



Tips for Innovative Meetings and Events (T.I.M.E.)

Topic: BEST Teams

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Welcome

Sometimes what creates a truly innovative meeting happens in the background – before the meeting even takes place. Many of the topics featured in Tips for Innovative Meetings focus on suggestions for improving the meeting itself. This month we take a step behind the scenes and look at the process of executing a meeting to glean a few tidbits.

The focus this month is on building effective supplier teams. How does selecting the “right” partners work to create a great meeting? What are the secrets to managing a team?

Much of this newsletter is based upon a presentation, “Can’t We All get Along: Increasing Program Value with Effective Supplier Teams”, which Mike Hamilton and I developed. (Mike is President of Synchronicity an experiential events agency with over 25 years of experience in tradeshows, meetings and conferences. You can find out more about Synchronicity at www.getsynchonicity.com. Contact Mike at (815) 464-1252 or mike@getsynchonicity.com. Or click here [Mike Hamilton](#) or [Synchronicity website](#)) The need for enhanced cooperation and collaboration only continues in the meeting and event industry. Please contact us, if after reading this issue, you are interested in the workshop or discussing additional strategies for you and your teams.

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What is a Team?

Jon Katzenbach in *The Wisdom of Teams* differentiates between working groups and teams. In working groups, members interact to share information, share perspectives and maybe even share best practices. In working groups, members make decisions to help individual perform within his or her area of individual responsibility. A team, compared to a working group, has people with complimentary skills who are equally committed to a common purpose to which they hold themselves mutually responsible

On the surface, just looking at a group of people won't tell you whether they are a team or a working group. Teams have a common pursuit. Working groups have members with individual pieces.

This Team is Like No Other

Teams in the meeting and event industry fundamentally differ from other teams in four ways:

The project with many masters – A meeting or event is a challenging project because the leader is typically answering to many, many masters. Stakeholders include the person holding the meeting, the participants, senior management, exhibitors, sponsors and participants, Customers and suppliers can also be meeting stakeholders. And each group may have a different reason, a different objective for the meeting. The stakeholders may define value or success in different ways resulting in even more challenges.

Project teams vs. intact teams – Teams responsible for executing meetings and events are virtual teams. The team forms to execute a meeting and then the majority of the members will disband for the next meeting. While there are many relationships that extend from one meeting to another, many of the team members are new to a team. Part of this is the nature of the beast – changing geographic locations often dictates that the suppliers are new for each meeting. In addition, the desire for something new, different, something not done last time, creates pressure to add new, different suppliers to the team.

Teams are highly permeable – In many situations, teams are formed at the outset of the project and all the players are identified. The team starts out with all the players (new and returning) in place. Many meeting teams have team members added to a team along the way. They are dropped in; or team members will drop out as their roles are completed. This make the team structure much more permeable and less fixed.

Scope is a moving target – More than in other situations, (my opinion here) the scope, goals and objectives for meetings are more likely to be a moving target. Often

meetings are called to happen, and yet, the reason for the meeting is not fully fleshed out. In my experience, this is less likely to happen with systems installations, engineering project or other projects.

Tips for Assembling Great Teams

Select team members who:

- Exchange information freely and openly
- Work outside boundaries (not prone to the “not my job” attitude)
- Demonstrate a willingness to be team members
- Serve as a single point of contact for their organization

Seek people who demonstrate the intangible ability to see the big picture. Look for vendors who don't see themselves as simply a florist, a DMC or a caterer, but rather who see their role as partners who will help create a unified, branded seamless event.

While technical skills are important, find people who possess the three characteristics of skills, accountability and commitment. Interestingly, the US Army states that they hire for attitude and train for skills. While this mantra will not suit supplier teams seeking specific expertise in the short-run, it does emphasize the importance of commitment and willingness to be a team player.

One characteristic of team players is their ability to support team goals. Teams have an interesting interplay of needs. On all teams, there is a natural tension between:

- My needs
- Your needs
- Team needs

Only when individual team members can support team needs and often temper their own issues can teams be most effective.

A final issue is team composition. How well do all the team members fit into the overall team? This is a question of how team members manage their personal identity.

Membership/inclusion – Do they want to belong? Will they feel like an insider?

Influence/control – Will they be listened to? Will they be able to contribute? Will they let others contribute?

Mutual loyalty/commitment – How will they get along with other team members? Will they be able to develop a cooperative spirit?

Who's on the Team

Your team will be composed of two kinds of partners. You will have suppliers on your

team that are:

- Long-term – with whom you already have a relationship or where you are certain you want to have a relationship
- Short-term – these are suppliers with whom the relationship is transactional; it might never develop into long-term relationship

Regardless of the nature of the existing relationship, your team is composed of all the people responsible for executing the meeting including team members like:

- Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Hotel Sales
- Hotel Convention Services Manager
- Internal support (Marketing, HR, Training, etc)
- Catering Managers
- AV Companies
- Décor
- Production/Lighting
- Catering company
- Registration company
- Exhibit designers
- Airlines
- Teambuilding companies
- Incentive houses
- Name badge suppliers
- Ground transportation
- Trade Show Producer
- Entertainers
- Modeling agencies
- Other suppliers

Tips to Jump-start a Team

Ready to start your team off on the right foot? At the outset of a team, the role of a great team leader is to be a:

- Visionary – The role of a team leader is not simply reciting lists of specifications and requirements. Rather than being simply a conduit, a meeting manager is responsible for providing the vision and framework for the team. And communicating that vision in way that is understood and motivating.
- Master organizer of resources – A team leader will define the roles; determine the gaps and identify where one need to build a team.
- Influencer of organizational strategy – To increase value, a team leader must be able to synthesize information. They must take in information from the team, from above and from the sides. Daniel Pink in *A Whole New Mind* identifies six skills necessary for future success. One of the skills he calls "Symphony". He writes (page 126): "Symphony, as I call this aptitude, is the ability to put together the pieces. It is the capacity to synthesize rather than to

analyze, to see relationships between seemingly unrelated fields; to detect broad new patterns rather than to deliver specific answers; and to invent something new by combining elements nobody else thought to pair."

- Great balancer – A team leader understands that at different stages of team formation, teams require different "treatment" from a leader. One well-known team model is Dr Bruce Tuckman's Forming Storming Norming Performing model published in 1965.

Stage 1 - Forming

During this stage, the team has high dependence on the leader for guidance and direction. There may be little agreement on team aims other than those received from leader. Individual roles and responsibilities are unclear. The leader must be prepared to answer questions about the team's purpose, objectives and external relationships.

Stage 2 - Storming

During this stage, decisions don't come easily to the group. Clarity of purpose increases but uncertainties persist. The team needs to be focused on its goals to avoid becoming distracted by relationships and emotional issues. Compromises may be required to enable progress.

Stage 3- Norming

During this stage, agreement and consensus forms within the team, who respond well to facilitation by leader. Roles and responsibilities are clear and accepted. Big decisions are made by group agreement. Smaller decisions may be delegated to individuals or small teams within group. Commitment and unity is strong. The team may engage in fun and social activities. The team discusses and develops its processes and working style. There is general respect for the leader and leadership is more shared by the team.

Stage 4 - Performing

During this stage, the team is more strategically aware; the team knows clearly what it is doing and why. The team has a shared vision and is able to stand on its own feet with no interference or participation from the leader. There is a focus on over-achieving goals. The team has a high degree of autonomy. Disagreements occur but now they are resolved within the team positively. The team is able to work towards achieving the goal, and also to attend to relationship, style and process issues along the way. Team members look after each other. The team requires delegated tasks and projects from the leader.

Tips for Managing Great Teams

The management and development of the team (and its people) is ongoing and constant. Unfortunately, space will not allow me to go into great depth on managing teams. Listed below are the seven areas where I will provide tips and suggests. Each section will have a brief commentary and then provide short action-oriented ideas. Managing people is a challenge. For more information contact me about a more detailed article for your internal publications or for speaking opportunities.

The seven areas for managing great teams are:

1. Create the Purpose
2. Communicate
3. Demonstrate Leadership
4. Manage the Project
5. Orchestrate Progress
6. Share Leadership
7. Facilitate Transitions

Create the Purpose – To manage a great team, a team leader must build the common purpose. Begin with the end in mind to create the vision. There is a direct correlation between a clear purpose for the project and project success.

Other actions to take to create the purpose include:

- Identify stakeholders
- Build agreement with stakeholders about goals, objectives and outcomes
- Tie goals, objectives and outcomes to the organizational business plan
- Set the scope and boundaries

Communicate – Establishing the purpose and vision is the first purpose. Then it must be clearly and consistently communicated to the team members with enthusiasm. Strong communication manifests itself in:

- Establishing good communication patterns and strategies
- Communicating to the team members about the purpose and roles
- Communicating to team members about tasks, progress and accountability (I talk more about this under orchestrate commitment)
- Communicating to other stakeholders

People work more effectively when they understand the goals they are trying to achieve. A leader helps the team see the desired outcome of their efforts and help them set specific goals and milestones along the way. Since the early 1990's Gallup has been surveying employees about various aspects of their work. One basic question they survey is for responses to the question, "I know what is expected of me at work."

Rodd Wagner and James K. Harter in *The First Element of Great Managing: Making sure employees know what's expected of them is the foundation of management* adapted from *12: The Elements of Great Managing* (Gallup Press, December 2006) write: "Knowing what's expected" is more than a job description. It's a detailed understanding of how what one person is supposed to do fits in with what everyone else is supposed to do and how those expectations change when circumstances change. A good team, some say, is a lot like a great jazz band in which each player listens to the other instruments as he plays his own. The better they pay attention to the rest of the band and work their way into the music, the better the result."

A leader is also responsible to communicate up, sideways and outside the organization as necessary. Supplier teams, as a cross-functional team, are unique in that people in addition to being team members are also (likely) to function as leaders within their organizations.

Other actions to take to communicate effectively include:

- Respect and understand each others' "diversity"
- Practice effective dialogue instead of debate
- Identify and resolve group conflicts
- Involve members in clear problem-solving and decision making procedures
- Value synergism and interdependence
- Help teams manage the scope of their work
- Communicate your belief in the team concept and the team's potential

Manage the Project - A cross-organizational team needs to be well-managed; someone to put all the pieces together. A team leader or manager is like a coach for a sports team or, like Pink and Wagner and Harter allude to, a conductor.

Other actions to take to manage the project include:

- Balance task and process
- Plan thoroughly before acting
- Emphasize and support team goals
- Reward individual performance

Orchestrate Progress - Successful leaders orchestrate progress on a variety of fronts: with team members and the other stakeholders who are involved in the meeting.

Other actions to take to orchestrate progress include:

- Communicate on a regular schedule and be predictable (don't surprise team members)
- Gain commitment for support
- Create a practical system for agreeing and tracking each task the team does for a client
- Create accountability by indicating individual team members who are responsible and indicate deadlines
- Communicate in actionable terms

Demonstrate Leadership – A leader's role is to lead, not to do the work or make all of the decisions. Strong team leaders will communicate to the team what their role is and isn't. They help the team see how they are relying on their experience, knowledge and intellect. However, when the chips are down and a team member experiences

obstacles and road blocks and it is the team leader who will remove those roadblocks, find additional resources, and generally provide support. A team leader will be the most effective leader if they work to help the team succeed.

Other actions to take to demonstrate leadership effectively include:

- Build relationships for trust and respect
- Champion the overall goals
- Recognize and celebrate
- Raise the bar
- Practice continuous improvement

Share Leadership - Cross-organizational team members are often already leaders in their own departments or functions. The most successful cross-organizational teams share leadership roles to capitalize on the team's functional and organizational diversity. As a leader, it is therefore important to share leadership. One key way this can happen is by keeping quiet. A team leader can encourage input by avoiding being the first person to talk or voice an opinion on a subject.

Other actions to take to manage the project include:

- Allow team members to help develop strategies
- Allows team member to help identify tasks
- Encourage creativity around new ideas and processes

Facilitate Transitions - Cross-organizational teams seldom enjoy constant membership from beginning to end – this is especially true in executing meetings as supplier partners may be added or dropped off from the team. The transitions of team members can make or break a team. It is the team leader's responsibility to bring new team members up to speed. They will act at the forming stage of the team despite the balance of the team who may be norming or performing.

Other actions to take to facilitate transitions include:

- Create an energized work atmosphere for everyone
- Engage and motivate people through transitions
- Explain the team's culture and challenges
- Develop skills required to work in teams
- Model and explain collaborative skills
- Maximize everyone's contribution to the team

More Tips

1. Use referrals to find suppliers to add to your team.
2. Involve the operational staff (for example, the banquet manager) in your site visit.
3. Provide your conference services manager with as much information as soon as

- possible so he or she can share it with their team at the venue.
4. Involve the operational team into the planning process.
 5. See what additional assistance partners can provide. For example, many CVBs or hotels can provide collateral materials or create a website for group registration.
 6. Use preferred vendors but don't be exclusive. With short lead times, it's good to have a small pool of resources to consider.
 7. Use the internet and technology to your advantage to communicate with your team. For example, subscribe to an e-fax service so that you can always receive faxes via your email while traveling or on-site.
 8. Show a clear interest in people.
 9. View the responsibility for the team and its performance as being shared between the team leader and members. All the team, not just the leader, is responsible for the team's performance, processes and output.
-

The Payoff

When a person hoards control, they:

- Diminish the quality of the meeting
- Give management the impression that meetings are easy to coordinate
- Portray themselves as some one who lacks the ability to lead
- Forces themselves to focus on everything including things they don't like or aren't good at
- Restrict themselves from larger projects with larger budgets

The benefits to effectively building effective supplier teams include:

1. Increasing the meeting or program value
 2. Harnessing the power of collective resources
 3. Increasing credibility and visibility
 4. Creating the ability to evaluate, learn, refine
 5. Creating the ability to challenge the status quo or the way things have always been done
-

Freebies: Committees and eRFPs

Freebies: Special circumstances - Planning with a Committee

Teams form under many unique circumstances. You may find yourself responsible for executing a meeting using a committee structure. Three quick tips:

- Understand the underlying politics
- Take advantage of the varied expertise that may be represented on your committee
- Motivate don't demand – especially with volunteers

A reprint of a great article, Planning Meetings by Committee written by Louise Felsher from Meetings & Conventions September 2005, is available through High Beam Research at: <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-136650802.html>

More Freebies

Electronic RFPs (eRFPs) are an efficient way to gain information from potential sites and suppliers. If you would like to receive tips for creating great e-RFPs, contact me at sue@suetinnish.com ([eRFPs Tips](#))

Future T.I.M.E.

Come see me in action at the following conferences:

HSMAI's Affordable Meetings Mid-America
April 11-12, 2007
Navy Pier
Chicago, IL
[HSMAI's Affordable Meetings Mid-America](#) or
http://www.affordablemeetings.com/mid_america.html

HSMAI's Affordable Meetings West
Tuesday, June 19 & Wednesday, June 20, 2007
San Jose McEnery Convention Center
San Jose, CA
[HSMAI's Affordable Meetings West](#) or <http://www.affordablemeetings.com/west.html>

I love to see familiar faces in the audience. Please come and see me.

Virtual T.I.M.E. and T.I.M.E. Gone By

Many back issues are posted on my website at www.suetinnish.com. Or if the issue is not on the website, please e-mail us with the month and topic and we will send you a copy of that newsletter.

You can hear a podcast on the topic of Signage and Wayfinding (February's T.I.M.E. issue) between Jim Grillo, Here's Chicago.com and myself. Listen now!

If the toolbar does not appear, go to
<http://www.hereschicagoblog.com/blog/TipsfromthePros> to hear the podcast.
[Wayfinding Podcast at Here's Chicago.com blog](#)

Here's what is included in past issues ([Back Issue Request](#)):

2007

Chaos & Meetings (January)
Signage and Wayfinding (February)

2006

New Year's Resolutions (January), Generational Differences (February), Speaker Suggestions (March), Building Bridges (April), Positive Posters (May), Cruises (June), Moving Knowledge and Talent (July), Relaxing Meetings (August), Keynotes (September), Podcasting (October), Unique Meeting Venues (November), Deja View (December)

2005

New Year's Resolutions (January), Brainy Side of Food and Beverage (February), Sarbanes-Oxley and Meetings (March), Visual Aids (April), Experiential Teambuilding (May), Emotional Meetings (June), Press Conferences (July), Green Meetings (August), International Meetings (September), Value of Entertainment (October), Copyright Laws (November), Deja View III (December)

2004

Branding (January), Audio Visuals (February), Networking (March), Strategic Budgeting (April), Sensory Meetings (May), Board Meetings (June), Leadership (July), Barrier-free Meetings (August), Time Management & Meetings (September), The Travel Experience & Stress (October), Voting Techniques (November), Deja View II (December)

2003

Everyday Meetings (January), Diversity (February), Problem Solving (March), Marketing Pre- and Post- Event (April), Entertainment (May), Balance in Meetings and child care (June), Mobile Events (July), Last Minute Ideas (August), Training Meetings (September), Unique Venues (October), Data, Information and Number Crunching Privacy (November), Deja View (December)

2002

Teambuilding Options (January), Promotional Products (February), Multicultural Communication (March), Outdoor Learning (April), Budgets and ROK (May), Creativity (June), High Touch Technology (July), Economic and Business Cycles (August), Successful Environmental Factors/Conference Centers (September), Return on Investment (October), Incentive Meetings (November), Resource Recap (December)

2001

Sales, Award Presentations (January), Change and Communicating Change (February), Open Space Technology (March), Adult Learning Styles (April), Trade Shows (May), Emotional Intelligence (June), Presentation Tips (July), Ice Breakers (August), Facilitation (September), Humor (October), Customer Care (November), Slack (December)

2000

Teambuilding (May), Green Meetings (June), Values (July), Minimum/Minimal Meetings (August), Evaluations (October), Politics (November), and Toys (December)

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