

Solid Relationships

One of the biggest misperceptions found in the study of teams and teamwork is the belief that to work and communicate effectively, team members must be best friends. Not true. In fact, the diversity of skill, experience, and knowledge needed to effectively and creatively divide the task almost rules out high levels of friendship, which is most often based on common interests. Speaking of diversity, we find that the stronger the differences on a team, the more effective it can be. A team whose members look at the world through the different lenses of function, gender, ethnicity, personality, experience, and perspective has a definite advantage over a more homogenous group. The diverse group will be able to surround problems, decisions and other team issues with a brighter cooperative understanding. They will see more creative solutions if they can channel their differences into synergy rather than strife. Because diversity provides plenty of opportunity for discord, conflict, and communication breakdowns, especially among teams that must accomplish their tasks in complex, high velocity, dynamic environments, their differences must be offset by trust, acceptance, respect, courtesy, and a generous amount of understanding.