

MACC "VOICE" DECEMBER 2017 NEWSLETTER

How to Build a Teamwork Culture in Your Organization

STAFF

Executive Director

Rod Kelsay
Mid America Cooperative Council
Indianapolis, IN

Administrative Assistant

Alice Pickler
Mid America Cooperative Council
Indianapolis, IN

OFFICERS

Chairman

Gary Weidenborner
CoBank
Louisville, KY

Secretary

Amy Studebaker
Farm Credit Mid-America
Eaton, OH

Director

Brian Haraga
Michigan Sugar Company
Bay City, MI

Director

Urban Mescher
Dairy Farmers of America
Maria Stein, OH

Director

Kevin Walker
Legacy Cooperative Grain
Stonington, IL

Director

Rob Zeldenrust
North Central Cooperative
Wabash, IN



Fostering teamwork is creating a work culture that values collaboration. In a teamwork environment, people understand and believe that thinking, planning, decisions, and actions are better when done cooperatively. People recognize, and even assimilate, the belief that "none of us is as good as all of us."

It's hard to find workplaces that exemplify teamwork. In the US, our institutions such as schools, our family structures, and our pastimes emphasize winning, being the best, and coming out on top. Workers are rarely raised in environments that emphasize true teamwork and collaboration.

Further, the way organizations structure their systems of reward and recognition, compensation, and promotions are the antithesis of teamwork. As long as employees are compensated and celebrated for their individual performance and contributions, you are failing to encourage teamwork.

Create a Culture of Teamwork

To make teamwork happen, these powerful actions must occur.

1. Executive leaders communicate the clear expectation that teamwork and collaboration are expected. No one completely owns a work area or process all by himself. People who own work processes and positions are open and receptive to ideas and input from others on the team. They cross-train other employees so service to customers is reliable and consistent.
2. Executives model teamwork in their interaction with each other and the rest of the organization. They maintain teamwork even when things are going wrong and the temptation is to slip back into former team unfriendly behavior.
3. The organization members talk about and identify the value of a teamwork culture. If values are formally written and shared, teamwork is one of the key five or six values.
4. Teamwork is rewarded and recognized. The lone ranger, even if she is an excellent producer, is valued less than the person who achieves results with others in teamwork. Compensation, bonuses, and rewards depend on collaborative practices as much as individual contribution and achievement.
5. Important stories and folklore that people discuss within the company emphasize teamwork (Remember the year the capsule team reduced the scrap by 20 percent? Remember when the sales team nailed the biggest sale in company history in only one meeting?) People who do well and are promoted within the company are team players.
6. The performance management system places emphasis and value on teamwork. Often 360-degree feedback is integrated within the system. The employees understand that teamwork is the expected interaction in the workplace.

How a Co-op Thrives Through Teamwork

A cooperative is "an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise". Cooperative values, in the tradition of its founders, are based on "self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity." Cooperative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others. They are distinguished from other forms of incorporation in that profit-making or economic stability are balanced by the interests of the community. **This is why the Cooperative Business Structure provides a natural climate for Creating a Culture of Teamwork.**

(excerpts from <https://www.thebalance.com/how-to-build-a-teamwork-culture-1918509>)

Do You Possess the True Spirit of Christmas?



While for so many people this holiday season is about rampant commercialism, keeping up with the Joneses and rushing to keep up with a hectic schedule, we should all jump off the speed train and take time to not only appreciate the true meaning of Christmas but also to embrace the **True Spirit of Christmas**.

Emotionally, this is a difficult time of year for so many. Depression and anger drive up the rates of suicide and domestic violence. Stress builds upon stress to destroy the holiday cheer of many. The underlying problem for so many

people is that they focus all their energy on what they do not have rather than embracing what they do have -- that is what **Christmas Spirit** is all about.

Whether or not you are an ardent Christian, if you live in the Western World then you know that the true meaning of Christmas is to celebrate the birth of Christ. The Christ child is a symbol of love, light, hope and peace that makes this such a joyful season for true believers. However, even among the believers, there are some for which this message is not enough to overcome the depression, anger and stress of the season.

That is why it is so important to embrace the true meaning of Christmas. You need to reach down within yourself to find the spirit of Christmas. In order to embrace the true Christmas spirit you must be willing to give. Give of yourself, your time and your love, and give of your worldly possessions. Do not think of the gifts you give to others as an obligation or duty, but think of it as a symbol of your love for them. While no gift can accurately reflect the love we feel for those who are near and dear to us, we can show them that they matter by spending time and thought to create or select a gift with meaning.

My son likes to make his gifts and spends a long time designing and then creating these items. Granted, we could have bought a sweatshirt with "world's best grandpa" printed on by a factory, but I expect that his grandfathers will cherish the shirts he designed himself and then created with fabric paint -- misspellings, oddly-formed pictures and all. If you are struggling with your **Christmas Spirit** then perhaps you should avoid the mall entirely this season and find a different way to give?

Embracing **The Spirit of Christmas** also means giving to those beyond our immediate sphere as well, especially those most in need. Obviously it is easy to throw some money in a Salvation Army collection, and that is certainly worth doing, but if your Christmas spirit needs a boost then perhaps you should try something more hands-on.

Local churches, schools, and charitable organizations can usually give you a list of opportunities to give and help. For example, through my church we have taken up a shoebox collection (creating an assortment of holiday gifts that will fit into a plastic shoebox and then are shipped to need children overseas) and bought coats and clothing for needy children in our community. I helped wrap the coats and clothing as well as contributed to both campaigns and it did wonders for making me appreciate what I possess.

*(excerpts from <http://www.allthingsfrugal.com/christmas.spirit.htm>
Deanna Mascle)*

Rod's Thoughts



As we conclude the year 2017 and look to 2018, we can remind ourselves that we are not alone.

The cooperatives that serve our needs were created by those who came before us. In some cases, over a century ago. Let us consider the gifts our forefathers gave us through the cooperatives that serve our needs, today.

First, we must acknowledge the challenging times our founding fathers were enduring. Rural America had no electricity, no municipal water, or stable market for their products. Inputs were scarce and information from the University Extension System was still in its infancy. There was no liquidity to purchase our homes, land, machinery or other inputs necessary to advance rural America; other than through a local wealth banker who set the prices.

In cities, finding safe places for financial savings or locating a fairly priced food source was very challenging. Affordable housing was also challenging, even if you could afford electricity. Three fourths of the country lacked the infrastructure that today we take for granted. Times were tough and money was scarce.

Out of these difficult times grew the leaders of our modern cooperatives. They were our great grandparents, not outside investors looking to make a profit. The outside investors were already invested in many businesses, automotive, energy, mining, and manufacturing. These businesses served wealthier customers in cities and a few in rural America. It was not until the common man in America was willing to invest in themselves, through cooperatives, that things began to improve. It began when a few took what meager funds they had and pooled these resources together to start their own cooperative. These early pioneers saw the importance of self-control, self-governance of their own business as critical building blocks for the success of those who followed.

The gift of our current cooperative system continues to serve our needs. I see four key parts of this gift:

1. **The Gift of Autonomy and Independence** - There is great value in being self-governed, because we maintain mutual control of our cooperatives. We choose how we grow and what services are offered to our member/owners.
2. **The Gift of Investment in our Cooperatives** - Our mutual investment supports self-governance. It is important that this investment's purpose is to serve member/owner needs. Though these investments need to be profitable, they are not chasing quarterly earnings for investors who care little about the communities that surround the business.
3. **The Gift of Democratic Control** - Democratic Control gives each owner a voice in their cooperative. These member/owners elect representatives of their peers who govern the vision and policies of the cooperative.
4. **The Gift of Shared Benefits** - These are benefits that stay local in our communities.

Let us be grateful for the vision of our forefathers. It is their shoulders that we stand on to enjoy the benefits of our cooperatives, today. Let us continue to communicate between our member/owners and the cooperative, to clearly understand how our cooperative can serve their changing needs. **Let the members know how their investment is working to serve their needs today, and into 2018.**