

Teamwork

Teamwork is an essential part of workplace success. Like a basketball team working together to set up the perfect shot, every team member has a specific role to play in accomplishing tasks on the job. Although it may seem as if one player scored the basket, that basket was made possible by many people's planning, coordination, and cooperation to get that player the ball. Employers look for people who not only know how to work well with others, but who understand that not every player on the team can or will be the one who gets the ball. When everyone in the workplace works together to accomplish goals, everyone achieves more.

Teamwork involves building relationships and working with other people using a number of important skills and habits:

- Working cooperatively
- Contributing to groups with ideas, suggestions, and effort
- Communication (both giving and receiving)
- Sense of responsibility
- Healthy respect for different opinions, customs, and individual preferences
- Ability to participate in group decision-making

The ability to work as part of a team is one of the most important skills in today's job market. Employers are looking for workers who can contribute their own ideas, but also want people who can work with others to create and develop projects and plans.

When employees work together to accomplish a goal, everyone benefits. Employers might expect to "see" this in action in different ways. For example, team members in the workplace plan ahead and work cooperatively to assign tasks, assess progress, and deliver on time. They have professional discussions during which differing approaches and opinions might be shared and assessed in a respectful manner. Even when certain employees end up with tasks that were not their first choices, jobs get done with limited complaints because it is in the spirit of teamwork and with the overall goal in mind. A leader or manager may often serve as the teamwork facilitator. In this case, team members participate respectfully in discussion, carry out assigned tasks, and defer to the leader in the best interest of the goal. Consensus is wonderful, but not always possible, and an assigned leader will often support and facilitate the decision-making necessary for quality teamwork to exist.

The activities in this section seek to teach participants about the importance of teamwork to workplace success and the specific role each individual on a team may play. Participants will learn about positive teamwork behavior and discover how their own conduct can impact others on a team. The section also discusses possible obstacles to teams working successfully and offers the opportunity to build constructive strategies for overcoming these challenges.

Note to facilitators: Learning the value of teamwork and becoming an effective member of a team is an important first step to developing leadership skills. For disconnected youth, especially those with underlying disabilities, the development of these skills is critical. Young people without a connection to work or school typically have had limited exposure to positive and proactive support systems, or a true sense of the essence of the proactive support of a community. Affording young people experiences through which they learn to rely on themselves and others is an important factor in the development of a productive teamwork mentality. If working with disconnected youth and/or youth with disabilities, use these activities to bridge teamwork skills as a stepping-stone to leadership development.

11. There is No "I" in Team

JUST THE FACTS: The purpose of this activity is to enrich participants' understanding of what it means to be part of a team and why being a good team player is important for career success.



Time

15-20 minutes



Materials

- Chart paper or sentence strips with markers and/or Activity 11 printed out for each participant



Directions

Choose and display five "teamwork" quotes (see Activity 11). This can be done on chart paper, using the accompanying worksheet, writing quotes on sentence strips, or reading each quote aloud. What is important here is the quote - and not necessarily who said the quote.

Ask participants to choose the quote they like best. Divide the larger group into smaller groups according to the chosen quote (i.e., all participants who liked quote #1, etc.). Participants should spend approximately two minutes discussing the quote and coming to consensus on the reason they liked it the best. One member of each team should be prepared to offer the group's feedback and reflection.

For another, more hands-on version of this activity, write each of the quotes on sentence strips. Cut the sentence strips into individual words or manageable chunks/phrases. Have groups work together to arrange the words/phrases into the correct order.



Conclusion

Tell participants that employers rate the ability to be a "team player" as one of the most important qualities and characteristics of their current (and future) employees (i.e., the job candidate). Ask why this is might be so. Elicit responses and an interactive discussion.



Journaling Activity

A friend comes to you seeking advice. He got into trouble at work for not being a team player. He really likes his job and isn't quite sure what to do. What suggestions would you give to your friend to help him improve? How might he respond to his boss?

Activity 11. Teamwork Quotes

"Individual commitment to a group effort - that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work." - Vince Lombardi (football coach)

"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."
- Henry Ford (pioneer of the assembly-line production method)

"There is no such thing as a self-made man. You will reach your goals only with the help of others." - George Shinn (former owner of Charlotte, now New Orleans, Hornets basketball team)

"It is amazing what can be accomplished when nobody cares about who gets the credit."
- Robert Yates (politician in the 1700s)

"Teamwork divides the task and multiplies the success." - Author Unknown

"I am a member of a team, and I rely on the team, I defer to it and sacrifice for it, because the team, not the individual, is the ultimate champion." - Mia Hamm (retired American soccer player)

"Respect your fellow human being, treat them fairly, disagree with them honestly, enjoy their friendship, explore your thoughts about one another candidly, work together for a common goal and help one another achieve it."

- Bill Bradley (American hall of fame basketball player, Rhodes scholar and former three-term Democratic U.S. Senator from New Jersey)

"Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence wins championships."

- Michael Jordan (former American basketball player, businessman and majority owner of the Charlotte Bobcats)

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

- Helen Keller (American author, political activist, lecturer, and the first deafblind person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree.)

"The strength of the team is each individual member...the strength of each member is the team."

- Phil Jackson (widely considered one of the greatest coaches in the history of the NBA)

"Unity is strength... when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved." - Mattie Stepanek (advocate on behalf of peace, people with disabilities, and children with life-threatening conditions who died one month before his 14th birthday)

"Lots of people want to ride with you in the limo, but what you want is someone who will take the bus with you when the limo breaks down." - Oprah Winfrey (American television host, actress, producer, and philanthropist)

"Finding good players is easy. Getting them to play as a team is another story." - Casey Stengel (baseball hall of famer)

Activity 12. Elements of Teamwork – An Inventory of Skills

Part of being a good team member is learning how to understand your personal strengths (what you have to offer) AND where you might need to draw assistance from others. Listed on this sheet are 10 of the characteristics that make a productive team member. Rate your level of confidence in each skill (HONESTLY) - and then devise a plan for how you can improve some of the areas you think might need a "jump start."

SKILL #1: RELIABLE

This means: You can be counted on to get the job done.

Rating: ☐ Not so confident ☐ Sort of Confident ☐ Really confident

SKILL #2: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR

This means: You express your thoughts and ideas clearly and directly, with respect for others.

Rating: ☐ Not so confident ☐ Sort of Confident ☐ Really confident

SKILL #3: ACTIVE LISTENER

This means: You listen to and respect different points of view. Others can offer you constructive feedback - and you don't get upset or defensive.

Rating: ☐ Not so confident ☐ Sort of Confident ☐ Really confident

SKILL #4: PARTICIPATES

This means: You are prepared - and get involved in team activities. You are regular contributor.

Rating: ☐ Not so confident ☐ Sort of Confident ☐ Really confident

SKILL #5: SHARES OPENLY AND WILLINGLY

This means: You are willing to share information, experience, and knowledge with the group.

Rating: ☐ Not so confident ☐ Sort of Confident ☐ Really confident

SKILL #6: COOPERATIVE

This means: You work with other members of the team to accomplish the job - no matter what.

Rating: ☐ Not so confident ☐ Sort of Confident ☐ Really confident

SKILL #7: FLEXIBLE

This means: You adapt easily when the team changes direction or you're asked to try something new.

Rating: ☐ Not so confident ☐ Sort of Confident ☐ Really confident

SKILL #8: COMMITTED

This means: You are responsible and dedicated. You always give your best effort!

Rating: ☐ Not so confident ☐ Sort of Confident ☐ Really confident

12. I'll Give You Some of Mine if You Give Me Some of Yours

JUST THE FACTS: Part of becoming a functional member of a team is learning to understand what you bring to the group and what you might need from others. This exercise is designed to help participants begin to identify their individual strengths and needs regarding teamwork.



Time

30 minutes



Materials

- Activity 12
- Pens or pencils
- Optional: Chart paper and markers



Directions

Introduce this activity by reflecting on some of the quotes discussed in Activity 11 (if you have not completed Activity 11, choose some of the quotes to discuss with the group - and offer a brief discussion on their meaning).

Ask participants for a list of some of the characteristics they think make up a good team player. This might be phrased as follows: "What does it take from each person on a team to make a team really work?"

Students will be completing an individual inventory of the skills they possess related to teamwork. This inventory is for personal reflection and need not be shared.



Conclusion

As part of the concluding activity, ask participants to share one of their identified areas of strengths - and one area they would like to improve. This discussion allows each to hear from others their areas of strength and need. This process may help those in need of assistance identify who might be able to offer it.



Journaling Activity

Consider your score on the Elements of Teamwork inventory. Were you pleased with your results? What are some of the areas you would like to improve? How will you attempt to do this?