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■ *Marshall Goldsmith is the author of 35 books, which have sold over two million copies and have been translated into 30 languages. Email us your thoughts on bad habits and behaviours you've seen in the workplace at [editor@leaderonomics.com](mailto:editor@leaderonomics.com).*

# DO YOU PLAY WELL WITH OTHERS?

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**T**HIS is a great question. If you answer it honestly. Your answer could lead to your success or demise as a leader. It could be the key factor in your personal and family relationships. So, let's ask it again. Do you play well with others?

Many of us may think "plays well with others" is a category for grading school-children, not grown-ups like us. We tell ourselves, "I'm a successful, confident adult. I shouldn't have to constantly monitor if I'm being nice or if people like me."

We may hold ourselves blameless for any interpersonal friction; it's always someone else's fault, not ours. "The other guy needs to change. I shouldn't have to. In fact, I don't need to, it's his fault!"

Or, we're so satisfied with how far our behaviour has already taken us in life that we smugly reject any reason to change. In other words, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

When my good friend Alan Mulally became chief executive officer of Ford, he set to work to create an environment where the executive team, notorious for not working together, could learn to play well with each other. Through Mulally's leadership, the focus of the team and ultimately the focus of the entire company became, "How can we help one another more?"

It worked. The company survived

through incredibly difficult times, and returned to achieving great success again through working together. If Ford had been a schoolyard, and the executives school children, they would have gotten the highest of marks in "playing well with others".

## HOW WELL DOES YOUR TEAM PLAY TOGETHER?

You can answer this question with your team by trying this simple four-step process, which I call "team building without time wasting."

The steps are:

**1** In a team meeting, ask each team member to rate "How well are we doing?" vs "How well do we need to be doing?" in terms of teamwork. Have each member do this on paper. Have one of the members calculate the scores — without identifying anyone.

On a scale of 1–10 — with 10 being the highest score — the average evaluation from over 1,000 teams is "We are a 5.8. We need to be an 8.7."

**2** Assuming there is a gap between "we are" and "we need to be", ask each team member to list two key behaviours that, if each other individual team member improved, could help close the gap and improve teamwork. Do not mention people — only behaviour — such as listening better, clear goals, etc. Then list the behaviours on a flip chart and have the team pick the one that they believe will have the biggest impact.



**3** Have each team member conduct a three-minute, one-on-one meeting, with each of the other team members. (Do this while standing and rotate as members become available.)

In these sessions each person should ask, "Please suggest one or two positive changes I can make individually to help our team work together more effectively." Then have each person pick one behaviour to focus on improving.

**4** Begin a regular monthly follow-up process in which each team member asks each other member for suggestions on how to continue their improvement based

on their behaviour the previous month. The conversations should focus on the specific areas identified for improvement individually as well as general suggestions for how to be better team members.

When asking for input, the rules are that the person receiving the ideas cannot judge or critique the ideas.

He must just listen and say "thank you". The person giving the ideas must focus on the future — not the past.

This is a quick and easy process that helps teams improve and helps team members become better team players. Try it for yourself and see!

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