

10 Traits of The Indispensable Team Member

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If you were building a team and could hand-pick its members, what are the key traits or attributes you would look for?

What are the behaviors and actions necessary for them to perform at their best and the team to perform at its best? In other words, what makes a team member valuable and indispensable?

This article reveals a set of key behaviors and actions that every leader would like to see in each of their team members. Of course, members cannot be expected to know already or practice these tenets. These behaviors and actions must be revealed as the team is forming and reinforced throughout the project.

Praise should generously be bestowed on those members who demonstrate these tenets notably. But members not performing to an acceptable level will need coaching and nurturing so they can become proficient as well.

Let's now look at the behaviors and actions of the indispensable team member.

1. Fully Participate

Voluntarily speak up in meetings and get-togethers. Contribute ideas, even if they may be unconventional—many times thinking out of the box brings the team to the best solution. Your opinion is important and can help identify or move an issue closer to resolution. Be forthcoming to both ask and answer questions.

2. Be Truthful

Be honest and timely when revealing your progress and issues. When you make a mistake, admit to it and take accountability. When you are faced with making a commitment, make only good commitments.

3. Be Reliable

Meet your commitments. Always do what you say you are going to do and when you said you would do it. A team is only as strong as its weakest link—don't be a weak link. Consistently provide quality work. Demonstrate personal pride in fulfilling your commitments.

4. Maintain A Positive Attitude

Adopt a can-do spirit. Be thankful for and even look forward to the challenges and opportunities before you. Place a constructive view on issues—seek out the sun during cloudy and stormy moments. Don't take or make things personal.

5. Focus On Solutions

The most professionally mature members do not engage in finger-pointing and the blame game. Instead, they are busy focusing on solving issues and moving forward. Be a problem solver. Recognize that we all make mistakes and that we need to learn from them and not repeat the same mistakes.

6. Practice Being Proactive

Don't just focus on the task at hand, also look at the tasks coming up to help ensure you and your team's readiness. Make it a standard practice to think one or more steps ahead.

7. Share Knowledge

Yes, knowledge is power. But the best performers give it away—they don't hoard it. They recognize the benefit of this behavior in strengthening the team and raising their own value and reputation in the process.

8. Demonstrate Personal Initiative

Practice self-reliance when appropriate. Require minimal leadership. Ensure you understand your assignment and domain of responsibility. If you are unsure about taking action, then seek appropriate counsel. Make things happen.

9. Practice Continuous Improvement

Seek ways to continually improve your skills as well as the processes and procedures that you and your team engage in. Become and remain the subject matter expert in your chosen domain. Be open and accepting of constructive criticism. Don't just correct a problem; seek to correct the process that allowed the problem to occur. Encourage feedback on your performance. Adapt to change.

10. Promote Team Success

Place the team first. See yourself as there to serve your team to the best of your ability. Show that you care about the welfare of the team and its success. Look out for the team as if its success is defined by your actions each and every day. Look for ways to make the team and its leader look good.

Shared Values

This list could be a great starting point for team discussion as each trait is described and examples shared to reinforce the benefit to each member and the team as a whole. Of course, other traits can be added and discussed. I cannot overstate the importance of a team embracing a set of traits—shared values—that can serve to bond and strengthen the team members along with their journey.

In Closing

Team members who are tenacious and diligent in demonstrating these behaviors and actions will serve as outstanding role models for other members. There's nothing better than an example to inspire and spur the members of a team to be their best.

Almost all team members want to perform well and to support the success of the team. They want to mimic behavior that will help the team and, in the process, make them look good as well. If you are a project manager or other leader, don't overlook your personal duty to set a consistent example for your team members.

Now, go become your imagined self!

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