

# The Two Missing Parts of Team-Building

The “before” and “after” of forming a team are as important as the “during.”

By Stephen Rafe

There’s no better way to solve problems than to harness the wisdom of a team. But too many people overlook two crucial parts of the team-building process – the meeting *before* the first team meeting and the evaluation *after* the team is under way. Here’s how to close these gaps.

## Coordinate a Get-Together

**1. Choose the people you want to participate in the team,** and meet with them. Discuss the team concept with them. You don’t want to ask their “permission” to form a team, since that’s a given. However, you do want to get them talking about the value of building a team and how they believe the group can be designed. In leading that discussion, take a “what’s-in-it-for-you” approach in asking for their input. Having them participate in the process up front helps prevent them from becoming part of a problem later on.

Trust is a key element in a group’s success. A trusting relationship comes far more readily when participants make the rules and agree with them ahead of time. Trust also comes more quickly when people get to know each other before working together.

## Team Up for Best Results

For more problem-solving and team-building tips, see these articles at [NonprofitWorld.org](http://NonprofitWorld.org):

**What Makes a Great Team?** (Vol. 32, No. 6)

**Increase Work-Group Productivity with Concescent Conversation** (Vol. 26, No. 3)

**Find the Glue that Binds Your Team** (Vol. 40, No. 4)

**Eight Steps to Managing Conflict** (Vol. 20, No. 4)

**The Key to Building Productive Teams** (Vol. 21, No. 4)

**Assess Your Work Style for Better Communication** (Vol. 37, No. 4)

**Zen and the Art of Team Building** (Vol. 20, No. 1)

**Earn People’s Loyalty: Here’s How** (Vol. 17, No. 5)

**What Kind of Team Leader Are You?** (Vol. 32, No. 5)

**Ten Steps to Excellence** (Vol. 15, No. 2)

**The Five Biggest Teamwork Ills & How to Avoid Them** (Vol. 40, No. 2)

As the coordinator for this initial meeting, you’re the role model for how the group should interact in the future. Listen supportively and answer any procedural questions.

**2. Listen to people’s input.** Be prepared to fill boards and flip charts with their ideas. Don’t tell them anything about what *you* think. Ask questions and have them summarize the salient points in each of their answers. Advocate the K-I-S-S formula – which here means Keep It Short and Simple. Use questions such as these:

*Why* are we all here?

*What is the core problem or opportunity* we’ve come together to try to address?

*What are our interests* in this issue?

*What are the components* of the problem? How do we know?

*What negatives* have we experienced or might we experience in addressing this matter?

*What positives* have we experienced or might we experience?

*How can we best address* each component’s pros and cons in small discussion groups?

*What would success* look like?

*What should the group hope to accomplish* in the time available? How should we focus, and what should we focus on?

*What contributions* should each group member expect to make, or be expected to make?

*What behaviors* are desirable, acceptable, and unacceptable? What constitutes a “good” contribution or a “bad” one?


*What should the outcome* (“product”) be from our group? How will it be shared with other groups?

*How shall we develop* all these thoughts into a summary report of this meeting?

**3. Have the group appoint a “scribe” and a “facilitator” for their future meetings.** The scribe will keep notes. The facilitator will keep the flow going (using simplified brainstorming rules). Explain that at their first meeting on their own, the team should choose a team leader. Their choice of team leader should depend upon the desired outcome and how they will measure “success.” But,

no matter what the team’s goals are, their leader should be someone with high moral and ethical standards. And coupled with that, the leader should be honest, fair, open, conscientious, and – ultimately – decisive.

## Follow Up & Evaluate

It’s important to keep tabs on how the team is doing and measure its success. To do so, have team members evaluate their own performance each time they complete a project. Use the “Team Peer Evaluation” form below. Then use the results to celebrate what’s going well and tweak whatever needs adjustment. Such ongoing measurement will allow the team to continually improve. 

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## Measure Your Team’s Performance

Peer evaluations can have great benefits when used well. Every team should have a “relief valve” built into the appraisal system so members can’t “fail” a colleague without cause. The following evaluation form may be helpful.

### Team Peer Evaluation

Read the eight benchmarks below. Then, using the scale provided, evaluate the performance of each member of your team on the project. All responses will be kept confidential. When you have completed this form, return it to your team leader, who will tabulate the results and incorporate the findings into the final analysis of the team’s success.

5 = very much    4 = reasonably    3 = some    2 = not much    1 = not at all

1. Met the team’s deadlines for this project
2. Contributed as expected to the collecting of information for this project
3. Contributed as expected to the analysis of the information collected for this project
4. Contributed as expected to the interpretation/reporting of the information collected for this project
5. Contributed as expected to the writing for this project
6. Contributed to the editing for this project
7. Demonstrated work quality for this project
8. Contributed to the overall success of the project

Person’s Name	Enter your numerical rating after each question.
(Example) John Jones	1 <u>4</u> , 2 <u>4</u> , 3 <u>3</u> , 4 <u>2</u> , 5 <u>1</u> , 6 <u>4</u> , 7 <u>3</u> , 8 <u>3</u>
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