

TEAMS AND TEAMWORK  
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## FOREWORD

Teamwork has been a matter of concern to The Navigators throughout our history. In recent years this interest has intensified. Many experiments have been made, and out of this ferment principles have crystallized and methods perfected. This paper brings together under one cover some of the principles and methods that have proven most helpful. The material has been gathered from a number of sources, mostly from Nav representatives who themselves have been active in developing teams.

## INTRODUCTION

In Scripture we see God fulfilling his purposes in the world through men. (The term is generic; women are assumed.) Usually he begins with one man – burning his divine objective into that man’s heart and mind, and giving him promises to guarantee the fulfillment of the objective. Rarely, however, does God begin and end with one man. Rather, he continues to give more men the same objective and the same or similar promises, leading them to associate together to fulfill their common vision.

Acts 16:9-10 illustrates this. Luke says, “And a vision appeared to Paul...and when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the Gospel to them.”

The history of these teams, or bands, of men runs through the Old and New Testaments, which are alive with the concept of teamwork. We see family units acting together (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) as well as bands of co-laborers (Moses, Solomon, Nehemiah and their coworkers), and battle units for both ordinary and spiritual warfare (David, Jesus, Paul).

Teamwork is clearly suggested in I Samuel 10:26, “And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men whose hearts God had touched.” Other references to teams and bands of men are I Samuel 23, the entire chapter, I Chronicles 7:4 and 12:23, II Chronicles 16:11, and Nehemiah 2:11-12. In the New Testament there is the familiar Acts 20:4 and Mark 6:1-2 and 6:30, among others.

It should be noted in passing that not only the Lord’s men band together! See John 18:3.

## I. WHAT IS A TEAM?

According to Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary, a team is simply a number of persons associated together in work or activity (apparently with or without a leader). The same dictionary defines a crew as a company of men working on one job or under one foreman; a gang, as men assembled to operate simultaneously; a band, as men united for a common purpose, restricted but allowing a degree of movement; and a group, as a number of individuals assembled and having common interests.

Obviously, there is a great deal of overlap in these definitions. For the most part they are used as synonyms, so it would be arbitrary to draw hard and fast distinctions between them. We are not attempting to fix terminology here, but simply to clarify a concept. Nevertheless, in doing this some distinctions may be useful.

For instance, we draw a distinction between a genuine team and a hastily formed posse, or an arbitrarily selected house-to-house visitation group. We make a difference between a football team and a wrestling team. In the latter, each man wrestles independently, though encouraging his teammates and cheering them on. In a football team, by contrast, all men work together simultaneously toward a single objective: to move the ball forward.

Still other distinctions have been made. For example, a group may have common interests but no leader, whereas in a team leadership is important if not essential. On the other hand, a crew may have a foreman but no heart-bond tying each member to the other members.

Or consider an orchestra: the total sound must be pleasing, or at least intellectually satisfying. This does not happen when each member plays independently, or all members play the same note or the same instrument, but when every member plays his proper role under the leadership of a conductor. So it is with teamwork; the Holy Spirit will blend each man's gifts and natural abilities so that the job is accomplished through the combined and coordinated efforts of all.

Thus the concept of a team as we are identifying it seems to include at least five elements: 1) a common objective, 2) an accepted leader, 3) agreement on method and activities, 4) a strong sense of love and loyalty among members, and 5) a certain division of labor within the group. What these elements mean and imply will become clearer as this paper proceeds.

## II. ADVANTAGES OF A TEAM

The Lord recruited individuals but he trained them in a team situation and sent them out as teams. The Navigators discovered that when working outside one's own country, where it often takes a large proportion of a man's time just to keep himself and his family functioning, there is a distinct advantage in having a team. Ever since the Overseas Directors Conference of 1961 we have made a determined effort to build up teams of two or three or more couples in each country where we decide to operate.

"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up. Again, if two lie together, they are warm; but how can one be warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him. A threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

Balance and Cross-training. A team of men has complementary abilities and depths of walk with the Lord within it. No one man has everything he needs to train another or to manage a total area ministry effectively, no matter how experienced he is. Each member of the team, the leader included, is strengthened and developed by all members. Thus men become well rounded and more capable of fulfilling the total vision. See I Corinthians 12:14ff.

Planning (Proverbs 24:6). Men benefit greatly by bouncing ideas off each other, whether it be the strategic plans of where and how to minister or the more tactical plans

of method and timing. The team allows this, particularly where the leader provides a permissive atmosphere.

An editor of Newsweek magazine interviewed the heads of 100 of the largest corporations in America and sent questionnaires to another 300 in an effort to find a pattern for their successes. He discovered that good executives had strong teams around them. The executive presents an idea to his team, lets them attack it, probe it and offer suggestions. When the meeting is concluded, the whole team is ready to follow through on the plan.

Protection and encouragement. Men bound together in loyalty to Christ and His Word provide mutual protection against the world and its attractions in the use of time and money. They protect one another against doctrinal divergence and error, as well as from the temptation of laziness in prayer time and Scripture memory; they challenge one another in evangelism and follow up. See Hebrews 3:13.

There is tremendous power in teamwork, especially when attacking a single target or pool of manpower. In such a case, two men working together are not one plus one, but two squared; three men teamed together are not one plus one plus one, but three raised to the third power. "And five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight" (Leviticus 26:8).

Philippians 1:27-28 indicates the courage and power that comes when men are united. The story of the tower of Babel carries the same idea (Genesis 11:6). Team effort multiplies the individual thrust, provides the impact of sheer numerical strength, and has the added advantage of pressing into useful service many Christians too timid to witness alone and undirected. Note I Corinthians 12:21.

A team allows for more rapid establishment of a ministry in an area. A band of men who know where they are going attracts others who want to get going. If a man tries to penetrate an area alone, it may take him a year or more before he has a group of men who demonstrate the dynamic aspect of the Christian life. If he starts with a team, however, he immediately has his "show case."

Related to this is the fact that a team tends to recruit to a work, or a vision rather than just to a personality. This provides stability, particularly when there is a change of leadership. It also provides protection from the possibility of a leader propagating his weaknesses, becoming a dictator, or building a private kingdom.

An area team is obviously more flexible than a sole area representative. With a team the area leader does not have to neglect his primary objective when it is necessary to minister more widely, as in public relations, training counselors, etc.

This team also creates a better atmosphere for building the basics. It is well known that people take on the character of the group. When Don Rosenberger, my early Nav mentor, became a Christian, his spiritual father took him to the mess hall and showed him a blackboard that had men's names chalked on it. Beside their names were checks, x's and such, indicating how many Bible studies each man had done, verses memorized, etc. Don assumed this was natural to the Christian life, put his name on the board and began Bible study and Scripture memory. While this principle is true to some extent of any group, it is particularly true of a team because of the team's intense character.

Leadership training is advanced in a team context in which there are opportunities both to lead and to follow, to plan and to coordinate. Since leadership is largely a matter of helping others accomplish their objectives more effectively than they could by themselves, it seems evident that Nav staff men who are expected to be leaders will

benefit by the team experience. At the same time, the team leader is able to keep men under close observation within the team context and thus gain clearer insight into potential leaders. Note Mark 3:14.

### III. DISADVANTAGES OF A TEAM

Teamwork is not without its dangers and limitations. It is possible for a team to thwart individual initiative. Although we want to raise up men who can work with others, we also strive to develop men who can “stand in the gap” (Ezekiel 22:30) and carry responsibility even when they are alone. Somewhere along the line we have to give men opportunity to demonstrate what they can do on their own. Note Acts 6:3-8 and 8:5-40 (Stephen and Philip).

Related to this is the observation that men who have been leaders, or who are natural leaders, may regress when forced into too circumscribed a team effort. This is especially true overseas where two or three area representative-caliber men are working together.

The team may promote inflexibility. There have been instances in our experience where men trained primarily in a certain team context have trouble fitting into another team, particularly if the philosophies or methods of operation of the two teams vary significantly. Related to this is the important question of whether the team, as it usually operates in connection with a single-target thrust, adequately prepares a man for the complexities of overseas assignments.

The tendency toward exclusiveness, narrowness, ingrownness (always present to some degree in an organization like The Navigators) may be exaggerated by the team experience. Team members may become isolated from the total Christian heritage simply because the team appears to be a self-contained unit. A local team could replace church life. The matter of loyalty also is of concern here. Teams rightly require a high degree of inner loyalty. But this may create an inability to relate properly to other Christians or Christian organizations. We may lose the spirit of service.

A team setup may cause some to overlook man-to-man training. There may be too much reliance on group training. Often in a group, training is geared to the lowest common denominator to accommodate the weaker members. Or the opposite may occur: the team effort may be pitched to such a high level that individual members falter without getting the personal attention they need.

Finally, team narcissism is a real danger. The team may become almost an end in itself. Reliance on the team may weaken dependence on God. Worse, we may give the glory for what is accomplished to the team, or the team’s method, rather than to God. Note Isaiah 42:8 and similar passages. In this way the team may breed carnality. Along with this is the possibility that qualities seen in a team member may be the result of group pressure rather than the genuine work of the Holy Spirit.

### IV. TEAM LEADERSHIP

The need for able leadership runs through both the Old and New Testaments. Passages such as Exodus 18:21, Numbers 27:15-17, Judges 2:16 and 21:25, Ezekiel 22:30, Matthew 9:36, Ephesians 4:11-12 and Titus 1:5 are typical.

But note: men need leadership, not domination. “Not that we lord it over your faith; we work with you for your joy” (2 Corinthians 1:24). See also I Kings 12:7. In his translation of I Peter 5:3, Phillips says we “should aim not at being ‘little tin gods’”. Jesus taught the same as recorded in all three synoptic Gospels (Matthew 20:24-28, Mark 10:42-45, Luke 22:24-27). Among other things, this applies to decision-making. In I Thessalonians Paul used both the phrase “we sent” and “I sent” (3:2, 5). There is little question that Paul made the final decisions for his team, but these decisions were evidently preceded by corporate discussion in a permissive atmosphere.

The kind of leader Jesus calls for is a man who will, in the John 15:13 pattern, lay down his life for his followers, his friends. The true team leader is humble, one who leads most convincingly by example; a servant, one who sees in the incarnate Christ, the Servant-God, his highest ideal. As Dr. Edman of Wheaton College has said, “Our job is to train servants; God will pick the leaders.”

The leader must know exactly what his mission is and be able to articulate the objective to the team members. Bishop Fulton Sheen has pointed out that when men do not clearly perceive their objective, they concentrate on motion. In The Navigators’ experience, we have discovered that men, even the most committed, need to have their objectives constantly clarified. This is one of the most important functions of the team leader.

The team leader must be a man of faith who knows he is on the right track and headed in the right direction. And he must communicate this faith to the men on his team, even in the face of contrary circumstances. Hezekiah was such a man (2 Chronicles 32:7-8), as was Gideon (Judges 7:10-15). If a leader believed all the gloomy reports he gets, he would do nothing but sit around and wait for catastrophe, which leads to the next point:

The effective team leader will act. “The man who tries to eliminate every last bit of chance, who tries to reconcile every possible pro and con before acting, who shrinks from going counter to the wishes of an advisor – such a man has no business being a leader.” So states a U.S. Air Force leadership handbook.

The U.S.A.F. distinguishes between the “traits” philosophy and the “action” philosophy when evaluating leadership. Traits such as enthusiasm, honesty, loyalty, etc., only indicate potential leadership. The Air Force, on the other hand, simply asks, “Did he accomplish his mission?” and “Did he utilize all available resources in accomplishing his mission?”

Traits should not be undervalued, however. Determination is characteristic of the successful leader – an inflexible drive to circumvent, sweep aside or destroy all obstacles in the way of accomplishing an objective. “Jesus said to them, ‘My meat is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to finish His work’” (John 4:34), and later, “I have glorified You on the earth; I have finished the work which You gave me to do” (John 17:4).

At Dawson Trotman’s funeral, Billy Graham observed, “He was a man with a one-track mind!” The ideal leader is dominated by a few simple ideas that have to do with accomplishing the big idea, and he allows nothing to side-track him. Thus he serves his men by maintaining the objective.

The capacity for appreciating the gifts and abilities of team members, and a commitment to helping them develop their own talents and personalities, seems to be a most important factor. D. E. Host, successor to Hudson Taylor as leader of the great China Inland Mission, cites this as the secret of his success. And Coach “Bear” Bryant of

the champion Alabama University football team declares, “I train men individually, then mold them into a team.”

It is apparent from what has been said so far that one of the team leader’s chief jobs is to maintain a high level of morale among his team members. General Eisenhower has indicated that this was the matter to which he gave most of his attention during World War II. “Morale,” he writes, “is the greatest single factor in successful war.” If that is true, a Navigator area representative will want to give it his highest priority.

A leader will make it his business to keep his men informed. Good communications – about what is happening, progress being made, victories won, etc. – is essential to *esprit de corps*.

At an area representatives conference, it was suggested that *esprit de corps* (loyalty to and enthusiasm for the team) is captured and maintained in the midst of a thrust, through mutual sacrifice and involvement, through clear communications of standards, objectives, qualifications and activities, by a servant attitude on the part of the leader, by meeting the needs of the members, by clear strategy and streamlined tactics, when each member feels needed and his ideas valued, where loyalty is stressed, and where victory and solid, measurable accomplishments are the norm. This pretty well summarizes the matter.

## V. HOW TO FORM A TEAM

The first step is to pray. In the final analysis teams, like all good things, are a gift of God. In praying about a team we follow Jesus’ example (Luke 6:12-13). Remember too that believing prayer is sustained by the promises of God, so we need to wait on God for pertinent promises. Look around for a man of like heart and mind to join you in prayer for a team. Thus in the early days of the Nav work, Daws and Walt prayed together, on the basis of the promise of Matthew 18:19, for a band of men whose hearts God would touch.

The next step is to “go fishing.” Make contacts through evangelism, Bible studies, rallies, etc. Then follow through. Follow-up will enable you to discern those who are responding to discipleship and hence are potential team members. Finally, handpick your team members from among your contacts, as Jesus, Moses and Paul did. (See Mark 3:13, Exodus 18:21, Acts 16:3). Insofar as God gives liberty, the team leader should aim at a balance of gifts and personalities when selecting his team.

In calling men to the team it is essential that you pre-sent an objective that is realistic and attainable, yet big enough and exciting enough to warrant giving one’s whole life to. Dawson Trotman was a master at this. “The world for Christ!” “Be fruitful and multiply!” This needs to be preached again and again until men are captured by the objective. Billy Graham tells the story of a man who was offered a job at a fabulous salary. He turned it down. “Aren’t we offering you enough?” the company asked. “Oh, your salary’s big enough,” the man replied, “but your job is too small – I’m a missionary.”

Next, form the team itself through joint activities such as evangelistic thrusts, prayer and Bible study, planning sessions, recreation, trips and projects, living together and doing physical labor together.

At the same time, each team member must be developed individually. Here the importance of man-to-man training cannot be overemphasized.

Keep the team small and hard. To bring the wrong man into the team means we hand over the leadership of the team to him. Why? Because we will always be asking, “What will he think of the idea?” and “Will he have a problem if we do this?” Deuteronomy 20:5-7 is a clear statement of the DBITH principle: Don’t Bring in the Half-hearted! At the same time, be careful not to surround yourself with “yes men,” or men who are unable to be fully honest with you for fear of being disqualified.

## VI. TEAM RELATIONSHIPS

Team relationships are foundational. What we are as men individually and together will determine how we work together. This in turn will govern the type of impact we make and the kind of men we produce. The interrelationships between the apostle Paul and his team members, and between the team members themselves, were as brothers, companions in labor, and fellow soldiers (Philippians 2:25).

There is a sense in which these three relationships are progressive. That is, we have many brothers in Christ, fewer companions in labor, still fewer fellow soldiers – men who burned their bridges behind them and who share common dangers and hardships. But in a broader sense we may assume that all three relationships are of equal importance within the team.

Brotherhood in Christ is the foundation of the team. The intimate heart-tie that we have to one another as brothers is a key to world evangelization. See John 13:35 and 17:21. A true brother relationship gives correct motivation, initiative, drive and imagination in helping others. It keeps us on the track with the right goal: to bring men into fellowship with God and others through Christ (I John 1:3). Lord Nelson, England’s greatest naval hero, said, “My victories have come because I have been able to command a band of brothers.”

Companions in labor minister together with the same objectives, though perhaps with different responsibilities. There must be diversity and flexibility within the team, yet the total ministry must be a combined effort. In I Thessalonians such phrases as “our Gospel,” “we exhorted,” “we pray,” “followers of us” indicate that Paul, Silvanus, Timothy and the entire team was involved not only in the evangelistic thrust but in the follow-up afterwards. Paul called his teammates “partners.” This means they shared not only in the work but in the results, not only in the planning but in the profit. Thus Paul speaks of the Thessalonians as “our crown.”

Fellow soldiers are enlisted together in a wholehearted commitment to die for their common cause and for one another. This is the main objective of their lives. It calls for availability, mobility, discipline, daring and, above all, cooperation and sacrifice. Personal desires, schedules, etc., must be laid on the altar. Each team member should be ready to lay down his life for his Lord, his convictions (as did Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in Daniel 3), and his fellow soldiers (as did Uriah in 2 Samuel 11, and Timothy and Epaphroditus in Philippians 2:20, 30. This spirit also dominated the early church. See Acts 4:32-37.

Confidence in each other and in the sovereignty of God will promote the kind of fellowship we are aiming at. Since God is on the Throne, controlling my life, nothing or no one can ruin me or my future (Psalm 37:5-6 and 75:6-7).

At the heart of the team relationship is an abiding sense of love and unity – men not only following the same leader but knit together in heart, soul, mind and spirit

(Romans 15:5-6, I Corinthians 1:10). The passage cited above, Acts 4:32-37, brings out the unity of the team, the sacrifice of the team, and the power of the team. One secret of this power is united prayer (Matthew 18:19 again). We get to know, in a unique way, those with whom we pray. Strengthened by unity, encouraged by fellowship, fortified by the presence of Christ (Matthew 28:20), the team goes out to battle, ready to attempt the impossible.

## VII. HOW TO EMPLOY A TEAM

Within a given area, there will be several “teams” – the whole number of Nav sympathizers who can be counted on to participate in rallies, to give, and to pray; a smaller ministry team of close-in contacts who are committed to the basics and who will join planned thrusts or accept limited responsibility; and the hard-core team – men who look to the Navs for direction, who are pacesetters, who help the local Nav lead plan and execute the Nav program.

The local leader will want to use his hard-core team for prayer and planning. He will use the hard-core team further as the nucleus for other ministry teams drawn from close-in contacts or fellow travelers. The hard-core team can also be used for forays.

Once the team has located several target areas, it begins to probe these areas (there may already be an “inside man” in one or more of them) in order to determine which of them is in fact the kind of place it would be best to concentrate on. After three or four forays, one target area appears to offer more potential than the others. At that point a special team is assigned to it, with or without a staff man, depending on circumstances.

Underlying the various uses of a hard-core team is the concept that a band of men hitting one target together affords distinct advantages over a group of men spreading out to several targets and coming together at intervals to pray and compare notes. (This is the model I was originally exposed to; it has value, but the team concept we are describing here is to be preferred.) This idea extends to regional teams as well.

A regional team is one in which members are drawn from the region at large for particular projects. One typical project is currently called Operation Homestead. In this operation a team converges on a given area to help the local man, or local team, get off to a strong start in the ministry. This has been employed successfully both in the U.S. and overseas. Recently a team drawn from Lebanon, Singapore and the Philippines converged on Petaling Jaya, Malaysia to get the work there off and running. In two weeks they led 20 men to Christ, whereas it likely would have taken the local representative several months to produce the same result.

Administrative teams are also important in the Nav work. These teams are needed when required guidance and coordination are too much for one leader to handle alone. They are used as a personal extension of the leader. In complex operations the executive function often requires several men. Similar to this is what might be called leadership teams: leaders who work together for a period of time in order to provide direction for a very large ministry. Nav regional directors do this regularly.

## VIII. TEAM EVOLUTION

Teamwork is a dynamic, not static, concept. Teams come into being, grow, diminish, change their objectives or methods or both, and sooner or later disappear.

The size of a team is conditioned by its objective, the method it employs, and the capacity of its leader. Generally, the bigger the objective, the bigger the team, particularly where time is of essence. Similarly, the more complex the method (that is, the greater variety of gifts and abilities required) the larger the team. Again, speaking generally, the more experienced the leader, the more men he can handle.

Jesus had a 12-man team. But it may be noted that in modern business the recognized “span of control” is somewhere between three and eight. When the hard-core team exceeds eight, a new arrangement should be considered. More often than not, a second team may be formed.

A man needs to be a member of team long enough to receive full value from it and contribute significantly to it. But if he continues too long on the same team, he may reach a “point of diminishing returns.” Before this happens it may be well to transfer him. He may be transferred to another Nav team, or “discharged with honor” to work elsewhere. It is often best to transfer the most experienced team member, even the leaders’ right-hand man. In addition to providing new challenge for him, it allows the team an influx of fresh talent. Compare 2 Timothy 4:10-12.

Frequently in the Nav work the leader himself is transferred. This should present no major problem unless he has failed to train a successor. In the Nav work, training a successor is taken for granted. A problem arises, however, when a leader is brought in from the outside to replace the transferred one. In such a case, the new leader will walk softly and make few changes while he gets to know his new team, and vice versa.

When its mission has been completed, or whenever there is a major change of objective, methods, or leadership, it may be well to dismantle the team. Under certain conditions internal tensions may require the same (Acts 15:39-40). But great care must be exercised lest individual team members be hurt or inadequately provided for. The Christian team leader’s responsibility does not end abruptly when the team itself disbands.

## IX. OBSERVATIONS FROM THE BOOK OF ACTS

The Acts of the Apostles provides background material which may prove useful in considering the actual outworking of the team principle. To what extent this material applies to Nav work today is probably a matter for individual judgment since teamwork, as recorded in Acts, was conditioned in part by cultural factors not identical with those of our day.

There does not seem to be any one method recorded for teamwork in the early church. There was unity with diversity. Factors of personality, calling, circumstance and Divine guidance kept the team concept fluid.

There were different types of teams, such as the apostles, the seven administrators (Acts 6), local teams, missionary teams, all with different functions.

There were varying standards on teams – the attitudes of Barnabas and Paul toward team member John Mark is a case in point.

Teams were able to function both corporately and as individuals. Men such as Timothy, Titus or Silas could team together or go alone on difficult assignments. Being a team member did not hinder the individual from being led by the Spirit to do exploits for God separately. Stephen, Philip and Peter illustrate this.

Functioning as a team in a particular locality did not prevent local Christians from participating with an outside team such as Paul's. In the case of Peter (Acts 10) it did not prevent his forming a new team and going to Cornelius for one specific task.

In Acts teams were constantly in flux, with men coming and going. Personnel were always changing. Though Paul had a few permanent team members, many came for a time and then went elsewhere.

Paul's team was not primarily on a training mission. Those joining the team, it would appear, were not invited on the basis of training for future leadership, but to serve in the advance of the Gospel. Their mission was to win men and consolidate the new converts in a given area. From this evangelistic and follow-up activity the team developed a training objective: to prepare a group of elders in each place to carry on the local ministry and expand further throughout their region.

It should be noted here, however, that in the present stage of the Nav work, the factor of training is important in selecting team members. Otherwise there may be a tendency to "use" men before we have built into their lives adequately.

In Acts the team members were in subjection to one another with a view to using the best combination of gifts regardless of seniority. For example, Paul was the main speaker for his team even though Barnabas was actually the senior man. Teams were also, to some degree at least, subject to the churches, reporting to them and to the Apostles to account for their doctrines and activities. See Acts 15:2, 6, 19 and 22.

## CONCLUSION

We in The Navigators have only begun to experience the full potential of teams and teamwork. God has given us some valuable insights to date, but it is too early to allow our ideas and experience to ossify. Let us be alert to new applications of the principles outlined in this paper, and even to new insights regarding basic principles.