

THE EXTRAORDINARY TEAM

PLEASE ROUTE TO

*Tips and techniques to improve
the way your teams work.*

Interactions are Essential

By Greg Richardson

Is it possible to destroy a meeting with great potential without knowing it? You bet it is! Great meetings typically don't occur as a result of luck. They rely on four classic areas:

•**Logistics** [resources and planning considerations that support the event]

•**Content** [productivity and deliverable-driven activities by participants]

•**Process** [methods by which specific activities, like decisions, are conducted]

•**Interactions** [manner and actions which distinguish the interface between people]

This brief article addresses a few of the invisible and subtle elements that shape the final category – interactions.

Create the Tone. The person responsible for guiding the meeting, regardless of title, has a tremendous opportunity if not obligation to set the tone for a wide open communication



forum. All of us have been to meetings where we felt energized and uninhibited to contribute to the group discussion. Take the time to lay out some guidelines and let everyone know how important their ideas and feedback will be, while acknowledging their potential contributions to the effort.

Discourage "Make-wrongs."

Existence and tolerance for the common human desire to be "right" can easily eliminate the very participation for which the gathering of minds was called. We don't like to be made wrong, and yet the ever-present

remedy is the mortal enemy of teaming—we simply become silent. Encouraging everyone to voice their inputs without attempting to make another person's statement "wrong" can pay large dividends.

Tap into Squatters. You know, those people who sit demurely with total confidence that everyone else will come through with the answers and decisions. That would be just fine, except these

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Team Players

Team players work closely together and make every effort to support one another. They keep each other informed, work together to solve problems, and offer help without being asked.

They start on time and end on time. They set a time frame on each team deliverable. Each team member does their part to meet individual and team commitments.

Team players ask for ideas from everyone. They recognize and consider others' ideas. They accept all suggestions as valid for consideration. They use the team as a resource to bounce off possibilities.

They give others their undivided attention. They seek first to understand, then to be understood. They respect each other by not interrupting. They consider the needs, motivations and skills of other members when offering help or advice.

Team players celebrate the small successes!

Self-Directed Teams

A self-directed, or self-managed work team is a small group of around 5 to 15 people who share responsibility for a particular task. Self-directed teams (SDTs) are responsible and accountable to the business leadership for certain standards of performance. Within well-defined boundaries, they have the authority to plan, implement, monitor, and control their processes. They often set their own standards for quality and productivity. They have direct, immediate access to whatever information, resources and training they need to accomplish their objectives.

What makes SDTs different from other teams is the level of responsibility and authority that members have for tasks which are typically performed by a supervisor or manager. SDTs work with a minimum of direct supervision and the leadership role is shared within the team. Each person has an equal voice and opportunity to participate, contribute and decide the team's work. Members *(continued on page 2)* typically handle job assignments, plan and schedule work,

Self-Directed Teams *(cont'd)*

related decisions, and take action on problems.

SDTs are different from quality circles, process action teams and cross-functional task groups in that SDTs are formal, permanent organizational structures. They operate with fewer layers of management. Because of the nature of the work, team members learn all the tasks that need to be done.

Team members are also responsible for handling the people-related issues more traditionally performed by management:

- Track their own attendance and hours
- Schedule vacations, time off, and overtime
- Deal with conflicts and personality clashes within the group.
- Identify and address training needs, and in some cases, train each other.
- Identify requirements for new

members, select individuals, and hire them.

- Evaluate the team's abilities to work together.
- Conduct individual performance appraisals within the team.

Self-direction is the highest evolution of team work. It requires a gradual shift toward sharing responsibility, decision-making and information. Business leaders must set the boundaries, train their employees, let go of control, delegate responsibility and authority, and reward team performance. They manage through planning the overall strategy, coaching, facilitating, supporting and removing barriers to team success.

It is not a "quick fix" strategy and may take from just a few years to eight or ten years (if ever) to develop the capabilities and earn the trust and responsibility within the business to be truly "self-directed."

A newsletter designed to facilitate discussion and share tips and techniques to improve the way your teams work.

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The Extraordinary Team is a quarterly publication distributed to clients, friends and partners of Quality Process Consultants, Inc. Articles are welcome and encouraged. We sincerely would like to know what you are doing.

Quality Process Consultants, Inc. helps you improve the way you and your teams do business. We specialize in facilitation services, training and unique facilitation products.

*Strategic Planning
Strategic Partnerships
Collaborative Problem Solving
Process Improvement
Process Reengineering
Team Building*

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Interactions are Essential *(cont'd)*

folks routinely have ideas or concerns that can propel the group into additional areas of inquiry and problem solving. The only way to extract their potential input is to observe their silence and ask them what they think about the point(s) being discussed. Non-talkers should never be confused with non-thinkers or non-creators.

Minimize Control. Meetings should be managed, organized and guided, but not "controlled." Regardless of position or role, unconscious attempts to control the discussion or outcomes of a meeting serve only to disempower the participants from their charter to act as leaders and continuously search for new ways of thinking and innovating. Control is so patently obvious and is insidious in its erosion of team spirit and sense of membership. The control artist is the only one fooled and the biggest loser in the game. Trust your partners to come through and the chips will fall where they are supposed to.

Acknowledge Courage. One last totally free idea to promote meeting and team productivity is to acknowledge the courage that each person summons while participating in a group activity. Courage may seem like a strong word, but it reflects the difficulty each person faces when deciding what to share with others. "Will I be right," "will my idea be accepted," "is my input good enough," are thoughts as routine as breathing. People need to know that it wasn't easy to display their thinking in front of others.

What do all these "strategies have in common? They are characteristics of Leadership, which is said to be in short supply these days. Leader-like people integrate all of these ways of interacting with their workplace partners. You know this, because it is immediately recognizable and appreciated.

“This is my favorite team activity! It’s a fun way to show us how we deal with change.”

Larry Mercier

THE EXTRAORDINARY

TEAM

What’s New at QPC Inc.

It’s spring and I have been sowing lots of seeds in my facilitation garden. You won’t see the growth or benefits for a while, but I am pretty excited about the potential.

We have just acquired our own domain name “qpcteam.com” and intend to build a new, better, zippier homepage which will give you access to past issues of this newsletter as well as past copies of my **Daily Press** column.

By popular demand, I will be offering several public seminars in Facilitation Skills and Exercising Influence. I am really excited about the Advanced Facilitator course. **Jeff Anthony** of **Anthony Consulting** will be joining me

to customize the course for maximum growth, actionable feedback and stellar customer service.

By the next newsletter, I will have a three-tape audiocassette and booklet available. I’ll keep you posted!

The big news is the Arnold Building is now fully occupied. **Jo Ann Rolle** of **J.D. Rolle & Associates, Inc.**, an economic research and diversity management consulting firm has leased out the final executive suite. Welcome aboard, Jo Ann!

Hope your gardens are planted

Seminars

May 13-14	Exercising Influence Richmond, VA
August 25-26	Facilitation Skills Hampton, VA
June 1	Facilitation Skills for HR Professionals Baltimore, MD
September 15-16	Advanced Facilitation Hampton, VA
October 21-22	Exercising Influence Richmond, VA

Please call 800.589.4733 for more

Practical Team Activities: Change!

Inspired by Larry Mercier

Change!

To demonstrate issues associated with change

Time - 10 minutes

Nr. of Participants: Everyone!

Introduce this activity as a way to demonstrate the affects of change. Ask the participants to stand up and find a partner.

Tell them to look at their partner carefully. Then ask them to turn “back to back” and make five changes to their appearance. As a facilitator, you may want to pair up with someone to demonstrate your instructions. Typically, the group will be very quiet and intent on their task.

After a minute, ask the participants to turn around, face each other, and identify the five changes to their appearance. At this point, you will probably hear lots of laughter! Roam around and ask how many changes the partners identified.

Ask them to turn “back to back” and make eight more changes. You may hear some moans and groans, and some may even “check-out.” That’s okay!

After a few minutes, ask them to turn around, face each other, and identify the eight changes. Roam around and ask how many changes were made and identified.

Ask open-ended questions about how they felt when asked to make the eight additional changes.

As the facilitator, show them that you made the thirteen changes by picking up thirteen cents, or by picking up thirteen markers or some other super easy way to “change your appearance.”

The participants will invariably respond by saying “You broke the rules!” You coyly respond, “What rules?”

Also, ask them why didn’t anyone “benchmark” your (the facilitator’s)

actions. After all, the facilitator has been through the exercise before, and they should have observed what you did to make the changes!

From this discussion, you can identify some issues traditionally associated with change initiatives:

- ◆ People tend to focus inward when faced with change.
- ◆ People forget to look beyond themselves when faced with change issues - even when the answer is in plain sight.
- ◆ They also tend to impose boundaries and ground rules on themselves that don’t really exist.
- ◆ Too much change frustrates people.
- ◆ People don’t share their feelings when stressed by change.
- ◆ We make change too hard.

Conclude this activity by summarizing the key points. Ask them to be open-minded as they continue with their team’s work.

“What leaders do is as important, perhaps even more so, as what they say.”

John R. Childress and Larry E. Senn
In the Eye of the Storm



From the Bookshelf

I keep remembering a specific diagram from the book, *In the Eye of the Storm: Reengineering*

Corporate Culture by John R. Childress and Larry E. Senn. It picks up where Michael Hammer’s *Reengineering the Corporation* left off...

focusing on the human side of change. The book offers a practical, simple-to-follow approach, targeting what company leaders can do to manage change to their organization’s advantage.

Hal Mauney at Norfolk Southern recommended this book to me. He raved about the diagrams, the implementation models and just thought it was a terrific resource book.

And I agree. It is a great book. One diagram in particular has haunted me for the past year. It is the “hectic” diagram (or write whatever word you want - “trouble,” “micromanage,” or “uptight”). From the corporate boardroom to the family room, I have found this dynamic to be so true. Childress and Senn call this phenomenon “The Shadow of the Leader.” In their book, they say:

“Business leaders, teachers, parents, church and

community leaders all cast a shadow that influences others. In very meaningful ways, hourly employees who interact with customers are “leaders” who cast powerful shadows about the company and its real commitment to service. Actions that match the message make the shadow longer, influencing people much more powerfully. Actions that vary from the stated messages or company slogans also demonstrate what’s important, and not always in ways that add to the “bottom line.”

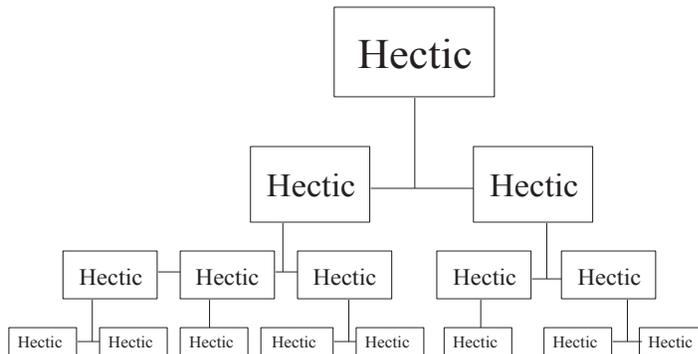
One of the most intimate and far-reaching examples of this shadow concept happens when parents, perhaps aware of their own imperfections, exhort their

children to “Do as I say, not as I do.” Unfortunately, children generally tune out that message and mimic the behaviors they see. James Baldwin states “*Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.*”

The message of any parent or business leader will be drowned out if the actions conflict with the words.”

My mother has a tapestry in her kitchen: “If momma ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy.” How true it is for families, organizations, and businesses.

IN THE EYE OF THE STORM (copyright 1995). Reprinted with permission



Care About Your Customers!

By Nina Zapala

Did you know that 64% of the time people stop doing business with you because they feel you just don’t care about them? Starting today, treat all of your customers extra special. Overload on service. Know their names. Make it easy to do business with you. Make it fun. Make it an event! Here are some other ideas to show you care:

Send all your customers a special thank-you letter expressing your sincere gratitude for their patronage. This can also be a great opportunity to showcase any community or charitable programs and encourage others to get involved.

Write a “statement of benefits.” For example: open 24 hours, thirty minutes or free delivery, or fastest service in town. Keep it concise and make sure it is the single most important benefit a customer will gain while doing business with you.

Educate your customers on your industry, your company, products and services, special offers, and all the wonderful things you do. This can be done through advertising, public relations, seminars, personalized direct mail campaigns, as well as one-on-one discussions.

Tell your customers why they should do business with you. If your prices are low - why? If they are high - why? If your products are better - why? If your service is exceptional - why? Let your customers know the reasons.

Don’t forget the customer after the sale. Does the phrase “buyers remorse” sound familiar? All too often, customers have doubts about buying a product or service, and then return or decline it within 48 hours. Prevent this with a call or visit within 24 hours of purchase.