adventure-learning experiences to develop better leaders and high-performance teams. Jonathan has been an EO member since 2006. He can be reached at jono@pinnaclepursuits.com.

For me, it was all about my passion for the work we did. I wasn't thinking about the long-term strain these commitments had on me, the staff and our finances. To effect change, we took the projects we were working on and asked ourselves two questions: "How reflective is the project to our vision?" and "How much money will it make?"