



Characteristics of a Team Player

In Teams at the Top (Harvard Business School Press, 1998), Jon Katzenbach defines a team as “*a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.*” Katzenbach highlights the following elements as mandatory for top team performance:

- A small number: larger groups use sub-units to maximize performance on collective work.
- Complementary skills: include a blend of skills that balance technical, functional, problem-solving, decision-making and interpersonal expertise.
- Common purpose: a meaningful set of common goals energizes a team.
- Commitment to strengths-based approach: capitalize on the unique skill set of each member.
- Mutual accountability: every member shares in the responsibility for achieving the team’s goals

In The Five Dysfunctions of a Team (Jossey-Bass, 2002), Patrick Lencioni describes the power of teamwork when he states, “*If you could get all the people in an organization rowing in the same direction, you could dominate any industry, in any market, against any competition, at any time.*” Lencioni’s model suggests that healthy must overcome the following “dysfunctions”:

- Absence of Trust (risk: vulnerability)
- Fear of Conflict (risk: artificial harmony)
- Lack of Commitment (risk: ambiguity)
- Avoidance of Accountability (risk: low standards)
- Inattention to Results (risk: individual vs. collective motives)

As a summary, below are some characteristics of a team player:

A team player...

- buys into shared goals and vision.
- enjoys mutual trust.
- communicates with clarity and openness.
- is willing to take risks.
- seeks inclusion, closeness and cohesion.
- welcomes new members.
- focuses on the here and now.
- displays an attitude of optimism and hopefulness.
- supports collaborative leadership.
- takes psychological ownership of the team’s work.
- invites conflict and addresses it to support team growth.
- accepts constructive feedback.
- maintains individual and group accountability.
- defers individual credit for contribution to group projects.
- experiences intrinsic reward and satisfaction for shared accomplishments.