

# THE GENIUS OF TEAMWORK

**T**True teamwork is the rarest, most exhilarating, and most productive human activity possible. Every business wants to harness this incredible energy, but achieving such a level of motivation and esprit is not always easy.

A team is not just a group of individuals who work at the same location or have the same logo on their business card. A real team is made up of people who may be unequal in experience, talent, or education, but who are equal in their commitment to working together to achieve the goals and good of the organization, each other and their customers.

If we are going to be successful, we can no longer look at our organizations as departments, divisions, or branch offices. We must look at the bigger picture and resolve to work together in ways we may never have done before. We may even need to cooperate with the competition. Think of all the mergers and acquisitions in the past few years. Your number one competitor today could be your partner tomorrow.

Futurist Bob Treadway CSP, from Littleton, Colorado often gives the Mensa IQ Test to participants in his seminars. He has found that many “average” people, when working as a team, test at “genius” level or higher. Participants contribute in different ways. Some brainstorm. Some work alone and then report back to the group. Treadway finds that a team “becomes a genius when everyone works together.”

Treadway also noticed that when a team is working at optimal performance, it is hard to know who the leader is. In other words, the team runs the team.

Such teamwork doesn't happen by accident. It requires commitment and effort, a willingness to accept the uniqueness of others, and an appreciation of diversity. We build teams in our companies the same way we build relationships with our friends and coworkers. High-functioning teams establish us and our companies as reliable, internally and externally. We then project this image to our customers, vendors, competitors, and communities.



With downsizing and restructuring, many managers today are responsible for as many as 250 people. More than ever, these managers need to build responsible and committed team members if they want the best performance from them. But how do they go about it?

A very dynamic, productive example was the team led by Mike Powell, when a senior scientist at Genentech. Because of its past successes, his ten-person team was given the most important assignments. I asked Mike how he managed to keep his people highly motivated in an environment with long hours and a great deal of frustration.

“I keep them happy,” he said. Now, every manager wants to do this, so I pressed Mike for details. “Ten years ago,” he continued, “I told team members only what I thought each needed to know. Now I tell everyone everything. It may slow them down a bit while they are filtering through all the information, but they get the big picture. Then they can then decide what it is they need to know and do.”

He added, “I also gave them lots of positive feedback via email and voice mail. One group at Genentech lost their leader, but they stayed incredibly productive. I left a

voice-mail message for one of them, saying ‘Everyone in the company is talking about how well you all are doing.’ They were really effective as a team and appreciated knowing it.”

Building a real team gets real results, but it can't be done with slogans and directives. Ed Stair, Senior Vice President at Gap talks about ‘Gap Heroes,’ everyone who uses innovation to find ideas to save money or improve productivity. Start by respecting each person's individual contribution, showing appreciation, exciting them about their possibilities for achievement, and sharing with them that their group effort has the potential for real genius. Good luck!

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