

This Team Stuff can be Challenging

By Nicole Pfeiffer, Benefits Practice Leader



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Yes, this team stuff can be challenging. You heard me say at the September Symposium that a recent University of Phoenix survey showed that 68% of people say that they would rather not work in a team. Yet, we know that we need one another. Being a master of one or a jack-of-all-trades in today's world does not bring about success if you are unable to work as part of a team. Here in the Benefits Department, all our roles involve interacting with others, so being able to perform well with your colleagues is key to attaining growth and success. The diverse skills of our teammates are needed to achieve success – we all have strengths that we contribute. Bringing together those unique strengths helps us to accomplish our organizational goals and objectives. So, let's take that earlier Mom advice and bring it to the workplace.

1

Communicate. Communicate. Communicate:

Good communication in the workplace ensures teammates have the information they need to perform well and eliminates inefficiencies. “We are not mind readers,” was a quote during our panel at the September Symposium. Share expectations. Provide status updates. Give appropriate timelines to one another. We need to communicate with our teammates, but perhaps even more importantly, we need to communicate with our clients. Respond in a timely manner, ideally the same day. Provide proactive status updates. Clients want status updates just as much as we crave them from our internal teammates.

2

Have a plan and get yourself organized:

A good broker shows up more often than just at renewal time. While we have different service standards based on client size, we still want to be interacting with a client more often than once per year. Sketch out an annual plan and act on your plan throughout the year. We can't get a year's worth of engagement out of delivering a 20% renewal increase just once a year. Also, renewal time isn't the right time to throw out wild new strategies that you haven't vetted with the client. It also creates extra work on the team. Be planful and take a client's temperature on new strategies early in the year. Work your annual plan.

3

Get aligned on roles:

Seek clarity on who is doing what and hold each other accountable for work tasks. Have conversations with one another directly if the work is not on target with quality or timeframe. Seek out additional resources if the team needs specialists to help with complex analysis or projects.

4

Be Gritty:

Grit is defined as perseverance towards long-term goals. Helping clients achieve their employee benefit goals should be gritty work. It's about executing on our ideas. It involves creating multi-year plans and vetting solutions early in the year. It means knowing what lines of coverage are up for renewal and obtaining the client's input on renewal strategy. It's about pushing work forward to smooth out the 1/1 renewal bump. It's about showing up regularly to let the group know you are thinking about them and executing their plan.

We are heading into our busiest time of year. Let's not forget that we need one another. Our goal is the best outcome for the client. Be sure to communicate, work your plan, be accountable for your tasks, seek out help when needed, and execute on behalf of our clients. In conclusion, remember that the strength of our team lies in our ability to collaborate effectively. By leveraging our diverse skills, maintaining clear communication, and staying organized, we can achieve remarkable results. Let's embrace the challenges ahead with grit and determination, knowing that together, we can accomplish more than we ever could alone.



Hi Mom! Sorry I missed you. I'll leave you a message.

I just finished up my Intro to Marketing team meeting. Oh, this working in teams just sucks. I know you say it is really important in business, but I'd just rather go it alone.

- **Jake** didn't show up for either of our two meetings. Who knows if he is still enrolled in the class. They say he is a football player and really busy right now. Does that just give him a pass on this project?
- **Josie** twirled her hair the whole time staring at Logan. She said she would be the note taker but didn't write down a single thing the entire meeting. Really, not a single note.
- **Logan**, I mean, he's pretty cute, so I'm not surprised that Josie keeps staring at him. Oh, he's the talker, Mom. The ultimate salesperson. Reminds me of some of those people at your work. He doesn't want to help with any of the prep work but says that he's got us covered for the presentation.
- **Jordan**. He is a computer science major getting a business minor. I think he is a numbers person. He came prepared with some background information. I'm so glad for that. He is really shy though and says that he won't be comfortable speaking during the presentation.

We have a 20-page paper to write about Hy-Vee's 2024 marketing plan and then need to present our PowerPoint to the Hy-Vee Executives on their marketing campaign. That's so much work to get done. How are we ever going to make it happen? How am I going to do it with these teammates?

Then there is **me**, Mom. The Chemical Engineering major that thinks a business minor will help me but struggles with this team stuff. I know, I know. You always tell me to be the leader that I'm capable of being. I can just hear you right now.... We are going to need a plan. We are going to need to communicate. We are going to need to get organized. We are going to need to get aligned on roles. Plan out the work over the course of the semester and tackle things week by week. Get gritty and be the leader that you are. The team performance can be greater than individual performance when done correctly. Blah, blah, blah.

Just call me later, Mom, so I can vent some more. Love you.

