

Team Building

Help wanted: professional, flexible, dynamic, well-organized, accurate, self-starter, independent thinker, upbeat, energetic, multi-tasked, experienced team player.

A lot to ask of any individual, especially one who has not played on any team since softball in the third grade! Many businesses request a team player without knowing what that actually means. Being on a team means being inter-dependent in a relationship, being able to trust others.

But first, one must be independent. If you cannot function well on your own, an office team can turn into an outlet for all your personality flaws. An independent person knows what makes him or her tick, what's important in their lives. These are called values or ethics. These values can then be brought to any team and become part of the contributing process. People who can't be managed or trust others will have a hard time being effective on any team.

A team needs a reason to get together; a project or specific plan that requires results. Of course, it also requires that the owner/manager/supervisor is willing to support the team's success. Remember, teams are not magic bullets. So, let's get started. How do you put a team together? Here are a few suggestions to follow:

- First, the owner/manager of the business must be aware of how teams work. The team is accountable to each other, not the owner. Second, someone has to lead. Third, it requires guidelines. And fourth, the team needs values of its own. Commitment, contribution, communication and cooperation are the four values or cornerstones of the foundation of any capable team or business.
- If one is not committed to the plan and the team, nothing will work. Until there is commitment there is nothing. Being committed means being charged with a responsibility for a particular result. In this time of quicker and faster, not many take the time to do whatever it takes to get the job done. What being on a team truly implies is giving up your ideals for something greater than yourself.
- Next comes contribution, the differences that make a team exciting. Not everyone on the team needs to be alike. I look at a team as a microcosm of the world. This is your community if you were sliced off the end of the earth. You must trust and be accountable to each other, not the owner.
- The owner or manager may lead the team, but allows the individuals on the team to blossom and grow. No throwing cold water over anything new or different! Teams can be about change and I think that is their greatest strength. When various types of people are on a team, the abundance of creativity can be a windfall.
- Now, how to communicate all these ideas and values. At the beginning of any meeting, everyone should be heard briefly, without interruption. This is an opportunity to settle in, to connect with each other before the real work starts. This process continues with everyone offering information about themselves, including that sense of humor that is sometimes missing in the workplace.
- Teams can be enjoyable and fun, but no one will know that unless team members relax and lighten up.
- Cooperation means to pool all the resources and ideas of each individual. It also means to put aside your personal goals for the objective of the team. The significance of cooperation is to work together in relationship and that requires patience. Remember, everyone on the team is an equal, there are no bosses.
- A word of caution. Not everyone is a team player. People who are loners need just that, to work alone. As long as they can create results on their own, let them. People on a team have to want to be there. No one wants a person on a team that does not want to be there; they just stall any progress. So, set your plan in motion and have fun!

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