

Success Derives from Teamwork and its Effectiveness

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## Abstract

Why are some teams more successful than others? What is it that separates the good, from the great, and the great, from the best? How well your team can work together to achieve a common goal is what can differentiate the level of success each team accomplishes. Success derives from a common vision, common goal, trust and teamwork. This has promoted the need to find out how these strategies work and their effectiveness on team's success. There are different strategies and small factors that are essential to enhancing effective teamwork which will be focused on throughout this paper. As a coach, it is important to put players in the best position to become successful on and off the court; therefore, teaching them quality life characteristics does not only benefit the team's success, but their own individual success. In time, you will begin to alter approaches to personal strategies to better fit the personnel of the team.

## TEAMWORK AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

### Strategies for Teamwork and its Effectiveness

In the coaching profession, whether it is an individual sport or a team sport, teamwork plays an important role in the success of the program. It begins with the relationship between the coach and the player. Creating a relationship with the athletes on the team, builds a trusting bond, making it essential when striving to bring the team to believe in your system. What is a team? – a team is a collection of individuals who are interdependent in their tasks, who share responsibility for outcomes, who see themselves and who are seen by others as an intact social entity imbedded in one or more larger social systems and who manage their relationships across organizational boundaries (Cohen and Baily, 1997, p. 241) (Jiang, 2010). In the athletic world, there are many teams from all over, but it appears that some teams are more successful than others. The reasoning behind this is the success that derives from how well players can interact and work on one team. “Teamwork is prevalent at present, especially in the work place. This shows that teamwork is very effective and beneficial for a business to grow. Teamwork and motivation is very important for the operation of successful organizations and a greater understanding of management” (Jiang, 2010). For teamwork to be effective, there must be a common vision, a common goal, and a purpose set at the beginning of the season from the coaches to the players and the all-around organization, laying the foundation of what is expected for the season. In order to achieve such characteristics, there must be team trust among the players and coaches. Trust generates the basis of teamwork and enhances the performance of the team and coaching. As a coach, you are going to receive different players every year with different backgrounds, ethnicity’s, cultures, beliefs, etc. Allocating successful strategies in uniting and binding the uniqueness into working towards the goal of a successful program. As a primary goal for any coach, this should be priority before

## TEAMWORK AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

moving forward. Settling on the set strategies that best fits a coach's style and beliefs, is the first challenge to be tackled at the onset of each season.

Who creates the vision? - When becoming a coach, you want to have a vision for your team and for the season. Visions should not only revolve around the numbers on the wins and losses column; but, expectations on how your program will execute the procedures to develop the team, while successfully accomplishing goals, and setting growth at the end of each year. Having a vision, contributes to a set foundation for the team and the program. It enables the participants to know where they stand at the beginning of the year, and know what is to come in the future. When claiming a vision, it is important that the coaches and coaching staff are on the same page. Having the same beliefs, allows more than one person moving in the same direction. As a group of leaders march forward to a common goal, allows others to know what their expectations are, and how hard they must work to enable such goals to become reality. "The vision that leaders seek to share with followers is a protean thing, continually being revised and annotated by changing values, emerging developments, and events that vindicate or repudiate aspects of the worldview previously held by leaders, followers, or both." (Owens and Valesky, 2007, p. 283)

The game is constantly changing and evolving, so this means that as a coach you must take on the adaptive leadership role and be comfortable with adapting to the change and leading your team in the direction of success. "The goal for forging agreement on the vision or mission of the organization is, ideally, to seek consensus as nearly as it can be practically achieved, but always consensus on a new and better state in the future." (Owens and Valesky, 2007, p. 284) Setting team goals is essential in establishing a successful program because along with having a clear vision, a common goal means that each player will be fighting towards the same end point together. In basketball, getting all twelve-fifteen players to agree on a common goal allows me, as a coach, to

## TEAMWORK AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

be able to set up a blue print for our season. This then requires teamwork to reach our destination. Everyone must be on board. If players or coaches lack that same conviction and respect, can cause a negative impact within your program. The purpose of goal setting, is to motivate the players to play for something bigger than themselves; and that is for one another. In order to foresee any kind of success as a coach for your organization “every team needs to be able to work together toward a common goal in order to be successful (Mathew, 2015). When talking about teamwork and having individuals work together to obtain a common goal, it seems more reasonable to recruit players who are similar rather than different. But, according to Mathew, “acquiring the necessary top talent to realize such project goals often involves bringing in a diverse group of people together to brainstorm, collaborate, and solve tactical problems. Leveraging the diverse talents, background experiences, and interests of members often leads to more creative solutions during team problem solving efforts.” Teamwork does not always come easy, it is a skill that has to be taught if you want your team to become successful. As a result, having diversity on your team can be difficult and may have its cons, but it can also bring on ideas derived from each individual, which may open a new door, new idea, new opportunities for the team as a whole. One of the most successful teams I have played on had players from all around the world. We had players from Argentina, Australia, California, Florida, Dallas and as much as we had our differences, we came together with the same vision and goal for our season and we found a way to get it done. We may not always have agreed with one another, but as we hit adversity and faced obstacles we were able to come together and share different ideas of how to overcome the setbacks. The fact that we trusted one another, we took in the different ideas and decided what worked best. This team I was part of won a conference title, and made it to the sweet sixteen in the national tournament. Having diverse players on a team is quite beneficial to say the least. This also brings forth opportunity for each

## TEAMWORK AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

athlete to grow as leaders, while creating a sense of commitment and belonging. As a coach, we aspire to help our players grow and prosper in all aspects of a human being, and being around a diverse group can help each individual grow in their own ways. What can be hard about getting diverse individuals, especially college aged females, to come together and work for not only themselves but for one another is the high level of trust that is required for teamwork to even be possible.

Mathew states that while developing and maintaining credibility, it is not only expected from a team leader, it is a requirement if the leader wants to influence the team members. This is essential when you want your players to trust you and your system. If you don't have players that trust you, it would be extremely difficult to get them to play for you and actually listen to what you have to say. The best way to set the foundation, is to lead by example and earn the players trust. By becoming an example for them, they will then witness the behavior you have displayed and their actions will reciprocate. Manzoor credits that by stating "trust generates the behavioral basis of teamwork, which results in organizational synergy and better performance of an employee". The higher level of trust that is generated throughout the team and organization makes less room for "me" and more room for "we." You then have players giving 110% day in and day out because not only will they have created a trust bond with the rest of their teammates, but they will trust their leader and trust the process in becoming successful. Manzoor also defends the idea that "organizations which emphasize more on teamwork have results in increased employee performance, greater productivity and better problem solving." Being a successful coach means more than just teaching the X's and O's, but rather building a relationship so strong with your athletes that they trust you, your methods, your system and their teammates to reach the ultimate goal that the team has set. Yes, you want your players to trust you and trust one another, but as a

## TEAMWORK AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

leader, that behavior must be reciprocated. When you become a coach, it is important that you trust your players, and that they feel it too. You can claim to trust your players but if they don't feel like you do, then you are probably not doing a good job of displaying that and that can affect their game. Players are going to make mistakes, that is inevitable, what shouldn't be done as a coach is taking them out of the game as soon as they make one mistake. That not only brings them down, but now you have given them the idea that you don't trust that they can recover from that mistake the next play. Not only that, but from personal experience, you then make the player feel like they must play perfect if they want to see any kind of playing time. This not only puts so much pressure on an individual, but it doesn't allow the player any room to grow if they can't correct their mistakes because of getting pulled out right away. There was a difference in the types of relationships I had with my coaches throughout college and high school. Throughout my career I experienced different relationships with different coaches. One coach I played for, built a strong relationship with me based on trust and it allowed my game to grow tremendously. He didn't only care about winning, but about my well-being as a whole and this allowed me to trust that whatever he did was in the best of my interest for my game and life itself. By building a relationship like this, I trusted his calls in the game and actions were reciprocated because he put trust in me on the court. He allowed me to make my own calls at times and by doing this, allowed the girls on the team to trust me as well. By trusting your players, not only enhances the confidence for play making, but lets the team know that they can trust their leader as well. On the other hand I have had coaches where I felt like trust was lacking in the relationship with coach and player. My relationship with this other coach was quite different. I didn't feel like there was much trust early on because any mistake I got pulled out. I felt like I had to come off the bench and play perfect if I wanted to stay in the game. That was more pressure than being a starter and knowing you were

## TEAMWORK AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

going to stay in the game even if you messed up. What I was told by my coach was that I played with too many emotions; but what he failed to do, was get to know me as a person and build that relationship that goes deeper than basketball. I played with a lot of emotion because I felt the need to have to be perfect in order to play, and that got the best of me at times because it is close to impossible. The difference between me being able to play collectively and lose my patience when making one simple mistake was the fact that I felt like I was trusted by one coach and the other coach lacked trust. This doesn't mean don't punish players for their mistakes, but be accepting to the fact that mistakes are going to happen and that is where room for improvement comes into action. As a player, knowing your coach trusts you not only enhances your confidence but also makes you become more accountable for your contributions to the team. Tarricone states that "it is essential that team members know their role and understand what is expected of them in terms of their contribution to the team." When fulfilling the role of a college coach, you are going to have players on your team who were, I guarantee, all-stars in high school and more than likely the best from their team. Unfortunately, not everyone's role is going to remain the same as it did in high school. It is our job, as coaches, to recruit players who can fit the piece for the puzzle we are trying to complete. Sometimes, we don't always recruit players, but allow for walk-ons to have the same opportunity by being on the team as well. This means allowing players to try out for the team, and if they're capable at playing at the next level you can choose to keep them but aren't good enough for scholarship money so therefore, they would be considered walk-ons. Don't give players false hope, but instead, be up front and honest with each of them. Tell them what is expected from them for the season; tell them what their role is on the team and how essential it is to be performed at the highest level so that the common goal can be achieved; explain to them why they have a certain role so they understand where they are at and what they need to improve on.



## TEAMWORK AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

Communication is key when it comes to trust and it starts from the top. Being in constant contact with your players and staff is essential so that everyone remains on the same page and so relationships don't fall out but rather strengthen instead. By having an open line of communication, trust is enhanced. Each individual from assistants to graduate assistants to players, feel more comfortable with sharing new ideas and being a coach, also means trusting that sometimes our ideas aren't always the best but we are susceptible to listening to the voices on the team. This leads me to what Owens and Valesky stated about GI leaders. Being a successful coach doesn't entail having all the power and demanding respect and expecting things to be done their way and their way only. But instead, "acting as a chairperson at a meeting, sharing problems with the group and facilitates efforts of the group to reach consensus on a group decision. GI leaders may give information and express opinion but does not try to 'sell' a particular decision or manipulate the group through covert means" (Owens and Valesky 2007, p. 305). Leaders/coaches who promote this kind of behavior, display a large amount of trust on their team and staff because they then become vulnerable to allowing others to have a voice in decision-making and this is what allows them to become successful organization as a whole. And when you have a team who can trust one another, teamwork then starts to become less demanding and what would seem to be effortless.

Strategies for effective teamwork means asking the right questions, commitment, communication and collaboration. The questions you would want to ask are to seek the most effective ways to approach teamwork would be: what's the vision? what's the mission? what are our objectives and strategies to have a successful season? what is our identity? purpose? value? (Windermere, 2018). You may ask why focus on teamwork when looking to become a successful coach? A successful coach has to start somewhere, and that is rarely ever at the top. Why not

## TEAMWORK AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

focus on something that doesn't require athletic skill but a heart and passion from each individual in the organization. The benefits of teamwork, according to Jiang, is that it is the key to staff development (Beal, 2003). Not only does Jiang say that it is the key to staff development, but he also says it is the smartest strategy for growth. What I enjoyed about reading that was that growth doesn't only mean in the sport, or in the game, but growth in general as a person. We want our players to grow in all aspects of life, not just the game so why not emphasize the importance of teamwork? In Jiang's journal, he says this can improve social relations to overcome the sense of separation and low trust syndrome (Jin, 1993). Along with that, he also claims that "teamwork can make people share the same goals and responsibilities for outcomes, namely, the common objective of an organization. Teamwork can also enhance effectiveness and productivity of a company, which would gain an organization more profit (Beal, 2003)." To relate that more to the sports realm, if you want to be successful you have to be willing to work for and with those around you. Whether it is your staff or your teammates, this includes anyone and everyone in your organization. Once you start to share the same goals, take responsibilities for your own actions, hold each other accountable, know your role, play from something bigger than yourself, working together as a team can be much more effective than someone trying to accomplish a goal by themselves in a team sport. Although you want everyone to work together to reach the main goal, you must credit the hard work and individual goals that are reached along the way. Manzoor says that "managers must plan and design an appropriate reward system for the employee and encourage their participation in team projects." It is only right to give credit where credit is due. Coaches, it is understandable that you have your eyes and mentality set on where you eventually want your team to end up, whether it be a national title, state title, conference title or even making it to the post season; but, it is also important that you praise the hard work of your athletes and staff through

## TEAMWORK AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

the process of trying to get there. By showing acknowledgment for the hard work these athletes and staff members are putting in, it lets them know that their work doesn't go unnoticed. It shows that obtaining their personal goals means something to you and the organization couldn't be successful without their hard work and determination to fulfill their roles and achieve their own personal goals. This will not only motivate players and staff members to aim to reach their personal goals, but as they set more goals for themselves, this not only makes them better players and individuals but it enhances the teams rating for success as a whole. In Tarricone's writing, she says that if you want successful and effective team work certain attributes were needed, such as: commitment to team success and shared goals, open communication and positive feedback, interpersonal skills, and interdependence. Why is commitment to team success and shared goals important? Because, successful teams are then motivated, engaged and aim to achieve at the highest level (Tarricone, 2002). As a coach, you want your players to be motivated to want to come to practice and get better, you want them engaged during film sessions and skill work, you want them all to want to work for one another to be successful at the highest level. With commitment, you want to make sure that your players have "bought in" to your system because that is the main ingredient that can make or break a team. Kreek believes that for teams to be effective, each member needs to let go of ego, control and ideas that other team members just don't embrace" (Windermere, 2018). If you don't have the "buy-in" from everyone in the organization, that leaves room for doubt and negativity to seep through, and that isn't something that will aid a team in being successful. This is why communication was one of the keys for trust, and is one factor to how effective teamwork can be. I have played on several teams where some were more successful than others and a lot of the success derived from the fact that the whole team bought into the system or vision. I have been apart of teams that were given everything and some teams

## TEAMWORK AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

where we started from the bottom and had to grind our way to the top. The teams where we were given everything, had all the talent needed to have an extremely successful season but, not everyone bought into the system. I'd have to say the other programs that I was a part of where we had to work for every inch of success, were the most successful teams I have been on. Not only did everyone buy into the system, but we all trusted our coach and one another so we could succeed together. These teams that I was apart of allowed us to go three rounds deep in playoffs and win a district title for the first time in school history. Another team, we won a conference title and made it to the sweet sixteen in the national tournament. It had a lot to do with how much we trusted the process, each other, the coaches and most importantly, the buy in from each individual. With this trait, Tarricone explains how you must "listen actively to concerns and needs of team members and valuing their contribution to the team and expressing this helps to create an effective work environment." Along with listening, "you must be willing to give and receive constructive criticism and give authentic feedback." The word authentic is so essential because an individual can tell when you are being sincere or not and this can make or break a trust bond that you might share with your players. Be genuine, show you care about your players more than just on the court. It's easier to play for someone who you know cares about you rather than an individual who could care less about you after you have racked up the stat sheets with number and have helped their "win column." I found myself falling in love with the game more and more when I played for coaches who genuinely wanted to see me succeed more than just winning. I looked forward to being in the gym constantly, looked forward to learning and expanding my game. I couldn't imagine myself being anywhere else than in a gym and having a ball in my hand. I have also played for coaches who winning by 70 points just wasn't good enough. We could have scored 140 points but if another team scored more than that, we just didn't play hard enough. It was difficult

## TEAMWORK AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

to want to play for someone like that. I dreaded walking into practice, sat on the bench trying not to make eye contact with the coach because I didn't want to go in. Why? Because no matter what I did right, or how hard I played, it was inevitable that I was going to be yelled at, and I mean torn down, at the end of the game, or practice. There's a difference between constructive criticism and just demoralizing players. With the different coaches I have played for, I learned the difference. Being able to give and take constructive criticism means humbling yourself, letting go of ego, and understand that the person giving it, is only trying to better you so you can help the team get better. Constructive criticism isn't only for the players, but for the coaches as well. We, too, are humans and we do falter and make mistakes but this is when we must drop our ego and take in any kind of criticism that should come our way – respectfully of course. To become an individual like this and to mold a team to work together like this, interpersonal skills are needed, according to Tarricone. She states that “interpersonal skills involve the ability to discuss issues openly with team members and being honest. Along with being trust worthy, supportive of your teammates, and showing respect and commitment enhances the effectiveness of teamwork. Fostering a caring work environment is essential, especially when there are multiple individuals working together effectively.” With these skills that she mentioned can help how effective teamwork can be, can be used to create an interdependent team environment. This kind of environment allows individuals to contribute to an organization far more than they would just as individuals. Tarricone states that a positive interdependent team environment brings out the best in each person by enabling the team to achieve their goals. At the end of the day, whether the main goal is reached or not, if your players are promoting, encouraging and learning from one another, you and your organization have taken a step forward in the right direction. Success doesn't happen overnight, but it is important to acknowledge the little victories along the way.

## TEAMWORK AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

To be successful in the game of basketball, your team must buy in to the idea that teamwork is what is going to drive success. For teamwork to be effective, there must be team trust throughout the players and coaches. Trust generates the basis of teamwork and enhances the performance of the team and coaching. Establishing a common vision, a common goal, and a purpose at the beginning of the season from the coaches to the players and all around the organization is the foundation of what is expected for the season. There are many ways to reach out to your players and find ways to get them to work together but the effort must start with the coach first. For any success to be accomplished, team members must believe in a vision set forth by the coach and their staff. Believing in something allows individuals to work hard and make that vision a reality. There is more to the game than gathering drills, making the perfect practice plan, watching film, etc., I must know how to connect with my players, create a sense of belonging through goals and visions, while teaching them how to work with one another to achieve those goals. Each person on the team has a certain role to play. It is crucial that everyone on the team knows their roles and expectations early on. Once roles and expectations are set forth, team players who believe in the program will learn to piece together their roles for the big picture. Once establishing such expectations, it makes the process moving forward much smoother. Having the ability to teach and coach players, brings on a responsibility of educating athletes on life skills not just numbers on a score board. No one wants to work with self-centered egotistic individuals, but with those who know how to work with others and will do their part to be successful in the future. That itself is more important to me, than the victories to come.

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