

SUCCESS GUIDE

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How to Stand Out from the Crowd. . . WHEN WORK IS A TEAM SPORT

By JoAnn R. Hines

There is no “I” in team. That’s the team-player mantra, right? We get this message all the time at work: to be an effective part of any team, you can’t be out for No. 1. The “team” is the party line in corporate America, and individuality often gets lost in the lemming-like shuffle. Which raises the question: how do you stand out and show the boss that you are worthy of a promotion or a raise in an atmosphere like that?

While teamwork is undeniably important to the success of many business projects, this corporate philosophy can create major career stumbling blocks. How do you differentiate yourself when everyone is supposed to work as a team?

My answer: even in this kind of a corporate structure, you can’t forget that it’s your responsibility to market yourself as if you were a business. Adhering to the team concept just makes that effort a little more complicated. The trick is to let your team members sing your praises. Don’t toot your own horn. You want the team to toot that horn for you.

Teamwork is great, but when it comes to the bottom line, or how people are compensated, it’s generally individual effort that gets rewarded. So it’s to your advantage to

be seen as a bright and shining star within the constellation of your team.

There are several soft-sell ways of doing this, without alienating anyone or losing your reputation for being a good team player; it just takes a little additional initiative and creativity on your part.

As your team is formed, try doing one or more of the following:

1. Volunteer to be the team leader.

This entails getting to know everyone. It might be a thankless job, but remember, yours will be the first name mentioned when people talk about the team. Your name will be first on reports or documents coming from the team.

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Caution: If the team’s efforts are not going well, your name will still appear first.

2. Volunteer to take the team meeting notes. I’m talking about something more than secretarial duties. Accept responsibility for being the conduit for information on all of the ongoing efforts of the group. All communications will funnel through you. Every memo will have your name on it and include your contact information. You should include a tag line (not just note-taker or corresponding secretary, but something memorable that will remind people about you and your role within the project—Goddess of note-taking or note-taking diva, for instance. The point is to be humorous and clever so that you will be remembered.)

3. Volunteer for high-profile assignments. As new teams are being formed, jump on those that deal with high-visibility, hot-button issues or are pet projects of the boss. Often, this will enable you to have an up-close-and-personal encounter with the

boss. If so, use the opportunity wisely.

4. Offer to write an article for the company newsletter about the progress of the team's project. Make sure that everyone is included. Quoting other team members is a great way to establish a bond between you and your team members. You can also ask for opinions outside the scope of the project—a great door opener with those who are higher up in the organization.

5. Set up the e-mail listserv for the group. This ensures that you have everyone's e-mail address and contact info. Periodically, send a note to ensure that all communications are being received and explain how the listserv process works. When people have a question, they will naturally come to you for the answer.

6. Seek out PR opportunities for the team. Whenever interviews or articles result from your efforts, make sure that everyone gets exposure. Just be sure everyone also recognizes that the publicity opportunity originated with you.

Tip: Share the wealth—don't hog the limelight when it comes to PR. The more individuals you can credit for the success of

the team, the more people will come back to you with thanks and support.

7. Submit for awards, commendation or honors for the team. Everyone loves a winner, and if you got the ball rolling by applying for the award, the company will thank you for it. Maximize the award or honor by following up with a press release. Be sure to include your name.

8. Volunteer to speak about the project's or team's accomplishments at an upcoming in-house or trade conference. Even though it's a team effort, everyone will remember the presenter.

The number of ways that you can increase your visibility within a team without turning the rest of the team against you is limited only by your imagination. There's no "I" in team, but there is an "M"—which stands for me.

JoAnn R. Hines' career advice is recognized in many circles. She has been invited to the White House to speak, has led a trade delegation to China, and has served as the online "packaging" expert for the Small Business Administration. For more career guidance, or to purchase her latest book, "Packaging Yourself," visit www.packagingcoach.com.



Q: Can adding too much RAM hurt my computer?

A: No, not at all. Adding more random access memory (RAM) is an excellent way to increase your PC's performance. But there is a point of diminishing returns: adding RAM to an older computer that lacks the processing power to run newer software won't result in any noticeable difference. In that situation, you might want to consider buying a new computer.

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