

## Team Incompatibility

By Kristin Arnold

A recent advertisement for the magazine, Sports Illustrated, pictured the back of a benched football player with another player's hand touching him on the back. The caption reads, "What counts most in creating a successful team is not how compatible its players are, but how they deal with incompatibility."

When working with teams, I often hear the lame excuse of "I just don't like that person," or "We just don't get along." You are certainly entitled to your opinion, but you still have to work with that person. Doesn't mean you have to love him or her, but you have to be able to get along to achieve the team's objectives.

In a weird and twisted way, I liken this situation to my aversion to peas. Simply put, I don't like peas at all. Never have and never will. Can't tell you why, either. Others might like peas, but for whatever reason, I just

don't.

So let's follow the analogy...do you have people on your team you just don't like? Others might like them, but you just don't? And the reason doesn't really matter, now, does it?

When it comes to dealing with peas (or people you don't care for), you have five basic options:

**Avoidance.** You can opt to stay away from them completely. In fact, you may spend lots of time and energy figuring out how to avoid those awful peas. I have even seen people elevate their hatred of peas into their favorite pastime! Are you actively avoiding someone on your team? Lamenting their very existence?

**Passive Resistance.** You pick those nasty peas out of the dish and put them aside...maybe for the dog to eat later. Are you passively avoiding someone on the team? You may acknowledge their existence, but refuse to engage.

**Camouflage.** I used to hide peas in my milk so my mother (*continued on p.2*)



### In this issue...

*Random Acts of Facilitation*

*Practical Team Activities: The Huddle*

*From the Bookshelf: Secrets of Successful Retreats*

*Motivation*



## Team Openers

When teams are first forming, ask each team member to complete one of the following statements: Assure team members that they can pass if they want as well as ask questions for clarity (not to challenge):

- ◆ The purpose of this team is to...
- ◆ From this team experience, I want to gain/get...
- ◆ To help this team succeed, I bring these strengths to the team...
- ◆ One thing that makes me a good team player is...
- ◆ I am most proud of...
- ◆ My most significant accomplishment is...
- ◆ My main concern about being on this team is...
- ◆ The expertise I bring to this team is...
- ◆ The one thing that frustrates me the most about working in teams is...
- ◆ In order to achieve our goal, I think the potential hurdles we may face are...

## Check Your Team's Dashboard

By Kristin Arnold

How do you measure the health of your team? Many teams use a set of "dashboard indicators" that let all team members know how well it is doing. Much like your car has a set of gauges that highlight important functions of a moving automobile, your team should have some basic measures that indicate when all is well – or when all may not be humming along like it should.

Take a look at your team dashboard, and fine tune your team's work:

**Clock.** Many team are chartered to accomplish a specific result within a specific period of time. The "clock" charts the passing of time, making sure it hits critical milestones. Permanent teams, on the other hand, have a greater challenge; they get stale over time. So set the "clock" to arbitrary three-month intervals. Every three months, the team should get a shot of "vitamin team" by doing something to re-energize and motivate the team.

**Gas Gauge.** When re-energizing the team, you are stopping to fill up the gas tank. Keep in mind, re-energizing is a deliberate activity: get

(*cont'd on p.2*)

## ▶ Team Incompatibility

(continued from page 1)

would think I ate them. Inevitably, I was always caught. She always knew when I was faking it. Are you outwardly playing good team, but inwardly resenting the person? Some would call this being "two-faced" or mildly schizophrenic.

**Limited Doses.** As I got older and more mature, I learned to tolerate a few peas. As an adult, I still don't care for peas, but if they are mixed in a dish that I like, I can eat them without a fuss. Can you demonstrate your maturity and put your differences aside?

**Do a Forrest Gump.** Can you not only

get along, but also acknowledge and accept your teammate's differences? Just like "peas and carrots," bring together people into combinations that work to enhance the team's objectives. Take a fresh look your team members' skills, talents and abilities. Notice the different flavors and diverse perspectives they bring to table.

Keep in mind; you have a choice. It's the incompatibility that creates a team's uniqueness. If we thought the same as you, acted the same and had the same beliefs, we wouldn't need a team, would we?

## ▶ Team Dashboard

(continued from page 1)

training, do something fun, allow people to move on or off the team, redefine the team boundaries, celebrate success, etc. When the team is low on fuel, make the investment to pull in to a gas station to refuel.

**Speedometer.** How fast does our team want (or need) to go? Is there a speed limit? Are you on cruise control? Many teams are willing to work at breakneck speeds for short periods of time, but no team can sustain a grueling pace over the long haul. Or, are you going so slow that traffic is passing you by? Figure out the best pace for your team, given the road conditions, environment and the team's abilities.

**Tachometer.** When the team is working too hard, it starts showing signs of stress, moving the needle into the "red zone". Teams exhibit stress by snapping at each other, not listening very well, making rash decisions, or making false assumptions.

**Temperature Gauge.** Conflict is inevitable in teams. Most teams manage the inevitable conflicts to generate light and not heat around the issue. However, when conflict is not managed constructively, the temperature gauge moves into the red zone. Whether stressed or conflicted, pay attention to behaviors that push us into the red zone.

**Oil Light.** Every team needs a lubricant - a champion within the organization with the clout and political pull to provide resources and support, smooth the potholes and remove roadblocks. Who is your chief lubricant? Is your oil light on or off; is that person (or persons) with you or against you?

**Brake Light.** Every once in a while, the team's brake light comes on. Usually this means that the team is at a "strategic moment" where the team is faced with a variety of possible ways to proceed. Any direction they choose will have a significant impact on the team, and cannot be easily reversed. When facing a strategic moment, the team needs to stop, make a conscious choice and either proceed or change direction.

Don't know what your indicators are? Ask your team for their opinion on how they measure the health of the team. Let them comment and react to the example, and use it as a springboard to develop your own dashboard and language to point out when the team is venturing into problem territory. When your team dashboard is in place, periodically check the gauges to ensure your team stays healthy.

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

Winter 2003  
 Vol. 8 No. 2  
 \$14.99 per year

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**The Extraordinary Team** is a quarterly publication distributed to clients, friends and partners of Quality Process Consultants, Inc.

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*"You can do random acts of facilitation! I have faith in you. Now go forth and boldly go where no lowly meeting participant has gone before. Into the mysterious and powerful universe of group synergy, where there's a surprise around every corner. Where magic happens!"*

*Steve Davis*

*www.masterfacilitatorjournal.com*

## What's New at QPC Inc.

Just wanted to thank all my clients, friends advocates and supporters as Rich, the kids and I have relocated to Fairfax, Virginia. The boxes are finally unpacked, the pictures are up on the walls and we are settling in to some semblance of normalcy (whatever that is). Odd thing, though; we had more snow in the last three months than we had in thirteen years in Hampton!

A big thank you to this season's clients who have graciously the various distractions in the transition: Old Point National Bank, Newport News Public Schools, NASA Langley Research Center Navigation Center, US Army Spouse Employment Summit, Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel Commission, Henrico County Public Library Baltimore Gas and Electric and Covenant Care, Inc.

On a sadder note, I decided to sell the Arnold Building to Metro Productions. I have known the CEO, Ray Walsh, for many years and I am confident that he will take good care of the building and our tenants. I will miss my friends in Downtown Hampton, and continue to wish them well—just as I wish you well!

*Kristin*

### The Huddle

*To allow team members to resolve issues between just a few team members—and not the entire team*

**Time:** 5-15 minutes, depending on team size

**Nr. of Participants:** Any

**Materials Required:** None

## Random Acts of Facilitation

Have you ever sat through a boring, non-productive, out of focus, "I'm wasting my time here" meeting? If you have, you may be part of the problem. Stop whining about the situation and do something to make your team meeting better.

Steve Davis of [www.masterfacilitatorjournal.com](http://www.masterfacilitatorjournal.com) has launched a personal campaign called "Random Acts of Facilitation." He beckons each one of you, no matter how low on the totem pole you might reside, to begin asking questions about the meetings you're in.

See to it that a clear agenda is presented at the meeting. If it isn't, request that one be developed either in the moment or that the meeting disband and reconvene at a later time until one is prepared.

If a meeting starts among strangers without any introductions or simple acts of relating, suggest spending a few minutes to go around the room and have people share something about themselves.

If someone is hogging the air time, speak up and thank them for their great input and suggest that others be heard from too.

Long before you've been meeting for three hours straight without a break, request a short recess to accommodate personal needs and to just stretch and rejuvenate yourselves.

When the energy is so heavy in the room you feel like you're smothering, say something funny to make people laugh. The fog will lift; things will start moving again. You will risk being the "fool." People will thank you later.

When someone suggests a valid action during the meeting without assigning a responsible party and completion date, jump in and suggest that it be assigned, without feeling obligated to do it yourself.

Finally, trust your intuition. When something feels "off," say so. You don't have to have all the answers. Just know that your intuition never lies and if you feel something, others may as well. Your courage will inspire others to speak. The collective unspoken, given voice, will bring previously undiscovered wisdom, knowledge, and energy into the room. Great things will happen.

## Practical Team Activities: The Huddle *By Kristin Arnold*

Whether you use this activity as an icebreaker or at the conclusion of your team meeting, suggest a "huddle" with these ground rules:

**One on one.** Use this time to meet with one or two team members that you need to ask a question, resolve an issue, share an idea etc. Avoid discussing agenda items that should involve the entire team.

**Be brief.** It's a quick time to check

calendars, update each other and share information. If you need more time, agree on a specific time to get together.

**Stay here.** Don't leave the room. Be available to each other to "huddle." If you must leave, come back as soon as possible.

**Focus on team business.** Socializing is acceptable, but not encouraged. Those having business issues can freely interrupt social activity.

**Be polite.** If your team members are talking, wait patiently until they are done. Remember, be brief!

**End on time.** The timekeeper will call "break" when the huddle is over.

When finished with the huddle, recommend that other unfinished business be taken up after the team meeting. You may also ask for feedback on the process. Did the huddle help or hinder the team's work?

“Whether you are planning to facilitate a retreat yourself, or you are a member of the planning committee, this book is a step by step guide to producing optimum success for your off site retreat.”

Carol Weisman

*Secrets of Successful Retreats*

## From the Bookshelf



Many of us have either sponsored a retreat, attended a retreat, regretted attending a retreat, or know of someone who is planning a retreat. Is so, you need to read *Secrets of Successful Retreats: The Best from the Non-Profit Pros*, (ISBN 0-9666168-4-7), edited by Carol Weisman. Although I contributed one tiny chapter on setting team/board ground rules, this book is a wealth of information on having an extraordinarily successful not-for-profit (or profit!) board retreat.

Carol did a great job in bringing in diverse experts to give the reader various perspectives on board retreats. This book is soup to nuts, everything you need to know about:

- ◆ Creating an Environment for Success
- ◆ Choosing and Using Facilitators Wisely (Elmer Fudd says you should read this chapter verrryy, verrrryyy carefully)!
- ◆ Using Pre-Retreat Interviews and Surveys
- ◆ Serving Great Foods
- ◆ Building the Team through Icebreakers and Exercises
- ◆ Establishing Ground Rules
- ◆ Preparing Mission and Vision Statements
- ◆ Establishing Organizational Values
- ◆ Making Strategic Decisions
- ◆ Moving Successfully from Retreat to Reality.

Of course, I can act very modest and tell you that everyone else's chapters are much better than mine...but really, they are! I was really impressed with the quality and thoughtfulness that my fellow team experts have given. Oh, and Carol is not the stodgy-sort of woman...you'll have fun reading this book, too!

Available on [www.qpcteam.com](http://www.qpcteam.com) or [www.boardbuilders.com](http://www.boardbuilders.com).

## Motivation by Joachim de Posada

The Manager's Desk Reference attributes ninety-five percent of employees are motivated by one of the following needs:

**Achievement.** the satisfaction of accomplishing projects successfully, exercising their talents, knowledge, and skills to attain success; “self-motivated” if the job is challenging enough.

**Power.** The accomplishment of influencing, persuading and controlling others and are motivated by positions of power and leadership, making decisions and directing projects.

**Affiliation.** The enjoyment of interacting with others and finding the social aspects of the workplace rewarding; opportunities to interact with others, team-work projects, and group meetings.

**Autonomy.** The creation of freedom and independence, making choices, setting schedules, and working independently of others.

**Esteem.** Recognition and praise, feedback and public recognition whenever possible.

**Safety & Security.** Job security, a steady income, health insurance, and a hazard-free work environment, predictable work with little risk or uncertainty, salary and fringe benefits.

**Equity.** Being treated fairly in work hours, job duties, salary, and privileges, becoming discouraged by perceived inequities.

You can easily see how a collective team of individuals motivated differently can be a strength as well as a detraction to effective teamwork. The best way to find out what motivates people on your team is to ask them and discuss the implications on the team's work.

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