



Herding Cats

I'll admit it. My mind's eye works overtime.

You see, as people speak, the screen inside my head heats up and creates vivid images to accompany the narrative. Funny, graphic, colorful, sometimes impossible...but, as folks speak, I tend to see.

So, imagine the pictures this noggin paints each time the phrase "herding cats" rolls off of someone's lips. Oh, my goodness, can't you just see the feline hordes moving about in different directions, all over the place, noisily doing everything *BUT* responding to that desperate, hapless herder? (Even as I type, I'm shaking my head!)

Well, in too many instances, teamwork -- if you can call it that -- is akin to our swarm of cats. I don't even know if "hot mess" is an accurate description. Movement, noise, confusion... absolutely; results...maybe.

Join me for this edition of **EA Insights** as we take a few minutes to delve into the topic of teamwork. Whether you're more often the herder or one of the kitties to be herded, I hope you find something to help make your team terrific.

All the best,

June

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Teams with Steam

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Teams are an ever-present part of the way most of us function. Whether in the workplace, in the community, or in school, people are called upon to pull together in an attempt to make something happen.

Truth be told, though, teams often function in a manner that turns out to be less than terrific. Issues of disharmony, working at cross-purposes, duplicated effort, responsibility gaps, and slow or no outcomes all may plague group assignments. And, while I am a firm believer in carving out time for team-building activities (and, in fact, facilitate them myself), such efforts are most productive when



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"Quotes"

"A team will always appreciate a great individual if he's willing to sacrifice for the group."

~Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

*"That's what I love about how diverse our team is[.]*** I think we're stronger together than individually."*

~Simone Biles

"Ultimately, leadership is not about glorious crowning acts. It's about keeping your team focused on a goal and motivated to do their best to achieve it{.}"

~Chris Hadfield

"Great things in business are never done by one person. They're done by a team of people."

~Steve Jobs

"Individual commitment to a group effort - that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work."

~Vince Lombardi

used as events to enhance the firm team foundation that already is in place; they cannot be viewed as the solution, in and of themselves, to ineffective teamwork.

So, what's at the core of teams that function well? Actually, it's: *s-t-e-a-m*.

Set it up well. Teams that are haphazardly assembled are bound to be challenged from the start. Instead, the team's purpose and intended outcomes should be considered carefully and, from that, members should be wisely selected to complement each other's skills, perspectives, temperaments, work styles, etc. to the extent possible. Team composition is a strategic first step that cannot be rushed through.

Tackle a common goal. As I begin my work with teams, a common finding is that people often have different views of their underlying purpose, or the goal for the particular project. It doesn't matter much that the disconnect is one of nuance or a whole-scale miss. When team members lack a consistent understanding of why they've been assembled and what the group has been charged with accomplishing at each step along the way, that team's ability to work together well and the results it ultimately can achieve will be impacted. It is the unwise leader who simply assumes that people know why they are on the team and what their roles are. Instead, conversations around both goal and role should be ongoing...to introduce, to reinforce, and to reset as needed for clarity.

Expect full participation and accountability. Everyone does not play the same part, but everyone does have a part to play. When a team permits some members to under-participate or allows others to over-step their bounds, it is a team that is out of balance. Teams work best when each member actively undertakes and willingly exhibits a spirit of accountability regarding his/her assigned duties. When this becomes the ethos of the team, the leader need not be the enforcer; rather, the team lives its commitment on a daily basis and, when necessary, it self-corrects.

Acknowledge and encourage each other. In terrific teams, leaders and members alike recognize each other for the positive contributions made along the way. Kudo-giving is not reserved for any one person. Members see and encourage; they come along side and assist. They don't wait to be asked; they don't hold off for a special ceremony; and they don't defer to the leader. Because everyone is a part of the team and its success, everyone has a part to play in cheering one another on. And, team members take this duty as seriously as any substantive assignment that has been dispensed.

Mark results. You may chuckle but, when some teams are asked about their primary accomplishment, the response is that they "met". Now, where there has been a significant rift among groups or members, a comment that meetings have occurred actually may qualify as remarkable movement. However, except in the rare instances that fit into this slight exception, the goal of teamwork usually should be to achieve a tangible outcome of some sort. Members shouldn't be meeting just to meet, or working just to work; they should be pooling their efforts in order to get something done that is of consequence to the company, to the community and, in the process, to themselves.

To function well, to get things done, teams need steam! If your team is completely out of steam or failing fast, call on us at **Executive Advantage**. Let us help you to create and maintain a team that's terrific. [Contact us today](#).



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"When employees join executives in truly owning the responsibility for business success, an exciting new sense of teamwork takes hold."
~Punit Renjen

"We can't all be good at everything. This is partly the logic behind having a team in the first place, so each role can be filled with the person best suited for that role and together, every job and every strength is covered."
~Simon Sinek

"Teamwork is so important that it is virtually impossible for you to reach the heights of your capabilities...without becoming very good at it."
~Brian Tracy

"When a team takes ownership of its problems, the problem gets solved."
~Jocko Willink

"When you encourage others, you in the process are encouraged because you're making a commitment and difference in that person's life. Encouragement really does make a difference."
~Zig Ziglar

About Executive Advantage

At **Executive Advantage**, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

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