

Teamwork Tips and Trends

Basics and Beyond



Teamwork Tips and Trends

Basics and Beyond

How would a nonprofit organization accomplish anything without teamwork? Whether you are fortunate enough to have staff and/or a robust committee structure, or a pair of willing partners, teamwork is essential to fulfilling your mission. Here are a few tips to enhance your team's results:

Some Basics

- **Is the team's purpose and current task clear?** A written committee or team charge can do wonders to zero in on the expected result.
- **Is each team member's role clear?** Strong to-do lists with a timeline help delineate expectations. Naming each role can be helpful: big picture leader, researcher, proofer, reminder, etc. Ultimately, with whom does the buck stop? Ongoing roles warrant job descriptions to weather changes and maximize efficiencies.
- **Is the project on track?** A formal project manager would assess the timeline compared to people-power (resources). Nonprofit organizations rarely have the luxury of adding funds or team members in order to complete team projects. But they may be able to pull in new expertise or perspectives from time to time to ramp up progress.

Beyond the Basics

- **Are the right people at the table?** Is there adequate buy-in from key constituents? There may be multiple levels: those who may benefit from the work, those charged with implementation, traditional stakeholders, and those who are ultimately accountable. Laying a strong foundation is well worth the time and may surprise the team with insightful perspectives.
- **Is the team the right size?** Once a project is underway, a smaller core team may be more efficient than the larger one that helped set the course. After a team has worked together for awhile review the team's composition from time to time.
- **How committed is the team?** Is the purpose compelling, inspiring, motivating? If not, explore how the work supports a greater goal or is part of the bigger picture, without which the organization might not be at its best. How can commitment be made stronger?
- **Are there opportunities for creative input and new thinking?** Maximize team member's talents to bring new ideas into the mix. Refresh an unwieldy process or outdated communications tool to reinvigorate the team and increase results. After a project is underway, taking a creativity break can inspire new momentum.
- **Document and communicate. Repeat.** Every project needs an elevator speech in order to recruit team members and inform constituents. If the goal can't be described in a few lines or a paragraph, perhaps the purpose needs to be reviewed.
 - It's worthwhile to document incremental successes for any important work. There is a continual need to orient new team members as well as share progress. With each orientation, remind yourself why you are doing the work and the project's role in a greater outcome. If the goal is long-term, it's even more important to set benchmarks and communicate progress to keep commitment strong and celebrate the milestones.

- What are the core documents for the work? Keep a master set of checklists, communications pieces, refined stories, and training tools.
- **When leadership changes.** Most projects experience a change in executive, volunteer, or team leadership, eventually. Be prepared with a status assessment, acknowledging contributions and successes. Welcome new perspectives. If the project takes a new course, take the lessons with you and make the next direction an even better choice.

Quote: "The first step to being creative is to get rid of your own unwritten rules." ~ Mary M. Byers

Indiana Nonprofit Resource Network provides affordable, accessible, and high quality training and custom consulting services such as board retreats. Visit <http://www.inrn.org> for more information.

You may freely copy and distribute this document, but please give us credit.

Share this document:

