



Teamwork Made Easy

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What makes a good team?

Good teams are built and nurtured by their members and by success – they rarely just happen. A team can be two people working together for a short time to get an urgent job done. Or it can be a large group completing a complex task over several years, like getting a Lib Dem MP elected. Whichever it is, they share some or all of the following features:

Members of successful teams

- Have a clear vision of the team goals and how they fit into them
- Have jobs they can do and are motivated to succeed in doing them
- Co-operate with other team members to help improve and get things done
- Listen to each other and contribute their views openly and positively
- Share the fun and the rewards



Teams who are performing well make things happen, deal with problems in a positive way, feel confident about taking initiatives and move towards their goals.

Top tips for successful teams

DO

- Focus people on a vision and targets
- Identify each member’s strengths
- Ask what people want to do and listen to and act on the answer
- Keep them posted on what’s going on
- Thank them for what they’ve done
- Share the fun

DON'T

- Give people unclear tasks or goals
- Give people jobs they can’t do
- Work them dead for no reward
- Ignore people until you need them
- Assume people will get things wrong
- Hand out lot of work at socials

The purpose of this booklet is to help you make a success of the things that your local party does. This guide also suggests some new things that could help you be even more successful.

There are six guides in all. Each guide is written in non-technical, “plain” English and should be easy to understand for any member. The other guides in this series are:

- Local Party made easy
- Membership made easy
- Campaigning made easy
- Communications made easy
- Fundraising made easy

Please contact the address below for copies of any of the other booklets.

For more copies, or to comment on the “**Made Easy**” series, please contact the

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Defining your goals – be SMART

A clearly defined vision with specific goals lets people know where they are heading and why. People are happier, more effective and tend to work harder when they know this. By following the simple formula of having SMART goals, you will go a long way to making sure you and your team are successful in what you do.

Make sure your goals are:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Time bounded

How to do it...

Specific – be clear about exactly what you are trying to do. ‘Raise more money’ may be desirable – but what does it mean? How much? How? By when? By being specific, you will know what you need to do to succeed and when you’ve done it.

Measurable – define how you will you know when you have reached your goal. How much money you need, how many copies of Focus you’re going to put out each month, how many more councillors do you want to elect in May?

Achievable - set realistic goals that are achievable. Constantly failing to reach targets is incredibly demoralising – so set realistic goals, whilst still moving forwards towards your vision.

Relevant – make sure you are doing the right thing at the right time. Prioritise your activity and make sure it really supports your overall goals.

Time bounded – by when is this to be done? If you don’t set a timeframe for a task, then it can drift and lose any sense of urgency. Be prepared to be flexible, but not at the expense of achieving the actual goal.

“If you don’t know where you are going, you will probably end up somewhere else”

Laurence J. Peter (1919 - 1988)
US educator & writer

Top tips for being SMART teams

DO

- Be specific and clear about what you are trying to achieve and by when
- Make sure the goal you set is achievable, compatible with other targets and actually desirable!
- Check others agree with the vision BEFORE you ask them to help
- Keep track of how tasks are progressing in a positive and constructive way

DON'T

- Hold aimless, un-focussed meetings that go nowhere
- Push people into roles they hate
- Work them dead for no reward
- Ignore people until you need them
- Criticise colleagues for what they won't do

Sharing the vision and keeping on track

Make sure you share the goals with the people involved in the project. Remind the team regularly about the overall goals and how you are progressing towards them. If people understand and agree with what is being done, they are more likely to work towards achieving it.

Successful teams work together to overcome difficulties rather than find culprits to blame for failure. If someone truly can't agree with an overall objective, then you need to find a way of resolving that conflict (see pg 5).

How teams develop

Successful teams go through a constant process of change and development. This is normal but it can be quite unsettling unless we understand what is going on. Here are the typical stages and what they can look like.

Forming

Team members are learning about each other and the task they have to perform. Finding out who has what skills and how they want to work begins here. It is a time to check out that there is a shared vision of the purpose of the team. If you are leading the team, then keeping it on track during this stage is an important part of your job.

Storming

A time when the team members are jostling for position and may challenge either the purpose or methods of the team, or even the leader. Lots of important questions come to the surface at this time and need to be answered, so that the team can progress to the next stage. It can be very unsettling to be in this phase of team development, particularly if you are a new member to a team. Trying to skate over the issues raised is a mistake, but so is getting stuck here and going around in circles.

Norming

People have worked out where they stand in relation to each other. Alliances start to form and peace breaks out. Team members will experience a growing confidence in their roles in the team and how they are going to carry them out.

Performing

The whole team works like a well tuned machine. Members of the team know what they are supposed to be doing and are confident they will succeed. They support and trust each other, solving any problems or difficulties constructively and positively.

Teams naturally move up and down this pattern. Any change in circumstances can throw them back down, often to Storming and occasionally to Forming. The change can be a new team member, the end of a task or even winning an election.

Leading a Performing Team

If you are leading a team, you will need to be adaptable in the way you deal with people at the different stages of the team's development.

Here are some examples:

Forming Teams – need structure and direction. Be firm, clear but fair. Make sure team members have an equal chance to get what information and understanding they need at this early stage.

Storming Teams – Consult team members and listen to their concerns, but still give clear leadership. Be positive and constructive in your feedback, explaining your decisions, whilst keeping the team on track.

Norming Teams – encourage and support team members whilst giving them space to take the initiative and make decisions themselves. This will encourage them to trust you and each other to be supportive, whilst still giving them a safety net if they need it.

Performing Teams - Actions and decisions can be delegated to team members. You should still be monitoring the results to check you are heading in the right direction, and keeping to the agreed strategy. Keep lines of communication open to individuals and the group so problems can be aired and dealt with.



Delegate

Delegation means giving out work for others to do, so that the outcome is a team effort, rather than just the product of one person's labours. Done in the right way and at the right time, it is one of the most effective ways to increase the effectiveness of your local party! Be sure to provide them with the "tool", the training and the encouragement to carry out their agreed task.

Watch out for under-delegation!

Potentially active members will LEAVE the Party if they feel that they are undervalued and excluded from becoming actively involved. But under-delegation happens when you think it's quicker to do it yourself, or you don't trust others to do it the way you want it done.

You MUST resist the temptation to do it all yourself! Other people may indeed do things differently, but that doesn't mean they do it worse. The most effective activists share things out, and also share out the credit for the result. Being part of a successful team means giving everyone some responsibility, and it gets easier the more you do it.

Top Tips for successful delegation

- ☑ Make tasks clear and concise
- ☑ Explain ANYTHING not understood, but don't patronise!
- ☑ Make delegated tasks simple at first
- ☑ Praise and correct mistakes gently
- ☑ Encourage others to delegate too

The effects of NOT delegating

- ☒ There is little skill building in the group
- ☒ Power stays focussed in very few people
- ☒ Poor morale develops
- ☒ High turn-over of potentially active members
- ☒ Membership is static or falls
- ☒ "Empire Building" damages effectiveness
- ☒ Everything done by a few people
- ☒ New people are not encouraged to join in



Effective meetings

Local Party teams usually have regular meetings to 'get things done'. Genuinely effective meetings leave the team with a sense of achievement and moving forward, rather than bored and uninspired. Here are some tips on how to make the best use of your team's time spent in meetings.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Be clear about the purpose of the meeting | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> THANK people for the work they do |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Make sure it is the best way to 'get the job done' | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Show an interest in them as people |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Publicise the meeting WHEN you set the date | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accept that mistakes happen and listen generously to difficulties |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Make a proper agenda, with timings and a start and finish time. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tell people of success and share the credit |

Common problems and solutions

PROBLEMS

Meeting has no clear purpose.
 The meeting goes on too long.

 One person hogs the meeting.
 Strong emotions lead to arguments.
 New members are silent.
 The meeting can't agree or goes around in circles.
 The meeting has no 'sparkle'.
 People stop coming to the meetings.

SOLUTIONS

Use your SMART goals to set a clear agenda.
 Keep your contribution clear and concise and invite others to do the same. Put time limits on each agenda item.
 Agree to have only one contribution from each person per item.
 Focus debate in the task/issues, NOT the personalities/emotions.
 Agree to favour new members wanting to speak.
 Take a vote, OR return to the item at the end.

 Include a special feature or fun item in the agenda.
 All of the above, plus when did you last say thank you to individuals or to each other?

Dealing with Conflict

Conflict in a team usually arises when two or more people disagree about the objective of a project, its relative importance, or how it should be carried out. It can involve strong emotions as well as a breakdown in communications. It is possible to disagree with someone in your team, without it becoming a barrier to progress and to use it to find new ways in which to move ahead.

Taking the heat out of conflict

Human nature is the reason we get angry with each other. Evolution has made us into people with a need to protect ourselves when threatened. When someone opposes your point of view, the natural tendency is to "protect" your self-esteem and argue back. If both sides are doing this, it can soon escalate to a shouting match, or worse.

The cost of conflict

Often, there's no winner if an argument gets out of hand, merely degrees of losing. Teams can become split and the effectiveness of the whole group is reduced. Conflicts, when handled correctly, are a good source of energy and new ideas. But often they aren't treated as a positive thing.

How to resolve a conflict

- Discuss the positives first (there are some in every situation!)
- Focus on the problem not the person
- DO NOT allow emotional exchanges
- Allow everyone to express their views, in turn
- Promote a discussion of the alternatives
- Frequently summarise what people have said
- Describe how the final decision will be made
- Summarise the decision and move on

Rewarding your team

As a Party we should remember we are mainly working with volunteers. We cannot offer a financial reward, so we need to use non-financial incentives. This method of reward doesn't cost anything, but can be as effective and as motivating as a large pay cheque if done correctly.

How to reward people...

- ★ Tell them you've seen the work they did
- ★ Summarise the resulting benefits of the work
- ★ Say thank you every time (and mean it!)
- ★ Tell them what you liked about it
- ★ Encourage them to keep it up

Take the time to find out what motivates your team members – you will find there are many different things. You need to be prepared to use a range of rewards to cover everyone's needs.



For example

Some activists don't really like attending social functions, but a chance to meet the MP for the nearby constituency would really appeal to them. Team members may like to feel they are progressing in the organisation and to have the work they do acknowledged in the local members newsletter. Others would find that deeply embarrassing, but still want to be thanked and praised within the team they work with. Whatever you do – never forget the positive power of 'thank you'. Here are some other ideas for you to use with it:

A reward should

- Show you appreciate the person's help
- Be genuine
- Allow the individual a sense of pride
- Provide an incentive to do more work
- Never under-estimate the person's effort

Hot reward ideas

- "Member of the month" award
- Work & Wine nights
- Social events with no work
- Surprise "Thank you" calls from local celebrities
- "Take the day off" raffles for the activists
- Articles about local activists in the newsletter
- Certificates of Merit

Where to go from here...

If you need help with managing a conflict

Contact your Region

Contact the English Party

Cowley Street

0207 222 7999 ext 525

englishlibdems@cix.co.uk

To run better meetings

Contact the English Party

Cowley Street

0207 222 7999 ext 525

englishlibdems@cix.co.uk

Any other questions

Contact your Region

Contact the English Party

Cowley Street

0207 222 7999 ext 525

englishlibdems@cix.co.uk

Generating a vision

Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors (ALDC)

01422 843785

Contact the English Party

Cowley Street

0207 222 7999 ext 525

englishlibdems@cix.co.uk

For ideas to reward teams

Attend membership training event

National or Regional sessions at any Regional or Federal Conference

Your Region