

Project Success Method

Build A Real Team



Does the act of assigning a group of people to work together on a project automatically create a real project team? Of course not – no more than the act of dressing a group of kids in red shirts and shorts and calling them the “Tornadoes” will create a real soccer team.

So how do you know a real team when you see one? A real team - whether in projects, sports, or any other collective endeavor - has the following characteristics:

- Commitment to a shared objective. The team will succeed or fail as a team. No individual can succeed, if the team is not successful.
- Commitment to a plan of action. Everyone knows their specific responsibilities and how the team will work together to achieve its objective.
- Mutual accountability. Nobody wants to let down their teammates.
- Mutual support. Everybody backs up their teammates.

Let’s be honest. When individuals are assigned to a project team, they often face the assignment with reluctance and apprehension. They have no personal ownership of the project, and the project is just more work added to their already demanding workload. They may even be skeptical about the objective or feasibility of the project and may lack confidence in the other members of the team.

So how can you convert a group of reluctant participants into a real team?

An interesting related question is, “Which comes first, the creation of a team or the production of teamwork?” Common sense would say that the team is created first, and then the team produces teamwork. But that’s not what really happens. First, a group is formed, but it’s not yet a real team. Next, the group begins to work together with the guidance of a coach to master the objective, rules, strategy, and tactics of the “game.” Each member of the group learns the responsibilities of with their position and how their position relates to all the others.



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As a result of working together, the group develops commitment to their objective and plan of action as well as a sense of mutual accountability and support. And the group has become a real team! As counter-intuitive as it seems, the production of teamwork actually precedes and leads to the creation of a real team.

The implication for the creation of project teams is clear. The way to create a real project team is to lead the group through a carefully structured process by which they clarify the project objective and develop a project plan. Because they developed the plan, it becomes their plan for their project. That's commitment. Then the team agrees to use a disciplined control process, which involves coming together periodically to review the status of the work and to solve problems. That process continuously reinforces mutual accountability and support. Now you have a real project team.

And who is the coach in this process? The project manager!