

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

▶ Living in the Now *By Clint Maun*

Look around at the place you work and see how different people live in different periods of time. They live in the Past Now, Current Now or Future Now.

Being around people living in the **Past Now** is depressing. They believe something great happened in the past, but nothing is going to be right in the future.

Organizational structures can get stuck in the past too. "If we had only done this...If, if, if..." Living in the past is a nonproductive way to live.

Seemingly fun people, but equally dangerous, are the **Future Now** people. They are waiting for good things to happen. "As soon as we get the new computer, have all staff vacancies filled, as soon as..." The waiting game they play is very dangerous. Nothing gets done while they wait.

Maybe you know some of the or-

ganizations that are playing the Future Now game. "As soon as we get the regulations changed, as soon as this or that happens." Living in the future is as fruitless as living in the past.



The key to a productive life is to be firmly rooted in **Today's Now**. Are you and your team focusing on today's issues? What did we learn from the past that will help us now? What are we going to do now to make it better in the future? That is how you deal with the past and future.

It starts with the team leader, because if you are out of focus, there's a good chance people who look to you for leadership and guidance will be out of focus, too.

You'll have negativity if you wait for the future. People will sit around and wait for something to happen. And if you spend time talking about how great the

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Meeting Statistics

According to a study by the USC in Los Angeles (Forbes, 10/25/93), the average meeting:

- ◆ Starts at 11 am and lasts 90 minutes.
- ◆ Is attended by 9 people – 2 managers, 4 co-workers, 2 subordinates and 1 outsider.
- ◆ Receives 2 hour notification.
- ◆ Has no written agenda and achieves its purpose only 50% of the time.
- ◆ 36% "completely" resolves the topic. 1% of those solutions are considered to be creative.
- ◆ 25% complain they waste between 11-25% of the time discussing irrelevant issues.
- ◆ 33% feel pressured to publicly espouse decisions which they privately disagree.
- ◆ 33% feel they have minimal or no influence in the discussion.
- ◆ 63% feel the real issues are outside the meeting's scope
- ◆ Senior executive spends 53% of their time in meetings.

▶ The Five Sins of Teamwork

Ideally, you want to work *with* your team members to accomplish great things. When working with your team mates, there is a terrific exchange of ideas and solutions, based on mutual respect and understanding. When working with others, both sides are working together to achieve team success. But sometimes, we fall into one of the five sins that undermines our team work:

Talking at, rather than *with* your team mates. Much like a parent talks at a child, some may talk at their team mates in an authoritative "I know this, and you don't" tone. People with perceived power typically talk at others in a direct and abrasive manner. They tell them what they know and aren't really listening to what others' opinions are. They think they are better than others. In a team environment, that attitude is the kiss of death. In a team, every person has a valid perspective and contribution to make. No one person is better than another.

Talking about other people. Much like when we were kids, when we don't get our way, we talk about the other person behind their back. Taking about other people without that other person's

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1 ability to share

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"Unless people know what's expected of them on the job, unless they know how to measure that success or failure, and unless they have the ability to control resources, it's unlikely they will be motivated to get the job done."

Clint Maun, Maun-Lemke Inc.

Living in the Now *(cont'd)*

past was, you are neglecting to deal with today's issues.

What do you need to work on as it relates to how you and your organization live each day? Is it to make specific plans to link the current to the future? Is it to get people who are sitting around playing the waiting game out of the past?

Unless people know what's expected of them on the job, unless they know how to measure that success or failure, and unless they have the ability to control resources, it's unlikely they will be motivated to get the job done. Remember to ask the following three questions:

- ◆ What are the expectations of each team member? What are they supposed to accomplish?
- ◆ How do they measure their own success or failure against those expectations?
- ◆ How can they control the resources needed to get the job done?

If you are going to have people focused on the Now, they need to **know what's expected** for that day, week, month etc. Sit down with your team and talk about what success is.

For example, "There are 14 things that must be accomplished today. These are..." and then be specific about the actions that must be taken. Somebody is going to say "We should do 32 things" and somebody else will say, "We'll be lucky to get two done". Aim for consensus. Look for middle ground. Recognize that if the team cannot make a decision, as the leader, you decide.

Problem solving is participatory. You get better decisions if you get input on what the 14 (or whatever number you determine) things your team needs to accomplish.

How do you know you're on track? There should be checks after one, two or three hours. Don't wait until the end of the day to find the team is behind and will need to work overtime (again) to make it up. Determine what the pace of work is

that will allow everyone to meet goals and divide the day into performance goals. Once the time to accomplish work is determined, each person will be able to measure her or his own performance against a standard.

Americans need to keep score. That's why if you don't give people ways to keep score, they will develop their own score-keeping system, which may or may not be productive: "Well I got more work than she does." "How come we have to do it that way?"

Nobody plays the game without keeping score. In fact, most golfers keep individual side scores on each hole. In measuring for your organization, you don't measure people all day. People measure themselves.

It's an important distinction. You can check people with a quality assurance audit or run down the hall and see if jobs are done, but set up a system to allow people to check themselves. Teach people to be up-front and honest with you, and you'll know if they are on track or if the schedule needs to be adjusted.

After you have defined the expectations and given your team ways to measure themselves, **let them have some control of the resources** to get the job done - supplies, equipment, flexibility on schedule, ability to adapt.

Lots of leaders want to manage the one thing that doesn't count: who can get the keys, who needs paper clips and/or pens. We don't need to spend our time that way. We need to help people of caliber manage their own time, resources, supplies and equipment, and then let them know how they're doing.

If you want a commitment, tell people what you're trying to do, act in today's now, act like you're on charge and work on expectations, measurements and control of re-

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A newsletter designed to facilitate discussion and share tips and techniques to help your teams to be extraordinary.

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“You created a wonderful atmosphere where we all felt comfortable honing our skills, receiving feedback and being challenged...I ended the course feeling refreshed, motivated, affirmed, and more confident and pampered.”
Sally Mason, Defense Security Service on Advanced Facilitator Training

TEAM

What's New at QPC Inc.

I just finished up facilitating the Commonwealth of Virginia's strategic planning initiatives for the Electronics industry and Advanced Materials sector. After a whirlwind trip through the state, starting in Roanoke and ending up in Herndon, we collected a vast amount of input from industry, academic and governmental stakeholders. Sponsored by Virginia's Center for Innovative Technology, these strategic plans define the vital few, significant actions which will propel their respective industries. I look forward to noting their progress!

We also have a new administrative assistant, Melissa Strawser. Hailing from the mortgage industry, she is bringing her wealth of organizational and administrative skills to QPC. She is a graduate of Christopher Newport University and a native of Hampton (so maybe she'll stay with us for a while!).

We have just redesigned our marketing materials, so don't be surprised if your next newsletter looks a bit different. While QPC will remain our corporate name, we are focusing more on the "Extraordinary Team." After all, we help your teams be extraordinary!

Stay cool and enjoy the summer — Kristin

Upcoming Seminars

Facilitation Skills

2 days – This Fall – To Be Determined
The Arnold Building, Hampton, VA
The Club at Franklin Square, Washington DC

Several people called me recently to see when the next public seminar for Facilitation Skills will be held. For the first time, I am considering holding the event in two locations: Hampton and Washington DC.

The course objectives are to enable you to facilitate any type of team including:

- ◆ Working with the team leader to ensure success
- ◆ Structure an efficient & effective team process
- ◆ Prevent problems from happening
- ◆ Gracefully intervene when appropriate
- ◆ Choose appropriate decision-making strategies
- ◆ Choose best process tools for desired outcomes
- ◆ Manage team development and dynamics

Please let me know if you are interested in attending!

Practical Team Activities: Decisions, Decisions

Decisions, Decisions

To demonstrate the team process of making decisions.

Time - 20 minutes

No. of Participants: Up to five people (per team, if more)

Materials Required:

- ◆ Prepared 5"x7" index cards with the name of the city, length of stay, travel time, cost
- ◆ Map of vacation destination and/or travel brochure/guidebook

from Rome (or other central destination).

◆ Sightseeing/Excursion possibilities are described on the provided index cards (hand out the index cards...noting the minimum time (in days) to be spent at the location, the travel time (in days) to get there and the additional cost to visit each location).

◆ Total amount budgeted for travel and lodging is \$5,000.

Inform the group(s) that they have 10 minutes to decide how to spend their ten day vacation.

Place the map/literature in a visible, but not quite accessible place.

As the group makes the decision, note how they "build" a consensus.

After the decision is made, ask if their decision is a consensus – and what it means to the group.

Ask the

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group to de-

scribe how they went about making the decision, what worked and what kept the team from moving forward. Some things to consider:

◆ Who spoke first? What was the groups' reaction?

◆ What were the first things you agreed on?

◆ How did you work through your disagreements?

◆ How did you build on your individual experiences and knowledge?

◆ How did you use any available materials?

◆ Did you think "out of the box" (e.g. take more travel time by backpacking or create "fluid" time so that you could stay longer in a city).

Conclude with some general observations and reminders about how groups go about making decisions.

Inspired by Sally Mason.

Begin by painting the picture of your group (or groups if more than five people) traveling to an exotic travel destination (e.g. Italy) The challenge is that everyone in your group must agree on the itinerary within the following constraints:

- ◆ Your group has only ten days total.
- ◆ Your group must arrive and depart

"These five sins can do more to undermine teamwork and team spirit than anything I can think of in the business place. Your advice is excellent. Hopefully people will take the time to read and think about just how they fit into this equation within their work environment."

Bob Currin, Digital City Hampton Roads



From the Bookshelf

For inspiring creativity, I highly recommend Floyd Hurt's *Rousing Creativity*. Published by Crisp Publications (ISBN 1-56052-547-9), this book is a wonderful, practical guide for building a more creative environment. He starts with the essential factors and ground rules for achieving creativity, such as:

- ◆ Everyone is creative.
- ◆ Be aware of your own defenses.
- ◆ Keep it in the room: confidentiality counts.
- ◆ Build on other's ideas.
- ◆ Keep the energy up.
- ◆ Stick to the problem/topic.
- ◆ Keep it fun to keep it productive.
- ◆ Embrace ambiguity.
- ◆ Foster constructive dissatisfaction.
- ◆ Nothing "bad."

He describes some great process tools to brainstorm and wraps them all up in "The Game" where the facilitator provides creative prompts to force new perspectives and new mind-sets. He lets you know how to set it up, what to be careful about and how to get the most out of the game.

A Mind is Like a Parachute...

...it only works when open. At first glance this statement seems true, but how many people do you know with really open minds? How about you? How open are you to the following statements:

1. Democracy may not be the best political system.
2. I can get along very well without my automobile.
3. Sexual preference is strictly personal.
4. I can quit my job and do something I really want to do.
5. If my daughter wants to get a tattoo, that's up to her.
6. I have no choice but to save for that "rainy day."
7. There are many good points to communism.
8. The American flag should be burned now and then.
9. I know the right answer. There are no right answers.
10. All life is sacred and should never be taken.
11. Religion is a mythology.
12. Pornography is disgusting.
13. My kids should read everything, nothing should be excluded.

No mind is fully open. The list of things that close our minds is very long. This does not mean we must question everything. That would make us crazy and waste a great deal of time.

One key to greater creativity, however, is to open as many new doors as you can and explore what's behind them. It's tough. It may mean going against many of the norms that have made you who you are. It may mean looking at and questioning things that have always seem sacred. It may mean alienating those around you who always expect you to act just as you have always acted.

Rousing Creativity Tip of the Week @ www.rousingcreativity.com

The Five Sins of Teamwork *(continued from page 1)*

Talking about other people without that other person's ability to share their perspective is rude. To the extreme, it is called backstabbing. When you find yourself talking about another, simply stop! Go find that person and have a meaningful conversation about the circumstances and why you feel the way you do.

Whining. If you look hard enough, you can always find something to complain about. Constant complainers whine about what happened, didn't happen, what they did, what they didn't do, who they did it with...and the list goes on. Misery loves company. Ever notice how all the complainers band together? Watch out...you can get sucked into the melodrama of how everything is wrong in the world.

What to do? Stop the complaining. Quit cold turkey. Or, as Clint Maun (see front page article) eloquently states: "quit your BMG" (bitching, moaning and groaning). All it does is pull the team down with you.

Avoiding. Rather than deal with the issue or problem, we may choose to ignore it, hoping that it will go away. Rarely, if ever, do team issues go away. They just get worse. By avoiding them, you are doing the team a disservice. Best thing to do is to have the courage and compassion to give some honest and timely feedback.

Talking around them. In the era of e-mail and voice-mail, it's easy to flip indirect barbs about our team mates electronically. Remember, sticks and stones may break your bones, but words leave a lasting impression. Especially if you can read or listen to the message over and over again. If you have a problem, go talk with the person directly. E-mail and voice mail are a great way to share information, not the best way to solve team problems and build team spirit.