

A TEAM IS MORE THAN A GROUP OF PEOPLE

WRITTEN BY
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When John Amatt led the 1982 Canadian team on a successful Mount Everest Expedition, only three people reached the summit. Many climbers who were part of the team, whose lifetime ambition was to stand on top of Everest, made the conscious choice to stay in the base camp. Why? Because they knew the effort was likely to fail if everyone tried to make it. They chose to forego their individual dreams in favor of helping the team succeed.

This wasn't John Amatt's first time to plan an Everest expedition. Ten years earlier, with one of his friends from Norway, he had gathered a team of world-class climbers from many different countries, for the challenge. But at the last minute, he backed out. Officially, it was to get married. "But that was just an excuse," he said later. "I knew that, despite having the best climbers in the world, this expedition would not succeed. Everyone wanted to reach the top for their own glory or that of their country. No one seemed willing to make decisions for the good of the team."

His fears proved founded. Not only did the team not cooperate to make it to the top, at one point these sophisticated expert climbers even indulged in a rock-throwing fight.

A "team" is not just people who work at the same time in the same place. A real team is a group of very different individuals who share a commitment to working together to achieve common goals. Most likely they are not all

equal in experience, talent or education, but they are equal in one vitally important way, their commitment to the good of the organization. Any group of people -- your family, your workplace or your community -- gets the best results by working as a team.

I believe that all of us want to be part of something bigger than we are. Team relationships fulfill that basic need. They are an immensely powerful force, yet they always need to be nurtured. Be sure to show each team member exactly how far reaching his or her contribution can be. The team, each member, and the larger organization will enjoy greater enthusiasm and ultimately greater success.

What makes a team? Individuals who are not equal in talent, experience or education, but equal in commitment. It is not realistic to think we can live or work with others without some conflict, but by communicating about the differences, focusing on the common goals and not throwing verbal rocks, we will make great strides.

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