

Teamwork Makes the Dream Work

It was a typical traveling day in the tropics. Well bronzed tourists getting ready to board their flights back home, linger in the airport; in two minds about extending their time in paradise or getting back to the “real world”. New arrivals scurry through immigration eager to get their vacation started. I too was anxious to get beyond the hustle and bustle of the airport. I was looking forward to meeting some of the members of the group I would be speaking to. They were already at the hotel reviewing last minute details for the meeting. As I sauntered towards the baggage carousel I was pleased to see that it wasn’t crowded. Before long I would have my bags and be on my way. As it turned out, I was among the last to leave the airport more than two hours later. Apparently the baggage handlers went on strike shortly after we landed. With their strike the entire system for that airline was crippled. Flights that were due to leave were delayed indefinitely. It seemed that the tourists would have their time in paradise extended after all. Flights scheduled to leave North America were also delayed, while those of us who were already in the terminal sweated.

I smiled at the irony. I was in town to speak on the “Power and magic of teamwork” and here I was, getting a first-hand lesson on what happens when a small part of this team doesn’t work.. This is the case with any team. Whether it is a small intimate family unit or a giant multifaceted team, like an airline - if one cog of the wheel doesn’t work, the entire team grinds to a halt.

Individually, or as part of a company or organization, personally or professionally, teamwork plays an integral part in our success. There can be no denying it. Needless to say, our personal success starts with us. We have to have clear goals and the courage and drive to pursue them. Nonetheless, we should never discount the importance of teamwork - people working together towards a common goal - in assuring our ultimate success.

Our lives are forged by many hearts and hands

The challenge with describing someone as self-made is that it suggests that their success is entirely a result of their efforts and their efforts alone. It fails to take into account the assistance rendered by others in their lives - their teammates. A teammate is anyone who plays a role, however slight, in our personal and professional development.

As you look around, you will no doubt notice the numerous examples of the Bill Gates, Michael Jordans and Oprah Winfrey’s of the world - individuals who stand head and shoulders above their peers. However, as the old saying goes, “No man is an island.” In order for them to have reached the pinnacle of their success they needed teammates - **people in whom they could believe in, who in turn believed in them.** They needed others to act as sounding boards to provide fresh perspectives, give advice, lend encouragement, and deliver a swift kick whenever the need arose. Even the best teachers have to be students sometimes. Likewise, the most accomplished among us still need the support and honesty of others. To a degree we are all self-made, but it is the efforts and input of others - a teacher, a neighbor, a close friend - coupled with our own dare, drive and determination that ultimately forge the success we enjoy.

Together Everyone Achieves More

The word TEAM is an acronym which means **T**ogether **E**veryone **A**chieves **M**ore. As individual athletes we all harbored Olympic aspirations. It was our greatest desire to represent Jamaica at the highest level of athletic competition. Truth be told, it is highly unlikely, given the paths we were on, that any of us would have realized those dreams. However, the minute we joined forces to form the Jamaica Bobsled Team we created an opportunity to achieve more and to create an impact beyond our wildest imagination. The magic inherent in teamwork says that we can all achieve far more working as part of a team compared to trying to get it done by ourselves. The country of Japan, I believe, epitomizes this fact. After WWII, without natural resources, state-of-the-art infrastructure or money, they applied their disposition to work as a team and have now become one of the world's leading economies.

Every task is important

Until I got stuck in the airport for two hours without my bags, I never considered the important role the baggage handlers played in my traveling experience. Those who take exception to me describing their job as important are confusing it with glamorous. I suppose being a baggage handler is not necessarily glamorous, but my experience has taught me that the job is every bit as important as any other job within the airline if your goal is to safely get to your destination with minimal hassle.

The point is, that as you work to achieve your goals and fulfill the vision you have for your life, you will be faced with a myriad of mundane things that you need to do on a daily basis. Chances are that none of them will be glamorous; but they will be all together important. Failure to acknowledge their importance and act accordingly will make elusive ghosts of our goals. The mechanic who tunes up your car, the girl who sells you your bagel in the morning, the spouse who works to ensure that you have a clean house to come home to in the evenings, are all completing tasks in their supporting roles as members of your team. The next time you are tempted to discount their importance, remember that without them you would have to complete those tasks yourself and would probably be kept away from tasks that you are best and most uniquely qualified to do.

We live in a complex, fast changing world. Industry, marketing, sales, and the exchange of information are all moving at a rapid pace. As a result, it is virtually impossible for any one person or entity to get it all done by himself. Successful individuals, organizations and companies recognize this and embrace the many benefits that can be derived from working as part of a team. They know that teamwork allows them to reach grander, more challenging goals even faster; and so they commit themselves to the idea and contribute to the process to pursue the ideals of teamwork. As they say, "Teamwork makes the dream work."

Keep on Pushing!

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