

*This shift takes us
from seeing people
through the mission
to seeing the
mission through the
people of God has
called together for
His purposes.*

teams that ~~don't~~ work

by Darin Durand, Ellen Susman, and Jim Mock

"We had a 50/50 chance of survival. If more thought had been given prior to our team's formation, a plan could have been prepared for how we would work best together...."

Several years ago, a friend wrote this in an open letter about the frustrations and hard lessons he'd learned about ministry teams. Do you detect a note of bitterness? The joys of working with a good team leave a deep and lasting legacy, but so do the wounds of a bad experience.

Much of the People Resources Team's work revolves around ministry teams—equipping them, resolving relational issues, helping people find their right fit. And, of course, the PRT itself is a team. Our ideas and experiences could easily make up a whole shelf of books, but we've distilled them down to three main points that are crucial for building healthy teams that will stay motivated and effective.

We hope you find these useful for yourself and possibly for discussion with your team.

By God's design, living and working in cooperation with others is an inescapable part of life. Don't minimize its significance.

Unless you're shipwrecked on a desert island, you'll never live in complete independence or isolation. All of us are continuously engaged in "teams" on many fronts: our homes, communities, schools, places of work, and ministries. We're created for relationship just as the triune God, in whose image we're made, lives in uninterrupted relationship as Father, Son, and Spirit. By His design, we can experience greater fulfillment and accomplish more if we do life together.

Living and working in cooperation with others is also part of the Christian life. Reflecting God's kingdom in our broken world demands unusual love and unity. In John 17:23, Jesus prays, "May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that You sent me and have loved them even as You have loved me."

Trust is the only effective "glue" for keeping a team together.

Because we live in a broken world, our own hurts can make us cautious and self-protective. When we keep a safe distance from each other, our team is united by nothing stronger than a shared commitment to an outward agenda. This kind of commitment is like the paste we used in kindergarten—we'll work together for a while because we're loyal to the mission and want to keep our job, but our desire to sacrifice will soon dry up and the team will fall apart. What we need is the "crazy glue" of growing in knowledge and trust of each other.

As a ministry team focuses on advancing the gospel, it's often easier to channel our efforts outward and ignore what God wants to do among us. We need times of



Darin Durand



Ellen Susman



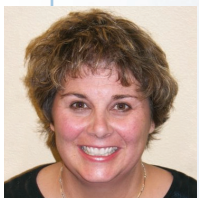
Jim Mock



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prayer, community, and the Gospel

by Cynthia Hagen, People
Resources Team



Imagine you knew you had only a few hours to live.

What would you do? Who would you want to talk with?

Most would want

to be with those they care about, communicating treasured thoughts and feelings. My favorite passage of scripture records our Savior's last intimate conversation on earth, speaking with the Person who was most important to Him about what was closest to His heart.

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.
John 17:20-23

Jesus' mission statement, as recorded in Luke 4, was to proclaim "the favorable year of the Lord," to free the captives and heal the brokenhearted. He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19). His last prayer, however, deals with none of these. Here He prays for His disciples—not that they would be leaders, missionaries or teachers, but that they would be one "as We are one," so they might represent God to the world and the world

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teams that don't work

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being and growing together, as in Acts 2:46-47: "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

The first generation church was no more perfect than we are. Personality clashes, wacky opinions, differing priorities—they had it all, even as we do. But because their basic trust was in God, they could trust Him with their human relationships, which in turn opened the way for a powerful and clearly demonstrated gospel.

The PRT uses a relational covenant that encourages us to deal with conflict quickly and directly. We gather at lunchtime once a week, and much of this hour is given to open sharing and prayer for each other. We figure we need all the help we can get to remain a healthy team.

The primary burden of developing good teams falls on ministry leaders.

As leaders, we need to move out of the Old Testament paradigm of "Moses on the mountain" receiving and imposing a plan, and into the New Testament example of shepherds watching over those in their charge. This shift takes us from seeing people through the mission to seeing the mission through the people God has called together for His purposes.

"From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." (Ephesians 4:16)

Leaders must set themselves to know and understand their team members well. As a good steward of the laborers gathered on the team, the leader empowers each to do his or her God-given part. The leader creates an environment where members can learn the facts and implications of each other's preferences, values, gifts, skills, ministry passions, hurts, sinfulness, background, culture, and much more. As the team goes deeper, the commitment grows richer and longer lasting. Rather than despising one member's weakness, another will use his strength to lift that one up.

If as a leader you're more goal-oriented than people-oriented, you need to accept that this kind of shepherding will be a challenge—not impossible. God can use your responsibility to your team to build that aspect of His character in you.

Questions to jump-start team discussion:

By God's design, living and working in cooperation with others is an inescapable part of life. Don't minimize its significance.

- ⊕ Why do you think God designed us this way?
- ⊕ Why do we try to escape this design and function on our own?
- ⊕ How has God used being on a team in your life?

Trust is the only effective "glue" for keeping a team together.

- ⊕ How do you know when your team is functioning based on trust? How do you know when it isn't?
- ⊕ What does it feel like to be trusted by your teammates?
- ⊕ Why are the other ways of holding a team together inadequate?

The primary burden of developing good teams falls on ministry leaders.

- ⊕ What does it look like to be people-oriented as opposed to goal-oriented as a leader?
- ⊕ What can team members do to help the leader build a healthy environment?
- ⊕ How do you know if people are well suited to their role on the team?

May God give us all grace to experience and express love and unity in our God-given mission!

what do you seek in a positive team experience?

interviews with Navigator staff leaders

In our work to assist teams over the past years, we've informally asked what people are looking for in a team experience. Almost all of the responses can be grouped into three statements:

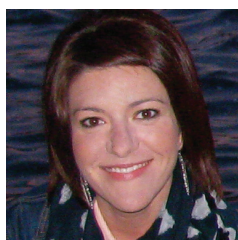
- ⊕ We want to know that our team is committed to our individual support and development.
- ⊕ We want to relate well as friends.
- ⊕ We want to work well together on meaningful tasks.

For this issue of *UpFront*, we asked several staff leaders to pass on to you lessons learned from their team experiences related to these three common desires.

Karen Pankratz

Associate Regional Director in the Collegiate Mission

We want to know that our team is committed to our individual support and development.



Everyone knows that food is a major part of a collegiate ministry! So when the cook at our summer training program

consistently underestimated the appetites of 30 grown men and women—even after training and multiple conversations. Frustrated, I initiated another conversation, planning to sternly rebuke her.

God intervened, however, and we dealt instead with the root cause of her anxiety and her fear of being rejected. By focusing on the task at hand rather than the growth of a person, I nearly missed an opportunity to be part of God's work in her and almost made things worse.

As we team together, we're constantly faced with the tension of working hard to accomplish the goal of our mission while at the same time valuing the growth and development of our staff. I believe that if we Navigator staff are thriving in our own walk with Jesus, we'll see this reflected in the personal lives and ministries, churches, communities, people groups, and students to whom we minister. A healthy team can encourage growth in all aspects of its member's lives, including intimacy with God.

Joe Maschhoff

Leader of the 20's Mission

We want to relate well as friends.

When it comes to friendship, a key lesson flowing out of my staff team ex-



periences is that *expectations are critical.*

Expectations related to friendship land on a continuum

where the end points can be precarious. On one end is the expectation that team members will surely become best friends. This will most likely lead to disillusionment and disappointment, communicated in comments like, "You let me down." Bringing our woundedness into a team can mean we'll demand that others provide for us what God alone can give, resulting in resentment on both sides. A team, no matter how good it is, cannot be our primary source of belonging.

On the other end, if we insist on limiting ourselves to efficient working relationships and aren't involved in each other's lives—that feels strange. We're seeking to build holistic, people-oriented ministries, but *we're* not really friends? We need to sense that our lives are open to each other. "How open?" is a matter of discussion. That's where flexibility in the middle of our expectation continuum provides a place to build toward friendship.

Cary Humphries

The Navigators' Chief Operating Officer

We want to work well together on meaningful tasks.

There's nothing that excites me more



these days than our potential for collaboration—for "working well together on meaningful tasks." I

recently took part in a discussion group of 32 voices (that's right...32!) from our U.S. and international missions. This team's initial efforts highlighted for me several crucial factors about how a team starts well together.

- ⊕ Dream together about what God might do through us.
- ⊕ Hear everyone's concerns and fears about challenges that could become barriers.
- ⊕ Honor each member's input to insure we move forward together.
- ⊕ Make sure our energy to advance doesn't cause us to leave someone behind.
- ⊕ Arrive at conclusions that reinforce our shared commitments.

Our team is in its early stages, but the entire process echoed, "We want to work well together on ETERNALLY meaningful tasks." And for that reason, it was a blast!

prayer, community, and the Gospel

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might believe in the Father.

The greatest passion expressed through Jesus' last prayer was for unity not just of His disciples, but also of believers who would come later. For us! Specifically, He prayed that we would be one, reflecting the community within the Trinity.

In my nearly twenty-five years on ministry teams, I've seen healthy and unhealthy groups. Community is organic, fluid, and varied, made up of different members. This makes it difficult to know exactly how to define a healthy team. However, I believe the following three characteristics are critical goals to pray toward for a team with true community.

First, a team with community is one where the members are known. Others on your team may know where you're from, how God called you to Himself or to ministry, what your resumé says. But do they really **know** you? Does anyone know your strengths, motivations, longings, weaknesses, heart, passions, hurts? Do they know how to encourage you, covering your weaknesses and appreciating your strengths?

Second, such a team has healthy accountability. There are no "lone rangers." If you're guilty of overworking or laziness, others will notice, care, and step in. You're challenged if you demand too much from others or never expect growth and ministry. You can't minister out of legalism, turning your back on the experience or expression of grace, without another coming alongside to speak the truth in love.

Third, a team that has community displays the power of a corporate witness. One of Jesus' requests in John 17 was for the world to know God **because of** the unity within the fellowship of believers. Now more than ever, isolated and lonely lost people long to be a part of an authentic and loving community. In this world of broken families and throw-away relationships, the attraction of imperfect but forgiving and grace-filled relationships is powerful and unique. It truly reflects God.

I've found that we can't demand the presence of true community like this, and complaining about its absence works against its growth. We can, like Jesus, be passionate enough about oneness that we both pray for and model it. We know He wants unity for us, so when we pray we can do so in faith, knowing we pray according to His will. Ask God to show you if you are known and if you know your teammates. Listen to Him about the level of accountability in your personal and ministry life. Pray and ask Him to empower a corporate witness. Perhaps you and your team could seek His will for your community. What characteristics would He want your team to reflect about Him to the world around you?

The enemy knows the power of Christian community; it's one of the first places he'll attack. Jesus knew this and prayed fervently for oneness. In the same way, our passionate pleas should cry out for unity within the diversity of the people who make up our teams.



Others on your team may know where you're from, how God called you to Himself or to ministry, what your resumé says. But do they really know you?

2011 / 2012 UPCOMING EVENTS

Personal Contribution Assessment

September 14-16, 2011
January 11-13, 2012
March 14-16, 2012
May 16-18, 2012

Sabbatical Orientation Workshop

July 25-28, 2011
January 31-February 3, 2012

Healing Prayer Seminar

September 30-October 1, 2011

Relational Healing Seminar

October 7-8, 2011
April 13-14, 2012

Becoming One

February 4-6, 2012
July 14-16, 2012

For more information call (719) 594-2555.

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