



Selecting a Success Driven Team

One of the hallmarks of a great project team is their ability to produce what is asked of them no matter how many challenges get in the way. Successful teams, no matter what objective they are trying to meet, have some things in common, like a great attitude, and the ability to get along. Of course you need great people, but many people are great people when they are on the right project and many people are anxious to do a good job. But it's a fine art getting the best out of them. So what are some of the ingredients for building a success driven team?

1. Great project leadership. The first ingredient is a great leader. The leader must have vision, but more importantly, he or she must know how to communicate the vision to the team. If you build your team correctly, and get the right mix of people on the team, they will function cohesively yet independently. A strong player doesn't always stop to ask questions – once they think they know what they are doing they tend to run on their own. You want this. You don't want someone who is constantly seeking reinforcement, or who needs micro-managing. But at the same time, you must know that they are going to run in the right direction. A strong team with a composite mix of skills all running under their own initiative is at risk of running in multiple different directions if the vision is not clear.
2. Skill mix. This is an important part of building a team that is destined for success. It is sometimes tempting to select strong players with similar skills. A more effective mix is strong players with dissimilar skills. Strong players seek out the plum assignments. If there are more strong players than there are plum assignments, unhealthy competition can occur on the team, reducing productivity. Driven people seek challenging, interesting work, so make sure there is enough to go around to keep everyone challenged. Also, find people to do the menial or detail oriented tasks so that your big thinkers and visionaries don't have to. This frees up the big thinkers to get on with the framework that success is built upon and clears their mind of the clutter that detail imposes.
3. It's okay to make mistakes. We all do. They are going to happen. A project leader ideally wants to know disaster is approaching before it reaches the point of no return. A well-oiled team will give the project manager the heads up before disaster strikes, hopefully in time to put some deflective measures into place. Sometimes the imminent disaster might be as a result of a mistake made by a project team member. The way to get team members to fess up to mistakes is to have a supportive environment without recrimination. Any threat of recrimination or punishment will force team members to "cover up" mistakes and try to hide them from their team lead – that just makes it harder to recover from down the road.
4. Motivation. We all like to feel like part of a winning team. A good project manager sets the tone early on with a great attitude, a supportive atmosphere and an expectation of success. When obstacles arise provide the tools and encouragement to get around them and a general of expectation of success and people will find ways.



When you look at the nuts and bolts of building great teams, it essentially comes down to attitude. It's easy to give up on a project when challenges arise, but if the project manager refuses to give up, then the project team will not give up either and success can be accomplished in more cases than not.