



State FFA Officer Web Page

Feature Article
August 2005

National FFA

Building Your Team Through Dynamic Team Meetings...by Ginger Berry, Freelance Writer

I sat in the middle of the group and felt a little defeated. I knew that we were accomplishing some of our goals, but it also felt a bit like we were going in circles. We were trying to solve the problem, but every time someone had an idea, another person shot it down.

Plus, I felt like everyone in the room was frustrated with how the meeting was going but did not know what to do about it.

With an inward sigh, I tried to think of ways to bring it full circle so the team could start functioning as a well-oiled machine, with similar goals and a purpose.

Sometimes working in a team can have its disadvantages. Putting together many fabulous people with creative ideas and independent thinking can lead to situations that are hard to solve and often difficult to detect.

Even a machine that rarely breaks needs oil every once in a while, and along the same lines, every team needs a little help to keep them running smoothly, especially when parts of the machine are miles away from each other.

Your state officer team has unique properties that separate it from other groups that are accomplishing a goal, but certain qualities are universally needed for every type of team.

One way to keep on task is to adapt a list of guidelines each member needs to follow during the meeting. These guides need not be extensive – just little housekeeping rules that ensure the meeting will progress as planned, or at least close to it. Here are some examples:

- Before evaluating a member's contribution, others check their assumptions to ensure they have properly understood.
- Each person speaks on his or her own behalf and lets others speak for themselves.
- When the group is not working well together it devotes time to finding out why and makes the necessary adjustments.
- Conflict is inevitable but will be managed and dealt with positively.

Beyond setting guidelines, think about little things each member can do during each meeting to encourage team togetherness.

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When people working together as a team follow these steps, communication, trust, and productivity will greatly increase among team members:

- Team members listen and pay attention to one another.
- People discuss the subject at hand and are willing to work through conflict as opposed to avoidance of conflict.
- Everyone has a chance to state his or her views.
- Members know and use problem-solving steps.
- Members are clear about group decisions and are committed to them.
- Frequent feedback is given to help members stay focused on team goals.

With a little oil and some guidelines, each meeting you have can be a productive one. Everyone can go home and know they achieved the team's goals in a way that made everyone happy, or at least content with the outcome – and that is one of the best feelings to have when you are a team member.

People often say there is no “I” in team, but there is “me,” and rightfully so. Each member needs to do their individual part to keep the machine going.

