

THE EXCHANGE

This issue's featured subject is "Building a Team."

SMOOTH SAILING?

When a new team is formed, there is usually a fair amount of anxiety from members. Team function falls into three phases:

Fight. In the beginning, there can be an abundance of disagreements. People usually have different purposes and suggested solutions, thus leading to conflict. Most team members experience tremendous stress. Extroverts blow up and introverts puff up. The result is not a pleasant sight.

If this happens to your team, hang in there. This is normal human behavior. Sometimes it is helpful to know that dysfunction is a normal process before things can get better. It can also aid the team if this is discussed before any disagreements arise.

Flight. After the fight comes the desire to quit the team. Many team members are convinced they are on the wrong team, or that some members need to leave if they are to stay. If they do not have the option of physically leaving, they become mentally or emotionally absent. This way, it is not their fault for the mistakes that the team is making.

When the team becomes so uncomfortable that you consider it not worth your time, realize that this, too, is a normal phase in the life of a team. Stay the course and stay engaged. Ask open questions to strive to understand your team members' points of view. It is not necessary to agree with everything. It is necessary to agree to listen and to keep an open mind.

Unite. The third phase of team life is rewarding. Team members begin to recognize the value of each other and even the value of those quite different than themselves. This is the phase when the majority of the work product is accomplished.

Many experts believe that the unite phase is not possible without the fight and flight. A team needs to experience some trial and tribulation in order to come together. Some would say that the diamond would still be a lump of coal without the pressure.



At TLC, we believe that understanding people and how they interact in teams can help to increase the effectiveness and satisfaction of being a

team member. Here are some quick tips to help you with your next team:

- Listen thoroughly.
- Take notes.
- Ask questions.
- Refrain from reaching a judgement too quickly.
- Turn your initial statements into questions to gently steer the conversation.
- Follow through with commitments.
- Be prepared for each team meeting.
- Arrive on time.
- Stay on track.
- Remind each other what the team's goals are.
- Be positive.
- Refrain from taking comments personally.
- Choose your words carefully.

Strive to see yourself as your teammates may see you. Adapt to the behavioral styles of the team members. And remember that being different can make you a valuable team member. While the sailing may not always be smooth, the progress will be invigorating!

IN THE NEWS



TLC has been asked to speak/facilitate training in Istanbul, Turkey; Denver, Colorado; and several other places locally and nationally. We are always pleased to be asked to travel to you for training. Unfortunately, we cannot always accommodate requests with service dates that are close-at-hand. Please think at least three months in advance of your needs. Planning ahead enables us to say yes to your requests. Now is the time to contact us to schedule training that you would like in the fourth quarter of this year.



SUMMER 2005

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LOOKING AHEAD:

- ◆ Giving Advice - the focus of the September issue of the Exchange.

LOOKING BACK:

- ◆ For previous editions of The Exchange, go to our [back issues](#).
- ◆ Re-read the [11/2002](#) edition: **Teamwork**.

Coming together is a beginning. Staying together is progress. Working together is success.

Henry Ford



Helpful Hints:

- Establish ground rules that every member of the team must adhere to.
- After meeting with your team, ask questions from participants on how to improve.
- Before selecting team members, ask yourself what qualities are required. Then look for those who exemplify those traits.

A snowflake is one of God's most fragile creations, but look what they can do when they stick together!

Author Unknown



To learn more about it, click here!

TEAM TIME



One of the most frustrating things about working on a team can be the meetings. Teams often take more time to make decisions and accomplish tasks than individuals working

alone. It's also no secret that an idea or proposal is sometimes sent to a committee for the purpose of killing it. So, what are the advantages of team meetings? How can they be made better?

The amount of time spent on group projects is not the primary advantage; it is the quality of the work. This is why our justice system, congress, and the Supreme Court are comprised of more than one person. The quality of the decisions made by bringing together a diversity of experience and expertise outweighs the time sacrifice of having several people working on the same task.

Did you know that research shows that the average talk time for a theme in a group meeting is only 58 seconds? This means that the attention span of groups is naturally short. Yet, team meetings often go off track. To keep team meetings on task, a few guidelines can be helpful.

- Use a facilitator with new or unproductive teams.
- Clarify roles and expectations up-front (e.g., leader, scribe, timekeeper, etc.).
- Clarify the specific purpose of the team. Also clarify what the successful result will be.
- Schedule start and stop times.
- Have a written agenda... and stick to it!
- Conduct some meetings standing up. They will not last as long as meetings with everyone sitting comfortably.

Training for effective team role-taking and task-orientation can be supplied in the context of staff and career development training. This is another excellent way to groom employees for more productive roles and outcomes. For suggestions regarding effective team building seminars and coaching, call TLC. We'd love to team up with you!

THERE IS 'ME' IN TEAMS!

Perhaps you have heard the expression, "there is no 'I' in team." The purpose of that saying is surely meant to have team members work together rather than to have hidden agendas.

Following this pronoun path, there is no 'we' in team either. While we can hope that everyone will join in, in reality if we wait for that to happen, the team may fail before it gets started.

There is a "me" in team. Maybe it is up to me to ensure the success of the team. Maybe it is up to me to be prepared, arrive on time, contribute, make decisions, follow through and encourage others to do the same. If each team member realized it was his or her responsibility, imagine what could be accomplished. Let it start with me.

FEATURED SERVICE: L.E.A.R.N. as a Team

When you stop learning, you stop growing. How many of our teams have stopped growing? Just because you've worked around a group of people for a while does not mean they know you, or that you know and understand them. TLC focuses on teaching departments and teams the fundamentals of an effective team by covering three basic principles.

1. Understand the five roles associated with all teams:

- Liberator - generates the idea
- Energizer - advances the idea
- Analyzer - refines the idea
- Runner - implements the idea
- Navigator - coordinates everyone on the team

2. Identify individual roles and recognize what your role is on the team.

3. Understand how the process of an effective team is required to ensure maximum efficiency.

On August 19th, TLC will conduct a one-day course of how to L.E.A.R.N. as a Team. For additional information on how you or key members of your team can attend this workshop, please contact us at: 423-622-8255 or email tlc@talklisten.com. Seating is available but limited.

BURY THE HATCHET

By Vincent Ivan Phipps, B.S.



Remember the last time you and another person had a serious disagreement? It is easy for me to recollect because my last argument was so recent. I was traveling with my brother across the island of Ibiza. The maps were in Spanish and, after arguing about the directions, we ended up getting lost. My brother accused me of wasting over two hours by fussing because I would not "bury the hatchet."

I took that opportunity to ask him if he knew the origin of the expression he had just used. He admitted he didn't know (which was rare because he hardly ever admits to NOT knowing something). I told him it came from Native American ancestors. During an Indian battle, after the fight was over, hatchets (small axes) would be buried in the dirt. This symbolized that the fight was to be forgotten and peace should emerge.

My brother and I laughed and put our situation into perspective. Since we only see each other two or three times a year, it was pretty silly to use that precious vacation together arguing. Instead, we agreed to listen to each other and get help from someone else. We found out we were both wrong and that we were only twenty minutes from where we wanted to go.

The next time you want to build a stronger team or improve rapport with co-workers, learn to bury the hatchet. Focus on the goals ahead instead of the problem's behind!

ASK THE EXPERTS



Dear TLC,

There is a member of our team that seems to only point out the negative. Let's call him "Pessimistic Paul". Our department uses brainstorming to generate ideas. Paul will shoot down ideas quickly by yelling out, "That won't work!" or, "We tried that years ago and it failed then." He is stifling our creativity and bringing us all down. What should we do?

-Stifled

Dear Stifled,

"Pessimistic Paul" sounds like a common member on the teams of many of our clients. Even though Paul's behavior is

familiar, it can still be a challenge to have someone like this on your team.

Before your team's next brainstorm session, establish the ground rule that no comments or speaking are allowed until all ideas have been presented. Instead of singling out Paul, address this to the group in advance.

When Paul later blurts out during the discussion, "That won't work!," instead of getting defensive, get informative. State something like, "Thank you for your opinion Paul", and then ask open questions such as, "What information do you have to support what you think?" Remember a true team needs someone to find the weaknesses in a plan or process.

BIRTHDAYS ARE FOR EVERYONE!

A very happy birthday to our clients whose birthdays are in July and August.

July:

Kathleen Stout

Lloyd Carter

Elaine Van Paepegham

Woody McClintock

Chan Phan

James Nalley

Daniel Homrich

Kiran Naik

Steve Carr

John Loving

Derek Wood

Rachel Collum

Maureen Burke

Charlie Milstead

Windy Niel

Jennifer Humble

Paul Major

Phil West

August:

Melinda Sublett

Chris Mayo

Karen Whaley

Russell Martin

Buck Gentry

Jill Robertson

Don Bates

Larcenuia Hills

Christopher Rownd

Carla Akhlaghi

Kurt Emmenegger

Charles Stiner

Danny Camp

Ven Garidepalli

John Stamps

Tony Ray

Donna Wong

Randy Hamrick

Gordon Morehouse

Larry Samuels

Jeff Miller

Andrew Hunt

Matthew Dobson

Happy Birthday!



Remember to...

- Ask the quieter members of your team for their input.
- Request alternatives from negative members of the team.
- Place team members in roles that will compliment their best attributes.

Many of us are more capable than some of us... but none of us is as capable as all of us.

Tom Wilson

Wild ducks make a lot of noise, but they also have the sense to benefit from occasionally flying in formation.



CEO CORNER: "Tipping Point"

By Beverly Inman-Ebel, MA CCC-SLP

Last May, I experienced the ultimate test of team building. I was in Morocco attending a conference for the purpose of electing a leader. Twenty-eight countries voted and the results were announced. My first and second choices did not win. That was a long way to travel to be so disappointed.

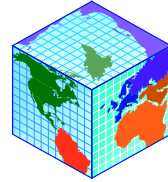
As the day progressed, evidence that the winner had used bribery, threats, and tampering with the ballots came to my attention. My disappointment turned into motivation to recall the election.

Leaders from ten countries met that evening to discuss what action to take. Only half of the participants spoke English, so translators made communication possible. Knowing that many smaller countries consider Americans to be bossy and somewhat arrogant, I decided to listen first, second, and third before I spoke.

This "team" only had one thing in common. We were all dissatisfied with the election. Finding other common ground proved difficult. After a half-hour of chaos that had me deep breathing to remain calm, a solution was offered that was nothing more than a slap on the wrist. I was convinced it would not work. I finally asked for clarity, "I am willing to continue to listen. Please help me to understand how this suggested action will solve the problem." They decided thirty minutes later that it would not.

Another solution was offered, one that I considered less valuable than the first. I asked for an explanation of the process they were recommending. Once I heard that, I commented, "I am not convinced that this process will allow us to accomplish our goal. What am I missing?" Again, they decided this solution would not work.

Suddenly, an African delegate came into the meeting speaking rapid French. Once the



translators did their magic, all of us realized that she had been threatened by the winner because she had voted for someone else.

That was the tipping point and I could sense it by reading the emotion on every face regardless of the language they were using to express it. So, two hours into this meeting, I finally took the opportunity to speak my mind. I announced that I had something to say and the volatile room became instantly quiet. While some might say that these leaders were willing to listen to the representative from the United States because we are respected for our ability to get things accomplished or because we are the most powerful country in the world, I think they were willing to listen because I was willing to listen first.

This group of fifteen people from ten countries suddenly came together with a united cause. We spent the rest of the evening composing a letter, transcribing it into different languages, and burning the midnight oil as each representative signed the finished document. We came together as relative strangers and left as true friends that continue to work together as a team through emails and international meetings.

If you find yourself a member of a dysfunctional team, keep listening. Look for the tipping point that can get the team together. Take the risk of speaking up at the appropriate time, then allow everyone to buy into the process so that it is the team's solution, not yours.

This group was able to function as a team in spite of language and cultural barriers. So can your team. Listen. Share. Get involved. Live your dreams!

What Our Clients Are Saying

"I especially liked the honesty of the workshop. It was a day well spent! I also enjoyed learning about the five rules of asking better questions."

Jason Herndon, Chattanooga TN

TLC establishes long-term relationships with our clients. If we have helped you or if you believe our approach to change would work for someone you know, please communicate with us by email [tlc@talklisten.com] or phone [1-888-232-2873]. We work with individuals and groups on the following subject areas: attitude, listening, body language, voice, leadership, compliments and corrections, behavioral style, teamwork, effective meetings, public speaking, accent reduction and much more!

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If I could solve all the problems myself, I would.

Thomas Edison, when asked why he had a team of twenty-one assistants

No one can whistle a symphony. It takes an orchestra to play it.

H.E. Luccock

TLC, Talk Listen Communicate, LLC

842 S. Germantown Road
Chattanooga, TN 37412

Phone: 423-622-8255
Fax: 423-624-4365
1-888-BECAUSE

Email: tlc@talklisten.com
www.talklisten.com