

## Team

*There is no "I" in "team."*

A team is generally defined as a group of two or more people working together to achieve common goals. While a team approach is not always the most efficient means to achieve specific goals or objectives, a healthy and effective team can be far more creative and productive than an individual working alone. Factors essential to team success include: 1) high-quality leadership; 2) clear objectives and goals; 3) shared operational values; 4) well-defined individual roles and compatible skills; 5) effective communications; 6) appropriate tools and resources; and, 7) the alignment of individual and team goals.

Each member's maturity, skills, and values are critical to team success. While our society tends to exalt independence, a person who pursues independent goals exclusively will be as detrimental to the team process as one who is overly dependent on others. An effective team player strikes a working balance between independence and

interdependence. Confident in his or her own knowledge and skills, this individual recognizes and honors the knowledge and abilities of others. By demonstrating and promoting mutual respect, honesty, cooperation, and support to all stakeholders, this worthy member brings vigor and value to the team.

At work, freedom to choose our team members is generally limited or nonexistent, so our team might include individuals with conflicting personalities. Mutual commitment to team purpose and goals must supersede individual differences. In fact, a number of diverse personalities with unique strengths and perspectives can enhance team balance and overall performance. Consider the following *Mistakes to Avoid* and *Steps to Success* to enhance your team value.

### *Mistakes to Avoid*

- ***Work without clearly defined goals and objectives.*** Result: Make excellent time but have no clue where you are going, let alone whether or not you have arrived.
- ***Attempt to perform in a poorly described or undefined role.*** Result: Experience the frustration and failure that occur when skills and tasks are mismatched. Create misguided doubt in others or yourself regarding your abilities.
- ***Underestimate your abilities.*** Result: Others might believe you. Find yourself stuck with unrewarding and mundane tasks while others get to tackle more interesting and fulfilling challenges. Reduce the overall quality of team outcomes by withholding potentially valuable contributions.
- ***Overestimate your abilities.*** Result: Others might believe you. Find yourself overwhelmed and lacking the necessary skills for your assigned tasks. Delay or prevent team progress and contribute to or cause team failure.
- ***Devalue the abilities or contributions of others.*** Result: You might believe yourself. Find yourself in the self-assigned, lonely position of "the only one who can do the job right." Alienate the team, and find yourself ineffectively attempting to carry the weight of those you have discounted.
- ***Engage in company bashing or harmful gossip.*** Result: Others might believe you and, worse yet, join you. Create unnecessary conflict, undermine team cohesion and

morale, and derail team efforts. Lose progress and gain the critical attention of management.

- **Shirk responsibility.** Result: Compromise team efforts and foster disappointment and resentment in those you have failed or have unfairly blamed for your failures. Find yourself reduced to menial responsibilities or removed entirely from the team.
- **Resist change.** Result: Create unnecessary stress for yourself and your team during transitions that are difficult enough. Bog things down for a while, but eventually learn that change is inevitable and will happen with or without you.
- **Hog recognition.** Result: Find yourself the team-nominated recipient of the "It's all About Me Award," which includes special honors such as loss of team respect, support, cohesion, and cooperation.

## Steps to Success:

1. **Clarify the team's goals and objectives in relation to company goals.** Questions to ask: Do I know and understand our specific team goals? Have we identified and agreed upon the steps required to achieve our goals? If asked, could I explain how the accomplishment of our team goals will support the company goals or overall mission?
2. **Align your personal goals with team and management goals.** Questions to ask: What are my short- and long-term personal and professional goals? Which of these goals can I pursue through committed service to our team? Which goals do I need to set aside for the good of the team? Am I willing and able to this and for how long?
3. **Objectively assess and seek to improve the knowledge and skills you bring to the team.** Questions to ask: What knowledge and skills are required to accomplish our team's work? How do my current abilities line up with the requirements? What strengths can I offer the team? In what areas do I require additional knowledge or skill development? What resources are available to help me improve in these areas?
4. **Work with the team and leadership to define your role and responsibilities to maximize your contributions to the team.** Questions to ask: What specific roles are required within our team? What are the assigned responsibilities of each role? Which role represents a "best fit" for my current abilities? What other opportunities might become available as I further develop my knowledge and skills?

- 5. Seek to understand and value the experience and abilities of others.** Questions to ask: What unique experience and abilities does each of my team members bring to the team? In what ways do their strengths add value to our efforts? How can we align our individual strengths and weaknesses to complement one another? If given the opportunity, what skill(s) or knowledge would I seek to learn from each team member?
- 6. Communicate with others in a manner that demonstrates respect, trust, and cooperation.** Questions to ask: Do my behaviors reflect valuing others? Do I demonstrate genuine interest and caring when others speak? Do I invite the open exchange of ideas? Do I seek to be objective and nonjudgmental when expressing my thoughts or concerns? Is my manner calm and self-controlled? Is my feedback specific and useful?
- 7. Accept and reliably fulfill your assigned duties and responsibilities.** Questions to ask: Do I fully understand my responsibilities and the required timelines for their fulfillment? How does the completion of my tasks relate to the assigned tasks of the other team members? What obstacles might I encounter along the way, and what can I do to prevent them or minimize their impact on the team?
- 8. Seek, accept, and respond appropriately to constructive feedback.** Questions to ask: Do I add significant value to our team's efforts? Am I meeting team expectations in the fulfillment of my duties? Do I consistently demonstrate

value, interest, and caring for the individual team members? In what areas does my performance require improvement?

- 9. Work to resolve or manage conflicts swiftly and effectively.** Questions to ask: What is at the heart of this conflict? In what ways might I be contributing to the conflict? If the conflict is left unresolved, what negative consequences might occur? What can I do to help manage or resolve the conflict?
- 10. Remain open to change and support team members through difficult transitions.** Questions to ask: Do I recognize and accept change as a natural and inevitable part of life? Do I look beyond its initial inconvenience to find the potential benefits? Do I take time to reflect and appreciate the past benefits brought about by change? How can I respond to required changes in a way that encourages and supports the team?
- 11. Value and acknowledge the contributions of others to team successes.** Questions to ask: How do I feel when my contributions to the team's successes are publicly valued and acknowledged? How do I feel when my contributions are devalued or ignored? In what ways do I express sincere appreciation to my team? When praised privately or publicly for team successes, do I accept full credit or do I openly and fairly extend credit for the success to the team?

1.) What is one of the mistakes that seemed big to you? Why?

2.) What are 2 of the best steps? Why do you think they are effective?