

Teamwork Techniques

Lesson Objective:	Discuss the importance of teamwork and identify techniques to encourage teamwork within your unit.
Behavioral Objectives: At the end of this segment you will be able to:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Describe the concept of teamwork.2. Discuss the importance of teamwork and cite specific examples of effective teamwork.3. Discuss different ways to encourage teamwork and build team spirit.4. Discuss how to maintain teamwork, or unit cohesion, once it is established.

Overview

As you have progressed throughout this course, you have learned about many different ways to save time and build a more efficient squadron. Inherent in this, be it delegating authority, problem solving, meeting planning, fundraising, or any other topics of the course; is the hidden concept that everyone in the unit must work together. The unit must become as one; a team. As commander, you are the facilitator - the coach - of this team.

As individuals your members have special talents, skills, and interests which can contribute to your squadron. Those talents are what makes your squadron effective. To make it even more effective you must guide those individual efforts into one direction, one purpose. In your position as commander your job is to articulate the vision and create the team.

Importance of the Group Effort

Two questions arise: why is this important; and how important is it to me, the commander? Teamwork is important because it is the ultimate force multiplier. Concentrated effort towards the same goal in harmony with each component is far more effective than merely the sum of its parts. The usual examples are sports teams, and they are good examples, but let's look beyond the high school football or basketball team for a bit.

If you have ever heard an orchestra play, you'll know what is meant. An orchestra playing in total harmony sounds as one. It stimulates all the senses with its sound. The conductor leading the orchestra leads with his baton, imparting his vision or idea of what he wants, and is rewarded for his effort with music.

An orchestra out of harmony sounds like a collection of plates, pots, and pans being banged together. They all have the same music in front of them, but they are clearly not going in the same direction. The conductor will have a rough time enticing the players to make music. Instead of leading with his baton, he ends up futilely slashing a stick through the air. He, the orchestra, and the audience do not hear music, only a bombardment of sound.

Historical Perspective

A classic example of a team working well is the United States effort during World War II. During that time, all components of American society banded together under the leadership of President Franklin D. Roosevelt to fight and win a war as one entity.

Think about it for a moment; it wasn't just a military effort, though the military itself was an extraordinary team. The military, manufacturers, civil servants, CAP, and ordinary citizens all played very specific and important roles in achieving victory, which was the main goal. Every citizen rationed important or scarce goods. Manufacturers put aside civilian production of goods to produce solely for the military. Cars were not produced in mass from 1941 through 1946. Women went to work in mass for the first time, while men went to war. CAP members, (well, you know what they did.) For about five years, the United States was truly enveloped in a common purpose, that purpose was the driving force behind just about everything that was done.

President Roosevelt was truly Commander-in-Chief. In his position he was the unifying force. He articulated the goal, and how it was to be achieved. He built support by establishing the need, and created the environment for it to be achieved. He was both a cheerleader and a correcting parent. And he worked, and sacrificed as much as everyone else. History records that even the White House had ration books.

What it Means for You

The reason we used these examples is to show what can be done when teamwork is employed. But you don't need a big group. Teamwork can be more evident in small groups. But the fact remains that most of what we've discussed before and what we'll discuss through the rest of the course is totally dependent on teamwork for success. And as the commander, you're the coach.

One could argue that a squadron is a team by default. That's not true. It is designed to be conducive to teamwork, but it's not a team automatically. You must mold it, guide it, chide it if need be. Remember also that you can have teams within teams. Flights, elements, flight crews, ground team, boards, IG teams, etc., all abide by the same principles. Using this concept can actually make the process of commanding easier because in having more than one team you can have more than one coach (i.e. team leaders, deputy commanders, board chairs, etc) to divide the work.

Why is teamwork important?

Team Building Techniques

Before you learn about the team, it's important to understand how people are motivated. While we will get into this in detail later in the course, it's useful here to give you a basic foundation. As you probably know, Maslow's hierarchy of needs is the tool you use to determine where your people are in terms of emotional satisfaction. The higher on the pyramid, the easier it is to focus them because they won't be worried about shelter, safety, and security. (*Reference: Motivation, Attachment 2, Section B*)

A group is a collection of people; the binding agent is a purpose, task, or event. They don't necessarily have to work together, see the issues in the same way, or even agree about the end result. A team is simply a group taken to a higher level; it works together, agrees on the same end result, and unifies to achieve it.

Teamwork Don'ts

Before reviewing what can be done to **build** a team; there are some things that you absolutely **must not** do. First, don't micromanage. It defeats the whole purpose of teamwork, because when you do it you try to put all the eggs in one basket - yours. Teamwork is designed to allow you as the leader to decentralize the work needed, by using principles like delegating authority to spread work among team members. When you don't do that you compress the work onto a smaller group, creating more pressure on the system.

Teamwork Don'ts	
➤	Don't _____
➤	Don't withhold _____ or work around members

Another point that goes right along with micromanaging is: don't withhold information, or try to work around your subordinates to get things done. In short, the "divide and conquer rule" does not apply.

Teamwork Do's

Here are some things you can do to foster better teamwork within your unit:

- a. **Articulate a goal everyone can identify with:** Teams must have a common goal. This is the biggest thing that binds them. It gives the same target which can be used to prioritize what needs to be. It provides a measuring stick to see how far the unit has come.
- b. **A plan or job for each member:** Give specific tasks to perform. In essence, give each member a piece of the puzzle, so that together, their pieces fit into one whole. It's your job to make sure that the tasks you set for them do not conflict; and if they do conflict, that a plan can be made to work around the problem.
- c. **A mechanism for communication:** One of the main reasons that teamwork breaks down is that the members of the team (including their coach) forget or neglect to properly communicate with each other. In order for the team to be effective, they must know what the other members are doing. They must have a way to provide constructive feedback, and ensure that each one is progressing towards the shared goal.
- d. **An environment conducive to teamwork:** Only you can provide your members with a cooperative environment. Though providing the proper equipment or facilities is of great concern, and should not be overlooked; what is perhaps more important is the attitude you have about your team. If you micromanage, don't personally employ the team, or don't encourage cooperation between members, they'll get the message that you're not serious about achieving a team effort.
- e. What are the best ways for you to show your support for the team? Two words: *trust* and *respect*. Trust your team to do the best job they can and give you everything they have. Trust them also to take your guidance and adjust to the needs of the goal. Respect their individual and collective judgment; and respect their efforts. This doesn't mean you will never have to take corrective action, or change the balance or dynamics of the team, but it does mean that you give the team a fair crack at achieving the goal.
- f. **Provide effective feedback:** Provide accurate, detailed feedback to your team. If one piece of advice or guidance affects more than one member of the team, tell them both. Use written feedback when possible if you want to say something to the group. If you do this though, try to confine it to positive or constructive feedback. When providing feedback, don't undermine other team members. And, allow them to provide feedback to you. Don't shoot the messenger.
- g. **Provide motivation:** Some teams need little motivation. They immediately see the need to achieve the goal, agree with it; know what needs to be done and know how to do it together. This is especially true with people who have worked together for a long time. New teams, or teams with vastly differing personalities or understandings of the goal and mean to achieve it need motivation.

Teamwork Do's	
➤	Articulate a goal everyone can _____ with
➤	Provide a plan or job for each _____
➤	Provide a mechanism for _____
➤	Create an _____ conducive to work
➤	Provide effective _____
➤	Provide _____

Sell them the goal; show that the unit can do it better and faster by working together, show them how they can achieve their individual goals while working together, or show them how not working together impedes their individual efforts.

Maintaining Unit Cohesion

Once you've built a strong sense of team, of cohesion, how do you keep it? First, exercise it. Like a muscle, teams get stronger with continued use, and atrophy when not used. This is why many sports teams have exhibition seasons before they have games which count in the standings. They need the time to clean the dust off, and remember how their different roles and personalities mesh with one another.

Second, try to avoid having one or two people do all the work of the team. The team should never think that a particular member is indispensable. This includes you. Never let them think that they can't function without you. Let them know that turnover is expected, and that new members are not outsiders, but possessors of fresh ideas.

Handle problems within the team (clashing personalities, schedules, and objectives) quickly and fairly. If you let problems fester, it will destroy the team from the inside. The members will focus on the problem and not the goal. In the worst cases, it will create parochialism and mistrust; and will destroy your ability as the coach or leader to move towards the desired end.

Remember that building a team is an ongoing process; and that the things you did to build the team are exactly the things to do to keep the team sharp. You probably won't have to be as forward about it as when you began, especially for a new unit, but you'll have to keep it together.

When possible, communicate with the smaller teams within the unit by using the team leads (flight commanders, teams leaders, board chairs, etc). This reinforces their ability to lead, and reinforces the cohesiveness of their team.

Finally, remember that teamwork is a way to make everyone's job easier; it's a force multiplier, not simply another layer of bureaucracy. Treat it as such.

Maintaining Unit Cohesion

- _____ the team, exercise it
- Avoid having one or two members constantly _____ the team
- Handle problems within the team _____ and _____
- Remember that building a team is an _____ process
- When possible, communicate with the smaller teams in the unit by using their _____