

Three keys to high-performance teams

The Hudson Highland Center for High Performance recently surveyed more than 3,000 "knowledge workers" worldwide. In her new book, *Contagious Success: Spreading High Performance Throughout Your Organization*, the center's Susan Lucia Annunzio identifies three characteristics that "consistently distinguish high-performing workgroups around the world":

- **Valuing people.** "The best way to value people is to show respect by treating smart people as if they are smart," Annunzio notes. "Leaders should tell workers what they want to accomplish, not how they want to accomplish it."
- **Optimizing critical thinking.** Annunzio says this is done in several ways: by helping people "get their emotions out of the way," and by being consistent in your own words and actions and living the values that you preach. Surprisingly, Annunzio's survey found that "in high-performing workgroups, the leader protects the group from the rest of the organization."
- **Seizing opportunities.** The most important motivator of a highly performing group, says Annunzio, is the environment itself—"a learning environment in which people can seize opportunities, take risks, generate new ideas, and even make mistakes." According to Annunzio, about half of the respondents—"the highest paid and best educated workers in the world"—were in "average-performing" groups, with another 40 percent "non-performing" and only 10 percent "high-performing."

And what characterizes a non-performing workgroup? Frequently mentioned behaviors in Annunzio's study included "micromanaging, hoarding information, and leaders acting in their own self-interest." In addition, members of teams at all performance levels "feel overworked and at the mercy of short-term goals." Nearly one-third of respondents in non-performing workgroups said their teams used to perform at a higher level than they do today.