

## Effective Teams

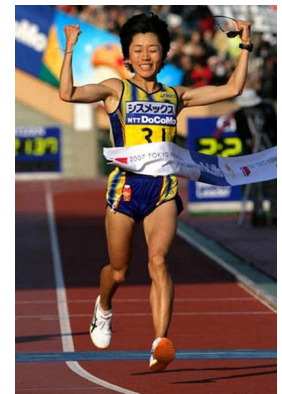
**“Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision; the ability to direct individual accomplishment toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.” – Andrew Carnegie**

Teams come together for any number of reasons – for example, to resolve problems, to be creative and innovate, or to carry out a tactical response to a well-defined plan.



One key factor to effective teamwork is **clear vision**. A marathon runner can't function effectively or achieve his or her **goal** unless all body parts are working in harmony with a **common purpose** – to win the race. Legs would be useless if the brain didn't tell them what to do at the right time, or if the nervous system failed to communicate those instructions to the

rest of the organs like the heart to pump more blood or the lungs more oxygen when needed. Fortunately for all of us, body parts aren't able to argue over which task is more important – each cell, organ and system have their own unique function and specialty – and are able to **synergise** with perfect timing! The body has incredible versatility and can achieve the most complex and challenging tasks as it can draw on whatever resources are needed at the time. This highlights the importance of recognising that a team's success is very much linked to a *clear vision* of what they are trying to achieve as a whole.



**People who are members of any team are not just interested in knowing ‘what’ they have to do, they need to know ‘why’ they need to do it.** Warren Bennis, a US businessman said: *“Vision animates, inspires, transforms purpose into action.”* **When we are inspired by the vision (the ‘why’) we can overcome any obstacles.**

Many excellent examples of clear focus with successful outcomes were highlighted during the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. Regardless of the cultural and language differences, diversity of sports and age, multiple stories emerged of Olympic medallists who had held long-term visions of achieving their goals. Did these individual champions achieve this glory on their own? Far from it! Many medalists in fact gave credit to their collaborative partners (whether or not they were a member of a team sport such as a relay, basketball or sailing). Olympic athletes appreciate not only the need for a clear goal, but just as importantly, the value and critical input and support provided by their coaches, families, sponsors and sports institutes. They understand that their achievements are indeed a collaborative outcome.

## Effective Teams (Cont'd)



Their **shared vision** inspired commitment to whatever was necessary to achieve the goal. To overcome injuries, disappointments, lack of funding, long hours of training, etc. Without knowing the 'why' – having the motivation to endure such obstacles would quickly become overwhelming.

Another key factor to creating effective teamwork is having a **collaborative spirit**. Collaboration is not the same as 'communication' or 'working together.' As Michael Schrage, author of 'No More Teams!' defines, *"collaboration is the process of **shared creation**: two or more individuals with complementary skills interacting to create a shared understanding that none had previously possessed or could have come to on their own."*

The creation of value can only come about by embracing the diversity of skills within a team and respecting that others can provide perspectives that add value to our own. Sharing insights, ideas, comments and raising questions as a group are a catalyst for creative outcomes. Great collaborators not only know how to work effectively with others but give credit where it is due. Alexander Graham Bell agreed: *"Great discoveries and improvements invariably involve the cooperation of many minds. I may be given credit for having blazed the trail, but when I look at the subsequent developments I feel the credit is due to others rather than myself."*



**A team leader with clear vision who can inspire others to embrace it in a collaborative spirit will go a long way to achieving successful outcomes.**

### Recommended Reading:

*'No More Teams! - Mastering the Dynamics of Creative Collaboration'* by Michael Schrage (Double Day 1995)

*'Teamwork: What Must Go Right/What Can Go Wrong'* by Carl E. Larson & Frank M.J. LaFasto (Sage Publications 1989)

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