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There is no 'I' in teamwork

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It is important to be a team player and build a rapport with others.



HELPING OUT: Sharing ideas is crucial at work. Photo: A.M. Faruqui

Henry Ford once said, "Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success." As such, the importance of being a team player and gelling together in a team cannot be undermined. Again, being a team player is something that cannot be isolated to a single situation. You will always be working in a team — whether you are studying or working, whether in an organisation or in your own business. A common example in everyday life is sports such as cricket and hockey. What works well here stems from the fact that it is a team. In this feature, let us review some simple tenets that you can keep in mind to be a great team player.

Group dynamics

Being in a team means that there is a common purpose that drives the team. This is the goal or what needs to be achieved. Also, the team goals should be clear and understood and accepted by each member. This will ensure that all team members understand the goal clearly and in the same way.

Another vital aspect is that there should be complete clarity about who would be responsible for what, so as to avoid overlapping responsibility and authority. A team should be built on mutual trust and there should be an atmosphere of honesty and openness among team members. Also, it is critical to be loyal to employees as the same is expected from them.

A good way to foster a sense of belonging and ownership is to involve the members in team-building activities and events. Having opportunities to interact outside work will not only encourage open communication but also develop some long-lasting relationships. For any issue that needs an

overall team consensus and commitment, involve the whole team in the decision-making process. This will get a buy-in from each team member and also a satisfaction that everyone's opinion matters. In a team, ensure that there are no blocked lines of communication and everyone is always fully informed. This should leave no scope for grapevine or rumours.

Commitment

As part of a team, each member needs to be committed to the goal and should be able to see value from individual contribution to the team. When you are committed, this is more or less easy to achieve. This also means that it is not just you, but also the other members who would need guidance and assistance. This is something that would be mutual.

You must not just be knowledgeable but also exhibit the right degree of enthusiasm. As a member of a team, seek responsibility to make the best use of your talent. Be energetic and have the drive to work and inspire the same in your fellow members. Every member is accountable not only to himself/herself but to all members of the team. Setting correct expectations can increase commitment.

Leadership

A team has to be steered and managed well to be able to reach its goal. As such, the coordinator should typically lead by example. This means doing a good share of the work and being accountable for the same. A good organisation is really needed in proper distribution of work. Having the ability to delegate and assign tasks and ensuring successful completion of the same is required. Ultimately, it is every member's responsibility to ensure that everyone has a task to complete and that the person doing it is the best resource for the same.

Virtual teams

The challenge in today's business model is to also manage and be part of virtual teams that are not bound by location or geography. You could be in one location and your team member in another and at times in different continents.

In this case, each team member is part of a project group or task force. What is needed here is the ability to connect across different cultures and time zones. In such a team the scheduling, timing and execution of tasks are important as they impact the overall performance. In fact, diversity is the key to a successful team.

A team should be made up of people who have different opinions and who handle work in different ways. Remember there is no 'I' in the word "team." Simply stated, it is less "me," and more "we."

And as we know, the whole is always greater than the sum of the parts. So, here's wishing you happy synergy times.