**Question:** Tips for Better Team Work?

**Answer:**

Have you ever wondered how some work groups exhibit effective team work and others remain dysfunctional for the life of the team? Effective team work is both profoundly simple and difficult at the same time. The factors that affect success in team work occur both within the team itself and in the work environment in which the team must function.

These ten tips describe the environment that must occur within the team for successful team work to take place. Successful team work is the cornerstone for creating functioning, contributing teams.

**Keys to Successful Team Work**

* **The team understands the goals** and is committed to attaining them. This clear direction and agreement on [mission](http://humanresources.about.com/od/glossarym/g/Mission.htm) and [purpose](http://humanresources.about.com/od/teambuilding/f/teams_purpose.htm) is essential for effective team work. This team clarity is reinforced when the organization has [clear expectations](http://humanresources.about.com/od/teamworksuccess/qt/clear_expectations.htm) for the team's work, goals, accountability, and outcomes.
* The team creates an environment in which people are comfortable **taking reasonable risks** in communicating, advocating positions, and taking action. Team members [trust each other](http://humanresources.about.com/od/workrelationships/a/trust_rules.htm). Team members are not punished for disagreeing.
* **Communication is open, honest, and respectful.** People feel free to express their thoughts, opinions, and potential solutions to problems. People feel as if they are heard out and listened to by team members who are attempting to understand. Team members ask questions for clarity and spend their thought time listening deeply rather than forming rebuttals while their coworker is speaking.
* **Team members have a strong sense of belonging to the group.** They experience a deep commitment to the group’s decisions and actions. This sense of belonging is enhanced and reinforced when the team spends the time to develop [team norms](http://humanresources.about.com/od/teambuilding/qt/norms.htm) or relationship guidelines together.
* **Team members are viewed as unique people** with irreplaceable experiences, points of view, knowledge, and opinions to contribute. After all, the purpose for forming a team is to take advantage of the differences. Otherwise, why would any organization approach projects, products, or goals with a team. In fact, the more that a team can bring out divergent points of view, that are thoughtfully presented and supported with facts as well as opinions, the better.
* **Creativity, innovation, and different viewpoints are expected** and encouraged. Comments such as, "we already tried that and it didn't work" and "what a dumb idea" are not allowed or supported.
* **The team is able to constantly examine itself** and continuously improve its processes, practices, and the interaction of team members. The team openly discusses [team norms](http://humanresources.about.com/od/teambuilding/qt/norms.htm) and what may be hindering its ability to move forward and progress in areas of effort, talent, and strategy.
* **The team has agreed upon procedures for diagnosing, analyzing, and resolving team work problems** and conflicts. The team does not support member personality conflicts and clashes nor do team members pick sides in a disagreement. Rather, members work towards mutual resolution.
* **Participative leadership is practiced** in leading meetings, assigning tasks, recording decisions and commitments, assessing progress, holding team members accountable, and providing direction for the team.
* **Members of the team make high quality decisions together** and have the support and commitment of the group to carry out the decisions made.