

## Tour de Lance...A Team Effort

By Kristin Arnold

Lance Armstrong couldn't win the Tour de France alone – he had a slew of support vehicles, sport coaches, directors and “domestiques” (Lance’s fellow cyclists) who worked together to position Lance as the five-time winner. Sure, Lance is a tremendous cyclist, but without exceptional support, he could have been at the trail end of the pack, or “peloton.” We can learn a lot from their focused teamwork:

**Know the Numbers.** Chris Carmichael has been analyzing Lance’s performance over the years. Based on hard data as well as Lance’s intuition, he fine-tunes the variables that will affect Lance’s future performance. Do you know the trends that affect your team’s work? Do you have a coach or “facilitator” to help guide the team?

**Constantly Improve.** Lance didn’t do so well during a time trial so his team analyzed what was different about that specific time trial. They attributed it to a new technique they

were experimenting with (a light misting to keep Lance’s core temperature down before the race). They decided to drop the experiment. When something goes wrong, do you point fingers at the “culprit,” or do you focus on improving the process?

**Constant Communications.** All team members are able to speak to each other via two-way radio. In order to conserve energy, Lance and his fellow riders developed a shorthand speech pattern to clearly signal their intentions. Have you agreed on the best way to communicate between your teammates?



**Provide Comfort.** Periodically, Lance needs food and water. The domestiques fall back to the pace car, get the provisions and then battle their way back up to Lance to pass it on. Are you attentive to the team’s basic needs?

**Prepare for the Worst.** The support mobile has every bicycle component on-board – just in case something goes wrong. Thirty different bike frames, dozens of tires and (continued on page 2)

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## A Different Approach

Our old mailman was so good. He was always on time, extremely friendly and he had a quickness to his step.

We had a standing joke. Whenever we were shipping out a lot of books in individual packages, he’d say, “You’re going to give those to the UPS driver, right?” and we always assured him that of course we didn’t expect him to take the packages. They would indeed be going by United Parcel Service.

Our new mailman is very good, too. He is always on time, extremely friendly, and he has a quickness to his step.

The first time he found us preparing a big stack of packages for shipment, he really surprised us.

This mailman walked over to the packages, noted they were for UPS pickup and promptly said, “Why are you shipping these with a delivery service? Why don’t you let me take them for you?”

We were dumbfounded. “Are you serious?” I asked him. Then I explained how (continued on p.4)

## Etiquette for Open Space Offices

By Kristin Arnold

More and more organizations are moving toward open office spaces designed to foster communication and teamwork. Rather than hide behind closed doors, each person has a cubicle or “pod” to do individual work and several areas or rooms to gather as a team.

Conceptually, open space design sounds great. Unfortunately, many don’t understand nor appreciate these neighborly rules of behavior:

**Leave Me Alone.** When you see anyone in a “Dilbert Pod,” assume the person is intently working. When they want to commune with their team mates, they will get up and move to a communal area.

**Imagine a Door.** If you must interrupt, knock on the partition before entering the cube space. Consider each pod has a “door” that deserves the same courtesy as an enclosed office. (The TV character, Les Nessman on *WKRP in Cincinnati* would be proud!) (continued on p.2)

## Lance Armstrong's Team *(continued from page 1)*

every tiny piece of equipment is carefully stored for quick retrieval. Does your team plan for the “unexpected?”

**Blow a Tire?** The domestique will unselfishly hand Lance a tire from his bike, then wait for the support vehicle, get a new tire, and then vigorously pedal his way back up to the peloton. Does your team go out of its way to support one another?

**Draft.** The domestiques provide the lead for Lance so he can “draft” off their back wheel. Drafting is more efficient and keeps Lance fresher for the end of the race when he needs to break away from the peloton. Does everyone on your team take the lead for a while when others need to catch their breath?

**Respond to Attacks.** Periodically, another cycling team may make a move to assert their position at the front of the peloton. Lance's team helps respond to these challenges by pulling Lance along, helping to control the pace and allowing him to draft behind them, even through the hills of France. When your team is challenged, does everyone respond?

**Share the Glory.** Although Lance proudly wears the winner's yellow jersey for the fifth time, he also generously shares the credit, prize money and rewards with his teammates. Although he is the star, he knows he could not succeed without their hard work. Do the stars on your team share the credit?

Lance Armstrong is truly a gifted athlete with an exceptional team to help him win the Tour de France. Just like Lance, every organization has their star performers and those stars are only as effective as the people who support and work with them.

## Cubicle Etiquette *(continued from page 1)*

**Back Up.** Sit with your back facing the entrance to your cubicle to minimize distractions and discourage people entering your space.

**Post a Sign.** When intently working, post a “do not disturb” sign on the outside of your cubicle or try draping a velvet rope across the entrance. You can also use foam Protoblocs™ to signal your readiness for visitors.

**Talk Quietly.** Even though you may have a loud voice, that doesn't give you the right to have loud conversations, use the speakerphone or shout across the bay.

**Move It.** When having a mini-meeting of just a few people crammed into your pod, move to a real meeting room. Team conversations are naturally louder than normal and will distract others around you.

**Be Discreet.** You're fooling yourself if you think your personal business will not be overheard by others. If you must conduct personal business on company time, take a walk and make personal calls from your cell phone.

**Popcorn, Anyone?** Unless you are willing to share (or suffer the consequences), keep your popcorn, aromatic leftovers, perfume overdoses and other smellies at home.

**Clean Up.** When done using the common areas, throw out the trash, push in the chairs and make the space as clean as when you arrived.

**Check It.** Periodically, review these rules of cubicle behavior. Provide an avenue to bring up any irritants, express grievances and improve the overall environment.

By following these ground rules, you can work comfortably, enjoy open communication and enhance your team's work.

For more information about Protoblocs™, come visit

www.qpcteam.com

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*“For twenty-two years, I have talked to taxpayers while working for the IRS. Now, I’ll be talking about more exciting things with our clients and advocates!*

*Barbara McDiarmid  
Project Manager, QPC Inc.*

## What’s New at QPC Inc.

Can you believe it has been an entire year since we moved to Fairfax? Time has just flown by...and after much upheaval, I finally feel settled in our new city!

Lots of exciting things are happening : We continue to work with great clients such as Comcast, BGE, MD Dept of Natural Resources, James Madison University; As Lab Chair for the National Speakers Association, I am anxiously awaiting the birth of this first lab called “The Expertise Imperative” in December; I am writing a chapter of a seminal book on Facilitation for Jossey-Bass; by the time you read this, our website will be completely revamped; and Barbara McDiarmid joined the company in July as our new project manager. Barbara is responsible for implementing our strategic planning action items and keeping me on track for my deliverables! Welcome to QPC, Barbara! Kristin

## December 4, 2003 is the Fourth Annual Extraordinary Work Team Recognition Day

This day celebrates those teams that consistently work extraordinarily well together to produce significant results for their companies or organizations.

Team leaders, members and management “champions” are encouraged to recognize exceptional team performance. Submit your stories for a chance to win a \$200 gift certificate for the team to spend as they wish—on dinner, a limo ride, concert tickets or whatever they choose. The team will also receive a commemorative plaque and letter notifying them of the honor.

Past winners include State of Missouri Criminal Investigation Bureau Project Team and Williams Employee Learning and Development Team.

Nominate your team at our website at [www.qpcteam.com](http://www.qpcteam.com) by November 30, 2003. The winner will be announced on December 4, 2003.

## Practical Team Activities: To Build a Tower

### To Build a Tower

*To demonstrate the value of teamwork.*

**Time:** 20-25 minutes

**Nr. of Participants:** Groups of 3 to 6 people

**Materials:** One box of straight straws (not flexible) for each group and one small box of paper clips that fit snugly into the straws.

is at least five feet tall, and someone who can blow a moderate wind! You will then use these folks to verify the success of each tower.

Ask if there are any questions and if they all understand the process – then let ‘em go!

After fifteen minutes, ask the groups to gather all around the center of the room, bringing the towers.

Have some fun while each measurer checks each tower. Typically, most of the towers succeed.

Debrief what worked and what the teams could have done better, and tie it into the team learning points.

- ◆ What did you like most about this activity?
- ◆ What made the team successful?
- ◆ What process, if any, did you use to “design” the tower?
- ◆ Who emerged as the group leader (s)? What characteristics did the leader(s) display?
- ◆ Did everyone participate? If not, why not?

- ◆ Describe the group dynamic.
- ◆ How did individual team members help each other?
- ◆ How did you make decisions?
- ◆ What would you have done differently?
- ◆ What did you learn from this activity?
- ◆ How might you apply these lessons to our team’s work?

For variety, change the criteria for success to include a competitive edge, (e.g., tallest, strongest, most creative, most functional, etc.). Hand out “prizes” for “winners!”

Introduce the purpose of the exercise: to demonstrate the value of teamwork.

Explain the desired results of the exercise: to build a free-standing tower using only the materials provided in fifteen minutes.

The criteria for success are: (1) the tower is free-standing (not attached to the floor, walls, etc.); (2) the tower must be at least five feet tall; and (3) the tower must be able to survive a moderate wind.

For an added bit of fun, ask for the “measurers” – someone who knows what “free standing” is; someone who



"In reality, the Work-Out Process never ends. Organizations, no matter their size or scope, always have the human tendency to accumulate plaque in their arteries and clutter in their closets....organizations are constantly reorganizing, finding new customer and suppliers, and changing processes and procedures. So these too need constant reworking."

Dave Ulrich, Steve Kerr & Ron Ashkenas  
The GE Work-Out



## From the Bookshelf: The GE Work-Out

The idea of Work-Out started in 1989 as a way to push cultural change throughout General Electric. Neutron Jack had just streamlined the workforce, but the work processes had not been redesigned well enough to acknowledge the difference. So Jack (and a bunch of consultants) developed the Work-Out to literally "work" the bureaucracy, rework, duplication of effort and other waste out of the process.

The whole point of holding a Work-Out event is to maximize the number of high-quality ideas for change and to carve out a doable list of actions that will deliver fast results on the improvement opportunity.

So what makes a Work-Out unique? First, the people who do the work define the issues and develop recommendations. Then, leadership makes the decision "on the spot" so all involved with making the recommendations know the status. Every recommendation has an implementation owner and a champion (a business manager who has the clout to make the approved recommendation a reality). Finally, every approved recommendation has the highest level of commitment to action (in other words, leadership gets in front of the action versus "behind" or supporting the recommendation). That means all obstacles are removed for swift action. It's all about easy fixes and quick successes in an environment ripe for reducing waste – not long, complex science projects!

The Work-Out consists of three phases:

**1. Planning.** A small planning team defines the problem and issues, identifies the information needs and sources, identifies and prepares Work-Out session participants, identifies and prepares the leadership, and designs the session. Participants are selected for their particular expertise/information about the process, ability to influence the proc-

ess and potential to implement solutions at all levels.

### **2. Work-Out Session.**

*Work Out Introduction.* Brief participants on the business issues and opportunities, review the objectives and agenda for Work-Out and introduce the overall Work-Out process.

*Small-Group Idea Generation.* Set up sessions to create an initial array of ideas and opportunities that can be further focused during the course of the session.

*Gallery of Ideas.* All the participants meet to prioritize and select ideas and opportunities for further work.

*Small-Group Recommendation Development.* Split up and turn initial high-level ideas and opportunities into specific recommendations with measures of success and accountable owners.

*Town Meeting.* Teams present the issue, root cause, recommendations for action and potential payoff to the leadership. The leadership openly dialogues with the team and other participants about the viability of the idea, and asks for input from the managers who will be affected by the team's recommendation, before making a "yes/no" decision on the spot.

**3. Execution.** The next day, the implementation owners will meet with the Sponsor to discuss next steps including action planning, identifying key players/team and establishing disciplined oversight/periodic progress reviews. Then, hold people accountable for following the plan!

For more information about Work-Outs, get the new book, "The GE Work-Out" by Dave Ulrich, Steve Kerr and Ron Ashkenas (ISBN 0-07-138416-2). As consultants to GE, they describe the Work-Out process and give you enough information to help you conduct a Work-Out – or scare you away!

*QPC Inc. can also facilitate a Work-Out process for your organization.*

## Different Approaches By Jim Ball (continued from page 1)

our previous mailman always tried to dodge the bullet on the delivery of our books.

"Of course I'm serious," he said. Then pulling out his barcode reader, he continued, "I can track your books for you, just like UPS. Let me ship them for you."

"Why?" I asked. "Why would you want the extra weight?"

His response left me numb.

"Because the more business I get for my company, the better off it is. When my company makes more money, I get to work overtime, and the better off I am. We both do better. Why shouldn't I get all the business I can for my company? That's where I work. That's my responsibility."

I couldn't help noticing that he called his employer "my company" rather than the Postal Service.

Well, there you have it. Two men doing the same job, but with two very different approaches. One man did his work but no more. The other man did his work and much more.

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