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# INTRODUCTION

**M**y model for business is *The Beatles*. They were four guys who kept each other's negative tendencies in check. They balanced each other, and the total was greater than the sum of the parts. That's how I see business: great things in business are never done by one person, they're done by a team of people.

~Steve Jobs

During my 36-year career in a Fortune 500 company, I have had the privilege and honor of leading (and serving on) many project teams. My particular style of team leadership involved the development and/or transfer of new technologies for application throughout the company—technology transfer, if you will. In effect, I was acting as an “intrapreneur”—an activity I very much enjoyed. Nothing, I believe, builds professional skills better and faster than leading project teams, especially interdepartmental teams.

My most valuable asset, developed over years of practice, was my ability to bring people together to accomplish worthwhile things. I usually had no line authority over team members, just the promise of solving important problems with unique and creative solutions. [Note the word “creative.” You will hear this word many times in the following pages.] I had to convince not only my colleagues they should serve on my team, but also had to convince their bosses to allow them to participate.

To my chagrin, I have seen teams badly handled; and I have also been on teams that failed because of lack of leadership. Successful teams feed off great leadership; and throughout this short volume, I shall be hammering this point home. Good management is always important, but leadership gets the job done. It unites the team, and without a united team, there is no team—just a gathering of individuals vaguely hoping that what they are doing is what is needed.

Leadership is the strategic force that provides team members with turbo-charge for a productive and exciting mission—the “catalyst” around which team members rally and contribute. It should be a joyous thing to serve on a team, not drudgery. Following a caring leader is an experience to be fondly remembered and emulated.

Always remember: trust and leadership are the heart and soul of any team.

~Harry Roman

# TEAM LEADER ACTIVITIES FOR SUCCESS

**I**ndividual commitment to a group effort—that's what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.

~Vince Lombardi

Teams can be an exhilarating experience for both the leaders and the members, representing a chance to do something different and new. Having spent more than 30 years managing and leading interdepartmental teams [and R&D-based, new product development projects], it's fair to say I have been through the process a good number of times. Many of the teams I led typically involved large issue concepts and projects, such as:

- Developing an advanced technique for power system load flow analysis
- Demonstration, testing, evaluation and marketing of solar systems
- Design of a central station photovoltaic power plant
- Using robots in nuclear power plants, and other utility operations
- Application of artificial intelligence technology in a utility system
- Microsensors adapted to large station transformers
- Developing an information architecture for the SMART utility

These teams usually involved multi-year team member commitments [three to five years], composed of five to 10 team members. The projects usually had large budgets, and a finished product that was both hardware- and software-based. The company then implemented the finished products within the company's tactical and strategic operations. I often supplemented the teams with vendors and outside consultants. As team leader, I was the one who presented the initial proposal to senior management for the start-up, or seed funding, followed by sustaining annual budgets.

Although each team can be different in their specific charge, member mix, lifespan and senior management oversight; overall, teams usually consist of a basic set of typical activities that characterize the team's movement and evolution of teams.

That process, as I have experienced it, is shown below. Remember, any team is about leading a group of individuals to:

- Pull toward a common goal
- Do something important for the company
- Grow their skills and expand their professional toolboxes
- Learn how to lead teams themselves
- Share a common feeling of accomplishment

### **Typical Activities that Characterize Leading a Team**

- Receive the charge from senior management for the problem(s) to be solved, or the new product to be developed.
- Identify the talents needed for the team to do its work
- Select team members
- Convene the team:
  - Connect the team to the challenge, as well as the corporation
  - Discuss the importance of the team's work from a tactical and strategic standpoint
  - Make sure the team owns the challenge
  - Solidify the team's meeting schedule
- Conduct and lead divergent thinking:
  - Brainstorm about the challenge
  - Identify potential approaches and solutions
  - Discuss nagging issues

- Discuss potential pitfalls
- Evaluate what others have done in this area
- Focus and connect team thinking
- Select most promising approaches/solutions
  - Develop plan of action for team to carry out
  - Parcel out work assignments
  - Develop figures of merit for measuring team effectiveness
  - Determine if outside consultants, partners, and/or special talent is needed
- Do the work
  - Conduct and lead team activities
  - Hold regular meetings
  - Let team members voice their ideas and comments
  - Determine if members should visit other companies to gather information
  - Determine the amount of information to be disclosed in papers, articles and releases—publish as approved.
  - Keep senior management involved and up to date—let team members present to senior management
  - File any intellectual property as uncovered, or developed
  - Coach and counsel team members—help them develop and grow
- Finish the Team Activities
  - Publish final reports and host final presentations
  - Close out all existing team accounts and outside contracts