

# Great Teamwork Begins With an "R"

by Kevin Dwyer

Teams form around a single common purpose. Teamwork occurs within a team only when there is respect. Great teams evolve around self respect and respect for each other. In retrospect, all great teams reflect on the journey they have made as individuals and how they have learnt to appreciate the skills, knowledge and behavior of their respective team-mates.

To create a great team when they are being built rather than in retrospect, individual team members must firstly have self respect. Self esteem is not enough. Self esteem requires a positive evaluation of us against some standard, often another person. Self respect requires no such comparison. It merely requires that we like ourselves for what we are, good and bad.

When we have self respect we do not care whether we are good or not at any chosen pastime like sport or singing or painting or gardening, just that we enjoy it. When we have self esteem we judge our pastime exploits against those of other people as being good. When we have self respect we have little need to win as an individual in a team and are more likely to play our role to the best of our ability, with humility and with good humor. When we have self respect, we have a vastly improved capability to respect others. Not having to be better than someone else, but having due respect of our abilities, enables us to maintain and improve relationships even through conflict. It allows us to welcome differences of opinion as a means of getting the best solution rather than avoiding them as a precursor to unpleasant conflict. Team members who have self respect and respect others can operate with clarity by being honest without the expectation of an emotional response.

Self respect and respect for others is learnable. It is not learnt or encouraged by putting a group of values on a wall plaque or on a sheet of paper. It is learnt and encouraged by the team getting to know each other and themselves well. Self respect is also encouraged by managers who mentor and coach.

A mentor generally tells others what to do in a given circumstance. They do so from an extensive background in the environment the team works in and an intimate knowledge of the person. A coach generally asks powerful questions to enable the individual to see a problem or their environment from a new angle, opening up new solutions. A mentor is generally also a good coach. Coaching and mentoring individuals builds self respect in the coach and the person being coached. Giving a team access to and encouraging the use of experienced coaches and mentors that they trust, builds great teamwork.

Respect for others can be encouraged simply by giving the team opportunities to get to know one another as human beings. Opening up Joharis Window is a must to get great teamwork. People often unwittingly and many times wittingly hide their real self from others at work. People who are true leaders at home and in the community may be meek followers at work. Getting those individuals to reveal more about their capabilities outside work has a great impact on the degree of respect others show them within a team.

There are many ways to get people to open up about themselves. Playing a sport as a team is a good standby. A number of sports suit, such as team golf, driving go-karts in teams, team tennis and team ten pin bowling. Amongst all teams there will be a sport which will fit peoples range of abilities which when played in teams will allow everyone to play. Holding a function with family members invited is a great way of saying thank you to those people who support the hard working team away from work. It is also an easy opportunity for people to learn more about each other from the interaction with family members.

The most important skill to teach team members to improve respect is how to listen and ask questions, especially clarifying and enquiring questions. Teaching the team to question rather than assume builds rapport and respect quickly. To maintain self respect and respect for others, disrespect must be counseled. Allowing individuals to show blatant disrespect is a certain precursor to the rest of the team going down the same path.

Teams build themselves around single, purposeful goals. Great outcomes arise from teams when that goal is extremely meaningful to the majority of team members. Great outcomes are achieved from great teamwork when there is respect.

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