

## “In This Issue: 3 Simple Ways to Sabotage Teamwork”

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Hiring Mistakes and Developing People  
From Helm and Associates, Inc.  
And Kurt Helm

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### 3 Simple Ways to Sabotage Teamwork

Wouldn't you prefer to believe that no one would knowingly sabotage teamwork? Me, too! Unfortunately teamwork does get sabotaged, to some degree or other, on a fairly regular basis.

The sabotage, usually committed unintentionally, directly targets the three C's of teamwork: Cooperation, Coordination and Communication. (The “unintentionally” part of the previous sentence is critical. More on that a bit later)

The results of poor cooperation, poor coordination, and poor communication are missed deadlines and busted budgets, and higher blood pressure readings for all concerned. These problems can mean disappointed customers, lost contracts, and a bad rep in the business community.

I think we can all plead guilty to the spreading a little sand in the gears of teamwork without even being aware that we have done so. How? Well, there are three simple ways:

1. Be demanding and arrogant. “But wait,” you say, “I'm not that kind of person! No one would ever think of me as demanding.” Oh no? Well, what is the difference between demanding and asking? It often comes down to one little word, “please.” Inserting the word “please” into your request can change it from a demand into what is, a request.

Another thing that happens when you use the word “please.” Simply saying “please” can

prompt a bit of a smile on your face or, at least, a less “serious” face, which otherwise tends to look remarkable like a frowny face.

Finally, using the word “please” and forming a light smile softens your voice tone so that it is easier for others to hear what you say as a friendly request rather than an order.

2. Be self-centered and ungrateful. Now, you know you aren’t that kind of person and I know you aren’t that kind of person, but you can be seen as that kind of person if you don’t make it a habit to say two more little words: “thank you.”

Deadlines, malfunctioning computers, and unavoidable bottlenecks can create pressure and it is easy to just simply forget to thank people for their efforts on the little day-to-day tasks. In fact, we have a name for many of those tasks, don’t we? We call them “thankless tasks.”

But don’t forget, behind every thankless task is someone’s effort. And we all like recognition for our effort.

If I asked a room of 100 people, chosen at random from your company, for a show of hands of all those who felt they always received thanks for their efforts, how many hands do you think I’d see?

3. Be inconsiderate and thoughtless. Interrupt other people’s conversations and their work at will because your agenda is obviously (that is, obvious to you) more important than theirs. And, besides, you have a deadline to meet. Who has time to say, “Excuse me...” or “I beg your pardon ...”?

One of the challenges of working in a team is that it involves working with other people. At the same time, it requires focus and concentration, things that usually are best done alone. Interruptions are inevitable, so when you must ask Charlie a question, begin with, “Excuse me...”, even if Charlie is just staring out the window.

And so, to the three C’s of teamwork, I would like to suggest that we add a fourth “C” for “Courtesy.” I started to call it “Common Courtesy” but then I realized that calling courtesy common is inaccurate. Altogether too often, the norm in our society and in our workplaces seems to be dis-courtesy.

And yet, courtesy is the oil that makes the machinery of teamwork run smoothly. When people are brought together to work toward a common goal, whether they produce results that are greater than could be produced by the same people working alone depends on the synergy they create. And the creation of synergy depends on how well they work together. And that depends on courtesy.

Here’s a bit of reinforcement for the power of three simple phrases: when you travel to a foreign country, travel authorities always encourage you to learn a bit of the host country’s language. If nothing else, there are three phrases that travel authorities insist are

essential for you to know in the host country's language. They are "Excuse me," "Please," and "Thank you."

Making it a habit to use these simple phrases will go a long way toward assuring that you will have a happy holiday and a smoothly functioning team at work to come back to.

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Remember, People ARE your most important asset!

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To Diagnose Problem Behavior, Test!

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