

## Team Work – Tips on Matching Up the Right Players

10/15/07

I'd like to learn more about how to build teams of people who are complimentary. What I mean is, sometimes it seems like I have a group of employees who just "click", and can get a lot accomplished. Other times, it seems like when I put people together they flounder, waste a lot of time, and don't accomplish what I know they are capable of doing. Can you help?

Having teams of employees who can accomplish a lot is a wonderful thing. And it can be frustrating and costly to watch a group of people flounder, even though you know they have tremendous potential. The bottom line is, as owners we get a lot more satisfaction from watching teams succeed than we do from dealing with breakdowns resulting from teams that are struggling.

This is a 3 part question. Understand your people, so you can make good assignments. Understand what the project requires, so you select the right people. Follow up and make changes if necessary.

Develop a profile of what each person in your organization is capable of, and under which conditions they are most likely to excel. Each person comes to the table with different ways of approaching situations. That's what makes life interesting and full of possibilities. Here are some examples:

- Some people are good at understanding the people around them, and can draw people to them. Some are task oriented, push to get more done, and may irritate the people around them as they focus on tasks.
- Some people need time to reflect before they take action. Some can see right to the heart of a matter. Some people need to get their hands dirty and experiment with a situation in order to figure out what to do.
- Some people constantly seek agreement and avoid conflict. Some enjoy debate, in order to learn.
- Some people are more inquisitive than others. Some love to learn for learning sake, while others need to apply learning to getting things done in order to feel satisfied.
- Some people can figure it out in their heads while others need to see the situation laid out on paper.
- Some people need to constantly set goals; others can keep themselves on track for longer periods of time and get frustrated with continual need to check in.
- Some people love connecting with strangers, others like to build deep, lasting relationships with a few people over time.

If you're not clear about individual attributes, you have some options. You can meet with

individuals and ask them to tell you their thoughts about conditions under which they're most and least comfortable. You can build a profile based on quarterly and annual reviews. You can ask people to take profile tests to help you both hone in on individual qualities and attributes.

When it comes time to assign people to projects, size up the situation. Here are some questions you might want to ask:

- Is it a short term situation, or a long term project?
- How quickly does this team have to get up and running and produce results?
- Will interaction with customers, prospects or vendors be a part of the project?
- Does success include doing the same thing over and over again using existing systems and processes, or will the team have to innovate new ways of doing things?
- Do people have to go out and meet a lot of new people, or work within a small group of people they already know?
- Will there be daily gains, or will results only show up after weeks or months of work?
- What kind of documentation will you need as a result?
- How much frustration are the team members likely to encounter?
- How much research is needed?

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- How much will a cheerleader help, versus distract participants?
- Are you looking for the perfect solution, or multiple ways to improve things?
- Does this require a big team, or a few individuals who will be on task?
- Will all team members be of equal skill, or will some team members need mentoring?
- Will ethical questions be involved; will confidentiality be important?

Considering the above questions will help you make better choices about what kinds of attributes you need to assign to the project.

Now you're more prepared to build a team that is complimentary. Remember, sometimes you'll get it right the first time, and sometimes you'll have to go back and do some re-arranging. And sometimes you may find you have the wrong people on board – which means having frank discussions about how things are going to have to change.

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