

Building a Highly Effective Team

Collaboration more important than ever to achieving success **By Susan Reynolds, MD, PhD**

A **S HEALTH** care delivery becomes increasingly complex, effective teamwork is needed more than ever. Only by collaborating with other caregivers can top quality patient care be delivered. But how do you build a highly effective team?

First, an effective team needs an excellent leader who can lead team members in developing appropriate goals and motivate them to accomplish them in a timely manner. The group's goals should be common goals for all team members and more important than individual goals. In order to reach these goals, there needs to be a mutually agreed to timeline, with check points along the way to keep the team on track. Regular group communication is also essential so that team members can provide mutual support to each other.

The leader must also match individual strengths of team members with their positions on the teams. Weaknesses need to be covered by others on the team. Having different personality types on a team can be very helpful, especially if they complement each other. When a team values diversity, its effectiveness increases because team members

understand what each member brings to the effort.

Team building usually occurs in four stages. At first, team members are getting to know one another, and figure out their roles. Then there is often a period of conflict and subgroup formation where the roles get blurry. Strong leadership is needed so that the team then begins to form cohesiveness and builds trust and solidarity. And finally there is clear differentiation of team roles. Conflict abates with this clarity, and the environment becomes open, trusting and supportive.

Finally, highly effective teams should also have high emotional intelligence (EI) demonstrating the same four domains of EI as successful individual leaders. Teams need to be self-aware (mindful of moods and emotions of others), self-managed (accountable for working together), socially aware (have empathy), and manage relationships both within the team and with other teams. Physicians cannot work alone anymore, so developing these team building skills will be key to future success.

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