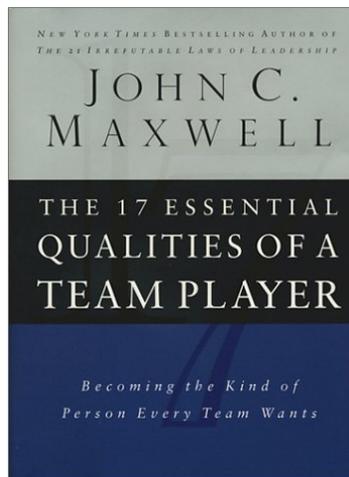


The 17 Essential Qualities Of A Team Player

Becoming The Kind Of Person Every Team Wants



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The Big Idea

A follow-up companion reader to The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork, here is a clear character profile of the ideal Team Player. Maxwell stresses some main qualities of a good team player: intentional, or she is focused on the big picture, relational, focused on others, selfless, willing to take a backseat for the good of the team, and tenacious – works hard to overcome obstacles, no matter what.

1. Adaptable

If you won't change for the team, the team may change you

Quincy Jones was the first African-American to hold a high position in a record company as executive. People around him always say he has a strong hunger to learn new things. From his early days as a musician, he strived to learn as many instruments as possible, then climbed up the ladder at Mercury Records, and from there went into producing films, shows for television, and publishing the magazine Vibe. He has worked with the world's top talents including Michael Jackson and Ray Charles. In all his endeavors, he adapts to the person and the situation to create a win-win all around.

Characteristics of team players with adaptability:

- They are highly teachable. This means they are willing to learn and adapt to new things.
- They are emotionally secure. They do not feel threatened by a new addition to the team, or a change in the way things are done.
- They are creative. Really creative people don't fear doing something different.
- They are service-minded individuals. They focus less on themselves and think of the good of the team.

How do we become more adaptable?

- Get into the habit of learning. Try to learn something new everyday.
- Reevaluate your role on the team. Maybe you could fill another role better than your current one.
- Think outside the lines. Look for unconventional solutions. Be creative and resourceful when faced with a challenge.

2. Collaborative

Working together precedes winning together

Collaboration is the key word when it comes to meeting challenges as a team. Cooperation is merely working together agreeably, but collaborating means working together more aggressively. Every team player must bring something more to the table, and not just put in his minimum required work.

A collaborative team player needs to change in four key areas:

Perception

A team player must see his teammates as collaborators, not as competitors. Their skills and talents must complement one another, rather than be made to compete against each other. Competition within the team will only hurt the team.

Attitude

Be supportive, not suspicious, of your teammates. Always assume another person's motives are good unless proven otherwise. If you trust people, it naturally occurs that you will treat them better, and a collaborative spirit will grow within your team.

Focus

Concentrate on the team, not yourself

Think of progress as a relay race, where you must pass the baton onto your next teammate. Do not ask "What's in it for me?" but rather "What does this do for the team?"

Results

Create victories through multiplication

Remarkable results can be achieved when you harness the skills and talents of all your individual team members. Several heads are always better than one.

To be a collaborative team player...

- Think win-win-win.
- Complement others and their unique gifts.
- Take yourself out of the picture. Stop promoting yourself and ask how the team would do if you were not in it, propose ideas that will not involve your participation but will promote other teammates.

3. Committed

There are no halfhearted champions

Jonas Salk, inventor of the polio vaccine, was so committed to his research that he not only tested the new vaccine on healthy volunteers, he had himself, his wife, and his three sons inoculated as well. He was so dedicated to helping humankind fight the polio virus, he did not patent the vaccine so the whole world would be able to benefit from it.

- Commitment usually is discovered in the midst of adversity. Committed people don't surrender easily.
- Commitment does not depend on gifts or abilities.
- Commitment is the result of choice, not circumstance.
- Commitment lasts when it's based on values. If it's something you believe in, it's easier to keep.

How does a teamplayer improve his level of commitment?

- Tie your commitments to your values. Make a list of personal and professional commitments. Articulate your core values and then compare your lists. Commit yourself to living your values.
- Take a risk. Any commitment involves risk, at least you won't have any regrets and "what ifs"
- Evaluate your teammates' commitment. You can't expect commitment from uncommitted people.

4. Communicative

A team is many voices with a single heart

"Remember the Titans" is a film that celebrates the importance of communicating and getting along as a team. It is a true story of one of the first Southern football teams to have both black and white players on the same high school team. The story tells of how players learned to overcome deep racial prejudices, for the good of the team. Up to this day the people of Alexandria, Virginia speak proudly of the football team of 1971.

Communicative team players...

- Do not isolate themselves from others.
- Make it easy for teammates to communicate with them.
- Follow the twenty-four hour rule. This means never allowing a conflict to go unresolved for 24 hours. The same way many married couples don't go to sleep without talking about a problem first.
- Give attention to potentially difficult relationships.
- Follow up important communication in writing. That's why there are marriage vows and business contracts. Both parties must have a clear idea what is expected of each.

How do we improve communication?

- Be candid. Openness fosters trust. Speak truthfully but kindly and respectfully to your teammates.
- Be quick. Don't sit on things. Address potential issues at the first opportunity.
- Be inclusive. Do not keep information from others, keep your teammates informed at all times.

5. Competent

If you can't, your team won't

Competent does not mean simply having adequate skills to perform a job. It means the individual must be highly qualified to do the job well.

Competent people:

- Are committed to excellence
- Never settle for mediocre. They always do their best.
- Pay attention to detail.
- Perform with consistency.

How do we improve our level of competence?

- Focus yourself professionally. Select an area of specialization, it should be something you are naturally good at, and it should be something you enjoy.
- Sweat the small stuff. Push yourself as hard as you can.
- Give more attention to implementation. Putting ideas on paper is one thing, implementing them on schedule is quite another.

6. Dependable

Teams go to Go-To players

Christopher Reeve had everything a man could want in 1995. He was a superior athlete, horseman, sailor, pilot, skier, and scuba diver. He had a good marriage and three wonderful children. He had a home in beautiful Westchester County, New York. He was good-looking,

and an accomplished actor with a long resume of feature films and plays under his belt, including the blockbuster "Superman".

On May 27, 1995, Christopher Reeve was thrown from his horse during a competition, and as a result became paralyzed from the neck down. The accident only made his marriage stronger. He understands the need for dependable people on his team: his wife, son, and an army of medical professionals tend to his needs everyday. It is this dependable quality that is required of any team player. Teammates need to know they can count on each other when times are tough.

The essence of dependability:

- Pure motives. If there are no hidden agendas the team will make progress.
- The ability to take on responsibility. The team player must want the ball and be able to sink it in the basket and score.
- Sound thinking and good judgment, when it counts.
- Consistent contribution, no matter how tired, overwhelmed or distracted, you must be able to deliver.

How do we improve our dependability?

Check your motives.

Commit goals to paper. Do your goals benefit the teams you are part of? How do your motives affect your family, fellow volunteers, and colleagues? Align personal priorities with those of your team.

Discover what your word is worth.

Ask five teammates "When I say I intend to do something, how reliable am I? Rate me on a scale of 1 to 10." If you rate lower than a 9, start writing down your commitments and track your follow-through.

Find someone to hold you accountable.

Having a partner you respect can help you stick to your word.

7. Disciplined

Where there's a will, there's a win

Discipline is doing what you really don't want to do, so that you can do what you really want to do. It means paying the price so you can have the reward later. To become the kind of players teams want, people must develop discipline in three areas.

- Disciplined thinking. Keep your mind active, and always think about the right things.
- Disciplined emotions. Either you master your emotions, or be mastered by them.
- Disciplined actions. Action separates the winners from the losers. When people act on what they must do, it is for the benefit of all those on the team.

How do we become more disciplined team players?

By strengthening our work habits.

School teaches us to do our homework when it ought to be done, whether we like it or not. Do something necessary but unpleasant every day to keep train yourself and learn to be more disciplined.

By taking on challenges.

Take on a bigger task than you are accustomed to. As you keep taking on bigger and bigger tasks, you will find yourself capable of more than you imagined.

By taming your tongue.

Hold your tongue when you feel like overreacting emotionally. Give yourself some time to cool down and think rationally.

8. Enlarging

Adding value to teammates is invaluable

Team members love a player who is able to inspire them to become more successful. Team players who enlarge their teammates share common characteristics:

Enlargers value their teammates.

People can tell when you have faith in them. Their performance reflects the expectations of those whom they respect.

Enlargers value what their teammates value.

They know what their teammates hope and aspire for.

Enlargers add value to their teammates.

The enlarger looks for special talents and gifts in others and helps bring those out for the benefit of the team.

Enlargers make themselves more valuable.

You cannot give what you do not have. If you want to increase the ability of a teammate, work on making yourself better.

How do we become Enlargers?

- Believe in others before they believe in you.
- Serve others before they serve you.
- Add value to others before they add value to you. Point out your teammates' strengths, encourage and motivate them out of their comfort zone, but within their gift zone.

9. Enthusiastic

Your heart is the source of energy for the team

The Harley-Davidson company has one thing you can find in all of its employees: passion. When the company was experiencing difficulty in 1981, 13 senior executives bought the company from AMF, and worked hard to turn it around, to return it to its former post-war glory. The employees who remained were committed, enthusiastic and had a profitable relationship with management. Today Harley-Davidson makes net sales of \$2.9 billion a year.

It was the enthusiasm of the owners, the employees, and the Harley-Davidson customers that saved the company. People who bring an enthusiastic attitude to teamwork often...

- Take responsibility for their own enthusiasm. Successful people know attitude is a choice. Choose to be a more positive person.
- Act their way into feeling. The only way to begin is simply to begin!
- Believe in what they are doing.
- Spend time with enthusiastic people. Enthusiasm is contagious.

How to improve your enthusiasm:

- Show a sense of urgency. Give yourself deadlines and be a bit more ambitious.
- Be willing to do more. Go the extra mile with your teammates.

- Strive for excellence. Nothing breeds enthusiasm like a job well done.

10. Intentional

Make every action count

Being intentional means working with a strong sense of purpose. Successful individuals are never scattered and haphazard. They have a clear reason why they are doing what they are doing. For a team to be successful, it needs intentional people who are focused and productive, the kind of people who can make every action count.

To live with intentionality,

- Have a purpose worth living for. You only need one good strong reason.
- Know your strengths and weaknesses. If you are self-aware and know what you can do well, you will direct your time and energy more intentionally.
- Prioritize responsibilities. Once you've figured out why you are here, it's easier to figure out the what and the when.
- Learn to say No. You can't accomplish much if you don't focus.
- Commit yourself to long-term achievement.

We all have a limited amount of time on this planet, so the best use of our time is to live with purpose, or a clear sense of direction that can bring a life that is full and well-lived.

"He who has a "why" to live for can bear almost any "how". –Friedrich Nietzsche

11. Mission conscious

The Big Picture is coming in loud and clear

Mary Hays, better known as "Molly Pitcher" was a hero like many others during the American Revolution against the British in 1778. She, like many army wives, had responsibilities during the war such as fetching water for the troops, cooking, and caring for injured soldiers. Her sense of mission was so strong that even when she saw her husband die on the battlefield, she took no time to grieve and immediately took his place behind the cannon. For her actions in battle General George Washington issued her a warrant as a noncommissioned officer.

The four qualities of mission-conscious team players are the ff:

They know where the team is going.

Mary Hays knew the fight for freedom could not stop, therefore she did not even stop to grieve because the future of the American nation was at stake.

They let the leader of the team lead.

Any time a team member hinders the actions of the leader, the whole team will be hindered in its goals.

They place team accomplishment ahead of their own.

Teamwork requires sacrifice. Mary Hays didn't allow herself to grieve for her husband.

They do whatever is necessary to achieve the mission.

Always keeping the team's mission in mind makes it easier to not get bogged down by the details of responsibilities. Mary Hays knew although her job was menial, fetching water for the frontlines, she knew it was important in the overall scheme of things.

How to improve mission consciousness...

Check to see if your team focuses on its mission. Do you have a mission statement? If not, let the team create one. Examine whether the goals of the team match its mission.

Find ways to keep the mission in mind.
Put the mission statement in writing and place it where everyone can see it everyday.

Contribute your best as a team member.
This may mean taking a behind-the-scenes role, like Mary Hays, but when necessary a team player rises to the occasion when called to the frontlines of battle.

12. Prepared

Preparation can mean the difference between winning and losing

To be a more prepared team, think about the following:

Assessment

Examine where your team is headed, and where you are now. To narrow the gap and make progress, the team will have to pay the price by preparing rigorously.

Alignment

You have to work in the right direction. Tons of preparation in the wrong direction is a complete waste of team effort and time.

Attitude

Diligent people prepare and do their homework. A positive attitude about yourself, your teammates and your situation will bring success.

Action

Courage has no greater ally than preparation, and fear has no greater enemy.

To improve preparedness...

Become a process thinker.

Create a system or list to walk you through the process and break tasks down ahead of time.

Do more research.

Become more familiar with the tools of your trade and become an expert at using them.

Learn from your mistakes.

The best preparation is a person's own experience. Study and review your mistakes from your last big project and determine what you can do differently next time you face a similar situation.

"You can claim to be surprised once, after that, you're unprepared."

13. Relational

If you get along, others will go along

Teams want people who are relational. Look for the following in your team relationships:

Respect

You must expect to earn it and give it to others, simply because they are human beings. It is the golden rule. Respect is best earned on difficult ground.

Shared experiences

A team becomes more cohesive when it bonds and shares experiences together over time. It takes time to build a solid team.

Trust

Trust sustains and feeds relationships. It is essential to all good relationships.

Reciprocity

Give and take is the foundation of any team relationship. If one person is always the giver and the other the receiver, the relationship will eventually disintegrate.

Mutual enjoyment

Just the joy of being together as a team can turn unpleasant tasks into positive experiences. A husband willingly accompanies his wife on a lot of errands because he wants to spend time with her. The wife gets her errands done, and the husband benefits by sharing time with her.

To better relate to your teammates...

- Focus on others instead of yourself.
- Ask the right questions. Ask your teammates about their goals and desires. Listen carefully.
- Share common experiences. Spend time not only working together but unwinding and having social gatherings.
- Make others feel special. Give them your full attention, genuine compliments, and recognize them in front of their peers, and family members. Show that you care about people and they will naturally connect with you.

14. Self-improving**To improve the team, improve yourself**

The corporate objectives of Nokia, or the “Nokia Way” are: customer satisfaction, respect for the individual, achievement, and continuous learning. These are core values that Jorma Ollila, the CEO and president recognizes and practices. He knows the true value of the company lies in its human resources. He is an example to all the employees because he constantly improves himself. Ollila has earned three master’s degrees –in political science, economics, and engineering. Everyone at Nokia is encouraged to develop themselves to their full potential to improve their performance.

People who are constantly improving themselves make three processes an ongoing cycle in their lives:

Preparation

Self-improving team players ask themselves what they can learn everyday. They are better prepared to meet challenges and handle them.

Contemplation

“If you study the lives of truly great individuals who have influenced the world, you will find that in virtually every case, they spent considerable amounts of time alone –contemplating, meditating, listening.” Time alone is essential to self-improvement. You need time alone to sharpen your personal vision and plan how you can improve in the future.

Application

A time comes when you have to start applying what you’ve learned, and becoming your vision. You need to change for the better and stop waiting around for “the right time”.

To become self-improving...

- Become highly teachable. Ask questions and adopt the attitude of a learner, not an expert.

- Plan your progress. Plan what books you will read, who will you interview and find learning moments wherever you can everyday.
- Value self-improvement above self-promotion. Make your next career move based on how it will improve you personally, not on how it will enhance you financially.

15. Selfless

There is no “I” in team

As a team member, how do you cultivate an attitude of selflessness?

- Be generous.
- Avoid internal politics.
- Display loyalty.
- Value interdependence over independence

To become more selfless...

- Promote someone other than yourself. Find positive things to say about others, especially to their superiors, family, and close friends.
- Take a subordinate role.
- Give secretly, without the other team members knowing. There is pleasure in giving to someone who cannot repay you.

16. Solution-oriented

Make a resolution to find the solution

Your personality type, upbringing and personal history affect how solution-oriented you are naturally. Anyone can become solution-oriented. Solution oriented people recognize these truths:

- Problems are a matter of perspective.
- All problems are solvable.
- Problems either stop us or stretch us. The choice is yours to let a problem stretch your potential or stop your progress.

To make yourself a solution-oriented team player...

- Refuse to give up.
- Refocus your thinking.
- Rethink your strategy. Brainstorm absurd ideas. Break rules. Do whatever it takes to generate fresh ideas and approaches to a problem.
- Repeat the process.

17. Tenacious

Never, never, never quit

Being tenacious means:

- Giving all that you've got, 100% not more than you have.
- Working with determination, not waiting on destiny. Tenacious people do not rely on luck, fate, or destiny for their success. When conditions become difficult, they keep working.
- Quitting when the job is done, not when you're tired. Push yourself beyond what you think you are capable of.

To improve your tenacity:

- Work harder or smarter. Put in additional hours. Plan your time to be more efficient.
- Stand for something. Write down how your day-to-day work relates to your overall purpose.
- Make your work a game. Create a friendly competition to motivate team players.