

The Seven Critical Steps to Great Teamwork

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Reading about team work is one thing. Making it happen is a different story. It's that "execution" thing again. Since this is a major focus for our firm, I thought I would share some of the "how tos" we coach.

Step 1 – Build Trust – Trust is foundational to teamwork; it's where it all starts. We can't go very far through the process without making some major progress with this one. It involves establishing the fact that everyone on the team, whether it's three people or twenty, believes that everyone else has their best interests and best intentions in play for the good of the team. This is a very other-directed phenomenon. You have to replace "me" with "we."

Step 2 – Demonstrate Courage – Shrinking violets don't build great teams. We want courageous debaters who will passionately speak up for what they believe is best for the team. Challenging ideas is a critical part of developing the best alternatives. We need to compare good ideas, scrub them down, and turn them into great ideas. As a team discipline I like to see two or three good ideas presented, look at the strengths and weaknesses, and then collaborate to build the best choice.

Step 3 – Develop Purpose – Knowing the overarching goal of the team helps build clarity and commitment. We need to know – clearly – our mission, our "reason for being." Then, as we go through our various team activities we need to check-in regularly that what we are doing truly supports the goal of the team. Stay clear and focused on what your team is tasked to accomplish. Then it's every team member's responsibility to contribute to maintaining clarity and commitment.

Step 4 – Establish Loyalty – This is the demonstration of "you care" for your colleagues. It demonstrates true support. They have to know their backs are safe and have your full support. This also contributes significantly to the trust factor. Sure, you can have differences of opinion. But they are only discussed with the primary party who can do

something about it – not someone else who cannot affect the outcome. Issues are addressed only with those with whom the issue is involved.

Step 5 – Give Support – "Silos" are a significant phenomena in today's organizations. Breaking them down is crucial to teamwork. This step places great emphasis on concentrating on supporting your colleague's success. What can you do to help them carry out their part of the contract? I like to describe this step as treating each of your colleagues as a client. "How may I help you?" is the crucial ingredient.

Step 6- Model Accountability – We often default to "who to blame" when we think of accountability. Members of great teams turn this around from blame to personal commitment. Accountability means "you can count on me." Without strong accountability, results are weak and undependable. A culture of strong accountability, from a team of committed, talented colleagues builds great teams.

Step 7 – Create Results – Ah yes. Results. We all are judged by the results we produce. We are engaged in our jobs to produce the best possible results. Great sports teams look at their performance, review the "game films" to constantly see what they can do better. So do business teams. Measurement – key performance indicators, scoreboards, milestones – are all important ingredients to posting great results. **Great teams are the very best delivery system for great results.**

Have your team review these seven steps. Do a check-up from the neck up. Apply the "what else can we do?" process. Any small improvement is worth the effort. It's always more fun to be on a team that just keeps getting better. Good teaming!

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