



What Team Members Really Do The Lucky 13

Much has been written about the power of teams. As organizations from huge government agencies to plumbing contractors are reorganizing themselves into teams, employees and managers are left to wonder, “Now that I’m on a team, what do I do differently?” So here is a brief list of some of the specific behaviors that you can practice to help the team and yourself succeed.

1. Look for ways to help the team meet its goals. Continually scan the environment for ways to contribute things that need doing. Go with your strengths. Know what you are good at and offer it freely to the team. Build on one another’s accomplishments.

2. Look for ways to support other team members. When you’re on a team, tune in and be ready to jump in, when and if you are needed. Effective team members, while always respectful of one another, don’t always need to ask if they can help. They help. Don’t be shy.

3. Communicate in ways that are: descriptive, empathetic, and equal. Be positive, nonjudgmental. Occasionally, you will need to say things that your team members may not want to hear. So describe the behavior or incident that caused a problem: speak in a way that communicates you may not have the answer either and hope to find it together, empathize and connect with the other person, and remember that you are all in this together.

4. Welcome problems. Accept them and approach them as an opportunity to work together toward resolving them. Solving problems is what teams are supposed to do. Don’t think you are doing something wrong if you have problems. Use your communication skills (see #3 above) to work together, listen to everyone, and come up with a solution. Solving problems together will make you a stronger team.

5. Discover and use the different talents of all the team members to help the team best achieve its goals. Maybe one person excels at handling details. Perhaps another naturally pays attention to the interpersonal nuances and works to make sure positive relationships are maintained, both within the team and with customers, coworkers, or others. Value each other’s unique contributions to the team’s—and the organization’s—success.

6. Be flexible. Do what needs to be done. On an effective team, very rarely will a task be the sole responsibility of only one team member. Use every opportunity to learn what you can about what other team members do.

7. Be honest with one another about issues affecting team performance and interpersonal functioning. When you’re on a team, you need to pay attention to both productivity and morale. Approach interpersonal problems with an inquiring mindset—you want to work together to resolve the issue. Say what needs to be said in a constructive way.

8. Give frequent, sincere, positive feedback. This fosters the mutual affection



that holds the team together. To do this, pay attention to your own thoughts and feelings as you watch your team members. If you hear that inner voice say “Good job!” then make sure you tell someone. You can also pass along positive comments from clients and customers.

9. When mistakes are made, find ways to make corrections without calling undue attention to what a fellow team member did or didn’t do. Never blame one another. Just pick up the ball and keep going.

10. Watch for signals. Respond to the subtle verbal and nonverbal cues other team members may send out. This allows you—because you are a team and know how to read each other—to deliver service that to the customer appears seamless. What would a sports team be without hand signals and nonverbal cues?!

11. Be confident. When you are part of a team, you will be asked to do things to support the goal which you may not have done before. Approach this task with confidence and give it your best. It has to be done, and your team members believe in you, so believe in yourself.

12. Let go of your ego. A team is about supporting others in the service of a shared goal. There is really no room for feeling that you are special, that certain tasks are beneath you, or that your mood is somehow more important than getting the job done. As much as possible, say yes to requests. Be enthusiastic and positive. Accept

challenges as opportunities to grow, learn, and contribute. If you focus on doing this, all the other principles will follow. And you will find that you are on a winning team.

And finally,

13. Celebrate together. Have lunch or dinner together. Throw a spontaneous party at the office. Savor the good moments, remind yourselves of what worked, and, yes, problem-solve. Keep asking, “What needs changing?” and “How can we do better?”

So there you have thirteen key actions to make your team—and yourself—succeed. Good luck!

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