

Leading Teams

ABSTRACT

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The New Workplace is defined as a place where communication methods are more advanced, delivery systems are more efficient, and organizational goals are clear. People are engaged in tasks and completing assignments and in most cases get the opportunity to take turns in leadership roles. With that, being able to operate within a team atmosphere is important, but what becomes more important is being able to lead the team.

Rees (2001) sets forth a practical guide for leading work teams. However, the history of communities lends the natural inclination to complete goals and objectives using a team-based approach. Task forces, committees, boards, the PTA and other community-based organizations depend greatly on teams for the accomplishment of organizational goals. Their missions and visions are too great to be carried out alone. Being a team leader allows for inclusion in a wide variety of projects, which capitalize on the team approach.

One model of teamwork is the "Ten Essentials of Teamwork." The ten essentials and a description of each is listed below.

1. Common Goals

- Reason for being and working together
- Rationalize existence
- Clear goals produce team achievement

2. Leadership:

- Members can and are able to lead
- Respected and influential individuals
- Build bridges

3. Interaction and involvement of all members:

- Members must contribute actively
- No holding back
- Leaders must know how to get individuals involved

4. Maintenance of individual self-esteem:

- Individual contributions must be heard, valued and acknowledged

5. Open Communication:

- Members can speak their mind
- Ample time should be given for communication
- Good informal communication channels

6. Power to make decisions:

- What does the team have the power to change?
- Team carries out decisions
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7. Attention to process and content:

- Process used to do the work; how the work should be done

- Content of the work done; what has to be done
- 8. Mutual trust:**
 - Treatment of each other, team member and team leader
 - Discussion of how behaviors affect trust
- 9. Respect for Differences:**
 - Disagreement and difference without punishment
 - Respect for the needs of others
 - If not met, can be de-motivating
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- 10. Constructive conflict resolution:**
 - Healthy resolution
 - Leader facilitates member expression of conflict

Not everyone is the same. As a matter of fact, each of us brings different strengths and weaknesses to the table. In addition, not everyone is comfortable in groups or leading groups. As a matter of fact people typically fear: group work, loss of personal power and identity, and building consensus.

Knowing this is important for the leader because it means that they must develop teams with several factors in mind. Leaders must realize the need for individuality, that teamwork is an ongoing negotiation, that facilitation involves bringing different ideas to the table, that they must challenge teams to meet individual needs, and provide opportunities to work independently at times away from the group to feel more comfortable.

One model to think about when leading others is the LEAD Model. A breakdown of the model includes:

- **Lead** with a clear purpose
- **Empower** to participate
- **Aim** for consensus
- **Direct** the process

References

Rees, F. (2001). *How to lead work teams*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.