

The Top 10 Steps to Create Winning Teams

By Naseem Mariam

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The Top 10 Steps to Create Winning Teams
Out of Ordinary, Self-centered Individuals
By Naseem Mariam, Project Management Coach
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In any business, prosperity and success is the result of teamwork and synergy. Often we come across a set of brilliant individuals and wish that we could make them work together for the greater good of the whole organization.

Here are the ingredients of the gel that brings self centered individuals together to form winning teams.

1. Foster harmony & trust (belong)
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For individuals to work as a team, there should be an environment of trust and harmony. Individuals should feel that they would be treated with fairness and care. They must trust each other and their manager to make decisions that will benefit them. A good manager is able to bring diverse

individuals together and within a few days get them working together with mutual respect, trust and love.

For a few ideas as to how to achieve this, read "Project Serenity - How to gain happiness and peace". In this book Michelle is a manager who diffuses trust and peace among her team members.

2. Identify common purpose (bond)

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Team members and Management should have clarity on the common purpose of the project and the reason why the individuals are being brought together. Here we should not stop with identifying the goal of the project. We should arrive at the importance of the project to the business goals of the organization.

What is the purpose of this individual project? What effect does success/failure have for the customer, for our organization, for the individuals in the team?

How does this project fit into the big picture of the mission, vision of the organization?

3. Plan, monitor & track the activities (plan)

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Each project has certain activities that must be finished within a schedule. These should be planned well. Discuss with the team the estimated effort for each activity and ensure that the person who is assigned the activity is committed to completing it as well within the schedule. Risk Management with preventive and contingency Action Items should be taken care of.

As a manager you should think of the performance management of each individual and throw in some buffer when the going is complex. Communicate the plan to your Management and to the customer and get the buy-in from all the stakeholders. Well begun is half done.

The other half is the tough part: monitor and track the activities of the project, re-plan and re-schedule whenever necessary. When schedule pressure tries to squeeze the sense and fun out of the team's lives, be sure to be around with a helping hand and lots of understanding care and sympathy.

Tempers may flare and bad decisions may be made on the pressure of the moment. Be always aware and alert to what is going on. Stimulate the corrective action through group discussions, mentoring and counseling.

4. Assign clear responsibilities (roles)

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A clear definitions of what is expected of each individual in the team. What are the roles that this team needs to have and who will perform the various functions of each role. This has to be clear and well defined. Once this is done each one knows what he should contribute towards the success of the team.

5. Delegate decision-making (delegate)

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With the plan and roles clear, the team just has to get on with the act. During the course of the project there will be multiple places where they have to take decisions on how to proceed, how to handle unexpected contingencies. Give them the freedom to make decisions about the technical and customer-service related aspects of the project.

They should feel free to consult or discuss things with you but as a manager the best help you can give them is to ask appropriate questions and lead them to arrive at the answer and solution themselves. Encourage them to make team decisions and then keep them.

6. Improve the individuals (self)

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Throughout school and college days we have been thought to be aggressive and plan for our advancement and progress as individuals. The industry expects us to work in teams but our inner self always asks "What's in it for me?"

As a manager we should ensure that each and every individual grows and acquires new skills and new technical expertise and exposure. This new learning should be consciously planned as a by-product of the project activities. This happiness at learning and growing will encourage the individuals to give their best to the project activities.

7. Hold regular meetings & outings (communicate)

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Lack of proper communication is quoted as the main reason for project and business failures. Creating an excellent workable plan is just half the story: keeping the whole team aware of the twists and turns in the project is the other half. Having delegated decision-making to the individuals, you as a manager should now provide them the mechanisms to discuss their problems, consult with the rest of the team and arrive at consensus decisions.

For this we require regular meetings & discussions. There is a world outside of the project also: therefore the team members should be encouraged to go for picnics and outings together. Do include the support staff in these outings since that is the next point for a winning team.

8. Ensure support from others (external)

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For a project to be successful in an organization, there are external and peers whose help and support is required at the right times. For a software project, machines equipment and software are provided and installed by the Computer Services Group. Then we may need external peers to review our work products. Last but not least we need the support of our projects internal and external customers.

Internal customers are the top Management with whom we have a give and take relationship: we give them successful projects and they give us the resources to succeed. An external customer is the client or actual customer for whom the software is being created. The team members should be guided to maintain good healthy relationships with these agencies that are external to the team.

9. Have escalation points (back-up strategy)

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Murphy's Law states: If anything can go wrong, it will. We did make contingency plans as part of the planning process. Now we need to also create escape routes through which we can salvage the project when disaster strikes.

Who are the people whom we can contact to take the tough decisions as to how much of the project and customer relationship we should salvage when the going starts getting disastrous. In the normal course we may not need to request the help of our escalation points but it is a good idea to identify them up front before the emergency situations arise.

10. Give Rewards, awards and promotions (encourage)

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The best way to encourage and create winning teams is to have rewards, awards and promotions that emphasize the importance of teamwork. Take time to define the criteria for winning teams and then select the best team of the organization periodically and give each individual in the team an award. Only that is perpetuated that is recognized and praised. By encouraging good teams you end up encouraging the formation of winning teams.

Follow these 10 Tips to turn any set of individuals into a winning team: whether it is in a sports team or a business, project team. In today's world the ability to make winning teams and throw in the gel of teamwork into a group of individuals is a much-needed skill.

Keep in mind the above 10 steps each of which helps in creating and keeping a winning team together.

Related reading
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About the author
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Naseem Mariam is the editor of "Management that Soars" Newsletter & author of "Project Serenity - How to gain happiness and peace". Let her guide you towards Faster All Round Success and a Stress Free, Joyous Life. Her free ebook and Newsletter tell You How. Subscribe with a blank mail to <mailto:projectdioxide@sendfree.com>. Visit her at <http://www.123projectmanagement.com>

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