



Building Strong National Teams

By Rachel Fields, P.G., CHMM and
Linda Gardiner, CHMM



- Rachel Fields, PG, CHMM
 - Manages national team who assists large retail client with processing and manages environmental permits and periodical renewals
 - Team consists of ~25 people on project part to full-time
 - Team members from various personnel pools:
 - Administrative assistants
 - Scientists and engineers
 - EH&S specialists
 - Team members located at various locations across nation
 - All communications/meetings occur with conference calls, webinars and emails



- Linda Gardiner, CHMM
 - Project Manager – national team
 - Manages national team to ensure environmental compliance for large retail client with permitting and design reviews for new and existing facilities
 - Large team of technical and administrative staff throughout nation
 - Communications/meetings occur with conference calls, webinars, emails and face-to-face events
 - Former Director of *Career Development Program* and *Technical Leadership Mentoring Program*
 - Lead team of Office Mentoring Advocates in various offices including telecommuters nationally and internationally
 - Communications occurred via conference calls and smaller face-to-face meetings



Building Strong National Teams

- What is a team?
 - A group of people working towards a common goal
- A national team may have team members spread over various geographic areas
- Building a strong national team is a process
 - Enables a group of people to reach goals using available resources
 - Type of people
 - Company resources
 - Expectations, needs, goals
- What makes a national team successful?
- Causes that can limit team's success



What makes a national team successful?

- Communication
- Identifying and Using Strengths of Individual Team Members
- Goal Setting and Reaching
 - Team goals
 - Individual goals
- Understanding Team Dynamics – Synergizing
- Strong Leadership and Encouragement
- Successful Team-Building Events
- Succession Planning



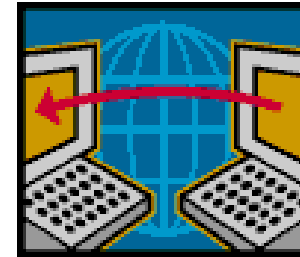
■ Methods of communication

- Face to face meetings
- Phone calls – one on one
- Team conference calls
 - Daily, weekly, monthly
 - For different groups within national team
- Emails
 - Know your audience
 - Know when to use “Reply All” and “cc”
- Texting and Instant Messaging
 - Remember – this is a company record
 - Be professional!
 - Before you hit send – *could your message be a headline of a newspaper?*



■ Methods of Communication (continued)

- Web portals and servers
 - Provides shared area for files
 - Backup all work
- Webinars
 - Using company technological tools to assist team
- Brown bag meetings
 - Offer opportunities for team members to 'brush up' on various project topics or tools
 - Offer opportunities for practicing presentations



Use Strengths of Individuals for Strength of Team

- Understanding and focusing on different talents and strengths within the team
 - *“Put aces in their places”*
(Source: Shed Wallace, *Business Strong Teams*, August 2009)
 - *Get “the right people on the bus, in the right seats”*
(Source: Jim Collins, *Good to Great*, October 2001)
- Identify strengths and use them
 - Do not use someone for a role that is weakness for them
 - Some people are leaders, some followers
 - Some are technically strong
 - Some communicate with clients or regulators well
- Develop strengths and encourage professional growth



- Sharing common project goal and understanding team's mission
- Having clear expectations
 - Do team members understand why team was created?
 - Do team members understand their individual roles?
- Wanting to contribute to team's success
 - *“Feeling part of something larger than yourself”*
 - *“Are team members committed to accomplishing the team mission and expected outcomes?”*
 - Are they excited? Challenged?
- Recognizing and developing individual career goals
 - Have individual career goals been communicated clearly?
 - Are new goals properly documented to benefit the individual?

(Source: Susan M. Heathfield, *12 Tips for Team Building: How to Build Successful Work Teams*, 2013)



Understanding Team Dynamics - Synergizing

- Organization of multiple skill and professional levels
 - Administrative staff
 - Technical staff
 - Managerial staff
- Beyond group dynamics, individual attention and strengthening is important to ensure focus on goals, progress, challenges and opportunities
- Office Staff vs. Telecommuters vs. “Road Warriors”
 - Special considerations
 - Meeting for coffee or lunch/dinner
- Work-life balance and other constraints
 - Understand each other’s constraints
 - Help team members to realize challenges others face in balancing work within and beyond shared project



Understanding Team Dynamics - Synergizing

- Managing Toxic people – need to be controlled, contained and corrected before negativity persists
- Dropping performers
 - Find alternatives for their skill set
 - Communicate steps of this process with individual
- Input, recognition
 - Good and bad, don't wait for reviews
 - Be honest - waiting and hoping issue will go away can be toxic
- Use mistakes as learning tool for team
 - Not a scolding for “offender”
 - Communicate with offender
 - Have them help with ‘Lessons Learned’ for team



- Goals, rewards, credit, worth, importance
- Strong leadership – encourage team and individual members
 - Take on new challenges and more responsibilities
 - Professional/career development
 - Professional alliances and certifications
 - Does current project help with an individual’s professional growth?
 - Encourage individual to pursue other opportunities, even outside of your project team
 - Gain more in positive “PR” than if you limit that individual to work on your project because you don’t want to find a replacement



- Can be viewed as a reward
- Can be used to build, mend, strengthen
- Enhance team experience and promote cohesion
- Optimum to solidify team group meetings aimed at:
 - training newer team members *and*
 - refreshers for seasoned folks, *and including*
 - team-building events
- Solicit ideas from the team
 - always doing what manager wants may not encourage team members
- Go offsite if feasible and appropriate
 - Even simple lunchtime venue
 - Or, something larger...



- Go offsite
- “Have a couple of laughs while in the process...picture that. Team development is something that takes place even though many of us may not actually be aware of it.”
 - Examples:
 - Canoe trips – are we all steering in the same/right direction?
 - Scavenger hunts
 - More examples from our projects
 - bowling
 - dueling piano sing-alongs
 - local restaurants
 - Can make team members feel more comfortable with managers and with each other

(Source: Polson Pier, *A Staff Viewpoint On The Subject Of Business Team Building*, November 2011)



Dealing with Obstructions to Team Success

- Encourage ideas
 - Not taking ideas from team seriously can hold back team
 - Managers should be open to comments/suggestions without team feeling as if there will be consequences for voicing opinions
- Handle negative team member(s) promptly
 - Talk with team member(s)
 - Be honest with your discussions
 - What is cause of negativity - *could it be due to a personal situation?*
 - Does project not meet expectations of team member(s)?
- Use team members for roles they enjoy, excel at, “own”



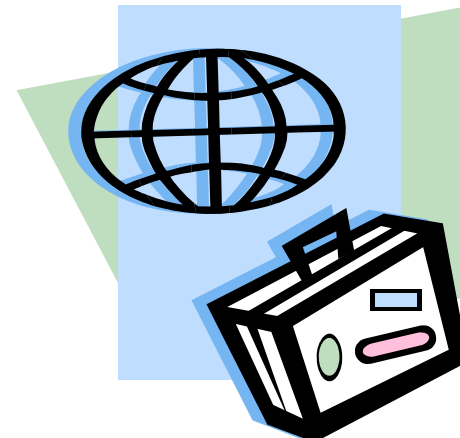
Dealing with Obstructions to Team Success

- Maintain applicable procedures and processes documented for team to follow
 - How can anyone be expected to do a job without proper instruction?
 - New projects may require development of new procedures
 - Procedures should be communicated and understood
- Continuously update procedures and processes as project dynamics change and share changes with team members



Dealing with Obstructions to Team Success

- Consider work and travel schedules and time zones of team members
 - Having team members on east and west coast and beyond can cause challenges in communicating directly
- Make each team member know that their position on the project is important
 - This includes:
 - Administrative staff
 - Technical staff
 - Field staff
 - Managers



- Have succession plan ready for team members
 - Cover sudden changes within project
 - Avoids disruptions
 - Covers temporary situations for vacations, illness
 - Covers permanent moves to another project or company
 - Provides plan for individual growth

