



CAREERS

News & Ideas about your career.
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International Leadership Institute
Providing leadership and career development programs, services and publications
in the U.S. and Europe since 1985

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Being a Team Player

By Sara Tusek

A common requirement for jobs of all description is “must be a team player.”

This metaphor from sports is popular across industries: in business, government, education, healthcare, non-profits and volunteer organizations, the idea of teamwork defines a particular way of using people’s skills and strengths in a cooperative, not a competitive way.

Respect: the basis for teamwork

Teamwork involves two or more people working together towards a common objective, combining their abilities in a productive, effective way.

In an organization, it’s a dynamic process involving employees with complementary backgrounds and skills, sharing common goals and exercising concerted physical and mental effort in assessing, planning, or evaluating critical areas of the organization.

True teamwork rests on mutual respect: respect for the organization and its goals, respect for each individual member of the team, and respect for the process itself. Without these three kinds of respect, no teamwork is possible; the forces that separate the team will split it apart.

Respect for the organization

Imagine a sports team that doesn't have the respect of its players. Maybe there’s too much internal strife, or favoritism toward certain players. The team may be corrupted by money or special favors from outside forces that want to destroy the team. Team members become cynical about the sincerity of team owners and managers, leading to complaining and lack of morale.



Now imagine that team trying to play to win. Even if each member tries his or her best, the efforts of the team are severely limited by the lack of focus and direction on the part of its leadership.

How much more so will attempts at teamwork fail in organizations where the mission and vision are unclear, or are not communicated to the employees. to p.2



Being a Team Player

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Respect for each other

Even if the team doesn't get enough support from its leadership, the team can still succeed to a lesser extent if the members support each other.

In fact, this is a common scenario in some large corporations that have lost touch with individual workers. The public goals and objectives of the organization may be ridiculed by the employees, as being simply "empty words" to impress customers.

When employees don't respect management's leadership, two outcomes are typical:

1. Workers go into "bunker mode," hiding behind their jobs and communicating as little as possible. This is the "keep your head down" approach to working when employees don't respect the organization's sincerity, or when the goals have changed and no longer have their full support.
2. Workers pull together to do their jobs well in spite of their disdain for management's methods. This approach can lead to the formation of labor unions, which are true teamwork efforts. So, ironically, management may produce the teamwork it asks for, but that teamwork, a labor union, may not be entirely what management expected!

Respect for the process

In very dysfunctional organizations, even the idea of teamwork is not respected. This kind of "everyone for himself" attitude was summed up by Dr. Sigmund Freud, noted psychologist, in his description of civilization as a process which attempts the following:

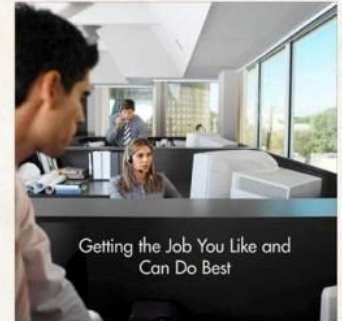
"to combine single individuals, and after that families, then races, people and nations, into one great unity, the unity of mankind.

But man's natural aggressive instinct, the hostility of each against all and all against each, opposes this programme of civilization."

In other words, people have to put aside their own aggressive instincts in order to work together in unity. Naturally, each person is hesitant to lay aside these instincts until everyone else does the same. And if there's no respect for the process of teamwork, then employees will not always be willing to trade their own ambitions for the good of the team.

As stated earlier, teamwork involves two or more people working together towards a common objective, combining their abilities in a productive, effective way. It's easy to ask for teamwork, but hard to develop it. Respect is the key element for successful teamwork in any organization.

21st Century Jobs



By Sara D. & Jaroslav B. Tusek

21st Century Jobs Seminar

The "21st Century Jobs Seminar" gives you access to the practical advice of Institute President Jaroslav Tusek, who has more than 27 years of experience in helping people get jobs that correctly match their skills, abilities, interests and goals with the right business or organization.

This seminar uses our newest book, 21st Century Jobs, as its workbook.

We aim to help you, the job seeker or career changer, to identify your unique set of gifts, talents, skills, interests, accomplishments, values and dreams--and then to find ways to make those dreams into reality, bringing all of your potential to the job which will use this potential to the fullest:

the job that you will love, and can do best.

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The next "21st Century Jobs" seminar will be in January 2010 in Lake Mary, Florida.

Please email Jaroslav at jbt@ili.cc for more details.