



COMMUNICATING WITH UNMOTIVATED TEAM MEMBERS

Managers and leaders encounter a variety of personality types when assembling or inheriting their teams, and not all are team players. Team “resisters” are late bloomers who find excuses or poke holes in moving ahead on task. Two of my favorite team-resisters are the “Yeah buts” and the “I dunnos.” With a little coaching, you can convert these team members into becoming productive players.

The “Yeah but” people always have a reason or excuse as to why a solution or suggestion won’t work. On the surface, these people come across as negative or not team players. In reality, these people can be a wonderful resource if you tap into their ability to see the challenges. Make them a part of your “preview” team before rolling out an idea. For every “yeah but” they throw your way, ask them to recommend a solution or change, and then give them time to come up with one. You may be pleasantly surprised at the latent creativity that lurks beneath the “yeah but.” At the very least, they’ll learn to either be prepared to resolve a situation when they object, or just not to voice their negative opinion.

The “I dunnos” are a different breed. They claim not to know and show little initiative in finding out the answer. My good friend and colleague, Judi Moreo, uses a technique that sounds a bit wacky yet works every time. When encountering an “I dunno,” Judi rephrases the question to ensure it’s not a miscommunication. If she stills receives the “I dunno,” she very calmly and seriously asks, “If you did know, what would you say?” and then waits for a response. It is surprising how many times a person comes up with a valid reply! By taking the fear or pressure out of a situation, Judi gets an honest and often enlightening view. And it’s good coaching for shy or awkward communicators to state their opinions without being criticized.

Being excellent leaders means gaining contributions from all team members. To do this, you as the leader must be able to “mine down” to the valuable talents every person has, whether they know it or not. So don’t let the “Yeah buts” or “I dunnos” derail you – take the time to shake the tree and see what fruit falls out.

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