

The Vision of **Teams**

TEAM WORKBOOK

A step-by-step guide for
learning The Vision of Teams

Welcome to The Vision of Teams

Thank you for your interest in “The Vision of Teams.” My goal is to offer our story as a new way of looking at the challenges that come with creating an effective and unified team from a diverse group of people.

The video presents the journey of the American Women's Expedition, the first women's team to ski across Antarctica to the South Pole. In “The Vision of Teams,” I talk about our journeys—both our trek to the Pole and our quest to become a smoothly running team made up of individuals who like and respect each other. Although the tasks before our team were unique, the challenges we faced are universal.

First, we had a bottom line: Getting to the Pole. That meant we had to "produce" or ski so many miles each day to reach our goal.

Second, we had teammates who didn't begin as friends and didn't always get along. As team leader, I picked the members; they weren't able to choose with whom they worked.

In pulling together the most effective team that I could, I assembled a group of talented and strong-willed individuals. The challenge then became creating an environment that would allow everyone's ideas to come forward in a constructive way.

Third, we faced rigid time constraints. If we didn't start our trip on time, the weather in Antarctica could have prevented us from traveling at all that year. Similarly, if we didn't proceed at our scheduled fast pace, we faced a real danger of running out of food.

Fourth, we operated on a tight budget that left little room for error.

Fifth, communication between team members was important but also difficult. The reasons were both practical—we spent our days skiing single file with facemasks on—and emotional—we shied away from talking about failures or disagreements.

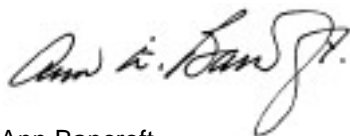
Sixth, like most “coworkers,” we had longer-term careers that would be affected by our success—or lack of it—in Antarctica.

Seventh, like most people, we wanted to feel good about ourselves and each other and enjoy the challenge before us, even as we worked incredibly hard to reach it.

And finally, just as most teams do, we made mistakes along the way. However, we tried to learn from our errors, overcome our weaknesses, and capitalize on our strengths to achieve our shared goal.

The lessons we learned on our journey to the South Pole apply to almost any team trying to reach a goal. Whether your mission is to develop a better software application, turn around a faltering division, or increase test scores in your school, I hope and believe that our story will inspire, motivate, and entertain you.

Sincerely,



Ann Bancroft

Welcome to The Vision of Teams

©1998 Lead Dog Productions. All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. No part of this book or video may be reproduced in any form, or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, unless specifically permitted in the text or by written permission from the publisher. Address all inquiries to:

**Star Thrower Distribution Corporation
26 East Exchange Street, Suite 600
St. Paul, MN 55101**

**1-800-242-3220
Phone: 651-602-9630
Fax: 651-602-0037**

www.starthrower.com

Welcome to The Vision of Teams

Contents

Welcome to “The Vision of Teams”	1
About Ann Bancroft	4
Using the Workbook	6
Key Concepts	7
It all begins with passion	8
But passion is not enough	10
Each team member brings unique strengths and weaknesses	12
Sharing a vision requires:	
truly communicating with each other	14
committing to a common goal	16
meshing personal goals with the vision for the team	18
Learning as a team means:	
learning from mistakes	20
learning from each other	22
planning for communication, rather than leaving it to chance	24
Taking action means:	
recommitting to the shared vision	26
working with and through other people to accomplish goals	28
putting in a solid effort, rather than just putting in the hours	30
challenging yourself	32
We are transformed by:	
working together and challenging ourselves to meet a common goal	34

Welcome to The Vision of Teams

About Ann Bancroft

Ann Bancroft is the first woman to travel across the ice to the North and South Poles and is one of only a handful of people who have journeyed to both Poles. Her career first captured the public's attention in 1986, when she skied to the North Pole as the only female member of the Steger International Polar Expedition. In November 1992, Ann led the American Women's Expedition to the South Pole. This group of four women skied more than 660 miles, each pulling 200-pound sleds, to reach the Pole in January 1993.

Between trips, Ann is an active citizen, diplomat, and community volunteer. She continues her work with the American Women's Expedition Educational Foundation, an organization whose goal is to highlight the strengths and achievements of women, as well as to educate young people on environmental challenges in Antarctica. She is an instructor with Wilderness Inquiry, a group that helps individuals with disabilities, as well as able-bodied people, to enjoy the wilderness.

Ann has worked with the American/Soviet exchange program, Ski for Peace, whose goal is to foster communication and understanding between citizens of different nations. She also has served on the boards of the Melpomene Institute for Women's Health Research and Friends of the Boundary Waters. Currently, she is a board member of the National Women's Hall of Fame. Ann has been a volunteer for numerous civic and charitable organizations, including Equity in Education and the Special Olympics, among others.

Ann was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in 1995 and the National Girls and Women in Sport Hall of Fame in 1992. In 1993, she received the YWCA Women First Award. Ann was named Ms. Woman of the Year in 1987 and the U.S. Jaycees Outstanding Young American in 1988.

Today, in addition to her work, Ann is preparing for her next expedition. This all-women's journey to the South Pole and across Antarctica is scheduled to begin in November 2000.

Ann earned her bachelor of science degree in physical education from the University of Oregon and previously taught physical education.

The Vision of **Teams**

Workbook

with

Ann Bancroft

Welcome to The Vision of Teams

Using the Workbook

This Workbook expands on the concepts presented in the video, “The Vision of Teams,” and provides examples that further illustrate each idea. The purpose of this Workbook is to help you learn and apply the information presented in the video.

As you watch “The Vision of Teams” and complete this Workbook, it will be helpful to think about how the concepts presented here apply to your organization. You may want to examine the particular issues with which your team has struggled, the goals and structure of your team, and the strengths and weaknesses of each member.

Notes:

Key Concepts

Listed below are the effective-team concepts identified in the video. This Workbook includes more comprehensive information on each, as well as exercises that will help you apply the concepts to your own experiences.

1. First:

- It all begins with passion.
- But passion is not enough.
- Each team member brings a unique set of strengths and weaknesses.

2. Sharing a vision requires:

- truly communicating with each other and listening, rather than blaming;
- committing to a common goal; and
- meshing personal goals with the vision for the team.

3. Learning as a team means:

- learning from mistakes;
- learning from each other; and
- planning for communication, rather than leaving it to chance.

4. Taking action means:

- recommitting to the shared vision;
- working with and through other people to accomplish goals;
- putting in a solid effort, rather than just putting in the hours; and
- challenging yourself.

5. In conclusion:

We are transformed by working together and challenging ourselves to meet a common goal.

It all begins with passion

"It's the passion that really pushes you through the times when you're being told you couldn't, or you shouldn't, and you yourself are questioning, 'Why am I here?'" says Ann Bancroft. "It is those moments of reconnecting with that passion that allow you to put one foot in front of the other."

Passion—the strong feelings that we hold about an issue or cause—sparks our dreams and compels us to take action.

Whether we're trying to launch a new product, run a political campaign or raise funding for a cause in which we believe, we need to hold tightly to our beliefs, because achieving our dreams often isn't easy. In fact, it usually requires hard work and a commitment of time or money, or both. Other people may try to discourage us. While we need to be open to intelligent, constructive input, we also have to be able to keep going even when others disagree with our goals.

List two things outside of work about which you are passionate, and identify the actions that your passion has compelled you to take. (Examples: A belief in a cause prompted me to join an organization dedicated to that issue; a love of the outdoors leads me to take frequent hiking and camping trips.)

Passion	Action Taken
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____

List two things about your job or this organization about which you are passionate. Even if you are not particularly enthused about your current position, find a couple of things about the company or the work environment that you care about. (Examples: The constant challenge to do my best work; my company's reputation for cutting-edge research; working with my coworkers.)

1. _____
2. _____

It all begins with passion. (cont'd)

Expedition Insight

Passion fluctuates when you are working toward a big goal that demands a large commitment of time and effort. The trick is to find or develop ways to keep your passion going.

One way that Ann Bancroft maintained her enthusiasm during the five years she was planning and preparing for her trip to Antarctica was to tie the project to another of her passions, education. Working through the American Women's Expedition Educational Foundation, she and other teachers developed a curriculum based on the trip for several hundred thousand schoolchildren. For example, the children following the Expedition learned about art and music taking place in Inuit, or Eskimo, communities.

Although some adults told team members that the venture was bound to fail, the schoolchildren never questioned their ability to succeed. The kids' enthusiasm, which was always on display when Ann and the group did presentations on Antarctica, helped team members stay connected with their passion.

But passion is not enough

"I've learned that passion is not enough," says Ann Bancroft. "Not enough for you to succeed in your environment, and not enough for me to succeed as leader of the first women's expedition to cross Antarctica on skis. Passion is not enough, because we cannot do it alone. Achieving our vision requires teamwork."

While passion may spark a dream and compel one individual to act, achieving a dream almost always requires working with others. Even a goal that appears to be the work of one person, such as an individual's commitment to lose weight or stop smoking, is easier to reach with the support of others.

Because of this, it's essential that we all develop the skills that will allow us to be contributing members of functioning, effective teams.

Write down a goal that you have reached and briefly describe how the support and assistance of others helped you to reach it. (Examples: I went back to school, which meant family members had to handle more responsibilities around the house; or, I took a new job that required me to change the hours that I worked.)

List three qualities an individual needs to fully contribute to a team. Then indicate whether you have these attributes or if they are traits you need to work on. (Examples: responsible, creative, hard-working, open-minded.)

Quality	Do I have this or need to work on it?
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____

But passion is not enough. (cont'd)

Expedition Insight

One obvious benefit of working with a team is that it allows you to share the work. On the Expedition, each team member became an expert at a particular task. Of course, everyone on the team knew how to do all of the tasks, in case of an emergency.

Ann Bancroft communicated with the outside world via the group's radio. Sunniva Sorby made sure that the team completed the research they were supposed to do as they traveled. Anne Dal Vera worked with a dietitian to devise a nutritious mix of foods that could be packed on sleds and survive the Antarctic climate. And Sue Giller worked with a Global Positioning System to determine how far the group had skied each day and whether they still were on course.

One drawback of Sue's job: to get the batteries that powered the system to operate in the Antarctic, Sue first had to put them in her long johns for an hour or two to warm them up. The effect, she says, was like dropping a bag of ice down her pants!

Each team brings:

a unique set of strengths and weaknesses.

In preparing for her trip, Ann Bancroft says, "My first step was to choose the members of my team. I looked for passion, experience, and a complementary set of skills."

Most successful teams offer a mix of skills. A diverse set of talents and experiences helps to ensure that all angles of a project are covered. In addition, creating a strong, deep team means that more members are able to take on leadership roles. This is important, because it is unrealistic to expect the "official" leader of the group to have all of the answers.

List three strengths you bring to your group or three aspects of your team's project about which you are an expert. Also, list three areas in which you would like to improve. (Examples: technical expertise, knowledge of the bureaucracy or politics surrounding the project, project-management skills.)

Strengths	Areas to Improve
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____

List one strength of each of your team members.

Team Member	Strengths
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____

Each team brings:

a unique set of strengths and weaknesses. (cont'd)

It is easy for people to overlook their own contributions. You may want to watch for an appropriate time to compliment your team members on the specific strength(s) they bring to the group.

Expedition Insight

Sometimes a team member's contribution veers from that described in his or her official job description. When Sunniva Sorby became injured, her contribution to the group's progress in logging miles while pulling a sled packed with 200 pounds of gear obviously lapsed. In fact, the others had to take much of the weight off her sled.

However, her concern for the others and cheerful willingness to give them emotional support remained intact. This was not an insignificant achievement, given the emotional, as well as physical, rigors of the trip. "In that sort of environment, almost everyone goes into survival mode," says Ann. "You do only what absolutely needs to be done. It's easy to decide not to make an effort to be friendly or supportive. However, Sunniva would give emotionally so unabashedly and freely, and sometimes at great expense to herself."

For example, if Sunniva was first in the tent at night, while her tent-mate was finishing her own chores, she made sure she had a cup of tea or soup waiting for her. She was able to cheer up Anne Dal Vera when she was down, and also help Sue Giller, who has an intense personality, relax a bit.

Sharing a vision requires:

truly communicating with each other—listening, rather than blaming.

In the video Ann Bancroft describes the end of the team's Great Slave Lake training expedition when team members had to wait two days before a plane could fly them out. The group had made many mistakes on the trip, and everyone was ready to point a finger. "There was a lot of anger," Ann says. "So, we sat down and thrashed it out. Criticism is never comfortable. We had to set aside the natural tendency to be defensive and really listen. Listening, not blaming, got us back on track."

When a team is working toward a goal, it's critical that members listen openly when something goes wrong, rather than simply blame others.

In the long run, blaming is usually counterproductive. People become defensive and may avoid doing more than just the task in front of them. In addition, blaming makes it easy to overlook all of the reasons something went wrong. Usually, mistakes occur because of problems throughout the system.

At one point or another, almost everyone fails to really listen. Can you describe a time when you didn't listen, but instead assumed someone else had made a mistake? Or, can you recall a time that you were the one who was assumed to have made a mistake? (Examples: When forced to work overtime on a much-delayed project, I blamed another department for bungling their responsibilities, only to find out later that they hadn't been given the correct deadline. Or, when a bike was stolen out of your garage, I blamed a family member for leaving the garage door open, until I remembered that I had taken the trash out before going to bed.)

Describe your experience: _____

Based on what you've experienced and observed, how do people react when they are not listened to, or are singled out when something goes wrong? How does this affect the team? (Example: People are less likely to go out of their way to contribute, which hinders the progress of the team.)

Individual reaction

Impact on team

1. _____ 1. _____

2. _____ 2. _____

Sharing a vision requires:

**truly communicating with each other—listening,
rather than blaming. (cont'd)**

Expedition Insight

One morning of the expedition, Anne Dal Vera made what could have been a serious mistake: She forgot to secure her daypack on top of her sled. The pack contained everything she might need that day, including an extra jacket and gloves, goggles and her lunch. All of these items were necessary, and the team had no spares. Soon after the four set off, the daypack fell off Anne's sled and was left behind.

While the mistake was serious, the group resisted the impulse to point a finger at Anne. Instead, the team came up with a plan: Anne Dal Vera would go back for the pack, while Ann Bancroft would take over her sled, in addition to her own. This meant that Anne, skiing without a sled, would travel quickly. The rest of the group would keep pace with Ann and, obviously, ski more slowly.

The plan kept the time lost to a minimum. More importantly, team members remained supportive of Anne, meeting her with hugs and hot chocolate on her return. That didn't mean they ignored what had happened. In fact, the experience reinforced in everyone's mind the need to create safeguards so that it didn't happen again. After that, every morning a round of "Are the packs secured?" would go out before the group left.

Sharing a vision requires:

committing to a common goal.

"Without the team's commitment to a shared vision, I knew we didn't stand a chance," says Ann Bancroft. "But as we talked and listened to each other, we realized that we did share a vision of how we could reach our expedition's goal."

In trying to reach a challenging goal, everyone's wholehearted support is essential. Otherwise, team members may end up just going through the motions and will be less likely to give the extra effort when needed. In some cases, they may even sabotage efforts to move toward the goal.

Can you recall a time that many members of your team weren't in wholehearted agreement with, or weren't aware of, the common goal? How did the lack of commitment to the goal affect the project? (Example: A new computer system was purchased without input from the people who would use it. They quickly determined that the hardware wouldn't suit all of their needs.)

Situation	Result
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____

What is the goal of your team?

Sharing a vision requires:

committing to a common goal. (cont'd)

Do you think most members would agree with the goal you've listed? If you're not sure, it would be worthwhile to discuss this at the next team meeting.

Expedition Insight

Perhaps not surprisingly, each member of the American Women's Expedition had a strong commitment to preserving the environment. They held true to their belief, even when it meant more work and expense. For example, their decision not to leave any garbage behind meant that much of the food packaging had to be biodegradable. Their commitment also meant that the team had to carry refuse out of Antarctica, which weighed down their sleds and affected their pace.

Sharing a vision requires:

meshing personal goals with the vision for the team.

"We all had to put the team vision ahead of our own individual agendas," says Ann Bancroft. "We found out how dysfunctional and miserable we'd be if we didn't learn to work together."

Even when people are part of a group, they naturally think of their own agendas and wonder how the group's efforts will affect their own goals and careers. Realistically, it would be impossible to completely eliminate each person's self-interest.

However, each team needs to find ways to accommodate both the personal agendas of its team members and the group goal. Most times, if the group does well, everyone—no matter what his or her immediate goals are—also does well. Conversely, if each person focuses only on his or her own goals, it is likely that neither the group, nor its members, will accomplish what they set out to do.

What are your personal goals as a member of this team? List three. (Examples: Get a chance to demonstrate my skills; gain new skills, which may help in getting a new job.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How important is the success of the team to your personal goals? Circle one.

1. Not at all important.
2. Somewhat important.
3. Very important.

Sharing a vision requires:

meshing personal goals with the vision for the team. (cont'd)

One danger in organizations is that people sometimes focus on optimizing their own performance at the expense of the larger group. For example, a salesperson may extend orders to customers who have questionable abilities to pay, figuring that the employees in the credit department can worry about collecting the money.

Do any goals encourage this behavior? If so, can your team come up with a set of checks and balances? In the example, for instance, a goal of increased sales could be balanced by a goal of maintaining or reducing the percentage of uncollected accounts.

Expedition Insight

The original goal of the American Women's Expedition was to journey to the South Pole and then ski the rest of the way across Antarctica. As the team completed the trek to the Pole, it became clear that not all four team members would be able to make the rest of the trip due to health problems.

Ann Bancroft thought about continuing on with just one other team member. However, this would have nearly doubled the cost of the expedition, as two plane trips, rather than just one, would have been needed to get all four team members out of Antarctica. Given that funding for the trek came largely from donations and that each plane trip cost several hundred thousand dollars, it was clear that continuing was simply too expensive.

Talking about her decision to end the trip at the South Pole, Ann says, "It was a moment of understanding my legacy. I could have continued, but what kind of legacy would I be leaving? It wasn't about me or my goal to traverse Antarctica any longer."

Learning as a team means:

learning from mistakes.

"Don't bury your failures and problems," says Ann Bancroft. "Dig them up and sift through them for the lesson. Successful teams talk about what went wrong and how to improve. Teams that learn from experience are ready when it's time to take action."

Many times organizations don't like to talk about their mistakes, because they think that if mistakes are ignored, they will be forgotten. In addition, talking about why things went wrong means people may have to acknowledge their own shortcomings or lapses in judgment, which is always difficult. However, burying mistakes increases the chances that you'll repeat them. The key is to use mistakes as learning opportunities and move forward.

Identify one or two mistakes team members have made so far. How have the mistakes been handled? (Examples: We've ignored them; team members have talked about the mistakes informally, but we really haven't hashed them out as a group; we've talked about our mistakes and are trying to see how we can prevent another one.)

Mistake	How Handled
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____

Think through the cause(s) of the mistakes. Can you identify a pattern? For example, are people making mistakes because they haven't been adequately trained? Are they being stretched too thin?

Mistake(s)	Cause(s)
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____

Learning as a team means:

learning from mistakes. (cont'd)

Trace each mistake back to its root cause. If a pattern of mistakes is noticeable, can you work with team members to devise a way to eliminate the cause(s) of mistakes or to avoid them?

Expedition Insight

Many times, mistakes happen when groups try to stick to schedules that no longer are feasible. This had happened to the team on their Greenland training trip. The pilot, who would take the team to their starting point, had grown concerned that a storm was rolling in. Thinking he was being helpful, he loaded all of the equipment on the plane before the group could check it. It would have taken hours to unload and check the gear. If a storm had started, the team likely would not have been able to leave for a week or two. As a result, the group decided not to do a last-minute check of their equipment before leaving the airport.

When they got to the starting point, the team found that their stoves didn't work with the fuel they had. This meant no water and limited food. "We all were seasoned expeditioners," Ann says, "and knew we were breaking a cardinal rule. However, we all felt the pressure to leave while we could." Fortunately, the team was able to obtain the correct fuel, and in the end, all they lost was time.

Learning as a team means:

learning from each other.

When one team member became sick on the Greenland expedition, all of the team members pitched in. "The extra pressure sparked new energy in one of our less-confident teammates," Ann says. "She rose to the challenge, and we all learned that she had a lot more to contribute than we'd imagined."

No one has all of the answers or all of the abilities. Bigger goals can best be reached by combining strengths so that the result is more than simply the sum of the parts. For this to occur, everyone on the team must respect input from all other team members.

It can be easy to assume that someone is less knowledgeable, just because he or she is from a different department or works at a lower-level position. Many times, quieter team members are overlooked. However, ignoring someone can result in a more limited pool of information and ideas. In the end, that can hurt your team's chances of reaching its goal.

Can you recall a time when someone surprised you or the rest of your team with his or her knowledge or insights? (Examples: I assumed that someone from outside of our group wouldn't understand our situation—then I found out she had been in a similar situation elsewhere. Or, we dismissed input from someone as a complaint, only to find out that his concerns were important and valid.)

Once it became clear that the person could contribute, how did his or her input change the group or the actions you took? (Examples: We sought her advice when we ran into problems in her area of expertise. Or, we changed the outside partners, such as vendors, with whom we were working.)

Learning as a team means:

learning from each other. (cont'd)

Whom on your team do you know the least? Can you get together for lunch, or ask to "tag along" with him/her at work for several hours?

Expedition Insight

Even though all four team members were skilled, experienced explorers, each was willing and able to learn more about different ways of doing things. "Part of it was curiosity, and their general willingness to explore," Ann says. "However, everyone also knew that being open to new ideas and ways of doing things would enhance the chance of success."

Learning as a team means:

planning for communication, rather than leaving it to chance.

After a particularly discouraging time in Greenland, when it appeared that the team might not make the trek to Antarctica, Ann pulled the team together to talk about their goals, and why they were all there. "Together we learned not to leave communication to chance..." she says. "We decided that every time one of us passed another in line, we had to acknowledge the other, even if all we could muster was a grunt. It was communication, an acknowledgment of each other, and it was important."

Relationships fizzle when communication lags. People start operating under their own assumptions, little problems take on greater proportions, and it's easy to think that one's contributions aren't being appreciated.

It's important to note that lapses in communication can happen to a team of any size. At times, it is easier for this to occur in small teams, because you just assume that you're communicating. Bigger teams, on the other hand, often are more likely to establish regular schedules and procedures for communicating.

How well does your team communicate with all members on a regular basis? Circle one.

1. Not well at all.
2. We started out communicating regularly, but communication has fallen off as the project has gotten underway.
3. We communicate regularly, but not frequently enough.
4. We've got it under control.

Have you run into problems or errors because of the lack of regular communication? (Examples: Some people say that they find out about events after they should. Or, we've had to backtrack, because we haven't always had the right information at the right time.)

Learning as a team means:

planning for communication, rather than leaving it to chance. (cont'd)

As the team's experience shows, informal communication is as important as official communication. The next time you need to discuss something with a team member, use the opportunity to get to know more about the person—beyond his/her project work. A quick question about weekend plans, for example, can go a long way to begin building a relationship.

Expedition Insight

Finding the energy to communicate proved difficult after team members spent eight to fourteen hours each day skiing, and then had to take another hour or two in the morning and again at night to create their living quarters. Not communicating was counterproductive, however, as team members began to feel disconnected from the goal and from each other.

"It was better for us, in the long run, to make the physical effort to communicate, in order to get the emotional 'miles' we needed," says Ann. "In the end, this would help us get the physical miles we needed to reach our goal."

Taking action means:

recommitting to the shared vision.

"There are times on every team when certain members are down," Ann says. "As the leader, I knew I had to counteract any negative influence to protect the team and move us toward the goal together. I restated the vision, and asked them to recommit . . . which they all did. I repeated the process whenever spirits were flagging."

It's easy to assume that team members are keeping the vision front and center in their minds. However, even when the goal is straightforward and everyone is committed to achieving it, it is easy for team members to forget why they are doing what they're doing. Repeatedly talking about the vision is necessary to keep everyone moving forward and in the same direction.

When you are working on a big project, it's easy to get wrapped up in day-to-day activities and forget the larger goal. Can you think of tricks you can use to remind yourself of your goal or mission? (Examples: Write down my goal and review it regularly; acknowledge small successes along the way.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Sometimes it helps to keep a group's goal visible. How can your group do this? (Examples: Print the vision statement on all pieces of communication; hang posters that illustrate our mission.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Taking action means:

recommitting to the shared vision. (cont'd)

How often does your team review the project's goals? If it has been a while, suggest at your next team meeting that you take some time to go over the plan and review your progress.

Expedition Insight

Once the team arrived in Antarctica, the difficulty of their task loomed before them. As a result, even though team members knew that they didn't have a great deal of slack built into their schedule, it became easier to give in to the temptation to slow down, or even to find an excuse to stop. Getting to the South Pole was a long and arduous process, and it sometimes seemed that the team wasn't making much progress—obviously, a discouraging idea.

The experience taught Ann and the rest of the team the importance of keeping their goal visible. "You have to verbally do it," Ann says, "and not think that just because the goal is written on a piece of paper, that it's set in stone and everyone is thinking about it. You also can't assume that just because everyone is experienced, that you don't need to talk about your mission."

Taking action means:

working with and through other people to accomplish goals.

"Getting the team to the Pole was the most important thing to think of," Ann says. "Not to reach the Pole, but to work as a team, travel as a team. Our motto became 'Four to the Pole.'"

Being a team can take on many forms. Although the four members of the American Women's Expedition spent much of their time skiing single file in a line, Ann says, "I never worked on anything that demanded so much that we act like a team." A team is defined by its members working toward a common goal, where everyone's efforts are needed to reach it.

On the ice, the hard and soft skills of the four women had to come together so that the team could function efficiently and effectively in the unforgiving Antarctic environment. For example, instead of each member insisting on her own way of putting up a tent or building a snow wall, the group used ideas from everyone to arrive at the fastest and easiest method.

To effectively work with other people, team members have to feel confident about expressing their thoughts and making contributions. The challenge is creating an atmosphere that allows this. Rank how well your team does:

- _____ Not well at all; our meetings become pretty hostile.
- _____ Just a few people seem comfortable voicing their opinions.
- _____ We've done OK, but there's room for improvement.
- _____ We're doing great!

If improvement is needed, identify several ways that your team can enhance the atmosphere: How can we enhance the atmosphere of the group, so that everyone is comfortable taking risks and expressing ideas? (Examples: Agree to seek out ideas from all team members; stipulate that no ideas will be dismissed without fair consideration.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Taking action means:

working with and through other people to accomplish goals. (cont'd)

Brainstorming sessions, in which everyone contributes and all ideas are recorded, can be an effective way to tackle an issue, as well as to get members comfortable voicing their thoughts. What issue facing your group would be appropriate for a brainstorming session?

Expedition Insight

While the video shows just the four women who made it to the South Pole, the American Women's Expedition really comprised many more members. Approximately 150 volunteers helped to raise money and get the group packed and ready for the trip. For example, schoolchildren packed all of the Expedition food—everything from bread and butter to cookies.

Hundreds of thousands of people made financial donations. The contributions ranged from a single dollar to several thousand, although the majority of donations were under one hundred dollars.

And finally, it's important to acknowledge again the importance of the schoolchildren's enthusiasm and confidence in the team. "Sometimes, when it was tough skiing, I would look at the sled and see those 300,000 kids," Ann says. "It was enough to help me kick it in gear for several more miles."

Taking action means:

putting in a solid effort, rather than just putting in the hours.

About one-third of the way to the Pole, team members had started to ease up a bit, and weren't giving their full effort to the goal. "I went into a little tirade today about miles and days and cleaning up your act [getting enough sleep]," Ann says. "Not just putting in the hours, but putting in the miles."

On many projects, as the initial enthusiasm wears off, it's easy to become complacent or a bit sloppy about the mundane, everyday tasks that need to be done. The work involved in meeting most goals often involves many small steps, as well as a fair amount of less-than-exciting tasks. It becomes tempting to take shortcuts, figuring that the work will somehow get done or that even if it doesn't, it won't matter.

What method(s) do you use to keep your attention on and dedication to monotonous tasks? (Examples: Make it a challenge to see how quickly I can complete a task; reward myself after completing a particularly tedious job.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What jobs facing your team could use a spark? How could you put some fun into them?

- | Job | Idea |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 1. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 3. _____ |

Taking action means:

putting in a solid effort, rather than just putting in the hours. (cont'd)

Bring up your idea(s) for injecting some fun into a particular task at your next meeting.

Expedition Insight

Like most people, the members of the American Women's Expedition were vulnerable to the temptation to slack off. According to their official schedule, the foursome were to ski two hours, take a 15-minute break, and then start skiing again. However, the breaks gradually began to stretch out, so that the team was losing valuable time. As the leader, Ann often had to be the one to "blow the whistle," which wasn't fun for anyone.

Ann brought the problem before the members of the group and noted that the whole team would have to solve it. Sue Giller came up with a simple remedy: She suggested that they log just their time actually spent skiing, rather than also include breaks in their daily tally. Because the suggestion came from a team member, and not the leader, it was easier for the other team members to feel that they were part of the solution. As a result, improvement was immediate. Team members began to police their own break periods and even cut them short when things were going well.

Taking action means:

challenging yourself.

"The allure for me is exploring myself," Ann says. "How will I perform at that moment of truth? That is, to me, the real adventure."

As Ann's comment suggests, challenging ourselves is both enticing and scary. We want to see how well we can do, yet we worry about the hard work ahead, and we wonder whether we'll perform as well as we hope.

However, if we never push ourselves, we won't know just how much we can accomplish. Challenging ourselves, both individually and in a group, allows us and our team to grow. And, as the Expedition shows, it enables ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things.

Think of the last time that you challenged yourself and rose to the occasion. This could be either on or off the job. (Examples: acing a test, nailing a job interview, giving a speech.)

How did you prepare yourself to meet the goal? Which of these tactics might work for your team as it moves toward its goals? (Example: I took several practice tests before taking the real one. Similarly, our team could rehearse our presentation and ask several people from another area to act as our audience.)

What I did	What the team might do
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____

Taking action means:

challenging yourself. (cont'd)

Bring up your idea(s) on preparing for the team's goal at your next meeting.

Expedition Insight

Again, like most people, the members of the American Women's Expedition couldn't consider challenging themselves to be a once-in-a-while proposition. Rather, they trained year-round for several years to be ready for their journey to the South Pole. In the off-season, for example, each of the four would bike, climb, or run for two to four hours a day. As a training expedition drew near, they increased their workouts in intensity and duration. (It's important to note that these sessions were in addition to the members' regular jobs as outdoor educators and guides.)

The group-training expeditions also were critical, because they gave the four members an opportunity to find the most effective way to use their skills and talents in unison.

We are transformed by:

working together and challenging ourselves to meet a common goal.

"In the end, this is what transforms people: working together on something they believe in strongly," says Ann Bancroft.

Many people told the members of the American Women's Expedition that there was no way four women could make it to the South Pole—that the physical and emotional rigors of the trip would be too much for them. Of course, the group proved them wrong and, in the process, made history.

While the goal of the American Women's Expedition was unique, their success shows how ordinary people, working together, can accomplish great things. Each of us has the power to make a difference in our workplaces, communities, and families. Doing our best to change things is profoundly rewarding and exciting.

Think back to the achievement you previously listed. What impact has reaching that goal had on you? (Examples: Increased my self-confidence; gained a better understanding of myself.)

Assume your team reaches its goal. What effect will this have on you?

How do you think others in your group will feel?

We are transformed by:

working together and challenging ourselves to meet a common goal. (cont'd)

Expedition Insight

"You know when you jump off to start a new project that you will be changed, but you're not sure how," says Ann Bancroft. "That's what makes it an adventure."

For Ann, the expedition gave her a better understanding of her strengths and weaknesses. As a result, she is more comfortable delegating tasks at which she isn't an expert. The trip also taught her a great deal about how to motivate people. Finally, she adds, "More than anything, the trip showed me the power that each of us has to make a difference. It's important that we use that power by voting, speaking up, and getting involved."



26 East Exchange Street Suite 600
St. Paul, MN 55101

www.starthrower.com

1-800-242-3220