



Making Teams Work

By Chanon Collins

Some teams are easier to inspire and motivate than others. Take a football team, for example. The members on this team are driven by the intense desire to perform well and hopefully win the game. These individuals have a goal in mind, pardon the pun, and they will find satisfaction in their achievements. Others types of teams are not quite as fortunate. Their ultimate win might be months or years away. So, how does one motivate a team when the prize for the members is too far away to grasp?

The first step is to create a vision or goal that will encompass the entire team. If the goal is easily obtained by one or two team members, what was the point of forming the team? In order for each member to present a vested interest in the vision, he or she must have something to achieve. Very few teams in business settings are formed for altruistic purposes.

Once the vision is identified, specific ground rules for basic procedures must be determined. Everyone on the team must be aware of the proper modes of communication and interaction. A team will easily be destroyed by errors or lapses in communication. It is essential that each member be informed of the progress of the team's activities.

While the prevailing thought of equal members on a team is present, every team must have a leader. Think back to your days in high school when your teacher placed everyone in groups for an activity. You were probably annoyed that you were not in a group with your friends and most likely aggravated because no one wanted to take charge of the activities. Despite your negative attitude, you must admit that once someone decided to take control, progress was made. Such is the way for teams in a business setting. Every team needs a leader. It is the job of the leader to guide, not to manage. This is a key component in maintaining equality of team members.

Along with a leader, the team must also have a scribe or recorder of information. Once teams begin to focus on the tasks at hand, ideas and concepts fly rapidly. It is imperative that a team member be selected to record these ideas and activities so that they can be acted upon in the future. The individual should also be responsible for drafting the agenda for team meetings. It is the job of the leader and recorder to see that the team stays on task during meetings.

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Since it is probable that the vision of the team will be months from realization, each member of the team should receive period praise and encouragement to maintain his or her energy and stamina for realizing the team goal. A genuine kind word and a pat on the back will go a long way in maintaining spirit and energy. It is human nature to desire recognition for a job well done.

It is common knowledge that people work better when they enjoy the company of their counterparts. Keep this in mind when creating teams. Remember the tattered cliché and don't let one bad apple spoil the whole bunch.

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