

Canoe Race

A Japanese company and an American company decided to have a canoe race on the Missouri River. Both teams practiced long and hard to reach their peak performance before the race. On the big day the Japanese won by a mile.

Afterward, the American team became very discouraged and depressed. The American company decided the reason for their crushing defeat had to be found. A Management Team made up of senior executives was formed to investigate and recommend appropriate action. They discovered that the Japanese had 8 people rowing and 1 person steering, while the American team had 8 people steering and one person rowing.

The American Management Team hired a consulting firm to assist in analyzing this data, happily paying their considerable fee. After six months of hard work, the consulting firm concluded that too many people were steering the Americans' boat, while not enough people were rowing. So the American Team acted:

To prevent losing to the Japanese again the following year, the team's management structure was totally reorganized, to include 4 steering supervisors, 3 area steering superintendents and 1 assistant superintendent steering manager. They also implemented a new performance system that would give the 1 person rowing the boat greater incentive to work harder. It was called the Rowing Team Quality First Program, with meetings, dinners and free pens for the rower. In an all-out attempt to further provide empowerment and enrichment's to the rower, new paddles and medical benefit incentives were promised in exchange for a victory in the next competition.

The next year the Japanese won by two miles. Humiliated, the American Management Team laid off the rower for poor performance, halted development of a new canoe, sold the paddles and canceled all capital investments for new equipment.

The money saved was distributed to the senior executives as bonuses for a job well done.