



CAREER CONNECTION



Teamwork: Bring Out Your Best

[By Monisha Bhat]

You feel your colleagues are no longer very interested in chatting with you. You have no clue what's going on with that exciting new project some of them are working on. You haven't even been asked if you'd like to take a look at it. Could it be that you no longer share the team spirit you once did?

Take a long, hard look at your performance before coming to any conclusions.

Is a Team Simply the Sum of Its Parts?

Teamwork is how most jobs get done today. Even if you are running a solo business, you will still need to rely on the services of others. For example, over a period of time, you may discover a good supplier with whom you regularly do business. Even though the supplier is not part of your company, the two of you must form an impromptu team and work together as you move from one assignment to another.

Furthermore, in the age of outsourcing, teams must learn to function as effectively across time zones and the proverbial seven seas as they do within a single office.

Competence or Camaraderie?

This is actually a redundant question, since close-knit teams complete tasks quickly and effectively. However, teams don't always need to be bound by friendship to perform well. Think about why you prefer your particular supplier over the many other options in the market. Your preference is likely based on the quality of goods and services, timeliness, or dependability. Qualities like friendliness also matter, but they still form the periphery around the core capabilities of efficiency and competence.

Team Dynamics

This brings us to an important aspect of teamwork: the manner in which a team interacts. Dynamics play a big role in the successful completion of a project. Regardless of the ideal of reaching a common goal, every person has a different viewpoint. In a single group, one may find pessimists, control freaks, eternal optimists, and fence-sitters. The control freak will ride roughshod over others. The fence-sitter will avoid taking responsibility. The one who will suffer the most in the group will probably be the optimist, who will continually propose solutions and continually find his or her ideas rebuffed. In the meantime, work will suffer directly or indirectly in the form of decreasing interest and enthusiasm among those who are likely doing more than their fair share.

Each Team Member is Responsible

Clearly, such a situation cannot last long. Evaluations are often carried out on the basis of the team's performance rather than individual accomplishments. However, this is not to say those who simply do not work will be carried along by others who do. Individual contributions are what lead to teamwork, and in many workplaces, every individual is more under the radar than ever before. Sophisticated electronic attendance and reporting systems ensure individual contributions get recorded alongside team achievements. As competition increases, companies are on the lookout for employees who refuse to play by the rules.

The Team is Watching

Those who believe they can avoid teamwork or take advantage of their fellow team members need to be careful. Employees are aware of what is going on around them. A critical colleague will only be tolerated so much; others will complain if conflicts among team members begin to affect productivity.

Teamwork is Fun

Teams do not necessarily need camaraderie to function well...but it helps if team members get along with each other. Few things are as exciting as being involved in work that is supported by many others. When you work on a team, responsibility gets divided. This means both the burdens and the rewards are shared.

ON THE NET

Building Effective Team Spirit
www.leadership-tools.com/building-effective-team.html

How to Build a Teamwork Culture
humanresources.about.com/od/involvementteams/a/team_culture.htm

Example of Good Teamwork and Bad Relationships
www.teamtechnology.co.uk/teamwork-relationships.html

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