

“What’s going to work? ... Teamwork!” That’s the song I heard from my 7- and 4-year-old girls while they were cleaning up their toys the other day. At a very early age, children learn the components of teamwork from parents, teachers and coaches. As kids, we join scouts, soccer teams or clubs that double as learning opportunities and fun activities. We are instructed to share, do our best and fulfill our role as part of a larger group.

Homeowners associations are unlike any other team on the planet. The team is made up of empowered volunteers, paid contractors, community managers and dues-paying homeowners. Building a team with a group of people from diverse backgrounds, purposes and objectives can be very difficult. However, if the team can bond over what they have in common rather than where they differ, great things can be achieved.

teamwork

Applications for Associations

By Matt Davenport

So how do we bring a group of individuals together and focus on building a community through teamwork? In the book, *Team Work: What Must Go Right/What Can Go Wrong* by Carl E. Larson and Frank M. J. LaFasto, seven characteristics of effective teams are listed:

1. **Establish a Clear, Elevating Goal.** Clear understanding of a goal and the belief in that goal embodies a worthwhile and important result. If the goal becomes unfocused and politicized, it will not be met.
2. **Results Driven Structure.** Every team member must know his or her role. A healthy structure does not confuse effort with results. The team should be structured to promote trust, allow creative initiative and reinforce goal clarity and desired results.

3. **Competent Team Members.** It is vital to have people on your team that are best equipped to achieve the team’s objectives. The board members, committee members, community manager and contractors must be able to fulfill their role.

4. **Unified Commitment.** Everybody on the team must buy into the vision and put their whole self behind it. If there is not commonality of purpose, it is impossible to build an effective team. It is essential that team members believe what they are doing is important and worthwhile.

5. **Collaborative Climate.** Teamwork succeeds most effectively when team members are enthusiastically unified in the pursuit of a common objective rather than individual agendas. Trust, honesty and integrity allow team members to stay problem focused and avoid the danger of politicizing the process.

6. **Standards of Excellence.** Casting a vision of excellence will affect the attitude of the team. Mediocritry has its consequences; Paul Harvey may have said it best when he remarked, “It’s the best of the loudest and the loudest of the best.” Team performance is ultimately dependent upon how each individual executes assigned responsibilities.

7. **Principled Leadership.** Who is the leader? Often times, leadership is hard to identify in an association setting. Effective leaders establish a vision, create change, and unleash talent. Effective leaders are those who lay down their ego in favor of the team’s goals. They allow team members to take an active part in shaping the team’s effort, to make decisions and to make choices. Most importantly, a good leader allows the team to be involved in a way that makes a difference in their life and the life of the team. Identify the leader and the rest of the team will benefit!

Forming a team requires foresight that unites all parties. Don’t run away from conflict. When human beings come together in any way, shape or form, there will be conflict. In fact, all great teams go through conflict that ultimately galvanizes the group for future challenges. Trust and communication are the central pieces that will sustain the team members through the team building process. Now that you are finally engaged and excited about those on your team, think bigger and don’t be surprised by what can be accomplished.

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