



Small Team Attitude Check Up

By James Ferrier

“The trouble with small teams is the people.” Have you caught yourself thinking that?

If you have (and who hasn’t at some time?), it may be time for an attitude checkup. How we relate to people reflects what we believe about God and His Word.

Matthew 22:37-38 says the most important thing we can do is to love God with all we are and all we have. Nothing else is more important or more life-changing.

If we hold anything back in loving God, we certainly will not be successful in the second priority: Loving our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:39).

Are you still working on that one? I am too. Slowly I have learned that the closer I draw to God, the easier it is to love others, because He puts the love in my heart. As I grow in intimacy with Him, God expands the capacity of my heart to love.

Valuing Your Team

Even as we struggle with the command to love others, we can choose to value our team members. We can see them as worthy of our respect and our trust. That single attitude adjustment can have a profound impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of your team.

When I was a daily newspaper editor, it was quite common for the college-educated editors to take a superior attitude to the trade union workers. They looked down on the workers and considered them less important. Of course, the workers recognized that bad

attitude, so they were uncooperative when those editors were interacting with them.

By simply choosing to treat the union workers as equals, I had their full cooperation, and I was more successful than the other editors in getting the newspaper to press on time. And if this was the result of treating them as equals, how much better would our work have been if I had truly valued them as more important than myself?

How to Add Value

Here are some ways to communicate to your team members that they are valuable:

Listen. Choosing to truly listen to your team members affirms their value. Instead of concentrating on what you are planning to say next, listen actively to your co-workers. Pay attention not just to their words, but to their tone, expressions, and body language. Formulate your response after you have heard them out, not before. Remember the Bible warns: “He who answers before listening—that is his folly and his shame.” (Proverbs 18:13)

Focus. Lay aside what you are working on when a team member comes to you. Give your undivided attention instead of continuing to work on your project. When a woman touched the hem of Jesus’ garment, he stopped in his tracks and asked, “Who touched me?” (Luke 8:45) He understood that the woman reached out because she wanted something from him. What do your team members want from you? How can you help them?

Communicate. Make sure the members of the team have the information they need to do their jobs. Few things are more frustrating than attempting to accomplish a task without the necessary resources. Remember how the people of Israel felt when Pharaoh said, “You will not be given any straw, yet you must produce your full quota of bricks” (Exodus 5:18)? Listen to what your team members say and make sure you have similar expectations regarding the tasks you want to accomplish.

Be real. Be genuine. Tell the truth about your capabilities, limitations, resources and deadlines. “Each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body,” writes Paul (Ephesians 4:25). Lead by example. By being honest, you give your team members the freedom to be honest in return.

Evaluate without judging. Recall Jesus’ words: “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to

you.” (Matthew 7:1-2). Accept others. Look for ways to collaborate rather than condemn. Look for results, not for someone to blame. Be a problem-solver. Recognize your team members’ efforts.

Celebrate. Remember what the older son said to his father? “Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.” (Luke 15:29). Even diligent and faithful workers lose perspective or get discouraged. Do what is in your power to communicate how much you value them. Be quick to offer praise and rejoice over their accomplishments. Encourage them. Cheer them on in their tasks.

Valuing others is just the start of obeying the command to love others. God wants us to love others just as much as we love ourselves! That’s a tall order, but He is present with us at every moment to help us do our best.

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