



Collaboration has become more complex, But success still depends on the fundamentals.

The Power of Teamwork

BY MAGGIE CRADDOCK

Few people realize that a group can accomplish what an individual alone cannot do — even when it comes to individual advancement. If you want the next promotion, you have to elbow that hardworking colleague next to you out of the way, right? Wrong. Here's a true story that shows you why.

It started when I sat across from three courteous, poised, but frustrated female investment bankers over a decade ago. "We need a coach," said the young banker named Cindy (names have been changed), while her colleagues Leslie and Amy nodded in agreement. "It's not just the three of us," Leslie added. "The three of us are the selection committee. There are fifteen of us who want coaching, and our job is to pick a coach that can work with the whole group." As it turned out, all fifteen members of the group had been passed over for promotion within the last year. Amy said, "We don't want to litigate, and we don't want to change firms. We like each other, and we like working here. However, we don't want to be overlooked anymore. If someone can tell us what it takes to get ahead, we're ready to do it."

These fifteen women become my first coaching group. Over a decade later, I'm still reflecting on what this group of talented bankers taught me about power, trust, and teamwork.

The first step in our coaching was establishing each member's personal power style. Through exploring the four core power styles of the Pleaser, the Charmer, the Commander, and the Inspirer, each member of this group learned how to play to her strengths and minimize her blind spots on the job.



But they took it a step further. When looking for people who have the potential to make it to the C-suite, many seasoned business leaders have told me that they look for people who are able to move beyond an understanding of how to be personally powerful, and embrace the ability to support others. The key to embodying this quality on the job this isn't just thinking about how to motivate or advance others. It's about experiencing situations with them that foster a spirit of trust.

In order to do this, the participants started to role-play their habitual responses to challenges ranging from satisfying a demanding boss to managing a troublesome subordinate in front of the group. These women would often sit back and watch as other group members volunteered to act out how people with a different power style might respond to the same situation. It was fascinating to watch how insightful a group could be as they pondered each other's career challenge together. Each woman was given a new perspective and approach to consider that might not have occurred to her without the team's input. What's more, as the group members developed a sense of each other personally as well as professionally, their collective intuition for giving each other advice on how to approach tricky situations evolved at an amazing pace.

Over our six months together, as they celebrated their victories and supported each other when they faced setbacks, it's not surprising that the participants became increasingly committed to supporting each other at a human level. As this group developed a bond of trust through learning to appreciate the value of each other's power styles, they began to embody a team spirit that went beyond collaboration. Their genuine commitment to bringing out the best in each other began to cause each of them, as individuals, to exude a type of confidence and professional tone that supported their professional advancement.

And the results spoke for themselves. After the first four women from the coaching group got promoted, the company's Chairman gave me some news that had stunned him after meeting them for lunch. "These women completely disarmed me," he said. "While they thanked me for my support, they spent most of the lunch letting me know how talented the remaining women from their group were that hadn't been promoted yet. I can't even fault them for lack of killer instinct because they took no prisoners when they asked me what they could do with me to make sure that each woman's manager understood the value she was bringing to the organization."

Fostering a spirit of trust is critical for drawing out the best in any group. Discovering one another's power styles and how they interact in various situations can be a learning experience for everyone — and it's the first step in becoming a powerful peer mentor for growth.

The top 7 Benefits of teamwork BY JERNEJ PAVLIČ

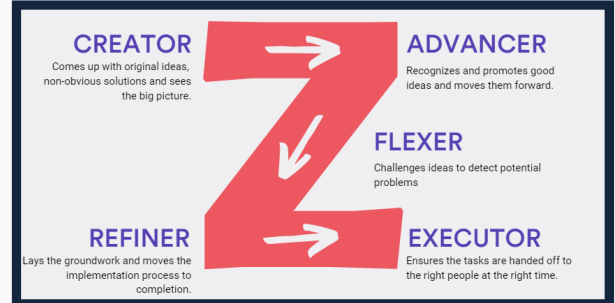
1. Working together facilitates idea generation and creativity

One important benefit of teamwork is, therefore, the way thinking in a group influences creativity. By involving multiple people (up to 10, according to research), the number of different perspectives can give birth to a greater number of these combinations of ideas.

2. Teamwork improves productivity and brings better business results

There's a great theoretical model which explains exactly why teamwork is so beneficial to businesses. It serves as a useful roadmap for understanding team members' roles in a team and their psychological characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses during the project.

The model is called the Z-Process you see pictured below. To achieve the best results, it's important to identify the roles inside the team and manage them accordingly, assigning them the right tasks to the right people.



3. Working in teams boosts employee morale and motivation

People are social creatures and despite the fact that some prefer to work alone, we enjoy sharing experiences with others. According to science, we're biologically and psychologically wired to feel better and work better in a team rather than alone. The advantages of teamwork in this regard are multiple:

- When we're feeling tired, our teammates can provide us with an extra energy boost that we need to power through.
- Sharing success improves team motivation while sharing failures makes the dark days less gloomy and enables us to come up with solutions to overcome them.
- As a part of a team, we have a greater level of control over decisions and our work. This can lead to a greater feeling of ownership of the project and overall recognition.
- Working within a team adds to the feeling of belonging – when employees are a part of a communal goal, they feel more connected to the company and thus more fulfilled and proud of their work.



4. Teamwork encourages taking healthy risks



One engineer, for instance, had told researchers that his team leader was “direct and straightforward, which creates a safe space for you to take risks.”

During an extensive research project, Aristotle, Google’s People Operations department came to a number of interesting conclusions about teamwork. The results made it clear: one of the main prerequisites for successful teamwork was a “shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking.”

This is the definition of a well-researched phenomenon called “psychological safety”. In functional teams that offer this kind of safety, an excellent teamwork benefit blossoms – healthy risk-taking. Team members aren’t afraid to voice suggestions, work independently, and take chances – and all that is much easier to do when we’re not alone.

There’s strength in numbers and it’s much easier to make risky decisions if you have a group of people behind you who support it and will catch you if you stumble.

5. When we work together, we learn faster

Once you put together a team of people, there’s a great chance it will consist of people of different ages, backgrounds, skills, and experience. While there are certain challenges at closing the gaps between these differences, the richness of shared knowledge far surpasses it. This means a continuous opportunity for people to learn from each other – professionally and personally. Advantages of teamwork in terms of learning and passing on the knowledge are multiple:

- New team members can quickly learn the ropes and become productive faster if they have a mentor rather than figuring it out alone.
- People have the chance to (subconsciously and purposefully) learn about different communication styles – a knowledge they can transfer when working with clients, for example.
- Employees working in a team can also learn by observing their co-workers and significantly shorten the time dedicated exclusively to training.

6. Teamwork relieves stress

The benefit teamwork has in the arena of mental health also comes from the fact that team members act as each other’s relief team. Whenever you have to pick up the kids from school, go to a dentist appointment, or just need an hour of rest, your team can cover for you. That results in a more flexible work schedule and a piece of mind because your personal life did not disrupt that important presentation.

7. Teamwork Working together improves customer service

Teams that have mastered collaboration and managed different steps in handling the workplace silos, utilize customer requests better. Why is that?

Team members can share their experiences and best practices, thus making the customer service better.

When it comes to solving problems, teamwork pays off in terms of a plethora of solutions a team provides. A single person might never come up with a certain solution that another co-worker comes up with.

The service the customer receives will be more consistent because team members communicate and are on the same page regarding the company goals and values.



SOURCES:

- **The power of Teamwork:** <https://hbr.org/2011/09/the-power-of-teamwork?registration=success>

- **7 Advantages of Teamwork:** <https://www.intheloop.io/blog/advantages-of-teamwork/>