

## **BEST YEAR YET ON EVEREST**

Case Study 115

### **The Situation**

In 2001, **an accomplished mountain climber** set out to achieve his life-long dream of conquering the highest peak in the world, Mount Everest. In addition to the treacherous terrain and unforgiving climate, **this climber also faced a unique challenge: he was completely blind.**

He organized a **team of 19 world-class climbers** to help him achieve his objective. Along with all of their expertise, however, **each individual brought into the expedition his own strong will and “big ego”**. Transforming this group of highly skilled individuals into a cohesive, functional team seemed nearly as challenging as reaching the 29,035 ft. summit of the mountain.

Finally the climb was happening in an era in which many teams had attempted and failed to reach the summit, due to the fact that they didn't have a plan and many went their own ways once the going got tough. Recently many climbers had died in the process of going it alone.

### **Work of Best Year Yet**

One of the technical climbing experts was also a Best Year Yet Program Leader so the group participated in a review and planning workshop while at base camp. The process provided them with a strategy for the journey ahead and they formulated three basic guidelines:

- **Trust one another's skills and knowledge**
- **Ask for our needs—eliminate fear!**
- **Develop our plan and stick to it!**

Furthermore, **they determined their major focus for this expedition would be “team mate”**, and they decided that their top goals, in addition to reaching the top and coming back alive, would include supporting one another both physically and emotionally. Before they set out from base camp, the group had a **clearly defined objective and a mutual plan in place to ensure they achieved it.**

### **The Results**

After three months of extreme conditions and arduous physical exertion, the group achieved the culmination of all their goals and made history in the process. This expedition not only included the first blind climber, but also a climber, who at 64 years old, was the oldest man to ever reach the summit of Everest. **Incredibly, all 19 members of the team made it to the top, making this expedition the most successful trek of Everest yet.**

Perhaps the most remarkable accomplishment, however, was the **culture of partnership** that was created at base camp and carried with them throughout the mission. Members reported that they “built an inspiring level of trust and confidence in one another despite not knowing each other well before they started” and attributed this success to the Best Year Yet system.

Although they faced life-and-death situations every step of the way, and were often under the most stressful conditions imaginable, **they maintained a superior level of cooperation and communication**, without even a single argument among members of the team!