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# TEAMWORK: A SKILL TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

DR. TESSY ANTHONY C.

**Dr. Tessa Anthony C.** has taught English language and literature for Graduates and Post Graduates at the Dept. of English, St. Teresa's College for the last twenty-one years. In addition, she is the Resource person at the State/National conferences for Creative Writing, Advertising, Communication skills, and Teaching skills in various institutions (IGNOU, The Continuing Education Program by the Government of Kerala). Her research includes the influence of ethnicity, multiculturalism and gender in the works of selected American writers. She is currently working on a U.G.C. project.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century as one sees now is characterized by the mad rush for improvement, in all spheres of life — fast life, extended hours, quest for getting more — are all the features of today's life style. But more focus is being given today to develop certain corporate skills which will equip one for life. No longer is self-play accepted as the prerequisite in an individual to be appointed in a national or multinational company. No army can withstand the strength of an idea whose time has come and the time has come to move from "I" to "we/Team".

The need of the hour is to have good skills in team management to be successful in the corporate world or which ever world one is heading for. For this, one needs to develop and equip oneself with good organizational skills. Team — is a common word which one uses in everyday life. But have we really thought of the depth and impact of what it

implies? As mentioned in the title, the word team can be considered as an acronym for Their Energy Accelerates More - a group of people working towards a common goal.

A successful team works with one heart. Team work is a united effort by a group where each one contributes his individual different skill to reach the goal effectively and efficiently. It is not an individual showcasing his skills and accomplishments but each one orchestrating to bring out the best symphony. Mental mapping is required to perceive, plan, implement and monitor whether objectives are being realized. How do we manage a team for optimum results?

Many people shy away from group activity either because they are too inhibited or they like to play the self-game. But having experienced what team work is like once, no one will back out. Whatever it is, it is the order of the day in not just the corporate

world but also in everyday life. The skill if developed and sharpened can take one a long way in overcoming hurdles, making one more responsible and leaving one with perceptive skills. In *Secrets of Mind Power* James M. Barrie says "Not in doing what you like but in liking what you do is the secret of happiness" (160).

Globalisation touched people everywhere directly or indirectly through outsourcing. And this paved the way in turn for acquiring cultural intelligence and global mindset. Besides, the phenomenal growth of the internet has given everyone a chance to browse and get enlightened. And one has to learn to manage a world with lowered barriers and a world where competition and collaboration can come from any corner. An offshoot of this is learning to manage business team globally because one is interacting with people from different outlooks, religious beliefs and cultural orientations.

One comes across teams in every walk of life. To begin with, the smallest team could be considered within a family of two. A family is like a bullock cart being pulled by two in the same direction. What happens if it is pulled in 2 different directions? As Edward de Bono said "a discussion should be a genuine attempt to explore a subject rather than a battle between competing egos" (51). Same is the case in a family if there is team work - synergy can be realized.

Principles of team work and the outcome of synergy is the key word in productivity today. Shared responsibilities and mutual cooperation will lead to achievement of

targets. Methods to identify skills and aptitude in students will provide better satisfaction to the youth and will in turn lead to better productivity.

For success, team-work principles have to be practiced. Essentially for every project, which the team engages in, there should be one leader and the rest shall follow. All members pulling in the same direction will increase the effectiveness of the team. You might have heard a newly coined term in this context - Synergy. It stands for the multiplicity effect seen in a group when they work together to achieve the goal. Synergy comes into play within a team that works towards a common objective, and then many a mathematical equation will need to be revised..  $1 + 1 \neq 2$ , but in synergy conditions,  $1 + 1 = 11$ . Stephen Covey says "synergy is the highest activity of life; it creates new untapped alternatives; it values and exploits the mental, emotional and psychological differences between people".

The foundation of all team building is having shared goals to which all team members are committed. It is to be understood that any team shall consist of people with varying levels of efficiencies and the skill possessed by each team member will also be different. To mention an analogy, a team is like the five fingers of our hand. None of these fingers are identical they are different in size, shape, position and capability. Yet each finger member may be able to do different kinds of jobs, but when they come together they can achieve much more. Even if the team

members are very effective at delivering their own goals, if they fail to capitalize on the potential of working collectively, they will fail to exploit the "whole that is greater than the sum of the parts". Another frequent mistake is to fail to appreciate the important differences between supporting others in the achievement of their goals with the commitment to a shared goal. While the former can be an important component of teamwork, genuine teamwork involves capitalising on collective potential, rather than just maximising individual performance. In a game of basketball if a player plays a self-game, the team doesn't generally win. But if the defence is good, the pass is appropriate and the shooting is sharp then victory will be ours on account of our team spirit.

It is amazing how much one can accomplish when it doesn't matter who gets the credit. Team Dynamics is the unseen force that operates in a team between different people or groups. It can strongly influence how a team reacts, behaves or performs. And the effects of this dynamics is often very complex. Suppose in a small team of six people working in one office there are two people who have a particularly strong friendship. This friendship is a natural force that may have an influence on the rest of the team, and can be manifest in various ways, either positively or negatively. For example if 2 or more members in a department vibrate well then this would be a natural force that can set the tempo for the rest of the group to follow and become one.

The foundation of good teamwork is having a shared commitment to common objectives. It is important to put this foundation of shared commitment in place by a kind of brain storming;

- Clarifying the team goals, and pledging commitment to these goals
- Breaking the ice and removing inhibitors
- Creating a sense of belonging and commitment to help the goals be achieved
- Mapping a path and listing short term and long term goals
- Finding solutions to assumed and perceived problems

Other factors can also influence. For example, if a wall of cupboards were to be placed across the middle of the office, this would also form a 'natural force' that influences the communication flow and may separate the group into two further sub-groups.

Sometimes, an "absence" of a natural force can also be a team dynamic. For example, if the leader or manager is permanently removed from the office, the group may be drawn into a change of behavior.

A team is that which can work like hand and glove though conflict is one of the drivers for improved team performance. Managed well, conflict can lead to better decisions, more creative ideas and higher quality output from the team. Managed badly, it can stop teamwork and hinder individuals from achiev-

ing their personal goals. If a team has to be a high performance, productive and efficient one it must learn to work together as a cohesive unit. Today's managers need to be astute and have a robust understanding of their team members.

Most teams suffer from lack of "cohesiveness". There could be various reasons. Strategically, there are FIVE key reasons, why the teams are not cohesive...

1. Absence of trust – Makes you feel guarded. Playing your cards very close from the chest will not help to build friends. If "trust" happens, imagine how enjoyable the work will be... If you are willing to be "vulnerable" with others, and willing to admit weaknesses and mistakes, the other person will begin his trust journey with you...
2. Fear of Conflict – The path to reach your objective will not be smooth, expect conflict. Conflicts can have several causes. If we look at the conflict continuum, on one side, the causes are work, issues, decisions, etc. On the other side, there are personalities, likes, dislikes, dress sense, habits etc. These are the causes of conflicts based on "Personal Attacks". Personal Attacks based conflicts should be "AVOIDED" in any professional environment...
3. Lack of Commitment- There are three causes for lack of commitments.
  - Lack of issue based conflicts. If the team engages either in artificial harmony or personal attacks, every one's views do not come on table. If a team member does not engage in the discussions, she will not have a buy-in for the outcome of the team discussions.
4. Avoiding Accountability – when you know you are accountable you will trigger off better performance. Accountability stems from buy-in, commitment and ownership. In a trusting team, the peers would not hesitate in reminding each other about their accountabilities. This is most critical and maturity driven dysfunction. Many people fear to remind the peers due to the fear of jeopardizing the trusting relationship. The accountability is effective ONLY due to the PEER PRES-SURE. Cohesive teams develop this attitude effectively...
5. Inattention to Results - If the focus is not on results, the team thinks about other
  - Desire for consensus. Talented people have different views and perspectives. Look for the best way out whosoever is the author of the idea. It is very difficult to arrive at a total consensus. Therefore, the team should learn to "Disagree, yet, Commit" protocol.
  - Desire for certainty. Believe that you will see the end. Great teams manage to achieve the outcome through discussions and trust even when there are uncertainties, ambiguities and frequent changes. The journey could be a roller-coaster ride.

irrelevant issues, politics etc. If the goals are clear, and there is total alignment and understanding of the goals and priorities across the peers, the desired outcome is achievable. This is what the organization and the team aims for - The Results.

If team members fit and follow issue based productive conflicts, then it will have Commitments and Accountabilities. These will result into Collective Results. If this happens, then, the team is a "3C Team". Meaning – "Conflicting, Comfortable and Cohesive Team"

An astute CEO or team manager can gauge his team members and use their individual skills to unleash an avalanche of good results. Team work is not just a management policy but a basic secret of success. It is a dynamic that fires performance of multiple skilled people to reach their goals at their optimum best.

Equip yourself with team work skills to join the workforce. TAKE GREAT PRIDE TO BE A MEMBER OF SUCH A TEAM.

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*Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress Working together is success.<sup>6</sup>*

- Henry Ford