

Find the Glue that Binds Your Team

It's in teams that things get done. Make sure yours is the best it can be.

By Joe Curcillo

Leading a team is about communication and organization. But most of all it's about getting to know your team members and finding the glue that binds them together. Let's look at the four steps that make up this essential "GLUE":

Gather information about the people on your team. Delve into the backgrounds and skill sets of each team member. Sometimes that information is available within the organization. At other times you're fortunate enough to know your team members. No matter how you acquire the information, learn what you can about what the players have done on other teams or within the organization at large. This background information is essential as a basis upon which you'll build the infrastructure of your team.

Now keep in mind: People change. Therefore, this collected information will be subject to modification as you watch the team come together during the life of the project. You should review and analyze the initial information as much as you analyze the project itself.

If the information you're gathering is subjective: Consider the source. Depending on who provided the information, it may or may not be accurate. Ultimately, it's in the next phase — as you listen to your team members and learn — that you'll begin to determine the strengths and weaknesses of your team in reality.

Artful leadership begins with a deep understanding of each team member's unique attributes. With that knowledge in hand, you're in position to help them work together for success.

Listen to team members to determine their interests and personalities. As you do so, several types of players will surface. Listen closely to their comments and thoughts. The way they speak and address the situation at hand will give you great insight into the type of team members they'll become.

As each team member reacts to your plan, balance their reactions against the information you've gathered about their backgrounds. Notice where their passions lie. You may find that one person is an expert in the subject matter while another is a talented organizer. Pinpoint the type of task that resonates most with each person so that everyone will lead their portion of the project with excitement.

As you determine the place for each of the players, speak to the expertise of the individuals so they feel you're speaking directly to them. For instance, when you talk about technical elements, look directly to your technician. Do the same for every team member, reinforcing each one's special talent and team position. If someone questions every action you take, let that person know that you appreciate being kept on your toes. All team members must know that you value them and the services they provide.

Unify team members by finding a common thread or by creating one that they can commit to. Once you've identified the types of team members you're managing, you'll want to present the project and the individual tasks in a format that speaks to the specific skill sets of the members.

Create unity by making it clear that they're all essential members of your team. Help them understand that they're working for the common good of the team and the organization, and let them know that their relationship to each other is vital for success. If they can understand how they fit into the big picture — and how the project fits into



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the big picture of the organization — they'll feel like part of the solution.

Empower the team to execute the plan with dedication and passion. Make the path ahead clear. Help team members understand the stages of development as your project progresses. Give them feedback as you move along the way, and be ready to step in and assist with mediation if conflict or hostility begins. Always keep an open line of communication with all team members to minimize the risk of competition for control. By helping the team visualize the direction they're heading, you'll keep them on the path toward executing your plan and reaching your goals. 

Joe Curcillo (themindshark.com) is a speaker, entertainer, lawyer, and communications expert. As an adjunct professor at Widener University School of Law, he developed a hands-on course based on the use of storytelling as a persuasive weapon. He has been a professional entertainer helping organizations improve their communication techniques since 1979.

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