



United States Soaring Team Task Force

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Topic 1 - Team Policy

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This document is for discussion purposes only and should not be considered the policy of U.S. Soaring Teams. Instead, this document provides a starting place from which to develop more accountable, transparent, competitive and sustainable United States Soaring Teams. You can help shape the future of U.S. Soaring Teams by making your comments to John Seaborn. planned@boulder.net Taskforce web page http://www.ssa.org/UsTeam/ust_taskforce.htm

U.S. Soaring Team Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this statement of policy is to establish the framework by which United States Soaring Teams do business and to provide clear guidance for future team participants. As an organization largely dependent on private contributions these four guiding principals are critical in all future operations.

Philosophy & Discussion

United States Soaring Teams hold the following four principals as the core guiding principals.

- Transparency
- Accountability
- Competitiveness
- Sustainability

Transparency

Transparency is the information an organization provides about itself and the issues under its control. How much an organization is willing to reveal about itself to outsiders is a fair measure of organizational transparency.

There are few organizations that know more about the importance of organizational transparency than faith based organizations. The faith based watch-dog group Wall Watchers puts it this way, "Wall Watchers believes that all Christian ministries have a responsibility to be good stewards of the financial resources that they have received from donors. Stewardship of these blessings is demonstrated when an organization is transparent to their own donors and to the public." The Wall Watchers use a snippet from the Bible that applies well: "We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men."

According to Webster's New World Dictionary, if something is transparent it is "capable of being seen through" or "easily understood."

If organizations are not acting in ways that allow their constituents to see through them and understand them easily, then they are not exhibiting transparency and may be failing in their stewardship responsibility.

Accountability

Accountability is described by Webster's as, "An obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions." Organizational accountability can best be described as a sense of personal responsibility and ownership held by the stakeholders of an organization. This definition implies an organization structure and established expectations.

Accountability also involves rendering an account to someone who has authority over you, such as contributors or team management, on how and how well one's responsibilities are being met (including the actions of subordinates), or on actions taken to correct problems and to ensure they do not reoccur. It also involves accepting personal consequences for problems that could have been avoided.

Put another way by Fred Nickols in his thesis, "The Accountability Scorecard" organizational accountability has to do with stakeholders. "Stakeholders may be thought of as groups of individuals or organizations significantly affected by what goes on at an organization, with a stake in having it go well, and for whom the organization wants things to go well in return. In other words, the relationship is reciprocal. The organization gives and gets something. So do the stakeholders. There is some kind of *quid pro quo*.

Organizations with high degrees of accountability tend to be successful. James Burke, former CEO of Johnson and Johnson, has observed that the ultimate measure of an organization's success is the extent to which it "serves all of its constituencies better than its competition" Clearly, this entails integrating, balancing, and satisfying the needs, wants, and requirements of the organization's stakeholders."

Applied to US Soaring Team's the stakeholders include, the Soaring Society of America, and team contributors, pilots, management and the soaring public.

Competitiveness

Of course winning is the ultimate goal of any competitive activity. But a focus on winning is to simplistic an approach. Winning is a by product of doing lots of things right or at least better than the competition. To win at the world level it takes a magical nexus of pilot skill, equipment, organization, preparation, funding and that special quality of sustained brilliance. Winning is an outcome goal which is largely beyond teams immediate control. Teams cannot control many of the factors which influence the ultimate outcome.

Because of their complex nature world championship competition happens at two levels – the organizational level and the pilot level. To improve the competitive standing of U.S. Soaring Teams the focus should be on developing the factors within their control that allow pilots to win both on organizational and the personal levels.

Sustainability

Webster's defines the idea of sustainability as, "being a method of harvesting or using a resource so that the resource is not depleted or permanently damaged." Organizational sustainability has more to do with developing a structure that can continue to operate over a long period using the resources available. Fairness, ethical treatment, rewards, transparency, accountability, competitiveness, task sharing and a sense of a common goal are all part of what makes an organization sustainable.

The US Team Task Force should carefully scrutinize changes in team policy for sustainability over the long run based on the volunteer nature of team management, the limitations of potential managers, limited funding and team resources.

Recommendation

United States Soaring Teams adopt the principals of Transparency, Accountability, Competitiveness and Sustainability as the framework by which teams establish operational guidelines and do business in the future.