

Teamwork



Today's article is dedicated to "Teamwork". We humans are much more team players than we think we are. Every situation in which we are not alone is a team situation. Every family, every circle of friends, every workplace is a team. How we and others play on a team, determines how successful the team will be. Of course, everyone wants to be a member of a winning team. The key question is: What are the characteristics of a winning team?

Those of you who are familiar with sports will know that just having talented individuals on a team does not guarantee victory. Real Madrid - with its group of arguably the best football players on the planet - still lost in the European Champions' league. Obviously individual talent and skills, although important, were not enough. There must be 'something else' besides individual skills that make a team successful. That 'something else' is what makes Teamwork such an important value. People know when that 'something else' is present. Working together becomes more instinctive, more fun, more productive. Have you ever been on such a team? What was it like?

The first characteristic that is part of a winning team is the willingness and readiness to share. In every great team there is an element of giving and taking in which all members participate. Michael Jordan was one of the most gifted basketball players in the history of basketball. He would regularly score 40 points or more each game. It was only when he actually started scoring *less*, however, that his team began to win the championship. He began sharing, passing the ball more, letting other people score. It was only when he learned how to give more and to take less that the team did better. Often in team situations at work, we look for how other people can help us. Too much taking without giving can however be counterproductive. The members of a winning team realize that by helping others, they also help themselves.

The members of a winning team also stay constantly involved. They are always looking for ways to contribute towards achieving the team's goals and objectives. Even if they have met their own individual goals, they look for how they might be able to insure that the team goals are met. The principle is well illustrated in a game of volleyball. Each player is responsible for covering a very specific area of the court. Nevertheless there is a lot of movement in volleyball and a player can often find himself outside of his coverage area. If a player cannot cover his area, the closest player is expected to do so. Imagine a volleyball player who always returns the balls that were played to his area, but never pays attention to balls outside

his area. He explains why he failed to go after a ball which he could have reached by saying: “The ball was not in my area.” How do you think his team members would feel?



Great teams are able to take advantage of all of the individual strengths that their members bring to the team. Each of us has different capabilities as well as a different way of seeing the world. On the one hand, this difference can make working in a team difficult. How can we all pull in the same direction, when all of us see things differently?

Alignment is therefore a key component of great teams. Making sure we all have a common goal and common vision helps all team members to contribute in a meaningful way. A team that is not aligned is like a football team that doesn't know where the goal posts are.

Once aligned, great teams then make sure that each member can contribute in their own special way. Each of us has our own set of particular strengths. To give an example: Perhaps we are good at moving boldly into action or perhaps we are good at patiently considering the options in front of us. Both characteristics are important for a team but difficult (not impossible) for one individual to possess both qualities. What makes a team more than the sum of its parts is that all of these characteristics can exist simultaneously within a team. It is like an orchestra. Each musician makes a different sound. But when combined together in an appropriate way they create harmony.

The final characteristic of a winning team is its ability to learn together. In life one thing is always constant: change. Situations are constantly changing and teams need to adapt to the changing environment. Winning teams recognize the need to change and learn how to change together.

What does “Teamwork” mean to Bunge? What does it mean to you? All of us at Bunge play on a team. We may have our own individual assignments and areas of responsibility, but these individual areas are part of a larger process. How big is the team that you play on?

Teamwork is nothing new to Bunge. To accomplish most of the tasks required in our business, teamwork is required. Perhaps reflecting on the Value “Teamwork” may nevertheless help us to understand the difference between good and great teamwork and help us to improve how we work with each other. As a starting point on that reflection, I'll leave you with a question: How do you play on a team and what more could you do to make the teams you play on more effective?