



The Lord, who satisfies with good things (Psalm 103:5), has given a very good thing to us in teammates. It is not just satisfying to have help in tackling the list of tasks but deeply soul satisfying to stand with a brother and sister in the midst of trusting God with the mission.

**April Otero**  
*International Student Ministries*



One benefit I have experienced as the result of being part of a ministry team is the opportunity to be reminded how much I need others. Teaming helps me to appreciate the gifting and contribution of others while allowing me to join in with my God given design.

**Dexter Johnson**  
*Military Ministry*



We love being on a team. After 17 years of ministering alone on campuses, we transitioned to being on a team at Penn State. Teams bring out the best and the worst in us and others. Teams are a means that God uses to sanctify us. Teams bring a fuller picture of the Body with different gifts and personalities.

**Dave & Cathy Bowman**  
*Collegiate*



Working with people day in and day out has forced me to face weaknesses I might have been able to ignore or hide working on my own. On the other hand, it's those same teammates that God has used to affirm my strengths and significantly encourage me to take more steps of faith.

**Dave Sasaki**  
*Collegiate*



Moving to a campus and joining a team has been a significant blessing. I have experienced the benefits of leaning on the strengths of others, sharing heavy loads, and no longer feeling alone on campus. I have also been encouraged by our desire to not consider ourselves fully funded until our whole team is funded, moving us to bless, serve and pray for one another. Working as one functional unit is so much more effective than an individual!

**Korryn Shoge**  
*Collegiate*

## navs speak out about their teams

*Teams bring out the best and the worst in us and others. Teams are a means that God uses to sanctify us.*

*UpFront* is the newsletter of The Navigators' People Resources Team, copyright © 2015 by The Navigators, P.O. Box 6000, Colorado Springs, CO 80934; (719) 594-2555. Brad Hillman, PRT director (brad.hillman@navigators.org); Cynthia Hagen, editor in chief (cynthia.hagen@navigators.org); Jill Brown, editor; Steve Learned, designer (steve@zignguy.com). All Scripture quotations from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise indicated.



real talk about real stuff . . . upfront



Fall 2015 • Volume 9, Issue 3

## the often-missed factor in successful teams

by Brad Hillman



*Brad Hillman*

If you've ever been part of a team—and who hasn't?—you probably remember at least two such experiences. The most outstanding success, and the most painful failure.

What made the difference?

Leadership? Clear vision? Understanding your Myers-Briggs temperament type? Or maybe you've read Jim Collins's book, *Good to Great*, and think the answer is to "get the right people on the bus."

Yes and no. Let me introduce you to Alex Pentland, who says that while these factors are indeed critical, all of them combined carry less weight than one often-missed success factor: the "social sensitivity" of the team members. And this MIT professor has quite a bit of research to back up his claim.

His study explains social sensitivity, or skills of social interaction, by describing how the very best teams interact in meetings.

1. They generate a lot of ideas in short contributions. No one goes on at great length.
2. They engage in "dense interactions," with group members constantly alternating between advancing their own ideas and responding to the others' contributions. Super-short comments such as "good," "right," or "what?" signal their reaction to an idea's value, good or bad.
3. Everyone contributes ideas and reactions, taking turns more or less equally. This ensures a wide diversity of ideas.

Pentland says these three elements of group interaction are more important for a successful team than individual intelligence, technical skills, members' personalities, and anything else you can think of.

I found plenty to mine from this study. But now let's look at it from a higher plane. As followers of Christ who are committed to his Word, does the principle of social sensitivity still hold such a high place in our teams' success? I believe it does. I think this is what the Holy Spirit is getting at in verses that invite us to love, care for, listen to, respect, and accept one another.

I'd be interested in your experience, but many of the Nav teams I've led, observed, or been a part of have not made this a high priority. These teams valued social sensitivity, but it definitely ranked below ministry techniques, leadership skills, investigative Bible study methods, and making the mission memorable.

*What factors made your past teams fail or succeed?*



©istock.com/PeopleImages

**When it comes to putting Trinitarian relationships before ministry activities, skills, or techniques, what does that look like in your ministry?**



**2015/16 PRT SEMINARS IN COLORADO SPRINGS**

**Personal Contribution Assessment**

- January 26-28, 2016
- April 26-28, 2016
- July 12-14, 2016
- October 25-27, 2016

**Sabbatical Orientation Workshop**

- February 1-4, 2016
- July 25-28, 2016

**Relational Healing Seminar**

- February 11 & 12, 2016

**Becoming One Retreat**

- February 12-14, 2016
- August 19-21, 2016

For more information call (719) 594-2555.


Over the years, I've seen a shift in my views. I now sense that, more than bigger numbers or greater mastery of skills, what God's after is relationship—my relationship with him and with others. I believe this is akin to what Pentland refers to as social sensitivity. And I would say the very best model of skillful social interaction or team is what exists between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Consider how they relate and how they invite mankind to join them in their relationship. Is there any better team than the Trinity? Is there a better example of social interaction than Trinitarian relationships?

Recently, I spoke with a man on collegiate staff who shares these values. I asked him, "When it comes to putting Trinitarian relationships before ministry activities, skills, or techniques, what does that look like in your ministry?"

Please understand, my friend isn't against skills or training in discipleship. Far from it! But he's seen that collegiate staff are often running on empty at the end of a summer training program. From there, they plunge into two weeks of the most emotionally draining activity a Navigator faces (fundraising), then arrive back at campus just in time to start "Holy Week," that frantic time of surveys, knocking on freshman doors, and hosting "get to know us" events for students.

My friend, whose target is unchurched students, told me he would often take his team away on a retreat during "Holy Week." They had no formal training during that time. In their meetings, each person was invited to share their story for one hour, and then others could ask questions.

He concluded that his staff team understood one another at a much deeper level, and they had meaningful insights into the other team members' struggles, hurts, gifting, and desires. They also experienced acceptance from their teammates when they shared. This deeper relationship empowered their "skills of social interaction." It enabled them to more deeply trust and relate to one another. This made for a team that was more like Christ, and—my friend believes—more attractive to unchurched students.

I'm not suggesting we don't do STPs, fundraising, or "Holy Week" on campus. I am suggesting that spiritually successful teams do more than give lip service to the importance of deepening relationships and inviting others to become more like Christ. These teams also schedule activities that reflect this commitment. 

**Here are some questions to get you thinking more deeply about this often-missed success factor:**

1. Can you point to specific things your team has done to increase the social sensitivity (Trinitarian relating) of the team members?
2. How would a deeper understanding of your teammates make you a better team member?
3. Do you feel that your teammates have a reasonably deep awareness of your story, its hurts and disappointments, doubts, successes and hope?
4. If you lead a team, would you say your team senses that the gospel in them is more a priority than the gospel going out to more students? Would you be willing to ask them in a manner they would feel safe to be honest?
5. What priority does Trinitarian relating have on your team?

I learned about Pentland's fascinating and thorough study in an article by Geoff Colvin, Senior Editor-at-Large for *Fortune Magazine* (<http://tinyurl.com/geoff-colvin>).



**lessons in team**

by Al Engler, Nav Neighbors Director

We called our leadership team the Compass Group because its main purpose was to set a direction for the diverse Navigator ministries and missions across Seattle. We were four men who didn't know one another well, but who shared a passion for advancing the gospel in our city.

The question was how to begin?

I'm not sure which of us suggested this—I think it was the Holy Spirit's idea—but we decided to take some time to hear one another's life stories. I'm not talking about a short testimony here. I'm talking about spending several hours, really hearing one another, asking questions, and probing for the work of God in our lives. We spent two days on this. We heard about amazing miracles of God, we heard about deep failure, we exposed our wounds and our scars and our hopes and our fears.


I learned how Dave had failed in college and the fear he felt as he traveled home to tell his parents. He talked openly of how that incident had marked him. I learned about Pete's resistance to various efforts of The Navigators to recruit him to staff, because he wanted to "make it work" in the workplace. I heard about how God had powerfully, specifically, and directly called him from a major chemical company to be a missionary to the U.S.A. I heard about how Tom had spent an entire year sick and without enough energy to even get out of bed, and how that experience taught him the Lord was enough. I told of Iris' and my calling, the generational sin in my family, and how both Iris and I were the first to trust Christ in our respective families. I unpacked how that background marked us with a deep love and heart for those outside the church.

At the end of the two days, I felt that I really knew these men. We had put relational stakes down deep into the bedrock of our shared humanity and our mutual relationship with Christ.

Over the years, we would sometimes disagree on a direction or have a different take on a particular issue. But the sense of brotherhood never waned. That time taken at the beginning was as important as anything we did as a team, and it has impacted every team I've been a part of since.

This past April, our Nav Neighbors leadership team met for the first time. We're a new mission and had much that we needed to accomplish in the few days we had together. Yet I decided we needed to take the entire first day to listen to one another's stories. So, we again delved deep into those stories. We exposed our scars and our healings, our hopes and our dreams.

We became a team. Now we'll see what God does with that.

**Editors Note:** *Several years ago, I had the privilege of meeting with Navigators in Seattle, where Al's team was. What I found surprised me. I knew Seattle was a difficult place, but the staff came across as vibrant, content, and energized. Veteran staff from one mission shepherded younger staff from others. Each used their gifts and skills well to accomplish the mission. The community as a whole glorified God by the way they lived and teamed together. I've often wondered how Al and his team brought this about, which is why I asked him to write this testimony. My hope is we can learn from his experience and create team wherever God plants us.* 

**We had put relational stakes down deep into the bedrock of our shared humanity and our mutual relationship with Christ.**



©istock.com/monkeybusinessimages