

Small Business Review

Successful team building

Take steps to incorporate all members into the process

BY TIMOTHY BRADY

In trucking, we think of 'the team' as the trucker, dispatch, safety department and sales. What we tend to forget, though, is that many teams are made up of smaller groups of individuals called units. In other words, the trucker and trucking company form one unit in the scope of the entire logistics team. The other units can include freight brokers, third-party logistics companies (3PL), shippers and receivers.

In the transportation of goods, the trucking company, freight broker or 3PL must work for each other's benefit, so their services are of value to the shippers and receivers for whom they haul.

To be a successful team, all members must work in harmony toward the same goal. Here's a list that should be followed by members of the team:

- **Understand responsibilities.** Know what is expected of each team member.
- **Have common goals.** Be sure each team member shares the same objectives.
- **Deal with change.** Be prepared for the worst-case scenario, or the smallest event, that could require a change of direction or plan.
- **Deal with conflict.** Have a plan to deal with conflicts that may arise in the course of booking, scheduling, dispatching, picking up, hauling and delivering shipments.
- **Share information.** Be transparent with information between team members. The more each team member understands the needs and circumstances of other members, within the group, the easier it is for the team to succeed.

• **Share ideas.** Share innovations with the entire team to improve task completion, and to ultimately bring greater success to the team.

• **Team maintenance.** Just as a truck needs constant maintenance, the same holds true with business relationships. Situations change, needs change, and if you're not aware of them in regards to other team members, you'll find yourself benched or out of business.

• **Direct communications.** Keep all team members in the loop at all times, regardless of whether it's good news, bad news, or just keeping them up to date on what's going on with their loads.

• **Develop trust.** This is the most important component of keeping a team focused on the goal, so constantly work on earning the trust of other team members. Actions speak louder than words.

Listing the components of good teamwork is the easy part of bringing together a well-run logistics team. The challenge is to take individual members and assemble them into an effective load-moving machine. It is the responsibility of each member to complete all required tasks, handle any changes in the course of the job, and finish within the time specified.

To create a well-oiled shipping machine, each of these separate entities needs to become the units of the winning team. This requires cooperation between each team unit, understanding the needs and wants of each unit, and all members working for the benefit of each other.

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