

# A Recipe For Effective Teamwork<sup>1</sup>

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There's nothing so deliciously exciting as a dynamic team functioning in high gear. Peter Senge, in his classic book, *The Fifth Discipline*, provides a wonderful example of what it feels like. He quotes from the memoirs of basketball player Bill Russell of the Boston Celtics:

Every so often a Celtic game would heat up so that it became more than a physical or even mental game, and it would be magical. The feeling is difficult to describe, and I certainly never talked about it when I was playing. When it happened I could feel my play rise to a new level...It would surround not only me and the other Celtics but also the players on the other team, and even the referees...At that special level, all sorts of odd things happened. The game would be in the white heat of competition, and yet I wouldn't feel competitive, which is a miracle in itself...The game would move so fast that every fake, cut, and pass would be surprising, and yet nothing could surprise me. It was almost as if we were playing in slow motion. During those spells, I could almost sense how the next play would develop and where the next shot would be taken...<sup>2</sup>

Teams are made up of individuals, each with his or her own beliefs, temperaments, self-concepts, and levels of emotional intelligence. These personal factors influence how effectively individuals function together as a team.

The effectiveness of team functioning is further influenced by a number of group characteristics—the team culture, the reason for its existence, the interpersonal dynamics among team members, the tasks being pursued, and various team processes, such as conflict resolution and decision-making.

All together, the proper blending of these ingredients is a recipe for cooking up a tasty, effective team.



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<sup>1</sup> From: [http://www.arniedahlke.com/101031 A Recipe For Effective Teamwork.pdf](http://www.arniedahlke.com/101031_A_Recipe_For_Effective_Teamwork.pdf)

Please take a moment to look at Arnie's site: <http://www.arniedahlke.com>

<sup>2</sup> Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of The Learning Organization*, New York: Doubleday, 1990, pp. 233-234.

# Gourmet Recipe For Teamwork

## Ingredients



- 6 to 12 individual team members, each possessing:
  - A centered, comfortable self-concept
  - A reasonable level of emotional maturity
  - A self-awareness of the influence of personal beliefs
  - An awareness of the influence of individual temperaments
- A team environment that consists of:
  - A mission-driven, problem-solving culture
  - A respect for and acceptance of individual differences
  - A constructive process for resolving conflicts
  - An agreed-upon process for arriving at decisions

## Cooking Directions

1. Either train a team member to serve as facilitator or obtain the services of an experienced facilitator to facilitate the team meetings. The facilitator helps team members cultivate a team climate in which people are aware of their interdependence, respect and trust each other, accept and learn from diversity, uncritical, and open to new ways of doing things.
2. Through a combination of training and teambuilding exercises, demonstrate the importance of recognizing individual differences and their influence on team dynamics—natural talents and temperaments, individual beliefs, communications styles, etc. (Using instruments such as the MBTI can be very helpful during this step.)
3. Establish the mission of the team and translate it into measurable goals. It is important that everyone understands and is aligned to the team's mission.
4. Clarify expectations of team members—they must be very aware of what is expected of them and who is accountable in the successful attainment of team goals.
5. Establish ground rules for team meetings—ground rules for meeting times and length, communication among team members, keeping a focus on topics being discussed, meeting etiquette, decision making, and conflict resolution.
6. Provide team members with the appropriate “tools” for generating creative ideas and innovative solutions to problems, such as brainstorming, flowcharting, force-field analysis, mind-mapping, fishboning, action plans, etc.
7. Once these steps have been taken, allow the team to function in pursuit of its goals



## Nutritional Information



It has been said for centuries that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Nowhere is this more evident than in the rich texture of successful teamwork. Teamwork results in the creation of innovative products and solutions to problems more efficiently and effectively than any one individual can accomplish alone. Teamwork gives everyone a taste of the pride of group accomplishment and individual ownership of goals accomplished. Effective teamwork brings people together in any organization in a climate of trust and mutual respect.