

**A short extract on Teamwork from Rudi Webster's up-coming book:  
*Think Like a Champion.***

### ***Different Types of Teamwork:***

***Don't play one game and coach another.***

There is no one type of teamwork that is ideal. Three basic forms have been described and in each type leadership, coaching, player management and group interaction are somewhat different. Combinations of these three forms are found in most sports.

In American football, the main objective is to keep possession of the ball and move it down the field incrementally or in one or two great plays to get the ball over the line for a touchdown. Most of the players never even touch the ball and the team generally moves in one direction, forward. Specialist coaches often control their team's tactics in the game by calling the plays for the team.

In this type of teamwork, the coach is king. He has great power and usually calls the shots. The main priority in the team is the implementation of the coach's plan. Conformity is the name of the game and dissent and individuality are not encouraged or tolerated. Leadership and coaching usually have an inflexible and authoritarian flavor.

In basketball and soccer every one handles or kicks the ball and the patterns for moving the ball are complex. Players are usually more flexible, innovative and creative and constantly interact with each other throughout the game.

Chemistry is a significant factor in this type of teamwork - how the players interact and communicate with each other and with the coach and how they cooperate and coordinate their efforts. In soccer, the performance of the team is greater than the sum of its parts.

In baseball and cricket, the result of the game is the sum total of individual effort and individual scores. A player can win a game with a good individual performance since the game is really a contest between a pitcher and batter, or a bowler and batsmen, with a supporting cast of fielders.

In this type of teamwork performance is built around individual execution, so there is more emphasis on individual effort, style, motivation and achievement than there is in the other two types of teamwork. Motivation of the individual and management of his assets and weaknesses should be top priority. So should the proper blending of individual talent.

Good coaches and administrators are flexible enough to accommodate internal differences and individual needs while focusing on the common goal or purpose. Having one rule for all can be counterproductive in this type of teamwork. The simultaneous management of diversity and interdependence is a key to good teamwork.

In a jazz band each member at first plays the same tune but he is then given the freedom to improvise and innovate. In a classical orchestra, the conductor is in total control and makes sure that every member faithfully follows the musical score. No latitude is given for innovation or experimentation. Teamwork in the Jazz band is similar to that in cricket, and teamwork in the orchestra is like that in American football.

Teams run into trouble when the team plays one game and the coach and administrators play a different game. For instance, when a baseball or cricket coach manages his team like an American football coach, most things revolve around him and his plan rather than around the captain and his players. His need for control and conformity and his dislike of any kind of dissent invariably stifle individual talent and creativity and interfere with team dynamics and performance. Similar problems with teamwork and team performance arise in American football if the coach tries to manage his team like a cricket coach.

In every team there is an on-going battle between two opposing sets of values, the “Mates Values” that hold the team together - sharing, caring and working together to achieve the team goal – and the “Me Values” that split the team apart – working selfishly and egotistically to satisfy personal needs and to achieve personal goals ahead of the team goal. Which one wins? The one that is fed the most.

When “Me-values” dominate, destructive forces like egotism, arrogance, dishonesty, infighting, and political battles wipe out shared vision, common purpose and unity. Win/win outcomes then give way to win/loss results where the individual wins and the team and the game lose. But, too much harmony can be just as harmful to performance as too much conflict. Balance is needed. The challenge for leaders is to keep their eyes on the prize and decide how much harmony to encourage and how much conflict to allow.

Like sports teams, business teams display different types of teamwork. For example, the group dynamics in public sector teams are very different from those in the private sector. But even within the private sector teamwork and team dynamics vary. Similar pathologies are also found in business teams but in many cases they are more damaging.

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