

## Why should I be a Team Player?

It's a phrase that is abused about as often as it is used, and whether it's used in the positive or the negative it can be either a blessing or a curse.

"I just love having Jaime on staff, he's really a team player."

"I'm going to have to let Carmen go. She's just not a team player."

But is playing for the team really all it's cracked up to be? Does your boss want a yes-man, or an independent thinker? Are there truly any compelling reasons that you should aspire to be a team player? As you'll see below, the answer is yes.

First it is important to understand what a team player is and is not. A team player is not a yes-man, a suck-up, a sycophant or a corporate lackey. A team player is an employee who understands what the organization expects and meets those expectations. Putting the interests of the organization first, he or she trusts management, supports decisions, understands context, gives 100% effort. And the first reason why you should be a team player is because you owe it to your employer to be one.

It may seem a little callous to put it that way, but the bottom line is that your employer pays you. You take money from your organization every month, and in exchange you owe the organization something. What your employer buys from you goes beyond the simple terms of your job description to those attitudes and perspectives that make you a valuable employee. Just as you expect friendly service at a restaurant, competent advice from your tax service and a smile from the barista at your favorite coffee shop, your employer expects value for the dollars it pays you. Being a team player is what you owe the organization in return for your pay.

You also want to be a team player because these kinds of employees create value **for** the organization. And creating value for the organization matters to you because a healthy, growing organization provides the financial stability that underlies your paycheck and creates opportunities for advancement. An organization that has employees that trust management, support decisions and give 100% effort, it is able to spend its time and energy on success and growth rather than on internal damage control. That success and growth benefits the entire organization, including those employees that make it possible.

In addition to creating value for the organization, being a team player makes you move valuable **to** the organization. The productivity of an organization is the productivity of its employees. As a result, employees who are more productive are more valuable to the organization. Being a team player means spending your time and energy pursuing those things that the organization has identified as worth pursuing. Instead of requiring the organization to spend energy in unproductive ways like providing accountability to lazy, complaining, selfish employees, a team player directs organizational energy in productive

ways. Increasing organizational productivity in this way makes the team player more valuable.

The icing on the cake for most team players is the fact that this kind of approach to your role as an employee is a fast track to promotion. Organizations must continually develop new leaders to survive, especially healthy, growing organizations. The types of people that organizations seek to develop internally are those that embody the team player spirit. It is hardly necessary to point out that organizations are not likely to promote those employees that put their own interests ahead of the organization, distrust management, undermine decisions, and don't work hard. If you want to be valuable to your organization, and make yourself promotable, you want to be a team player.