



## Great teams have great role players

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COLUMNIST

DEAR CHIEF: About three times a year I get tasked with putting a team together to accomplish certain objectives. This is frustrating because during planning meetings no one contributes much—they just go with whatever I say or suggest. Everything “sounds good” to them. They have no opinions and don’t question anything. Each person seems motivated to be on the team so I’m at a loss for getting them to be more productive as team members. Do I need to start cracking a whip?

WHIP CRACKER



DEAR WHIP CRACKER: You may have to crack a whip but I’m wondering a few things about how you select team members: Do you draw names out of a hat? Walk around and randomly pick people? Ask for volunteers? Are you looking for people to fill certain roles on your team? Does someone else assign team members for you?

Ideally, it would be nice if you could select your own team members, establishing a role for each one of them. Different roles are necessary in order to maximize participation and effectiveness. It’s sort of like a football team. When a coach sends the offense out on the field, the 11 players

participating in the play won’t all be wide receivers. A quarterback, some linemen, and a few running backs will be part of the mix. Each player has a specific role in regards to passing, blocking, running, and catching in order for plays to be successful—you can’t have players who can only catch.

When putting together a team, look for participants who can effectively fill the following roles:

1) *Facilitator*: This person knows how to get the job done and is capable of guiding others in accomplishing the overall objective. Organization and delegation skills are his or her strengths.

2) *Cheerleader*: This person is there to help boost morale and motivate others. A cheerleader will always try to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative.

3) *Devil’s advocate*: This person can seem argumentative but really just wants to get to the heart of any assumptions or problems and find the best possible solution or outcome. If your idea can survive someone trying to poke holes in it, then it’s probably a good idea. If someone actually can poke holes in it, then your idea obviously needs work.

4) *Muse*: The muse brings creative sparks to meetings and inspires others to think outside the box. This person will bring plenty of ideas to the table, igniting some kind of reaction from

team members.

5) *Counselor*: Wisdom comes from experience and this person comes with lots of it, using firsthand knowledge and observations to provide unique insight into solving problems or meeting objectives.

6) *Specialty experts*: Sometimes you need a team member(s) who can perform a specific skill-set for certain functions. For instance, if one of your team’s objectives is to raise money, then you need someone skilled in the art of fundraising. Or maybe you need a talented marketer or salesperson.

Each of these roles can provide an important contribution to the group as a whole. Having a diverse group of personalities and skill-sets will give you the necessary psychological boost the team might need.

Next time fill your team with these types of role players and you’ll begin feeling more energy and experiencing better participation in your planning meetings. Team members will be lively and much more assertive.



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