

Web Search

Conduct a web search to identify a quiz that identifies your leadership style.

Leaders understand the importance of accountability and maintaining positive workplace relationships. Effective leaders do not do all the work themselves. When appropriate, they delegate. **Delegating** is when a manager or leader assigns part or all of a project to someone else. As a leader, empower, teach, and mentor others. Ultimately, leaders take responsibility. Become a model by taking your responsibilities seriously and consistently performing in a quality manner.

Becoming a Leader

At work you may be assigned a leadership position by your boss, by a team, or simply because no one else wants to lead. No matter how a leadership position is obtained, be willing and prepared to lead. Begin preparing today by learning new skills, joining committees, training, and attending workshops. Volunteer to serve on a team and learn what skills are necessary to be a successful team leader. Observe successful leaders and/or find a mentor to help you develop strong leadership skills. Learning new skills, including improved communications, will enable you to better think and behave like a leader.

An important element of professional success includes getting involved in your community. One excellent method of increasing leadership skills away from work is to share your expertise with a local non-profit organization. Find a creative way to share your time and talent with those less fortunate or with those who are just learning a skill you have already mastered. Many non-profit organizations are in need of individuals to serve on their board of directors, head projects, or perform specific activities. Volunteer experiences provide excellent opportunities to develop both leadership and team-building skills. Assisting others stimulates creativity, relieves stress, and is also an excellent way to meet and network with others. Additional benefits from volunteerism include an expanded professional network and potential job leads, as will be discussed in Chapter 13.

Name three non-profit organizations that can benefit from your expertise, time, or talent.

One final issue influencing today's leaders is dealing with gender, generational, and cultural differences. Today's leaders represent the contemporary workplace of various ages, religions, gender differences, and other factors that were discussed in Chapter 5. A good leader will remember that not everyone shares his or her beliefs and values. The job of the leader is to unite individuals and use diversity as an asset to successfully achieve company goals. As a leader, be aware of differences among individuals and ensure that your personal actions are in no way offensive or demeaning to others (intentionally or unintentionally). In addition, display zero tolerance for prejudice and avoid stereotypes by treating everyone equally.

Teams and Performance

Most individuals have experienced being part of a successful team. Perhaps it was a sports team, or maybe it was in school when a group of students successfully completed a big project. Whatever the task, individuals were part of a unit whose members all shared and contributed to a common goal and respected one another. These important factors resulted in success. Learning to successfully work alongside others is a skill that is necessary in the workplace. You will most likely be working with others as part of a team. A **team** is a group of people linked to a common purpose. Each team should strive toward creating synergy. **Synergy** is defined as two or more individuals working together and producing more than the sum of their individual efforts. When people are truly working together as a team, performance is at a premium and the result exceeds what each individual can accomplish alone. This section discusses teamwork, factors vital for team success, and the impact teams have on an organization's overall performance.

It is becoming increasingly common for companies to rely on teams to accomplish goals. When workplace teams are assigned the task of reaching a goal, members are accountable to one another and to the organization as a whole. Teams provide opportunities for members to take a leadership role in helping them become accountable for successfully reaching a goal. In a team setting, each member has a sense of ownership for the team's performance. This can occur only when team members are active participants and are accountable to fellow team members.

Several types of teams exist at work. Teams that occur within the organizational structure are formal teams. **Formal teams** are developed within the formal organizational structure and include functional teams (e.g., individuals from the same department) or cross-functional teams (individuals from different departments). **Informal teams** are composed of individuals who get together outside of the formal organizational structure to accomplish a goal. Examples of informal teams include a company softball team and a group of coworkers collecting food for a local charity. Another type of team that is common in today's workplace is the **virtual team**, which functions through electronic communications because the members are geographically dispersed. It is quite common for virtual teams to operate in various time zones and across national borders. Effective communication and premeeting planning is essential when working in a virtual team. Refer to Chapters 9 and 10 for additional information on effective communication and appropriate use of communication technologies.

No matter what type of team situation you are involved with, positive relationships among all team members is necessary for success. Getting the job done depends on a team effort. A team composed of individuals who behave professionally performs better.

Teams go through five stages of team development: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. In the **forming stage**, individuals are getting to know and form initial opinions about team members. Assumptions are based on first impressions. Sometimes these impressions are right; other times, they are wrong. In stage two, the **storming stage**, some members begin to have conflict with each other. When team members accept other members for who they are (i.e., overcome the conflict), the team has moved into the **norming stage**. It is only then that the team is able to enter the **performing stage**, where they begin working on the task. Once the team has completed its task, it is in the **adjourning stage**, which brings closure to the project. Note that it is normal for a team to experience each