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**How To  
Become  
A Better**

# *Team Player*

**A Guide For  
Employees & Managers**

**Bart Allen Berry**

HOW TO BECOME A BETTER TEAM PLAYER  
A Guide for Employees and Managers  
By Bart Allen Berry  
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## INTRODUCTION

Navigating the dynamic interaction of individuals at work can be fraught with peril, especially in a competitive and politically charged work environment. Getting things done with and through others comes with the territory at work however, so it pays to understand teamwork as well as possible.

No one wants to be the employee or manager that everyone gossips about at the water cooler, or worse yet, the one everyone would vote to throw over the side of the boat if they could. Personal survival aside, teamwork is necessary to produce good work, satisfy customers and keep the organizational machine humming. So it pays to be good at it. It might even be the thing that helps you keep your job, or better yet, the thing that helps you and your work group produce better results.

Being a good team player has two dimensions you should be aware of if you are interested in improving your team player skills or you are interested in helping your team work better together:

**1)The group dynamics and interaction between team members. This includes things like team atmosphere, coordination, maturity, identity and commitment.**

**2)Your own teamwork behavior including things like sensitivity to others, contribution, focus, efficiency and personal style.**

This book will help you understand team dynamics better, develop your own approach as a team player, increase your awareness of the needs of the group, and position yourself as one who champions and facilitates better teamwork. With new awareness and a few behavioral changes you will be able to more effectively navigate and manage the minefield of human relationships on work teams and solidify your position as a real asset that is valued by your fellow team members.

This book includes the powerful Teamwork Behavior Awareness Inventory Self-Assessment where you can score yourself on your team player skills and behaviors, AND the comprehensive Teamwork Survey for Workgroups, so you can measure the strengths and weaknesses of the work teams you participate with and target opportunities for growth where you can help make a real difference.

As you read this book and apply its learning's you will begin to become much more aware of the dynamics in any intact work group, allowing you to interact and contribute more safely and effectively.

Teamwork Awareness

Most of us spend so much time reacting to others we forget to take a step back and look at ourselves. How others see and experience us might be very different from the image we think that we are projecting on the team. Remember that people are sensitive, they want to be acknowledged, they want to belong and they want to be connected when they work with others.

Although your own perspectives, actions and behavior might be 'right or correct' when one objectively looks at any given task, it is often more important to preserve harmony in the work group than to risk alienating someone who might have a different point of view – or even just be plain wrong.

Getting things done, making effective decisions, planning and executing as a group means getting the contribution and efforts of everyone on the team aligned. Being effective together while maintaining positive and constructive relationships with your fellow team members is at the heart of what the art of teamwork is all about.

Becoming more aware of the dynamics of teamwork means you are beginning to be less emotional and reactive to what is happening now – usually meaning your focus on the task at hand, and more alert to what is happening in terms of the process your work group is using to get the task accomplished.

Being effective as a team player means that you are going to initiate or facilitate actions that support the team's processes being more effective, productive and satisfying for everyone. "But it's not my job to do that! " you might be thinking, "isn't that the group leader's responsibility?" . Yes and no.

If the group leader is ineffective or just doesn't have the skills to lead a group well, guess what? You are still stuck working on the team. So you will be helping. In the case that the group leader is effective, you will be supporting them by contributing to the high functioning team they are trying to create.

Yes you will be taking the initiative to become a change agent and facilitator of better teamwork in your work group. Being an effective team member means you are in it for the long run and are willing to invest in the long term growth of your work team.

"What if our team leader is an absolute pain in the (blank) insensitive authoritarian dictator and he doesn't really want anyone's input?" . Unfortunately this is a very common scenario in the working world, but here you will learn some teamwork skills that will make you and your team more effective and satisfied together and essentially 'train' your team leader to operate in healthier ways. The key is to keep the focus on the processes that make better teamwork happen rather than getting swept up into the urgency of the task at hand.

The workaday world is filled with new tasks, performance goals that must be met, tight schedules and resource constraints that put pressures on employees and managers. These pressures are often used as a justification for dictatorial directives, decisions with a lack of input, or flat out disregard for the contribution of team members. Bad and costly decisions are often made by teams in hurried high pressure situations where a good teamwork process was completely neglected.

Many work teams do reach their goals with bad teamwork, but the damage to relationships, team member's sense of value and integrity lead many employees to declare that "they never want to repeat that process again". Bad teamwork is stressful and causes many employees to 'check out' when it comes to extra initiative or demonstrating a real commitment to the team. Look for the employees who are stepping out of the door at precisely 5:00pm (or earlier if they can get away with it) who miss team meetings whenever possible and who are circulating their resumes for a better position elsewhere.

Great teams have a positive group of people who enjoy working together and who celebrate their successes, take responsibility for improving themselves when they make mistakes and who actually enjoy working together. Being with a happier and healthier team is a lot better way to spend the tens of thousands of your working hours five days a week.

So What Does Good Teamwork Look Like And How Can You Contribute More As An Effective Team Player?

The following ten dimensions are the most important cause/effect/symptom indicators of teamwork, or the lack of it. As a process-observer you can become more sensitive and aware of these factors and implement strategies and changes to mitigate for poor teamwork in these areas. Each of the following ten chapters mirrors the Teamwork Survey for Work Groups (Included in this book) so you can actually score each of these factors later to accurately measure the strengths and weaknesses of your team.

Suggestions are included for how you can help as a team player in each area and become more meaningfully engaged in the process of creating better teamwork.

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## Chapter 1. TEAM ATMOSPHERE

Team atmosphere is a very palpable phenomenon that is felt by you inside the culture of the team and noticed by other teams, departments and individuals who have to interact with your team. Like dysfunctional families, it can be uncomfortable to be around a group of people when they have a black cloud over them because they aren't getting along.. Most people would rather be around sunshine and rainbows. When the team atmosphere is dark, individual team members will avoid meetings and interactions and others will avoid this team as well. So what factors lead to a poor team atmosphere?

### **ATMOSPHERE. The team is not satisfied with themselves.**

Having successes and celebrating together is validation that you are doing something right. Teams that haven't had a success in a while, or whose performance is decidedly mediocre find little to be excited about. Teams need to achieve their goals to have something positive to share with one another. Astute leaders know that teams need validation and acknowledgement of the successes they have achieved along the way so they will feel good about their own abilities and potential. When was the last time your work team received acknowledgement for something they have accomplished?

#### >>For The Team Player

As an effective team player you can make a difference. You don't need to schedule a formal meeting or make an official policy change to acknowledge the small successes that happen on your team every day. Find a way to notice the good work that was done, what worked well with the team and make sure the team notices that yes, indeed they have accomplished something together. This continual reinforcement will positively affect the team's belief in their own capabilities and help lift their identity and self-image.

### **ATMOSPHERE. Treating All Team Members With Respect**

There are few things more destructive to teamwork than disrespecting others. There is simply never a case where disrespect is called for, and in most cases disrespectful behavior will come back to bite you somewhere down the road.

People are often hired in organizations because of their technical abilities in certain areas or their expertise or particular skill. This doesn't mean that they have refined social graces or are always comfortable playing the games or adapting to the social norms of the rest of the group. Some people are naturally introverted and socially anxious, making them awkward around others. At work, as in most social situations, these folks end up being increasingly isolated and reclusive and will not actively seek others out or volunteer for situations that they might perceive as socially vulnerable. This often causes fellow employees to disrespect them, make jokes about them or somehow treat them badly because they seem different.

In the average cross section of humanity in any organization there will be a wide range of political and social beliefs, tastes, preferences and points of view. Regardless of our uniqueness and differences, everyone needs and deserves to be respected. In the professional working

world, people want to be taken seriously for their opinions, contributions and expertise and most people have a need to belong and be accepted by the group.

Treating someone as though their point of view is not valid or shouldn't be considered can be downright insulting. What's worse is that when an individual has been hurt this way – they remember. They might not demonstrate it openly now, but don't look for them to want to join your next initiative or go out of their way to help you once they have 'black listed' you in their mind. It can be downright poisonous on a team to develop a disrespectful culture that allows anyone in your work group to be treated with less than the personal and professional dignity that they deserve. Individual team members who are insensitive, shoot down others ideas, speak for the team as if they have already established a consensus when decisions require input, or who don't provide opportunities for others to speak are some of the worst offenders when it comes to trying to establish better teamwork. These types need to get some feedback to become more aware of the damage they are causing to the quality of teamwork and individual relationships with other team members.

>>For The Team Player

Regardless of who they may appear to be, or however unique and unusual, someone thought every one of your team members should be hired and they are part of your team. Take the time to get to know each of your team members better and what their professional capabilities are. By making sure that others on the team are treated with respect you will not only be helping them feel better, but you will be standing up for a culture of respect on your team that will be good for you as well. By respecting everyone you will be modeling a behavior that others want and perhaps giving them the courage to stand up for others as well. Everyone on the team wants to be respected.

### **ATMOSPHERE. The Team Exhibits Humor**

If you walk into a room of coworkers you will be able to take their temperature in a very short time. Are they laughing and smiling together? Do they seem relaxed or uptight? People who are anxious, stressed out and afraid will feel very tense to be around. Unhealthy work environments with low levels of teamwork don't feel good.

They say that when people laugh it is really a relief of tension and stress. That's why humor can be a great thing for any work team. When humor is present in a work group it's also a sign of healthy working relationships. Great team leaders and great team players encourage humor to lighten the atmosphere, to make people feel more comfortable and to help relax with one another.

>> For The Team Player

As an effective team player, it's easy for you to post the occasional joke by email, tell jokes at a meeting or just be seen to acknowledge and encourage humor from others. Just keep the humor from offending or alienating anyone on your team or you might do more damage than good. When you hear a good joke – pass it on. Make it a point to start meetings with a humorous story or anecdote to keep it light.



## **ATMOSPHERE. The Team Has A Positive Identity**

How does the work team refer to itself? Do they say something like:

“Yes, we are the XYZ compliance department and we do that boring stuff that the company needs and yes things are about the same as they every were for us, you know we have some challenges and our department budget has been frozen now since....BLAH BLAH BLAH”

Or do they see themselves a little differently:

“We are the XYZ team and the most important department in the entire company- we influence everything and without our work the company would be lost. We have incredible people and we do amazing things with the resources we have and in fact we just achieved the.....etc.”

The atmosphere of a team is reflected in the identity they present, how they refer to themselves and how others perceive and refer to them.

>> For The Team Player

As one of the members of the team- you can help craft a positive team identity. The team’s identity is something that can be consciously developed, directed and promoted. Often times this is beneficial internally where the capabilities of a particular department need to be marketed a little more effectively. By defining the identity of the team with a mission statement or catchphrase the team is consciously presenting themselves in a positive light that will up level everyone’s self-esteem on the team. As an individual team member you can continuously emphasize a positive identity for your team and represent and defend it proactively throughout the entire organization. Every work team needs a positive image of ‘Who they are and what they do’.

## **ATMOSPHERE. Others Find This Team Easy To Work With**

This is a symptom of lack of teamwork that is easy to identify in any organization. It’s both important to smooth functioning internally as well as being extremely important when dealing with customers. One of the most statistically significant predictors of customer satisfaction in any customer supplier relationship is how well the supplier’s organization works together to meet customer needs. Lack of teamwork between departments can cause shortfalls that might lose the customer order or create a negative experience that causes the customer not to return to buy again.

When a work team is conflicted internally, others who are forced to interact with them often get mixed messages, lack of follow through or subtle forms of sabotage as coworkers refuse to cooperate, communicate or share resources and information. This cultural cancer can be devastating to an organization’s productivity.

Sometimes the only way to cure this disease is major surgery to cut out the tumor. This can mean sacking the department head and all of the actors perceived to be part of the problem. In

order to not get thrown over the side with the other bilge, it can be critical to the work team's survival to take proactive steps to change the organization's negative perceptions about dealing with your department.

>> For The Team Player

What you can do as a team player. Bringing this effect to the attention of the work team is a good first step, and perhaps a private sit down with the team leader is called for to express your concern. Individually you can do everything possible to bend over backwards for all of those with whom your department interacts, taking extra efforts to make sure relations stay positive and that others feel that they can work with your department. Solicit feedback in the way of internal surveys to validate your perspectives and concerns about how your team is perceived and share with your group to target improvements.

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## Chapter 2. TEAM COMMITMENT

Commitment is the magic ingredient for any work team, department or company. Commitment means the team will be moving forward with energy and a focus on goal achievement. When a team is committed they are an inspiration to others as they set a tone and lead by example. Leadership of any organization enjoys having its work teams demonstrate a high commitment level.

Commitment takes many forms. Doing extra work, taking responsibility and initiative, staying focused and sustaining prolonged effort are all signs of commitment.

When commitment is absent however, it takes much more energy to initiate and sustain effort. Much closer supervision is necessary which brings with it a heightened irritation and feelings of disrespect for team members who can't be trusted with the responsibility of assuring that goals and objectives will be met.

Lack of commitment is another sign of an unhealthy team and is really a team leadership issue. Team member commitment levels should be measured and understood along with the root causes for them not being higher. The following are the main factors that influence team commitment.

### **COMMITMENT. The Team Is Clear About Their Purpose**

It's really hard to rally a team and get them focused on an objective, task or goal when it's not absolutely clear what it is they are supposed to do, how they expected to coordinate and what the key performance metrics are along the way. When objectives are understood in detail they can be broken down into smaller tasks, they can be assigned to the most appropriate personnel and they can be sequenced in the most efficient ways.

A clear purpose means that there is a definition of what is and is not included in the objective and the team will have an unambiguous understanding of how to interpret their priorities and results. This will help clarify roles and responsibilities within the team and eliminate many sources of confusion and conflict.

>> For The Team Player

As an individual team member you can advocate for clarity by continuing to ask questions, suggesting more formal definition of goals and responsibilities and voicing the need for further detail on behalf of the group. Many will often be thinking the same things you are, but afraid to speak up. You will be relieving the worries of many of your fellow team members and helping to ease their anxieties as well.

### **COMMITMENT. The Team Works Hard Together**

The two elements in this statement are works 'hard' and 'together'. Hard work is universally understood as work that is harder or a larger work load than average or normal. The more Machiavellian team members will see additional workloads coming from a long way off and some will do their slippery best to avoid, duck and be absent when it's time to show up for extra effort.

There are few things that will create more enmity than a few employees who are suffering under a heavy load while others are seen to somehow skate out of the same level of work. When an out of the ordinary heavy burden of work comes on the team, the members who are tasked with the lion's share would like to see their team members pitching in and sharing part of the load.

When a team goes through a tough section of hard work together they are taking part in a high energy shared experience. This can be particularly beneficial to the team dynamics when the people that work together succeed at achieving something significant. The bonds that are created from a high energy shared experience bring team members closer together and build the positive identity of the team and what they are capable of. Team members remember who they shared a foxhole with when they survived the battle.

>> For The Team Player

As a good team member, take the time to notice. Working hard together can be what great teamwork looks like, and when heavy demands are placed on your work team you will be helping by celebrating how well you are working together when it's tough, how well each team member performs and the achievement of each task and goal along the way. Reinforcement of the good work your team does together is also effective marketing for your team's identity and image in the rest of the organization. When you broadcast and celebrate the hard work of your team it makes you look good too.

### **COMMITMENT. Team Members Give Extra Effort.**

When you see your team members going above and beyond, working longer hours on a particular project so the team can get it done, or stepping up to take more responsibility than is in their job description you should be proud of the teamwork in your group. Team members who go the extra mile set the standard of performance for others and increase the capabilities of your team.

When team members aren't willing to step up for extra work – be it a little or a lot, it's usually a symptom of a poor team atmosphere, feelings of disenfranchisement or checking out from the team because of feeling undervalued or un-included the rest of the time. These feelings can have an even worse effect when a high profile employee complains that doing extra work is an unreasonable and unfair expectation from the organization.

When a union of large clique of employees decide to band together and resist any request for out of the ordinary effort, this could prove the beginning of the end for any hope of real teamwork in the future. Keeping an eye on how spontaneously team members agree to extra work can be a very accurate barometer of how other aspects of teamwork are going.

>> For The Team Player

As someone who wants to promote better teamwork, you might want to play both sides of the fence in this case. Perhaps you can be an advocate for management or leadership to help convince team members to get on board with a special effort or a particularly challenging objective. On the other hand you might be perceived as more of a team member when you

support your fellow employees by listening to their concerns and voicing them with leadership to advocate for some special compensation or other benefits for those who give extra effort.

As an individual team player, you don't always have to automatically agree to heavier out of the ordinary workloads in an effort to brown nose your way to approval. There may be times however, when you need to be the one who steps up to the plate and enlists the commitment of your fellow team members for that extra work load.

### **COMMITMENT. Team Members Take Initiative.**

Picture a time when an individual must make a decision about something that effects the work of the team and they are outside their scope of authority or responsibility. If there is good teamwork and synergy within the team, goals are clear, and communications are good then the risks of this employee making the correct decision should be relatively low. When good teamwork is in place, individual employees also worry less about being ostracized from the group because they make a mistake.

In a work group with low levels of teamwork, decision making will be more formalized, lines of authority and responsibility will be harder to cross and a sense of competitiveness will cause employees to blame and deride one another when they make mistakes. Individual employees themselves will be more reticent about taking authority or responsibility upon themselves that might put them at risk of the wrath of fellow team members or their boss.

With better teamwork comes more trust in the individual and respect for their expertise, judgment and decisions. Every situation and decision cannot be foreseen or administered ahead of time. A culture of very low risk taking and stomping on initiative will result in much slower production and the seemingly smallest of issues freezing the continuity of a team's work flow.

Individual employees want to grow professionally and have their inputs and decisions accepted. Stifling initiative can be a great way to build resentment and change employee attitudes for the worse.

>> For The Team Player

As an individual team member it will be good to take stock of the risk/reward history of your own work group's culture. If you'd like to stretch the current team culture in regard to taking initiative, perhaps the best way is to take very small risks at first and then publish the results of the successful decisions you made at the next employee meeting. This will in effect, bring up the topic of overstepping lines of authority to see what kind of resistance you get, while also giving tacit permission for others to begin to stretch if you aren't chastised for taking (unauthorized) successful action.

You can work your way up to more significant risks and decisions gradually and take the opportunity to thank your boss once in a while for their confidence and faith in you. You'll be able to keep an accurate measurement of your boss's temperature and comfort level with you making decisions on your own. Make sure to emphasize how your individual initiative helped

the team get its work done better and the whole group will begin to think you are something special.

### **COMMITMENT. Team Is Willing To Do Whatever It Takes.**

When you have a work team that is willing to do whatever it takes to achieve an objective, goal or task it's a pretty rare thing. This means that the work group knows what they have to do, are willing to do extra work, will problem solve, share resources, perhaps step outside their normal routine and create whatever path is necessary to achieve the objective. Teams that operate like this earn the faith and support of the rest of the organization.

No one wants to have to pull out all the stops on a daily basis, but when it is necessary and the team needs to step up, the likelihood that they can be counted on is in direct proportion to the foundations of healthy teamwork that have been developed in the past.

Do team members feel valued and respected? Are they trusted and seen as vital participants or treated as slaves who are expected to suck it up, regardless of how ridiculous the work load or objectives? Team members who live through intense periods of really hard work will either talk about the experience in reverent and appreciative terms: "What we did together that one time" or in terms like "That's what they made us do and we had to do it – they gave us no choice – I would never go through that gain".

When leaders and managers need to ask the seemingly impossible from a team, how do they handle it? Are special rewards and acknowledgement included? Or is the ugly job of assigning extra-heavy workloads to a team delegated to some other functionary so leaders don't have to look team members in the eye?

>> For The Team Player

Perhaps one of the best ways to build rapport with your fellow team members is to ask yourself how you feel when the situation comes up and you are asked to do whatever it takes. How you are feeling about it is probably similar to how your fellow team members are feeling and by sharing your thoughts and opinions with them, you'll be seen as at least a reasonable and humane person who is concerned for them as well, and who just might be able to help build a consensus with the entire team about whether it's fair or to what extent the team should commit itself.

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## Chapter 3. TEAM INCLUSION

As mentioned earlier, one of the fundamental human needs is to be accepted and included in the group. Studies in group behavior tell us that people will go to great lengths to be accepted by group members. Whether it comes from some early cave man instinct or deeply seeded Freudian needs, no one is immune to the need for acceptance and inclusion by others unless you are a Sadhu or Monk who has totally eliminated the influence of your Ego.

It makes it all the more damaging to the human psyche when the individual must do all manner of back flips and unnaturally fake behaviors to conform to the sometimes unreasonable culture within their own work team. Most people just want to come to work and do their jobs without having to deal with the additional stressors and anxieties of human behavior.

### **INCLUSION. Participation by everyone on the team is promoted.**

Would it be surprising to learn that many work teams are controlled, directed and maintained by an average of 35% of the total number of all of the individuals on a given work team. This smaller clique makes all the critical decisions, are intimately involved with the most important details and are tasked with the most significant parts of the work. The rest of the group often tags along, however qualified and experienced they might be, and go with the flow.

The problem with this is that everyone is pulling a salary and if a case study of the average work team and how their work is distributed was ever done, an objective scientist would probably be able to find any number of optimizations that would share work more equally, get much more accomplished and have a much more fulfilling and satisfying work experience for everyone.

In addition to the fundamental needs of acceptance and inclusion, employees also long for the opportunity to do more, and to take on more responsibility. Most employees want to continually develop and are looking for the chance to grow professionally. The problem is that most work is distributed on the basis of urgency and past successful completion, not based on the idea of purposely growing the capabilities of individual workers.

Now if everyone had this attitude the folks who were the most trusted and reliable would get even more capable and perhaps extend and grow new capabilities for the work team, while the more they trusted new talent to grow and develop, the easier it would be to have someone to delegate the old stuff to. This short sighted and reactive way of operating might get the team by day in and day out, but sooner or later the unsatisfied and unfulfilled ones will leave for a better opportunity, the higher performing folks might get burned out and then the managers are faced with having to completely rebuild a new team. Not very cost effective.

Although this example may seem extreme, it's important to understand how fulfilled and included each team member feels so they can find a reason to come to work for more than just punching a time clock.

>> For The Team Player

As an effective team member you can check in with your fellow team members to gauge their satisfaction, bring up issues of professional development, growth and responsibility. Share openly at your next all employee meeting and have conversations with your boss about taking

better advantage of your capabilities and helping you grow into a more valuable team asset. Be a voice for developing the combined potential of your entire team, not just a few key team members.

### **INCLUSION. All team members and their perspectives are valued.**

It might seem like beating a dead horse here, but once again, it is important to include everyone on the team. Even when leaders and managers already know the answers to questions, the decisions they will have to make and the directions the team will be going in, it's important to include everyone so they feel part of the process.

For the Manager of Team Leader - Maybe it seems a little patronizing to include everyone in key initiatives and decisions, but as a manager, if you don't you are taking a big risk. What you are effectively communicating is that you know better than everyone else so why bother asking them. The trouble is, on average you are right only about 65% of the time. Maybe one of those folks you neglected to ask had the answer you needed, but you never consulted them.

When someone who is qualified to contribute to a decision and they are not consulted it insults them. It's especially bad when you could have consulted them and didn't and made a costly mistake. When you get called on the carpet for your bad and costly decision, your team won't have your back either, in fact they may be the first in line to tell everyone what a dummy you are. Not good.

It gets worse. When you make your own decisions without consulting the team and you are successful – Hooray for you! Your team still feels undervalued and underappreciated however. They can't really get too excited about celebrating a success that they had no part in. On the flip side, if you fail it will be really hard to gain the trust and support of your team members again.

So even though it may feel like an academic exercise and perhaps unnecessarily time consuming, there are other benefits to involving everyone on your team. You'll also get a glimpse into the future for how certain actions and decisions will be perceived by others and in effect- have a focus group on your course of action before it is implemented.

The best kind of leader is one who makes his team feel like they did it themselves. These are the same folks that will throw you an excellent retirement party and tribute rather than having a party of their own when it's time for you to leave.

>> For The Team Player

As a team member at any meeting where decisions are made, advocate for group brainstorming and at a minimum making sure that everyone at the table has a chance to give their input. This will stop folks from griping later that they didn't have any say in what was decided so they aren't going to support the initiative etc. Often times you may be perceived as a supportive team member if you validate someone's perspectives before a meeting and encourage them to speak up – making sure that they have the chance to be heard. Many people are afraid of public speaking in front of any kind of group. You'll be helping them so they won't feel frustrated later.



## **INCLUSION. All team members are treated fairly.**

It can be irksome to see fellow team members get the shaft, be disrespected or treated unequally in terms of preferential treatment, pay, policy or work opportunities. Discrepancies in fairness can have legal implications as well.

The main impact on teams is when people feel that they have been wronged or that someone who perhaps didn't deserve it got treated better than they did. This breeds resentment, and can cause any employee to not want to show up the next day with a smile, ready to give their best.

All of us keep score whether we admit it or not, and treating some members of a team less fair than others is no way to build teamwork.

>> For The Team Player

Be an advocate for your fellow team members. Communicate with them and develop informal consensus about what's fair and communicate these feelings to upstairs when necessary. You'll be seen as someone that others can trust and confide in, and someone that is an advocate for fairness overall. Instead of challenging your bosses or managers like some kind of radical labor organizer, you can simply bring up the question for comment. "Does everyone agree that this particular situation seems equitable? I had some feelings about it myself and wanted to find out if I was the only one who felt this way?" (You already know what they typical answers will likely be).

## **INCLUSION. Information is Easily Shared Between Team Members.**

Hoarding information. Being secretive. Holding yourself separate from others because you have some piece of important information before others have it. Not sharing information with other team members because you want to exercise some sense of superiority or intentionally damage them in some way. These are all immature acts of fundamentally insecure persons who mistakenly think this type of behavior makes them better, higher or privileged in some way. Exactly the opposite is true.

Employees who withhold vital information from one another are intentionally not cooperating the way a good team should, and need to have their Egos taken down a notch. This is the most fundamentally damaging and destructive behavior for any process or situation where interdepartmental cooperation is necessary. Team members or employees of any kind should not have to work through and adversarial relationship with people in their own organization.

However uncomfortable relationships may be between individuals, damaging the work processes, output and productivity of the workgroup or the company by holding back information others need to do their job is inexcusable. Intentionally frustrating the productivity of another employee or team member should be cause for immediate dismissal, and certainly with no letter of recommendation on offer.

When employees intentionally withhold information (save management deciding upon when to release major announcements, changes or when information is truly sensitive) they are in effect communicating that they are not willing to cooperate with a teamwork culture and are putting their own Ego driven needs over that of their team members and the smooth functioning of the organization as a whole.

>> For The Team Player

As an individual team member, continually reinforce open information sharing, model what openness looks like and be willing to share whatever is requested by fellow team members (unless policy warrants against it) whether you like them or not. Most supposed secrets and bad behaviors like this come out later anyway and those who were revealed as hiding or withholding information are found out- never to be trusted again.

### **INCLUSION. Team Is Kept Informed And Up To Date.**

Inclusion in top management's policy changes, new production demands, company downsizings or other large scale decisions are a part of feeling like a department or a work team is valued and included in the organization as a whole. Much like the personality of the individual employee, the work group as a whole can get resentful and feel disenfranchised when they feel that the company does not keep them in the loop – thus treating them with disrespect.

Customer Satisfaction science tells us that even when the customer has to get bad news, it's always better to be honest and up front and let the customer know as soon as possible so they can begin to do something about it. If you are the team leader, your team members are your customers.

Not keeping work teams in the loop tells them that they are not important, that their organization is treating them like they are less deserving of up to date information and that they will just have to do whatever the company tells them, regardless of how unreasonable the team finally finds out they are to be treated. No one likes to be treated like this. Repeated incidents can cause real rifts between labor and management that will cost the organization plenty in terms of future productivity.

Even the bleakest economic scenarios are best shared with employees as soon as possible so that they may have a chance to digest the impacts and prepare themselves for change. When vital information is withheld from work teams they can become jaded, bitter and unmotivated, losing their faith in leaders and management. Not a good picture for any organization that depends upon the teamwork of its people.

>> For The Team Player

As an individual team member you can advocate for more information sharing for your team at every opportunity. Your team members will see you as sticking up for them and feel solidarity with you. The point here is not to turn you into some kind of zealot organizer within your organization, but instead to be seen as one who is an advocate and facilitator of teamwork at all levels – not adversarial, but in a very inclusive fashion.

Your golden opportunity as a team member is simply to accept and include everyone. The disenfranchised and statistical outliers in particular will consider you as part of their clique and privately talk about you as being 'one of the few cool ones' on the team. Your managers and supervisors will see you as a leader, communicator and facilitator of inclusion. When a downsizing happens who do you think everyone will want to keep on board?

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## Chapter 4. TEAM LEADERSHIP

Team leaders have an incredible influence over the promotion and ultimate success of teamwork in and workgroup. Do they create a culture of teamwork and openly value it and model it themselves? Or do they simply give teamwork lip service?

Being a manager or leader of a team is not easy, because in addition to being responsible for organizing the human resources of the group to get the right things done, the leader has to also insure that appropriate climate, relations and interactions are maintained between team members. Team leaders must endure those pesky problematic human beings who more often than not cause all kinds of unexpected problems and difficulties with one another.

### **TEAM LEADERSHIP-Respect of Your Team Members**

Inexperienced managers with no group facilitation or coaching skills often take their position as one of dictatorial authoritarianism, which is not particularly endearing to team members who would like to develop a teamwork culture. Utilizing positional authority to make your team do what you say isn't teamwork.

Some team leaders have a good heart and truly care about the employees they are responsible for, some perhaps too much, making them pushovers and easily manipulatable by individual team members.

Neither situation is ideal for maintaining the respect of those you manage and those whose team you purport to lead if you are the leader or manager of a work team. Getting things done by tapping the abilities and potential of your team is an art form and can always benefit from improvement no matter how good you are already.

The key to success as a team leader is pretty simple however. Genuinely respect and care for your team members and they will respect and support you.

>> For The Team Player

As an individual team member you have the opportunity and responsibility to give your team leaders feedback. Let them know what's working, what didn't go so well, and what other approaches they might try for better effect. Team Leaders and organizational managers of all kinds are busy people, so keep at them and don't be afraid to repeat yourself several times to make sure they get your points. Let them know that you are a confidential sounding board and you can perhaps give them some positive and constructive feedback to help things go better with the team.

### **TEAM LEADERSHIP. The Leader Solicits Input From The Team**

If you have read any management books this century you'll know that one central theme for management of any organization is making sure you include the voice of the customer in your decision making. Guess what – the team members you lead are the customers of your leadership.

Yup. Most of them have opinions and perspectives about your decisions that it might not be easy for you to hear, but listen you must.

Listening is one part of the fine art of inclusion, already discussed earlier. When team members feel that they are consulted and their opinions are listened to, they feel like part of the team. Additionally, listening to team members and soliciting their input works on the principle that none of us (you) is as smart as all of us (the rest of the team). Smart team leaders learn to tap the incredible brain power and creativity of their entire work group every chance they get. This is also a great way to get more team member involvement to take on various initiatives. There are actually people who care and are willing to perform certain tasks and spearhead various initiatives if you only let them.

In our many teamwork training programs with San Diego Corporate training, we have several exercises which are specifically designed to give team leaders an opportunity to practice soliciting ideas from their team. It's fun to watch solutions emerge from carefully contrived challenges where the team leader isn't the one who comes up with the answers, but instead has to get the problem solved through his team.

Sometimes leaders need permission to ask for help, instead of continuously thinking of themselves as the invincible hero who has to solve every problem themselves.

>> For The Team Player

So how can you help your team leader as a lonely individual team player? One method is to continually ask for a vote on certain issues – or a simple show of hands. Pose questions to the group that ask for buy in or reactions. Try to create a culture in which the leader is expected to at least try his ideas on the team for size first, before he presents them as gospel. Sometimes meeting with the leader ahead of time to let him know that you and some of the other team members would be happy to share their reactions if he simply wants to “bounce a few ideas off of you” as he is developing them. Work with him. Most team leaders will learn to appreciate that very much.

### **TEAM LEADERSHIP. The team Leader Keeps The Team Informed**

This section of the book could be a great course in Team Leadership which is very much its own unique skill set. It has already been discussed that not including team members or entire departments in what is happening in the organization is a sure way to build resentment in the workforce. Obviously, Team Leaders need to keep their team members in the loop as to what is going on as much as possible.

Many team leaders are able to create an attitude of solidarity with their work team as they are going up the hill to fight the dragon (advocate for their team and its needs with management).

By keeping the team informed whatever the eventual developments in the organization, the team will tend to support the leader that fights alongside them and for them as opposed to the one who is aloof, removed and seems to put themselves apart from the day to day experience of the work team.

>> For The Team Player

As an individual team member, acknowledge and appreciate your team leader when they share information and developments with your team. Encourage them to continue to keep you in the loop as much as possible and to include you in the details of their thinking about certain decisions. Let them know that you think they are 'one of the good ones' for doing this.

### **TEAM LEADERSHIP. Keeps The Team Focused.**

A good team leader knows how to prioritize and keeps the focus on what's important. One of the team leader's responsibilities is to provide clarification and let his team know that although there are many small tasks and objectives, a few are the most important and what the team needs to stay focused on now.

Getting lost in the woods for the trees does not engender the respect of the team. When the team leader is confused and unclear this effect roles downhill to the entire team.

When the team leader keeps the team focused on its core goals and objective he is able to harness the real power and potential of the team and guide them to their highest levels of performance. Team members actually appreciate this and will often point to this type of leader later in their careers as one of their most positive influences.

People appreciate and are willing to follow leaders who are clear and unequivocal about what they are doing and why they have chosen a particular course of action.

>> For The Team Player

As an individual team member you can support the team leader by expressing your appreciation for clarity and for helping the team concentrate on what's most important. Conversely you can help other team leaders get back on track when they seem to get lost in minutiae and need to make things simpler. Additionally, when things are unclear or when you sense that your work group is confused you can be the one at meetings that presses for clarity and solidifying plans and objectives, roles, and responsibilities.

### **TEAM LEADERSHIP. Keeps The Team Motivated.**

Motivating teams in one part motivation of the group and the other part motivation of each individual team member. It's really hard for a team leader to make a single speech or presentation and expect his troops to rise up and take the hill. Motivating a team is a continual process spread out over time where respect has been developed and the troops are at least willing to listen.

Financial rewards are often constrained by the bureaucracy of the HR department, and even when they can be effectively implemented many studies have shown that financial rewards are just a small part of what motivates employees. Bribing your team to get them to do what needs to be done might have implications with a particular campaign or effort that might lead to

additional days off or a bonus of some kind, but generally people respond to different things when it comes to motivation.

Beating the competition can be a great strategy to motivate a work team. Everyone wants to be number one and they believe that they can be the best. Smart leaders throw in a healthy dose of competition because they know that some people are motivated that way.

Exceeding last year's production might not be such a big motivator, especially if the increased expectation is arbitrarily selected out of top management greed rather than being based in the reality of what is possible.

Team members respond better to deeper inclusion and participation, often where they are given more control, authority and responsibility. Smart team leaders continually stretch people into areas where they want to grow and develop and show what they can do with the right opportunities.

In short, team leaders have a much better chance of motivating their troops when they work closely with them and understand the individual nuances of where each employee is at and what they might be looking for. The best motivational strategy for any team is to have inspirational group goals built on a foundation of individual goals.

>> For The Team Player

As an individual team member you can support the team leader by letting them know the current motivation level of the team as you have discovered by interviewing other team members. Sharing the hot buttons for fellow employees and letting the team leader know how they are being perceived will help validate their positive attributes and change their not so positive ones when it comes to motivating the team as a whole. You can also provide feedback on group consensus about which motivational strategies, perks or rewards have worked in the past.

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## Chapter 5. TEAM SKILLS

Team skills are learnable. These are techniques utilized for improving teamwork. Most are essential for higher levels of team functioning.

### **TEAM SKILLS. The Team Communicates Well with One Another.**

Formal and informal communication is the glue in good teamwork. High quality communication as well as a quantity of communication is necessary. If team members aren't communicating with each other it seems unlikely that they will be functioning at more than a mediocre level.

When team members are given the opportunity to have their opinions heard they feel more connected to the team and to the culture and identity of the work group. If they only get the opportunity on rare occasions they will be left feeling like they have an 'US vs Them' relationship with leadership and management. Most team members have a lot to say.

Make no mistake, team members will always be talking with one another. Whether they are griping or generating creative ideas is really the responsibility of team leaders and culture of communication they create.

When team members have conflicts between one another it affects everyone around them who can't function normally and have to tip toe around individuals or issues because certain team members don't get along. Also a leadership issue, conflicts between individuals that hamper communication of the workgroup should be expeditiously eliminated or the individuals propagating the conflict need to be.

>> For The Team Player

As a good team player it will be to your advantage to embrace team meetings as an opportunity to communicate when the whole group is (hopefully) present. Bringing up issues and concerns, ideas and feedback are always important. If teams are not given the opportunity to communicate on a regular basis, gripes, conflicts, and frustrations will build up and magnetize an increasing amount of negative energy. Meetings with the entire team should be used for more than simply telling team members what they have to do. Communicate often and a lot. Communicating more is a learned behavior and every team needs to practice.

Without getting into personal conflicts too much, as a good team player you can help mitigate personality differences and be a peacemaker when you see rifts developing that will hurt the climate and communication within the team.

### **TEAM SKILLS. The Team Solves Problems Together**

Having problem solving skills as a team automatically assumes that the team can communicate well together. At San Diego Corporate training we teach many different approaches to team problem solving, utilizing different models. The underlying assumption to utilize these group collaboration type approaches is that the team can function well enough together to attempt them.



Problem Solving Skills include things like continuous improvement models, The 8 Stage Creative Problem Solving Approach, Z-Problem Solving Model, the Data Problem Solving Process, Normative Brainstorming, Quality Function Deployment, Cause-Effect Analysis, Priority Weighting Matrixes and much more.

Practicing with different problem solving models can be fun and interesting and a good way to involve and energize any team. Different problem solving models break the routine of day to day boring meetings that are always run the same way and can lead the group to new perspectives and fresh solutions to any problem or concern.

Enlightened leaders and managers should be building their skills to facilitate group problem solving as it is a great way to get problems solved without having to come up with all the answers themselves. It's also a great way to build ownership for solutions, as the team members who come up with new solutions will more easily agree to be involved with implementing them.

>> For The Team Player

As a team player, you can suggest different problem solving tools and approaches and bring these refreshing ways of operating to the smaller groups you might be working with-which will then 'catch on' later with the work team as a whole if it goes well. By continuously bringing new models and skills to the group you will soon be perceived as someone who is fun and innovative to work with. Team problem solving skills and models are easily researched on the internet or are available through our company at the San Diego Corporate Training Website.

You can also suggest new tools and approaches to your team leader or manager. Work on your own facilitation skills and the team leader may increasingly trust you to present these innovative approaches to the team.

### **TEAM SKILLS. The Team Is Creative.**

Creativity means you have the ability to bring something new to the table when needed - as a team. It's easy to be creative as an individual, but unleashing and managing the creativity of a team requires more skill.

To get to the point when you can be genuinely creative together as a team means that you already have a healthy and comfortable team atmosphere and enlightened team leadership that allows and promotes the necessary processes and communication for innovative ideas to emerge.

Without good teamwork and a feeling of safety to begin with, the average team member is not about to risk embarrassment, the derision of fellow employees or the criticism of the boss to advance anything but the most conservative of ideas and solutions.

Team creativity is also a cultural dynamic in many teams. Usually with a few colorful risk taking team members leading the charge, creativity can become a part of every team effort and serve as an example for other work teams and departments. When creativity is applied methodically it can result in entire new approaches, new products and new solutions.

Team creativity requires that the group can set aside the time to be creative, have a safe environment where new and untested ideas can be introduced, have permission to think outside the box and even be a little zany in order to test boundaries and norms in order to explore places where new solutions might reside.

Some creativity comes from simply synthesizing all of the available data on a particular subject, examining the benchmarks and drawing conclusions for your own particular situation. Like any creative process- this requires the time and energy set aside to do it – and teams need to give themselves permission to make the time for things that don't necessarily fall into the important and urgent quadrant.

Great ideas and innovations aren't located in the places where you normally look. The trick is to set aside time on a regular basis to look in those other places and approach problems and challenges from a different angle.

>> For The Team Player

As a team player you can do a few things to promote and develop team creativity. Continually challenge you team as to how to make things fresh, new and better. Bring creativity tools and processes (much like problems solving tools) to group meetings to get team members to think differently. Support the more abstract ideas and creative members of your team when they suggest fresh approaches. Run herd on the critical and judgmental ones who shoot down others ideas before they have been given a chance for further development.

### **TEAM SKILLS. The Team Makes Good Decisions.**

Decisions can only be evaluated as good or bad, successful or unsuccessful after they have taken effect to see if indeed, the intended outcomes have been achieved as planned. Implicit in the dynamic of effective decision making is the post mortem evaluation – “How did the decision we made (as a team) actually work out?”

Few teams ever go back and examine the decisions they have made in the past that have brought them to the circumstances they are experiencing today. Post mortem evaluations and examining of yourselves as a case study are great proactive steps but examination of the root causes of bad decisions should go deeper.

Work Teams should not only be examining the quality of their decisions (as evidenced by the results they get) but they should be examining HOW decisions were made by the team. This is more times than not – the real reason why bad decisions happen. Let's look at the main causes for bad decisions as they relate to teamwork:

The team leader makes the decision without consulting the team

Not all team members are present to give input

The team jumps on the first idea and launches into action

The team has lousy ad-hoc decision making processes or doesn't utilize methodical approaches

Team members have no confidence in leadership and don't believe their input will make any difference anyway so they don't contribute.

Team meetings are dominated by one or two more vocal (not necessarily the smartest) team members

Team doesn't have adequate time to examine the decision effectively

There are certainly many other reasons why bad decisions are made, but the key here is to understand that good decision making is a habit that teams can adopt. Smart leaders involve their team members at every opportunity so they can feel more included, informed and involved. Individual team members will feel 'pride of ownership' when their decisions work out well. Utilizing all perspectives of the team is good insurance for making sure you aren't forgetting anything as the team goes forward.

>> For The Team Player

As an effective team player, you can promote the idea of methodical decision making, use of post mortems, examination of root causes, formation of key performance metrics to track whether or not decision are on track and promote more open discussion of decision making and how the team does it. When you see your team leader or others on the team jumping to a decision too fast – put the brakes on and make sure you have considered alternatives effectively and scientifically, evaluated your constraints, options and outcomes.

As a team player it might feel risky to try to stop the fast moving train of quick decision making, but others on your team will likely appreciate it as well. When decisions seem to be happening too fast and look like they are in danger of being low quality – try techniques like:

1) Restate the decision for the group. "So we are saying that we are going to spend the money on the new inventory system and this will take at least three weeks to implement while we are under pressure next month with our biggest order of the year.... etc." Sometimes hearing the decision summarized will cause others to re-examine the implications.

2) Take a few moments to get everyone's reactions. Go around the group and allow time for everyone to comment.

3) Ask the group if we are making a decision too fast and being 'reactive' with a ready fire aim approach rather than stepping back and being more proactive.

4) Ask the 5 whys. (Basically a process where you keep asking why and drilling deeper into the reason for the decision – testing assumptions and unveiling hidden root causes which might have other solutions).

5) Ask your team to plan for decision making. As part of a quarterly strategic plan- decide that you are going to make adequate time to address the decisions that you see you need to make in the future. When decision making time comes you have already prepared and educated yourselves making the logical decision much easier.

While these are just a few ideas about improving your decision making as a team, the point is for you to become an advocate for better decision making by the team as a whole. The team will appreciate you for it in the long run.

### **TEAM SKILLS. The Team Continuously Improves Itself.**

Continuous Improvement has been a popular term that mostly applies to manufacturing processes that are repeatable and measureable so that small percentage improvements lead to faster processes, higher quality and lower costs. Continuous improvement can also be applied to teamwork where measures for improvement might include things like higher satisfaction, stronger identity, better results in their core deliverables, easier interdepartmental workings, more open communication and certainly higher productivity together.

The challenge is what to work on and how to measure whether your team is getting any better. The book you are reading now is actually mirroring the Teamwork Survey For Workgroups and is a measureable tool for identifying your strengths and weaknesses as a team (what to work on being the lower scoring areas) and how you score on each of 50 different teamwork factors (giving you the baseline measurements and allowing you to establish improvement targets). This survey is included with the book in a printable version you can utilize with your own work team.

Working on all 50 aspects of teamwork at once is impractical, especially since most work teams have very little time to focus on teamwork as it is. Utilizing the survey included in this book with your workgroup will allow you to identify a few issues impacting your team the most that you can target for improvement first.

Continuous improvement means growth as a team. To go through a year or two of working together, most teams are likely to fall into a rut and a regular way of doing things. The more interesting teams will be meaningfully engaged together in growing and developing themselves into something better and more satisfying. People like to keep it fresh.

>> For The Team Player

As an effective Team Player you can advocate for measurement of teamwork using the Teamwork Survey For Work Groups provided here. This self-guided instrument will allow you to share it as an objective survey administrator and not someone with a particular agenda that might come across as threatening. The Teamwork Survey is anonymous and guidelines for administration, interpretation, analysis and findings are all included to make it easy for you. If you can't get agreement to administer the full survey you can always share it with individual team members to get their feedback and develop an esprit de corp amongst them, or perhaps you can break up individual sections of 5 questions in each category of the Teamwork Survey and share them at team meetings for informal discussion to help stimulate discussion and improvement.

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## Chapter 6. TEAM COORDINATION

Team Coordination refers to the mechanics of how you are actually working together. Without good mechanics one cannot expect a high level of functioning.

**TEAM COORDINATION.** Team members cooperate with one another.

Whether they like each other or not, whatever the political or personal friction behind the scenes might be, team members need to understand that their job is to provide a quality work product to others within the organization. Few organizations can function when one individual resists working with one another.

The details of organization, scheduling, roles and responsibilities, quality measures, due dates and thousands of other details are necessary to keep a complex machine rolling along. This can only happen when fellow employees give each other what they need to do their jobs and have a workable level of give and take.

This is arguably one of the most important aspects of team leadership- to model and champion cooperation in the workplace. Team leaders need to acknowledge it when they see it, punish it when it's absent and continually strive to grease the wheels between team members and their work relationships so cooperation continues to happen well.

>> For The Team Player

As an effective team player you should be a model of cooperation with others, always objective, always willing to go the extra mile to give others what they request or anticipate their needs. You can do a lot by not becoming part of a culture of non-cooperation whatever your personal feelings may be.

### **TEAM COORDINATION. The Team Works Well With Other Departments.**

Many organizations have natural adversarial relationships that come with the structure of the organization. Engineering and marketing, sales and accounting, implementation and compliance, labor and management are a few common examples. The very definition of the work that one department does often seems to contradict the priorities of another department. Over the normal course of time plans are sometimes frustrated and seemingly difficult accommodations must be made - often causing conflict between individuals and departments.

Operating a work team in a larger organization means that your group or department may become more isolated and not necessarily interact directly or very often with the other work departments you need to coordinate with. This can cause all sorts of inaccurate assumptions about who you are, who they are, what each other's departments want, how they operate etc. This propagates the 'Us and Them' mythology in an organization.

It is important to be proactive about developing good relationships with your most important internal customers and all of those who are in your 'supply chain'. Working with other departments is a requirement so why not have it run as smoothly as possible. Even though it

may seem at times like you are working at cross purposes there will certainly come a time when their cooperation with you is critical and you might even need them to do something out of the ordinary or go the extra mile for you. Better that you have built good inter-departmental relations ahead of time.

If relations between departments are rocky you may have to go to extraordinary lengths or kick your problem upstairs – needing a referee from upper management to perhaps sort out the squabbles between departments who are supposed to be cooperating together. Most upper level managers have little patience for having their own routines interrupted with employees and departments who can't seem to get along. If problems get out of hand it might be easier for them to let some people go or re-organize work processes entirely.

>> For The Team Player

As an individual team member you can talk with fellow team members about the need to improve relations between departments. Reach out to individuals in other departments and get some dialogue going if things are sour. Talk to your managers or team leaders about ideas for improving relations. Perhaps a interdepartmental team building program?

### **TEAM COORDINATION. The Team Fulfills Its Commitments On Schedule.**

The essence of good management is to determine appropriate and realistic objectives, organize and coordinate the resources necessary to accomplish the goals and provide the completed work product at the agreed upon time. Good management of any team means coordinating the individuals and their work so as to fulfill these common objectives together – and on schedule.

Fulfilling commitments can mean orders delivered that create revenue for the organization, on time delivery to maintain relationships with customers, or critical pieces of a much larger project that other parts of the organization need before they can move forward themselves.

On time delivery might be analyzed through use of a simple cause-effect analysis. Where was the problem? Process? Materials? Environment? Manpower? More times than not though, it's actually teamwork.

Delivering on time and keeping the focus on timeliness is often an uncomfortable constraint for many teams, narrowing the time available for other pursuits or perhaps keeping team members so busy that they don't feel like they can pick their heads up to give anything else their attention.

This is really one of the quandaries of leadership. How can you get more out of the same people, do more, grow more etc. with limited time and limited resources – especially time.

Ultimately the leader of any team, if he is not already the president or business owner themselves will feel the implications of missing deadlines. After all, they have signed off on the commitment to provide the work product and agreed to coordinate the resources of his team to deliver. So what is a challenged leader to do about this?

The real answer is to not let missed deadlines become a sudden problem to begin with. Good planning and inclusion of the team way ahead of critical deadlines will help keep the focus on

not only the importance of meeting the schedule, but on how it might be done. When the entire team is involved in understanding the plans in more depth, individuals can see how their individual work product is critical to the outcome.

Teams can be more effective when they set their own performance milestones together with team leaders so in effect, they are committing to what they see as realistic to achieve themselves and these constraints can be figured into planning on the front end. Regular meetings and lots of communications will help keep small changes in projections in check along the way, rather than waiting to be surprised when the deadline arrives that the work product is not ready.

On time delivery is a leadership responsibility but it can be managed better with the deeper involvement of the team.

>> For The Team Player

As an effective team member you can work both sides of the fence on this teamwork topic. On the one hand you want to advocate for efficiency and timeliness as a healthy team value. On the other hand you want to challenge leadership to have good planning processes in place so crushing work flows and unrealistic deadlines aren't put in place that will make working tough for everyone.

You can also be an advocate for accountability and fairness within the team so that those who are carrying very heavy burdens are acknowledged as a barometer for what really hard work looks like and how you would like it not to become the norm because of chronic demanding deadlines. On a one on one basis with fellow team members, slackers might benefit from knowing that other team members are forming opinions about them when they compare workloads.

Those who consistently manage their time badly or let the team down should feel the peer pressure of the group to tow the line. As a fellow team members perhaps you can provide some coaching or lead them towards more learning about effective time management.

### **TEAM COORDINATION. The Team Handles Complex Projects And Initiatives Well.**

Measurement of this factor reflects more of a symptom than a cause. When one asks why a team does not handle complex projects well the causes are often obvious when it comes to teamwork.

Not enough time in meetings to execute well

Poor project leadership

Poor participation level of individual team members

Lack of clear focus, roles and responsibilities

Poor planning process

Lack of Inclusion in decision making

Necessary team members not included

Etc.

Managing a large scale complex initiative requires great facilitation, communication and much of the teamwork skills set included in this book. It also helps if the group running the project actually enjoys working together and the team atmosphere is conducive for cooperation.

Teams who work very well together are the most trusted with high level initiatives and large responsibility. It is no surprise that teams who don't work as well together day to day won't be trusted with more important responsibilities.

>> For The Team Player

As an individual team member, hopefully you can have some influence when the actual decision is made whether or not your team takes on a large complex project. Push for the right team members, adequate time and resources, and as much 'preparation of the project team' as possible on the front end (maybe a teambuilding workshop) to build in additional insurance that the team is going to work well under heavy demands, pressure and complexity. If your team has recently failed at a major complex initiative you can be a vocal proponent of the need for a team development effort before the next major initiative is undertaken.

### **TEAM COORDINATION. The Team Responds Well To Unforeseen Changes Or Surprises.**

This is another symptom rather than a cause. A work team with a strong identity will have the confidence in themselves to be able to handle unforeseen challenges as they come up. A weak, vulnerable and pessimistic team won't have the resilience to react as well when things get tough.

Keeping your chin up in the face of challenges is easier when team members support one another, self-reinforce their belief in themselves and their identity and are able to have a say in how they will mitigate for unforeseen developments. A committed team will often do the extra work without question, rally together to change directions or reallocate resources and effort quickly and get onto the new track with a minimum of fuss.

Weak teams will resist, whine and complain, offer passive resistance and blame everyone within range for their ineptitude and problems that were caused outside of their control. (Not helpful).

In some firms an entire workforce can be infected with a resistant attitude which can cause untold problems with the organization's health.

>> For The Team Player

As an individual team member you can be an example of virtue in tough times by staying positive. You'll be seen as mature, responsible and a dedicated employee. Keep in mind that the hours in your work day will more or less stay the same and you still get to come and go at the same time each day. Your company is paying you for your time and effort after all – there are no guarantees that it will always be the most pleasant or that the work will be designed for you on



your terms. Welcome to the realities of work life. You can however, as a step toward continuous improvement advocate for some analysis as to why changes were unforeseen and how to avoid these kinds of surprises in the future.

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## Chapter 7. TEAM SYNERGY

The elements of teamwork in Team Synergy are highly interrelated. Most are causes as well as symptoms. Synergy is really an ultimate description of a team who is admirable to look at in terms of how well they work together and what they look like when they are doing it. The Team Synergy category is a great set of measures for any intact work team to look reality straight in the eye and ask themselves: “Does this describe our team?”

### **TEAM SYNERGY. The Team Regularly Comes Up With Good Ideas.**

Once, a couple times, on a few occasions are different descriptors than ‘regularly’. Regularly coming up with good ideas means that this phenomenon is expected to repeat itself.

Coming up with good ideas as a team means there is communication happening, deep problems solving and analysis, open idea sharing, and a culture of innovation in place. Team members who are comfortable with one another can more easily bounce off and leverage one another’s ideas so that the group is smarter collectively than they would be as an individual.

Groups that can’t seem to get it together and generate some new ideas are dull and generally perceived as mediocre performers.

>> For The Team Player

This is an easy area to make a difference as a team player. Group meetings, one on one conversations with the boss, speaking with coworkers etc. are all good opportunities to suggest that maybe some new ideas could be considered – whatever the subject. When you find yourself falling into the trap of saying “This is the way we have always done it around here” a red flag should go up in your brain to tell you it’s time to consider some new ways of doing things.

### **TEAM SYNERGY. The Team Enjoys Working Together.**

If you are on a team that truly enjoys working together, consider yourself lucky. With all of the complexity and pressures of today’s work environment, whether your organization is large or small, it’s increasingly rare to actually like the people you work with, enjoy seeing them every day and have a way of working together that is better than ‘just tolerable’.

Only you know the answer to the question of whether or not you enjoy working with your team members, but the question is really – why not? And what will the team as a whole say about how they score themselves on this?

>> For The Team Player

When you find that you don’t like working on a team with your fellow team members you can either change your attitude and relationships or change your team. If you’d like to change your own attitude and you know that your team members would like to change their attitudes as well – you probably need some sort of teamwork intervention from a professional firm. What your

team really needs is an interventional teambuilding process that will help you recalibrate your relationships with one another. The team leader probably needs some work as well so he can lead from a different perspective in order to help the team relate to one another more effectively.

There are probably one or two team members you have that you are especially uncomfortable with. There are steps you can take responsibility for to improve those individual relationships to at least get them to a neutral state where they might not necessarily thrill you, but they don't make you upset or anxious either.

### **TEAM SYNERGY. Team Members Are Cross Trained With One Another**

The give and take of a busy working team often sees individual employees out of town or giant workloads that require a team member to step into a different role to provide coverage. Teams with a lot of history together seem to be able to do this easier, but the really smart teams intentionally train one another to be able to perform vital functions or at least some of the work of others on the team when needed.

Cross-training is a popular policy in Asian companies like Samsung where executives are purposely assigned to different departments and locations to learn complimentary aspects of their jobs, often for several months at a time. This comes in very handy when someone is out unexpectedly, or a particularly heavy work load is encountered. It's also a great professional development step in the careers of many who learn how to be more effective by understanding and learning to appreciate their role from a new perspective.

Unhealthy, suspicious, competitive work cultures protect their unique job knowledge and sphere of influence fiercely, often stifling potential cooperation and the development of a more integrated team out of the fear that someone will take their job.

>> For The Team Player

As a team player it's valuable to keep in mind that you don't really own anything at work and by giving things away like knowledge, access and skills you will be empowering others that you might delegate to in the future when you want to develop in other areas. No one wants to keep doing the same things year after year anyway and helping others grow might also keep it interesting for you. Be seen as the one who is willing to share and give away knowledge rather than the paranoid one who is continually suspicious and protecting their turf. Learning others jobs and skills will also make you more valuable and able to help others out when they need it.

### **TEAM SYNERGY. Team Members Trust And Rely Upon Each Other.**

How will you and your team members respond to this dimension of teamwork? Do you in fact, really trust your team members to have your back? To rely and depend on them to follow through? Do your team members defend you and the team to others?

It is gratifying to see individuals that back their team members and their decisions first before considering someone else's perspectives. "If that's what Suzy told you then I back her decision. I know she has good reasons for what she does and I would never second guess her".

Or knowing that team members will fulfill their commitments to do what they said they were going to do and hold up their end. It's called trusting them.

When fellow team members are found to have made a mistake or be wrong about something, team members back them anyway in front of others. "Hey everyone is entitled to make a few mistakes. John is an upstanding guy overall and he more than carries his weight with our team. We are very glad to have him".

Team Synergy is often described as a tight family or clique that sticks together. This is what we are talking about here – a very close knit group of people. Having a great work team who is this close will be a rare and special privilege to be part of during your career.

>> For The Team Player

As an effective team member, try trusting your team members implicitly. This might be refreshing for them as well as perhaps it's not something they are used to. Be an example of how trust can work and others will begin to trust you as well creating the kind of teamwork culture that feels good to be part of.

### **TEAM SYNERGY. Other Teams And Departments Are Impressed With This Team.**

This dimension of teamwork is nothing more than the evidence procedure for determining that this team is working well together. When was the last time someone at work told you that you had a great team or that they really admired the way you worked together.

On the flip side, you might ask yourself and your team why others aren't saying that every day.

>> For The Team Player

Become an advocate for the image of your work team in the organization and with external customers. Find out how others see your team and what you can do to improve your team's reputation.

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## Chapter 8. TEAM EXCELLENCE

Teams often don't understand that excellence is a measurable destination. It is possible to determine what excellence looks like, where you are today and where you need to improve to get there.

Achieving excellence as a team is a decision, it's an intention and it's a methodology. Achieving excellence does not happen in an ad hoc fashion all by itself. It is a commitment.

Excellence for the most part, is defined by customers. Quality, Timeliness, Value etc. are often defined by others compared with the best they have ever experienced. Your team and its work products are continually being compared with the current benchmark of excellence for what it is that you do. Your team should have a picture of what the benchmark looks like and stay focused on it.

The first step for teams is to have accurate measures of how you are doing now. The second step is to have a plan and process for working on the areas of excellence that need the most help. The third step is to become the benchmark of excellence in what your team does.

The unfortunate thing is that many work teams never even have the 'excellence' conversation with themselves.

### **TEAM EXCELLENCE. The team Meets Or Exceeds Requirements.**

This is a simple definition of performance. Teams who stay focused on 'the right stuff' will focus on their deliverables to their customers first – whether they be internal or external. When the team fulfills their commitments and obligations and can deliver what is required they earn loyalty and see increased return and recommend rates.

Teams that exceed requirements receive even more preference and can become known as the best or even be described as 'world class'.

>> For The Team Player

As an effective team member you can push for high standards and not just getting the job done, but doing it beyond the expectations of your customers. If you want job security this is one sure way to have it.

### **TEAM EXCELLENCE. The Team Produces Error Free Quality**

Getting it right the first time with no mistakes or re-work is the earmark of a team that works very well together, knows what's important and covers all of the details. Although a strict quality control policy should be a part of every work team's makeup, it is often sidestepped when heavy workloads or challenging delivery times are allowed as excuses to let errors creep in.

Consistent mistake free work from a team is hard to argue with. Teams with great records for quality and accuracy have more influence in an organization because they are known to be dependable and represent the organization and its product line well.

>> For The Team Player

Team members with integrity won't tolerate mistakes and errors. Be an advocate for quality and condemn the concepts of 'minor errors' and a few inaccuracies as acceptable in your team's work product.

### **TEAM EXCELLENCE. The Team Delivers On Time.**

Work teams who want to be respected need to have high standards for timeliness. To be effective and consistent with delivering on time, teams need to have an accurate idea of how long their work takes and be continually measuring to eliminate their own waste and rework – giving themselves more elbow room when time deadlines are tight.

Being late is not an attribute of excellence, whether it's for a phone call, a meeting or a product delivery. Value your own time, and the team's time. Protect your team's timeliness reputation within the organization.

>> For The Team Player

As an effective team member be on time and let others see your example. Don't wait for the chronically late and they will get the message.

### **TEAM EXCELLENCE. The Team Is Proactive.**

If you keep doing the same things the same way, year in and year out you have no right to complain when you hit the same bumps in the road you have experienced before. Being proactive as a work team means that you are looking ahead and trying to mitigate for the difficulties you know you will experience in the future. Some teams never get beyond the day to day urgency or consider that there could be an improved way of doing things available.

Proactive work teams think differently. They make the choices and decisions that will not only make their lives easier in the days to come, but work to increase their capabilities, skills and the quality of their work without being asked.

Obviously, being self-directed to do more than is required is an advanced state of functioning for any team, but this is what every organization would like to have. To operate as a proactive work team there must be high levels of trust and involvement, commitment and communication with a healthy dose of self-awareness and objectivity. Teams need to be willing to see where they really are today, accept that they need to be better and make a concerted decision to developing themselves further.

>> For The Team Player

As an effective team member you can advocate for thinking ahead, fixing the processes that cause the problems today so they won't occur tomorrow and continually looking for ways to get ahead of the need and the demand. Support and embrace being proactive about every area that needs improvement and advocate for being proactive with the team's leadership.

### **TEAM EXCELLENCE. The Team Takes Responsibility When Things Go Wrong.**

Mistakes, hiccups, shortfalls and errors will be made by everyone. No one is perfect. The difference between an excellent team and a mediocre one is that the excellent team will step up and take responsibility when mistakes are made while taking corrective action to restore confidence in the relationship – with other departments, with supervisors and with customers.

Excellent teams let others know up front about expected disappointments and are completely honest about the current situation, whereas mediocre teams hide from blame and responsibility, hoping to avoid negative fallout. Excellent teams get busy fixing things while mediocre ones sit around hoping the axe won't fall or look for ways to blame others or outside circumstances for their failures.

>> For The Team Player

Excellent team members help their team mates face up to their mistakes and encourage them to own up and take corrective actions while also making sure to correct the factors that will avoid similar mistakes in the future. Be one who helps to create a scientific data driven analysis perspective that respects the integrity of the individual rather than focusing on fault and blame. Let customers know you feel their pain and have pre-planned mistake recovery strategies to preserve customer relationships.

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## Chapter 9. TEAM GROWTH

Growing as a team presupposes that the team will continue as a unit for the foreseeable future. This means that a team has the opportunity to learn from its experiences, to develop its ways of operating and possibly look down the road to how they might prepare for the future. Some teams grow by virtue of the situations and circumstances which happen to them. Other teams are more intentional and have a good idea of what will help them improve and perform better and are more comfortable driving their own development and growth.

### **TEAM GROWTH. The Team's Work Is Important/Vital.**

This teamwork descriptor refers to the extent that a work team is competent enough to be trusted with responsibilities vital to the organization. Work teams who know they are working on the 'Manhattan Project' feel differently that the attendants who monitor the employee parking lot. How the organization as a whole treats an individual work team is often in direct relationship to how important their work is perceived to be. This can lead to feelings of low self-esteem on particular work teams and the establishment of employee and work group hierarchies that might leave team members feeling like what they do doesn't really matter that much.

When team members become jaded or resentful because of feelings of separation from other departments or those they perceive to be on 'the inside' they will have a tendency to develop more of an 'Us vs Them' attitude and perhaps feel justified in shirking work, taking advantage of every perk and benefit and offering other types of passive resistance and non-cooperation.

When a work team is made to feel that what they do is vital and necessary to the ongoing operation of the organization they will naturally have higher self-esteem and pride in their work and develop a stronger identity as a team. When teams have natural pride and a strong identity they are more likely to look for ways to learn, improve and do even better as a work team.

One of the key things team leaders can do for any intact work group is to show the direct relationship between what individual worker and their team does that connects with the overall mission of the organization. This should be an important part of establishing a mission for the work team and continually reinforcing the importance of what each team member does.

There was a janitor mopping the floor in a hospital lobby and someone asked him about what he did there. "I provide the necessary sanitized and clean environment that is critical for all of these doctors and nurses to provide high quality healthcare in this hospital. Without me, they can't do anything."

>> For The Team Player

As an effective team member you can help reinforce connections between your team's work and the organization as a whole. Encourage fellow team members to see their work as important and to look for new ways to impress their customers and to improve how they perform.

### **TEAM GROWTH. The Team Regularly Integrates New Approaches Or Technology.**



No one wants to do things the same old way, day in and day out, especially when new methods and technology are available to make work more efficient, higher quality or better for customers. Life is more interesting for work teams when they upgrade, retool and come to their jobs using the latest technology available. Growing as a team by upgrading how you work is a decision every team faces.

Teams who use the old methodologies, old equipment and repeat the same processes and procedures without exception find little excitement and fulfillment every day at work.

Team members feel like their organization understands them and takes them seriously when they are equipped with new tools and technology and supported and enabled to do their work better.

In most cases team members will be haranguing their leaders and managers for tool updates and new technology, as they have seen what their peers in others organizations are doing and they want to keep up, or their own technology and equipment is so worn out it is getting in the way of doing their job effectively.

Team members want to be able to utilize the best methods, technology and tools and strong teams will be continuously upgrading their tool sets. Hopefully your organization will budget for the latest innovations to allow your team to work more effectively.

>> For The Team Player

As an effective team member you can help the team understand and clarify the benefits to new technology or tool investment or simply help them continue to review operating procedures to see if there is a better way to get things done. Rather than resting on a particular tool or technology upgrade decision, it is perhaps more effective to help develop a culture of continuing to look for new approaches, tools and technology as a team.

### **TEAM GROWTH. Individual Team Members Are Growing Professionally.**

Each team member should have a professional development plan and meet with their team leaders regularly to contract for additional courses and training, new job responsibilities and preparation for each employee to move up the career ladder wherever possible. Individual team members need professional growth opportunities or they are at risk of becoming bored or feel that their career has reached an inevitable plateau. When they feel this way employees will cease to demonstrate commitment and initiative in their jobs and will increasingly be looking for better opportunities elsewhere.

Team members who are given new responsibilities where they must learn new ways of operating or are trusted with matters of higher importance will be much more meaningfully engaged. When an entire work team feels that they are in the most fulfilling positions the energy level of the group will be higher and distinctly more positive. Keeping a work team vital means working with the professional development needs of each individual.

>> For The Team Player

As an effective team member you can model professional development coaching with your boss or team leader if they don't normally do this as a matter policy- a surprising number of organizations don't. Encourage your fellow team members to look at their careers in terms of their professional development planning. You will be, in effect, encouraging them to help develop a consensus amongst team members that this is the right thing to do, and they will see you as someone who is looking out for their individual interests as well.

### **TEAM GROWTH. The Team Participates In Regular Training & Development.**

Does the team have to wait until there is a crisis in the teamwork dynamic before a team building program is held? Will it take a merger or acquisition as the reason for an organization to work on making their work teams stronger? Technical training, team training, customer satisfaction training and development schemes of all kinds help keep employees fresh by interjecting new concepts and learning into the day to day working reality.

Teams need to be proactive about their own training and take the initiative to be intentional about their learning and development. Some training is specifically related to job functions, new product roll outs etc. and some training is general professional development in areas like presentation skills, or problem solving skills. Teams should be 'keeping it fresh' for their employees and this helps to keep worker spirits high by stimulating learning, and lets every employee feel valued because their organization sees fit to invest more in them.

Many teams are held together with string and glue for long periods of time without any outside help or support with any type of training and development. These teams can become frustrated and feel disconnected and neglected when they see other departments and divisions receiving these benefits when they do not.

>> For The Team Player

As an effective team member you can be the squeaky wheel when it comes to advocating for training and development. There are also many things you can initiate yourself from sharing online free video training to self-lead exercises and training from pre-prepared training products which abound everywhere. Promote conversations with your fellow team members about the types of training you would like to see and feel that would be the most beneficial for everyone.

### **TEAM GROWTH. The Team Plans For The Future.**

It is amazing how many intact work teams do not operate with a strategic plan. Whether your plan looks five years ahead or two months the idea is to have some idea of what is coming in the future so your team can more efficiently prepare for the challenges ahead – and hopefully do things a little differently than last time.

It's frustrating to see the same mistakes and frustrations repeating again and again in organizations when in effect, they know that they are coming. When a customer standing in long lines at the bank after Columbus Day asked the teller why the line was so long and why all of the

teller windows weren't staffed the teller replied " Sorry sir, there are always lots of people in line after a holiday...."

Planning is an activity that takes good communication, participation by those who have the perspective and expertise to lend some perspective, and thorough data analysis from which decisions and commitments can be made.

A team that operates with a planning culture has the assurance that there is a process in place to plug data into where it will be received and considered thoughtfully. A well designed strategic planning system will create at least an annual plan with performance metrics and milestones that can be revisited each quarter so the team can gauge whether or not they are on track.

One of the reasons strategic planning is called 'strategic' is because it takes a wide objective view and is able to analyze data and performance measurements over a long period of time. Planning allows teams the luxury to STOP! And take a good look at what they are doing and how they are doing it. This can be game changing for many work teams who have never planned before and are instead caught up into the reactive day to day world of getting the work done.

Involving team members in planning is also a great way to demonstrate inclusion and also a very smart move on the part of team leaders because their team members will feel included and valued for being part of the process. Team members will also be able to share the true knowledge 'from the front lines' that will help ground decision making in reality.

As it has been said, teams that fail to plan, are planning to fail.

>> For The Team Player

As an effective team member, you understand that planning is a vital process where learning from your work experience can be integrated into improvement. Become and advocate for planning, and don't be afraid to suggest project post mortems, development of a library or data repository where past results can be looked up and other tools for continually measuring the performance of the team.

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## Chapter 10. TEAM MATURITY

Team maturity is a summary of high performance measures for teams. Teams that score well in these areas are typically those with long histories and groups which have been very intentional about their own development and effectiveness together. Team members on mature teams are typically less Ego driven and competitive, but are rather much more accepting, trusting and comfortable with one another. Mature teams also produce more consistent results and are able to weather change with little interruption in performance. In many ways, the mature team is what every team should be striving towards becoming.

### **TEAM MATURITY. Team Members Are Trained To Perform One Another's Duties.**

A team's overall capacity can continue uninterrupted when team members step in for one another during absences, vacations or other emergencies. Rather than being unprepared for these eventualities and having work processes come to a screeching halt when a key team member is absent, smart teams prepare themselves with cross training in advance. In many cases individual team members have a 'wing man' pre-assigned that they know they can go to when they need help to fill in, or if there is an unexpected workload demand that is more than the individual can handle.

When any process is run at full capacity, a problem anywhere in the line will cause the entire process to stop. Cross training provides work arounds and additional mitigation capacity so that team processes as a whole can continue. This in effect, makes a work team more capable.

There is a natural resistance with many employees to have someone else inside their work environment, privy to their processes, data and relationships but this is precisely what is necessary if cross-training is to be effective. Ego centered fiefdoms and private silos must be broken down so that another can step in and function effectively, if only on a temporary basis.

Asian work environments have long understood the need for cross training and many will organize work environments where employee desks are nearly attached together all in the same room. This makes everyone's work transparent and creates a lot of passive learning where everyone is listening and learning to one another all the time. To be an employee on a work team with this kind of office layout takes a certain frame of mind that's not exactly comfortable with westerners, but the principle forces the elimination of the individual Ego and feelings of ownership that can separate one worker from another.

>> For The Team Player

As an effective team member you can offer to support another team member if there is no formal system in place, or perhaps suggest the 'designated wing man' strategy to your entire team. Individual team members will always have unexpected leave and absences, and not be able to perform their duties for a variety of reasons. Your investment in building this capacity now will help avoid crisis and stress later when it's not prepared for.

### **TEAM MATURITY. The Team Resolves Conflicts Well.**

Conflict is a part of human interaction and the more team members you have, the more likely it is that you will see a steady stream of conflicts – some small, some not so small. The challenge as a team is how you handle conflict when it occurs.

Does your leader or manager sweep conflicts under the rug?

Is the norm on your team to wait until conflicts explode before you deal with them?

Are conflicts causing interpersonal rifts that are damaging your work effectiveness with one another?

Mature teams know that conflict is a part of working, but they don't let conflict get in the way of their effectiveness as a team. Perhaps it takes many conflicts to get better at handling them, or perhaps mature teams have better conflict resolution strategies.

A few things will help conflict resolution go more smoothly on any team.

A culture of respect of the individual first.

Conflict resolution procedures that report up the ladder in a formal way- established as policy ahead of time.

An effective team leader who has mediation, coaching and facilitation skills.

A commonly agreed upon conflict resolution model that team members can learn, perhaps at a conflict resolution workshop so they have a respectful structure in which to channel their complaints into constructive resolution.

Teams that have ongoing conflict will see all sorts of dysfunctional behaviors between team members that can boil up into real problems for any work team. Mature teams seem to be adept at not letting conflicts and disagreements polarize them and can let go once issues are addressed and decisions are made in whomever's favor.

>> For The Team Player

As an effective team member you can take the temperature of various parties in conflict and offer the olive branch of mediation and conflict resolution if you feel prepared to take this on. Become and advocate for conflict resolution training for your team if regular conflicts are a problem for you.

Challenge the team to develop a team culture where conflicts are accepted as a part of doing business, but your team will be mature enough to handle conflict constructively without damage to individual relationships.

### **TEAM MATURITY. The Team Learns From Its Mistakes.**

This dimension of teamwork is a great one to evaluate for your work group. How many times will it take the group to learn? You might be asking yourself this question on a regular basis.

Learning as a group takes much longer than the learning of the individual. Just because you know something, doesn't automatically mean that every else does as well. People aren't synthesizing data and information the same way you are, or from your perspective. The hardest learning's are the costly mistakes which could easily have been avoided – because someone had the right answer, but no one asked them.

Sometimes teams need to be repeatedly beat over the head with the same mistakes before they will take the time to evaluate what's going on. Typically, mistakes happen because of bad decision making. Bad decision making happens because of inadequate group processes. Inadequate group processes happen because the team is not communicating together well enough. Teamwork, you see is the answer to many things.

When a work team is mature there will be less blame of the individual and more examination of the process that lead to the mistake or bad decision. Rather than deriding the individual, mature teams are interested in how they can operate so mistakes won't repeat themselves.

Every team member and every team will make mistakes. We're all human. When mistakes happen, the key for teams is to look at the processes they are utilizing as a team that are either not happening at all or need to be changed to be more effective. Fixing, rather than blaming.

>> For The Team Player

As an effective team member you can influence the culture of the team by helping to evaluate the process, rather than the individual when mistakes are made. It is more comfortable and more constructive for the individual who made the mistake to work alongside you to evaluate it and help generate solutions. Try in every case to keep the focus on the process and your fellow team members will appreciate it when they get called on the carpet. You just might be modeling the process you wish they would use when you make mistakes yourself.

### **TEAM MATURITY. Team Remains Positive Regardless Of Circumstances.**

Mature teams will have seen events come and go and will not be easily phased by the latest crisis or development. Unless it's a case of a layoff of the team themselves, they know they will need to pull together and work in new or alternative ways to get things done. Sometimes this means more challenging goals, less resources or tighter time constraints. Mature teams know that human potential is on their side and with ingenuity and commitment difficult challenges can nearly always be overcome.

Mature teams don't get to this way of thinking without a few necessary team dynamics in place already however. Namely confidence and trust in their fellow team members, great communications, planning and inclusion where they know they will have the opportunity to help 'tune the machine' to help overcome new challenges, and an esprit de corp where they are supporting one another with a sense of solidarity about being able to handle whatever comes next.

Having a bulletproof attitude comes from doing a lot of things right as a team over the long term where deposits and investments in good teamwork in the past can be drawn upon in times of need.

>> For The Team Player

As an effective team member your attitude is everything. It can influence others, it can affect your own experience and it will be mixed into the team's collective attitude. Make sure to be one of the sweet ingredients in the mix, not a sour one.

### **TEAM MATURITY. The Team Has Positive Expectations For The Future**

This teamwork factor is a cause as well as a symptom. One might argue that by continuing to hold positive expectations for your work team you are having a positive influence on others by 'keeping the faith' and insisting that your better days are ahead.

More reassuring however, is when the team has generated a healthy positive expectation for its own future grounded in real experience, investments in teamwork, effective planning and execution and objective analysis on how they are working together as a team overall.

When teams are dissatisfied, discouraged and dysfunctional they will tend to rate their expectations for the future much lower. When things are not seen to be improving, current realities or issues are being ignored and leaders don't appear to have a team's best interests in mind, teams will have a less confident outlook.

Teamwork can be resurrected from the ashes with the right approaches and insightful intervention but positive benefits are short lived when structural realities don't change along with individual team member commitments.

>> For The Team Player

As an effective team member recognize that the positive or negative expectations of your fellow team members are a valid measures of what is going on in the team. This should signal the need for some type of turnaround, help or training when expectations are low, but can also be a cause for celebration and identity building when they are high. Having an exciting future to look forward to as a team is one of the better things about coming to work.

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## Chapter 11. Summarizing Your Role In Observing Team Dynamics

As you have read through the last ten chapters, many of the dynamics and interactions described may sound a lot like your own work team. These sound familiar because they are all too common in every workplace. But maybe you're wondering about what your role in helping your team can be, especially if you are an employee on a lower hierarchy. We know what you are feeling.

The message here is that anyone can be a facilitator of better teamwork, despite their formal job description or position. In fact many workers naturally perform in the ways we're suggesting here to help their team and fellow team member to work better together. When you help, assist, facilitate, suggest, advocate, or influence on behalf of better teamwork you are on safe ground. Everyone's input is valid when it comes to these subjects – because we are all team members and are entitled to have something to say about how your own team works together.

You'll be increasingly perceived as a leader for doing this. Just don't be a pain in the butt. Sure you will encounter resistance from those tough cases who have little patience for team processes but you can pick your opportunities and your delivery to minimize resistance of those with little sensitivity or patience for teamwork. You can keep your awareness about the team dynamics in your work group tuned in at all times – so you'll know where the most important areas are to address when the opportunity arises.

It's important to recognize that you are not supposed to turn into some kind of radical labor organizer here, rebelling against the oppression management. Instead see yourself as a seasoned professional who is advocating for a more efficient, effective, productive and satisfying work group based upon what is known about how high performance happens in work groups. What you will be doing is in everyone's interest.

Many work teams don't have anyone on them to perform a role of being more proactive about better teamwork. If they are lucky most work teams might attend one team building event a year which will commonly be more of a recreational party than a focus on real improvement in teamwork skills.

Keep the focus on teamwork over time and you will have an influence. Many people really want better teamwork but they just don't know how to articulate that need or know how to implement better teamwork. You'll be helping everyone by implementing any of the suggestions here.

Is this a risky career move for me? Don't be worried that you will be pigeon holed or labeled as some kind of touchy-feeling worker over concerned with workers feelings. By varying your presentations and suggestions across a range of teamwork factors (and especially if you are able to implement the Teamwork Survey For Work Groups\* included in this book), you will impress many with best practice knowledge and perspectives about teams. Plus it's the right thing to do.

•See the appendix for The Teamwork Survey For Work Groups, complete survey and improvement guide, ready for administration.

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## Chapter 12. ARE YOU PART OF THE PROBLEM?

### TEAMWORK BEHAVIOR SELF ASSESSMENT

In the introduction we said that there were two aspects to being a better team player. One is to tune into the group dynamics of your work team as we've reviewed in the previous chapters. The second is to take stock of your own teamwork behavior with an honest and objective self-analysis in five areas.

The following instrument is a great 'self-assessment check in' for any team member in terms of the behavior they bring to the team. Integrating well with other team members requires a realistic self-awareness about where your own team player behavioral tendencies reside.

Score yourself on each of the questions on a scale of one to ten and calculate your average score for each of the categories.

### TEAMWORK BEHAVIOR INVENTORY SELF ASSESSMENT

#### **Sensitivity to Others –**

1. I appreciate the individual strengths each team member has to offer. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I work well with the diverse styles of my team members. \_\_\_\_\_
3. I make my team members feel comfortable. \_\_\_\_\_
4. I make sure everyone gets the opportunity to contribute. \_\_\_\_\_
5. I am sensitive to the consensus of the team. \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Contribution**

6. I consistently perform my roles and responsibilities on the team. \_\_\_\_\_
7. I support my team members. \_\_\_\_\_
8. I work as hard as anyone on this team. \_\_\_\_\_
9. I speak up when I have something to contribute. \_\_\_\_\_
10. I have a synergistic influence on the team. \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL\_\_\_\_\_

### **Efficiency**

11. I help the team find better ways to function together. \_\_\_\_\_

12. I help the team prioritize. \_\_\_\_\_

13. I help the team stay focused on its goals. \_\_\_\_\_

14. I help the team to solve problems. \_\_\_\_\_

15. I maintain a commitment to timeliness and efficiency. \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL\_\_\_\_\_

### **Commitment**

16. I am committed to the goals of this team. \_\_\_\_\_

17. I maintain a positive attitude. \_\_\_\_\_

18. I put my personal opinions aside to work with the goals of the team. \_\_\_\_\_

19. I see myself working with this team long term. \_\_\_\_\_

20. I am committed to helping others achieve excellence. \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL\_\_\_\_\_

### **Personal Style**

21. I am easy to work with. \_\_\_\_\_

22. I don't always have to be in charge. \_\_\_\_\_

23. I don't always dominate discussions. \_\_\_\_\_

24. I bring organizational skills to the team. \_\_\_\_\_

25. I trust my team members. \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL\_\_\_\_\_

List Your Averages For Each Category

Sensitivity To Others\_\_\_\_\_

Contribution\_\_\_\_\_

Efficiency\_\_\_\_\_

Commitment\_\_\_\_\_

Personal Style\_\_\_\_\_

Overall Team Player Behavior Score (Add all scores and divide by 5)\_\_\_\_\_

#### ANALYSIS

1. See if there is any identifiable pattern in your behavior by category. Which questions strengthen the category? Which questions weaken it?

2. Identify your top five highest scoring questions and single strongest question answers. These are your teamwork behavior strengths you have identified by this assessment. What ideas do you have for making these even stronger?

3. Identify your lowest five question scores and lowest category. You have self-identified these areas most in need of improvement. What ideas do you have for strengthening these areas?

Develop an improvement plan for your team work behaviors and you team members will appreciate it. Consider confiding your results with someone you trust. Consider having peers or co-workers fill out this assessment on you to see if it agrees with your own perceptions. Take the Teamwork Behavior Inventory again in a few months to gauge your improvement

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## 13.CONCLUSIONS: FEELINGS ARE IMPORTANT

Teamwork is created by the dynamic interaction of individuals and must be worked at to realize its benefits. Teamwork can be taught and there are best practices which every team should consider putting into place.

Deciding that you want to be a better team player means that you are willing to become an advocate for better teamwork. This will expand your role as one who brings team concepts to the table, who raises standards of inclusion, participation and involvement and one who either directly or by other means, facilitates and supports the journey towards better teamwork and the creation of a more productive and effective work group.

Human interactions are largely driven by feelings and people will commit to working better as a team when it feels better to do so. Teamwork is largely about making people feel more accepted, comfortable and valued so that they really want to work better together. As a better team player you will be perceived as a more valuable asset to the team.

The fundamental assumption is that better teamwork makes teams perform better and achieve higher levels of productivity. Better teamwork makes good business sense for everyone, and makes for a much more healthy, rewarding and satisfying work environment.

#####

Be sure to try out The Teamwork Survey For Workgroups included in the appendix. As mentioned earlier this corresponds to the topics in each of the first ten chapters. Print out a copy and complete it as a single data point or as a team. Our company administers this survey online for large groups of employees so feel free to contact me if you need help with this at <http://www.BartAllenBerry.com>

Thank you for reading my book. I wish you all the best with helping your work team to become their very best. If you enjoyed this book, won't you please take a moment to leave me a review at your favorite retailer?

Thanks!

*Bart Allen Berry*

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## APPENDIX

### **Functional Work Group Teamwork Survey**

This instrument is used to quantify the strengths and opportunities for improvement of any intact functional work group. Team members anonymously rate each question on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) for each question. A score for each category is calculated, as well as an overall self-assessment score.

Add together Individual team member assessment scores for a combined assessment of the team as a whole.

Name of Work Group \_\_\_\_\_

Please respond to each statement from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest). Answer every question.

#### **Team Atmosphere**

1. Team is satisfied with themselves \_\_\_\_\_
2. Team treats all members with respect \_\_\_\_\_
3. Team exhibits humor \_\_\_\_\_
4. Team has a strong identity \_\_\_\_\_
5. Team is easy to work with \_\_\_\_\_

Add together all scores for category \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Team Commitment**

6. Team is clear about their purpose \_\_\_\_\_
7. Team works hard together \_\_\_\_\_
8. Team members give extra effort \_\_\_\_\_
9. Team members take initiative \_\_\_\_\_

10. Team is willing to do whatever it takes to get the job done\_\_\_\_\_

Add together all scores for category\_\_\_\_\_

### **Team Inclusion**

11. Participation by everyone on the team is promoted\_\_\_\_\_

12. All team members and their perspectives are valued\_\_\_\_\_

13. All team members are treated fairly\_\_\_\_\_

14. Information is easily shared between team members\_\_\_\_\_

15. The team is kept informed and up to date\_\_\_\_\_

Add together all scores for category\_\_\_\_\_

### **Team Leadership**

16. Team Leaders maintain the respect of all team members\_\_\_\_\_

17. Team Leaders solicits input from the team\_\_\_\_\_

18. Team Leaders keep team informed\_\_\_\_\_

19. Team Leaders keep the team focused\_\_\_\_\_

20. Team Leaders help keep the team motivated\_\_\_\_\_

Add together all scores for category\_\_\_\_\_

### **Team Skills**

21. Team communicates well with one another\_\_\_\_\_

22. Team solves problems well together\_\_\_\_\_

- 23. Team is creative \_\_\_\_\_
- 24. Team makes good decisions \_\_\_\_\_
- 25. Team continuously improves itself \_\_\_\_\_

Add together all scores for category \_\_\_\_\_

### **Team Coordination**

- 26. Team members cooperate with one another \_\_\_\_\_
- 27. The team works well with other departments \_\_\_\_\_
- 28. The team fulfills its commitments on schedule \_\_\_\_\_
- 29. The team handles complex projects and initiatives well \_\_\_\_\_
- 30. The team responds well to unforeseen changes or surprises \_\_\_\_\_

Add together all scores for category \_\_\_\_\_

### **Team Synergy**

- 31. Team regularly comes up with good ideas \_\_\_\_\_
- 32. Team enjoys working together \_\_\_\_\_
- 33. Team members are cross-trained with one another \_\_\_\_\_
- 34. Team members trust and rely upon one another \_\_\_\_\_
- 35. Other teams and departments are impressed with this team \_\_\_\_\_

Add together all scores for category \_\_\_\_\_

### **Team Excellence**

36. Team meets or exceeds requirements \_\_\_\_\_
37. Team produces error free quality \_\_\_\_\_
38. Team delivers on time \_\_\_\_\_
39. Team is proactive \_\_\_\_\_
40. Team takes responsibility when things go wrong \_\_\_\_\_

Add together all scores for category \_\_\_\_\_

### **Team Growth**

41. Team's work is important/vital \_\_\_\_\_
42. Team regularly integrates new approaches or technology \_\_\_\_\_
43. Individual team members are growing professionally \_\_\_\_\_
44. Team participates in regular training and development \_\_\_\_\_
45. Team plans for the future \_\_\_\_\_

Add together all scores for category \_\_\_\_\_

### **Team Maturity**

46. Team members are trained to perform one another's duties \_\_\_\_\_
47. The team resolves conflicts well \_\_\_\_\_
48. The team learns from its mistakes \_\_\_\_\_
49. Team on remains positive regardless of circumstances \_\_\_\_\_
50. Team has a positive expectation of the future \_\_\_\_\_

Add together all scores for category \_\_\_\_\_



>For work groups surveying themselves, add together all question scores and average each for a Total Teamwork Survey report.

Analysis- Circle the number corresponding with your category mean totals for each category (when calculated for a group- otherwise plot your individual score category totals)

**Atmosphere**1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30  
31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50

**Commitment**1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30  
31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50

**Inclusion**1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31  
32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50

**Leadership**1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31  
32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50

**Skills**1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33  
34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50

**Coordination**1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30  
31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50

**Synergy**1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32  
33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50

**Excellence**1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31  
32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50

**Growth**1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32  
33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50

**Maturity** 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31  
32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50

Add together all category totals and divide by 10 for an overall mean score\_\_\_\_\_

Compare categories above the mean with categories below the mean.

Identify highest category/lowest category.

### IDENTIFY YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES BY SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

Top 5 Strengths (HIGHEST SCORING):

Q:

Q:

Q:

Q:

Q:

Top 5 Opportunities for Improvement (LOWEST SCORING):

Q:

Q:

Q:

Q:

Q:

Make Your Plans For Improvement:

### **Causes or Effects?**

*(Facilitator Notes)* As the team's results are reviewed, each individual question construct is examined. I ask the team whether the low score for a particular question is a "cause" or an "effect." This is a great way to stimulate discussion and clarify the root causes of particular issues.

Take for example question # 6: The team is clear about their purpose.

If the group scored low in this area, I ask them to think about whether this low rating is a root cause that generates other negative effects or whether it is, in itself, an effect of some other dynamic. These types of questions force the team to think about how they do things and to define their problems and issues very specifically. Root cause analysis through the use of "fishbone charts" (aka: cause and effect diagrams) can be particularly effective here in clarifying problems and issues.

### **Is It The Team Or Outside Influences?**

Many teams try to lay the blame for conditions in their group on external influences such as the market, management, etc. This discussion on each individual construct helps a team see which things are indeed beyond their own control or outside their sphere of influence and which things they can take ownership of and have a positive impact on. There are no right or wrong answers here, but rather a meeting of the minds and agreement from the team about where they stand on any particular issue. Solidarity in the face of adversity is also a characteristic of teamwork.

### **Comparison With Hard Outcomes**

The artful consultant or team facilitator brings back hard outcome measures (sales, orders processes, successful bid approvals etc.) , comparing it with the high and low Functional Workgroup Teamwork Survey scores to see which elements most favorably or unfavorably impact these hard measures.

This is the analysis portion of the work in transforming a team. On the one hand, you have a set of self-evaluation measures that the team has identified as their own strengths and weaknesses. On the other hand, you have the team's input about where they want to go and how their progress toward the goal can be measured. Some hypothesis can then be formed about improvement in specific skills or approaches that will be most beneficial for the team.

A running list of teamwork improvement should be compiled with team members increasingly volunteering their suggestions and ideas on what needs to be improved about teamwork. Comparing the Teamwork Survey Data with the hard outcome measures helps to build the bridge from teamwork ideals to concrete performance increases back at work. The facilitator is careful to always keep the 'Ideal State' for the team close at hand and to keep stressing the relationship between improvement efforts and the eventual desired end state that they will create in terms of teamwork. When the process gets more complex it's important to keep the light at the end of the tunnel burning brightly. (\*The Teamwork Survey and overall seven step teamwork intervention process is covered in more detail in Bart Allen Berry's Supercharge Your Work Team, available at the [BartBerry.com](http://BartBerry.com) Website, online and at other book retailers worldwide).

Another way to analyze the results of the Functional Workgroup Teamwork Survey and the ideas and discussions it generates is to divide low areas or teamwork issues into two categories:

#### *A. Process Improvements in Teamwork*

List areas in which the team needs to develop new skills or models for a different way of working together. Examples of team process oriented approaches include:

- Using facilitative leadership approaches
- Implementing brainstorming techniques
- Encouraging more equal team member participation and inclusion
- Utilize a methodical problem solving model or approach
- Fostering Innovation
- Build Higher levels of trust and honesty
- Communicate more respectfully with one another

#### *B. Team Tasks And Objectives*

List areas where teams actually need to accomplish different tasks or objectives to increase their effectiveness. Examples may include:

- Develop a long-term strategic plan
- Make a progress report on recent developments and communicate it to other departments
- Develop an employee morale-building program
- Set up a suggestion system for new ideas
- Review needs for meetings in order to optimize schedules
- Build more accountability into weekly reports
- Build a web based project status system to keep everyone informed

In the author's experience progress in the first category—Process Improvements in Teamwork—will yield great benefits in the accomplishment of the items in the second category—Team Tasks And Objectives.

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## ABOUT BART ALLEN BERRY

Bart Allen Berry is the founder of his own 30 year old Training and consulting firm, and has lead team development programs for the world's finest companies in six countries. Bart's best practice team building and team development programs have been utilized at every level of the organization to drive higher productivity, performance and satisfaction. Bart has been an adjunct faculty member for many major Universities and has provided programs UCSD, Stanford University and The Daniels School Of Leadership in Denver among many others. Bart has personally delivered training and development programs for more than 200,000 employees and managers.

Bart Berry offers team development programs worldwide and at their Learning Center 25 miles south of the border in Baja Mexico.

Visit their website for more information: <http://www.BartBerry.com>

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