

## What it Takes to Successfully Manage a Team

Written by: Tracey Renzi, CM, M.Ed, MBA | October 20, 2015



We have all heard the cliché, *There is no I in team*. While this may be true on many levels, there are times when the “I” points directly to the manager or leader of the team. Sometimes for a good reason, other times not so good. Managing a team is not easy, and it is not for everyone. The responsibility, dedication, knowledge, and demands all add up to what can be either an extremely stressful or an extremely rewarding career. However, it all starts with how you lead the team.

For team members to support its leader, they must have confidence in his or her abilities. The leader needs to build credibility with direct reports, while at the same time guiding the team through day-to-day operations, building team rapport, and focusing on both the present and future.

There is an abundance of information on how to successfully manage teams, all of which is very enlightening. Mentors can be extremely helpful, as well as colleagues you have worked for and with during your career. New and daily challenges help me to focus on some of the

most important aspects of team success.

1. **MANAGE HORIZONTALLY AND VERTICALLY**

Direct reports are not the only ones observing what you do. It is important to manage upward and downward, but don't overlook your peers. Know how your team interacts with other teams, build rapport with other team managers, and find ways for your teams to work together. If you are new to a department or organization, reach out to others for information that can facilitate your transition. Managing is not limited to your staff. You must also manage yourself and your relationships.

2. **UNDERSTAND YOUR TEAM'S JOB**

Learn what your team does on a daily basis by spending time with team members. They can provide a plethora of information about operational processes and procedures. At the same time, you will build team rapport and credibility as their leader. The information you acquire will prepare you to step in and step up in the event of an emergency.

3. **MANAGE FAIRLY**

Each team member possesses a different skillset that offers the opportunity for growth and advancement. Despite upward potential, each member should conform to the same basic expectations. This involves maintaining a level playing field where each employee is accountable to the same standards and adheres to the same policies and procedures. When discipline is required, be kind yet firm. Correct unacceptable behavior privately and without humiliation. Offer praise publicly and give credit when it is due. Show respect.

4. **EMBRACE DIVERSITY**

Build team capacity based on education, experience, and a diverse set of characteristics to include age, gender, ethnicity, etc. Assign experienced members to aid in the development of less experienced members. Employ mentors to help with the achievement of career goals. Build employee skill sets to prepare them for advancement from within, however, don't overlook external candidates who can bring new perspectives and insights to your team.

5. **STAFF ENGAGEMENT**

Remember your team is comprised of people first. Get to know them, learn about their lives, and engage them in conversation about things you have in common. Share some of your life too. Offer encouragement when they take on new projects or tasks, celebrate when good things happen to them, and provide support when life gets tough. Facilitate team bonding by planning activities outside of work that involve the entire team. Make attendance optional, but do be sure everyone is invited. Plan a variety of activities (and at a variety of times if shift work is conducted) so that everyone has the chance to enjoy time with their team members outside of the office.

How you manage your team says a lot about you, both as a person and a leader. Team members are watching your every move, action, and reaction. How you engage with the team models how members will treat each other. How you handle challenges sets the example for how the team will react to similar situations. Accordingly, a successfully managed team often takes on the personality of its leader. Be yourself, pay attention, ask questions, and engage your team.

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## About the Author



### **Tracey Renzi, CM, M.Ed, MBA**

With over 15-years in Information Technology, Tracey has developed a myriad of expertise across multiple business and operations platforms. Tracey holds an M.Ed. and MBA, along with multiple professional certifications in customer service and management. She is dedicated to giving back to the community through the funding of animal rescue efforts and support of businesses with environmentally and socially oriented agendas.

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