

# *“Intolerance of Intolerance” Diversity Awareness Corner*



*Beyond This Place... There Be Dragons!*

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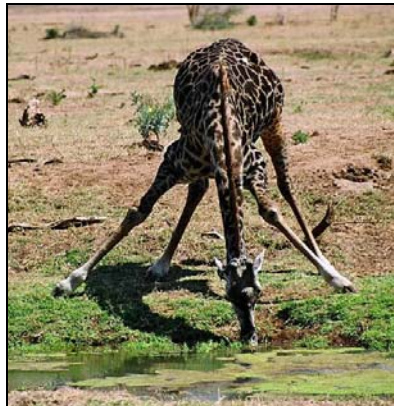
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## ***BUILDING A BETTER TEAM***



Team. We have heard so much about how important “team building” is to any organization in recent years. If you ask just about any leader if it is important for employees to function as a “team,” you will most certainly hear a resounding, “Yes!” We want everyone working together towards the same unified goal, which is:

**The success of the organization.**

All of this sounds just fine ... except for one small hitch.

**We often try and build teams with emotional children.**

You cannot have a true team with emotionally immature people. Why? Because they are so intolerant of others that their egos get in the way. When one team member disagrees with another, their egos become bruised. Their self-awareness is just about “nil” because they cannot stand for anyone else to have an opinion different from theirs or they are so afraid of offending others by disagreeing with them that they remain silent when their opinion should be heard.

If someone is an emotional child, they simply cannot take criticism or admit the fact that they might possibly be wrong. As a result, the goal and focus of the individual team members quickly turns to getting even with someone who dared to disagree with them, or to sabotage another team member to make them look bad, or not speaking up at all out of fear that another team member might be offended.

I recently was speaking with a client who told me her company planning on doing some teambuilding with their managers. I asked the human resource person how they intended to go about building this team atmosphere. The HR person then started to explain to me that they were bringing in a consultant to go through some exercises with them so they could practice working together towards the common good. The trainer also had some materials they would go over in class that showed them how to go about working together and building familiarity with each other in order to establish this new team environment. The process had some very specific steps the managers were to follow in order to *build this familiarity* with each other, as well as how they could maintain this focus and strive towards their common goal.

I continued to listen to the program that was being implemented. The HR person then asked me, “Well, what do you think?”

“I think it sounds very logical and designed very well ... but it is not going to work,” I responded.

“Why not?” the HR person asked me. “This program has a wonderful reputation. I went through it in Chicago and I loved it.”

“That’s great. But I am not hearing anything at all that even remotely addressed the emotional intelligence of your people. I have met your people, and the problem you have right now is that the vast majority of them have lousy self-awareness, which means their egos cannot take being wrong. When someone disagrees with them, they rip each other to shreds, either right there on the spot, or most likely later in a passive aggressive fashion. If you do not address the level of emotional intelligence of a team first, ***TEAM BUILDING IS IMPOSSIBLE ... PERIOD.***”

I then continued to explain. “The idea behind having a team is that all of the team members speak up when they see an issue in order to solve whatever problem is on the table. In order to do this, the team members must have trust in one another, which means that each team member feels it is “safe” to speak up. However, if a team member does not feel that it is their place to speak up, which is a “role” issue, or if they feel that it is not safe to speak up, most people would rather bite off their tongues than risk speaking up.”

“It is a lot like giraffes,” I explained. “The only time a giraffe is vulnerable to prey, such as lions, is when they get a drink of water. So, where do you suppose the lions hang out in the Serengeti?”

“By the water hole,” the HR person responded.

“Right,” I told her. “So, when a giraffe comes walking up to the water hole and sees a bunch of lions licking their lips, what do you suppose the giraffes do?”

The HR person laughed a bit and said, “Well, I doubt if they get a drink.”

“That’s right,” I explained. “They will stand there and wait. They will not get a drink of water because it is not safe. Actually, the giraffes will go without water for so long that they will fall over dead from dehydration rather than risk getting a drink with the lions sitting so close. **That** is what your employees will do. They will just stand there and not say a word because it is not safe to speak up due to all of the shallow egos in the room, which indicates emotional intelligence issues. They would rather bite their tongues off, or even risk termination rather than assume the risk of speaking up in an unsafe environment. Unless you build a safe environment, which means building trust with emotionally intelligent people, your program is doomed before it even begins.”

Emotional intelligence must precede every managerial skill, which includes teambuilding. Building trust is not a logical issue. It is an emotional one. As a result, so is team building, and you simply cannot do that emotionally immature people.

### ***CONFLICT BUILDS TRUST & TEAM***

Although it sounds contradictory, “trust” is actually built primarily through conflict ... that is, when conflict occurs in an honest respectful manner.

Think of how you will react if your boss, Mr. Dithers, calls to you and says:

“Ah, Scott? I need you to come in here to see me. We have to talk about some things.”

If there is not any trust in the relationship, we will instantly get a chill up our spine and our minds will flood with ANTS. (Automatic Negative Thoughts) Am I in trouble? What did I do wrong? Am I going to get fired? These are the types of thoughts that race through our minds. All of these thoughts are ANTS.

However, what if Mr. Dithers had spent time discussing various topics with me and disagreeing with me in an honest respectful manner? What if Dithers had asked my opinion on various matters in the past, disagreed with me, and I saw that disagreeing with him was OK? Actually, what if Mr. Dithers actually **used** my opinions to brainstorm ... to get his ideas rolling as well? I would soon see that I could disagree with Dithers, and that is actually what he wants to have happen, and he would think more of me for it. **THAT** builds trust and relationships.

Anyone who has ever seen the television show “House” has seen these relationships and trust built with his staff through conflict. This is exactly what Dr. House does with his team of doctors. Diagnosing his patients is House’s primary goal ... and he is not concerned with who comes up with the solution or who gets the credit. (Isn’t it amazing what can be accomplished when no one is concerned with who gets the credit?)

As a result, House and his staff brainstorm over all of the various symptoms the patient exhibits in order to diagnose the problem. They disagree. They argue. House makes his little snippy sarcastic remarks. All of this is “safe” to do because that is what is expected. Actually, if a physician *does not* interact with his/her opinions and take risks, that doctor gets fired.

**REMEMBER: No one believes anything you say. They watch what you do.**

In other words, don’t tell me that I can trust you ... prove it. That is what House is actually doing. He never tells anyone that they will not get fired for disagreeing with him. Instead, he proves it. He engages them, and rewards them for engaging him back. THAT proves to others that they can disagree with you and that is OK. Actually, it proves that is what is expected.

Honest respectful conflict builds trust because it proves to everyone that I can disagree with you and **THAT IS OK**. If such a relationship is not fostered, then most people will not speak up. In fact, most people would rather “crash and burn” rather than speak up and voice their contrary opinions in an unsafe environment.

Understanding that trust is really built through honest respectful conflict, and therefore a team, has changed the way crew members, such as co-pilots, are trained. In the early 1990s, it was discovered that 80% of all airline crashes were caused by pilot error *that could have been prevented* if the cockpit crew had worked together more harmoniously. In other words, if the others in the cockpit had not been so intimidated by the pilot, who is “God” on an airplane, then they might have spoken up when they saw the pilot make a mistake and prevented the crash. (“Emotional Intelligence,” Daniel Goleman p. 148; Carl Lavin, “When Moods Affect Safety: Communications in a Cockpit Mean a Lot a Few Miles Up,” “The New York Times” June 26, 1994.)

Now, wouldn’t you think if you were a co-pilot sitting in a cockpit and you saw the pilot make a mistake that could possibly crash the airplane, wouldn’t you speak up? I mean, choosing between possibly embarrassing the pilot on one hand and dying in a ball of flames on the other, wouldn’t you think you would speak up? Actually, the answer is “no.” In many such instances, far too many co-pilots simply kept quiet and let the airplane crash.

Today, airline crew members are trained in simulators where they are encouraged again and again and again to speak up when they disagree with a pilot’s decision. By repeating this exercise again and again and again, the crew members form new habits: They are trained to automatically respond and speak up when they see a potential problem. In the end, the co-pilot sees that it is safe to speak up, even if he or she is wrong, to the point that real trust is built. As a result, a team is born.

In reality, what these crew members are doing is “rewiring” their “low road” neural pathways through the amygdalas in such a way that responding to potential problems becomes second nature. The split second reaction is to now speak up rather than retreat.

However, the pilots also understand that it is the crew members’ job and responsibility to speak up if they see something that might be wrong. They must make deposits into their crew members’ “Trust Accounts” by reinforcing the fact that they want to hear what the crew thinks ... just like House.

Unfortunately, most managers prove just the opposite to their employees. They do not want to hear what their people think. In fact, if their people do voice a contrary opinion, these employees suffer the consequences. In the end, these inept managers prove to everyone that they in fact cannot be trusted ... that speaking up is not safe, so no one does. In the end, you have such disasters like we had with the space shuttles Challenger and Columbia.

Before 1986, several employees noticed that there was a problem with the O-rings on Challenger. Many of these NASA employees spoke up and brought this issue to management’s attention. In fact, some wrote reports outlining precisely what was wrong with these O-rings on the Challenger Space Shuttle, which in not corrected presented a very high probability they would fail if it was launched in temperatures of less than 56 degrees Fahrenheit.

You would think that such vital news from bona fide NASA rocket scientists would be hard to take, but it would be acted upon quickly. However, instead of acting upon these reports, the NASA employees who spoke up were fired.

And of course, as history revealed on January 28, 1986, these people were right. Challenger exploded 73 seconds after launch. Not only did seven astronauts lose their lives, but the trust throughout the organization was shot. Few in the organization would speak up after that out of fear of from management reprisals. NASA management had proven that it could not be trusted.

After I presented this program to one of my clients, a municipality in the Columbus, Ohio area, I got a real treat. The mayor came up to me afterwards and said, “You know, my father retired from NASA.”

I responded by saying, “Really. Was he there during Challenger?”

“Oh, yes,” she responded. “Actually, that was why he retired. He was so disgusted over how the problem with the O-rings was handled by NASA management that he just couldn’t work there anymore. Everyone knew that these O-rings were bad. Everyone. Even the janitors knew they were bad and it was only a matter of time before it blew up. It was common knowledge.”

Seventeen years later, there was a problem with the heat shields on the space shuttle Columbia. Of course, even though management might have professed how much it valued “team work,” the fear of reprisals for voicing a contrary opinion still loomed large throughout the entire culture. Few dared to speak up after seeing what had happened to those employees who spoke up after a problem with Challenger was discovered. As a result, the problem went unresolved and on February 3, 2003, the

space shuttle Columbia disintegrated on re-entry when its heat shields failed. Again, seven more astronauts died.

Are they smart at NASA? Think about it: They really are “rocket scientists!” But then, that is just all the more reason people “**get too big for your britches.**”

*This* is why “really, really smart people do really, really stupid things”. In the end, the U.S. Senate report cited “gross mismanagement” for the reason why Challenger and Columbia exploded.

However, this is also why NASA started its own internal Diversity/Tolerance Program in 2006:

**To get rocket scientists to talk to each other.**

Uncontrolled ego kills trust, which kills team.

REMEMBER: No one believes anything you tell them. They watch what you do.

(I often wonder if the executives who made the decisions to terminate the NASA employees who spoke up about the defects in the space shuttles, and who also made the decisions to launch Challenger and Columbia in spite of these warnings would have made the same decisions if their family members were on board. I assume it would be a lot easier to keep your ego under control when your priorities change in this manner.)

You can tell people that they can trust you all you want. They will not believe you until you prove it to them. Of course, this means disagreeing with them and showing them that “that’s OK,” just like they do with co-pilots today.

*It Is Amazing What Can Be Accomplished When No One Is Concerned Over Who Gets The Credit*

## **WHO...Is Responsible For Solving This Problem?**

### **Can You Solve This Problem?**

You work at Kaiser Aluminum in Heath, Ohio in 1985. You are making chain link fence today.

The process begins with a solid aluminum ingot about half the length of a telephone pole and about one foot in diameter. The ingot is then “drawn down” to about one-quarter inch in diameter. Of course, if you draw an aluminum ingot that is one foot in diameter down to about one-quarter inch in diameter, that ingot becomes a strand of wire that is *very* long. This strand of wire is then wound onto a spool. Each spool weighs about 1,000 pounds.

However, your customer does not want several spools of wire weighing 1,000 pounds each. Instead, the customer wants you to deliver larger spools of this wire ... about 10,000 pounds each. Therefore, you need to weld the ends of these 1,000 pound spools together and then wind them onto one large spool weighing 10,000 pounds each.

So, after you weld the ends of these smaller 1,000 pound spools together, you then wind them onto a larger spool, which will hold ten smaller spools.

If you look at the diagram below, you will see several 1,000 pound spools of wire. Once these ends are welded together, they will run through these “wire guides” at lightening speed and will be wound onto this much larger spool found on the far right. As this wire winds onto this larger spool, the spool moves back and forth so the wire will wind up evenly, just like an automatic garden hose winder does in your backyard.

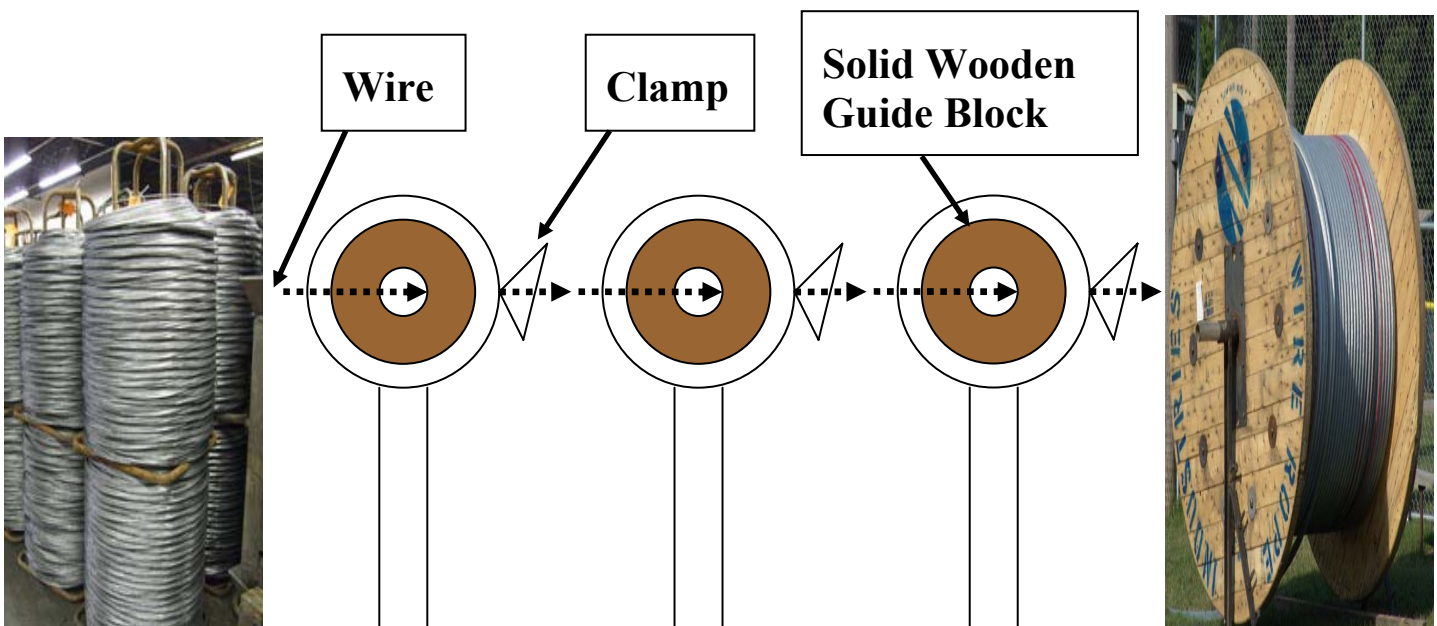
However, as this wire shoots through these guides, the wire rubs against the solid wooden block. Once this wooden block wears through, which it will do every eight to ten hours, it must be replaced so the wire will not scratch itself on the steel guide.

So, the workers on the line must stop the machine, cut the wire, open up the steel clamps on each of the guides, unthread the wire, put new solid wooden blocks in place, close the steel clamps over the new blocks of wood, re-thread the wire back through the new wooden blocks, re-weld the wire back together again and then re-start the machine. This process can take up to 20 minutes.

Kaiser Aluminum has been following this process for 40 years. This is a very expensive process because the company loses approximately \$10,000.00 per hour when it is down.

Can you think of a better way to do all of this? The only purpose the wooden blocks serve is to cushion the wire as it flies through the guides so it does not get scratched. What would you do to make this a more efficient and cost effective process?

Also, **WHOSE** job is it to come up with a solution?



## *Solutions?*

### **So ... what did you come up with to solve this problem?**

Some of the answers that groups often come up include using a different kind of block rather than a wooden one, such as a plastic polymer of some kind so it would take longer to wear through, oiling the wire to reduce the friction as it flies through the wooden block, and even designing a suspension system that hangs from the ceiling so that the guides sway back and forth in order to reduce friction. All of these are very good ideas.

This issue arose when I was working my way through graduate school at The Ohio State University as an employee on the factory floor. The engineers looked at it and came up with all kinds of marvelous ideas. Management came up with other ideas as well.

However, it was a little guy who had worked in the tool and die shop for years who came up with the idea we could put into place immediately. His name was Melvin.

No one paid much attention to Melvin. Since Melvin worked with grease all day making the dies slippery enough for the wire to be drawn down without scratching or stretching unevenly, he was kind of “grimy.” For example, on pot luck days, Melvin was always asked to bring the bread ... with a receipt. In other words, people avoided Melvin, and this tended to tick him off a bit. Melvin was ... “different.”

At one meeting where we were all discussing how we could save money for the company, and on this issue with the chain link fence wire in particular, Melvin softly chimed in and said, “Why don’t you just cut the block in half?”

Melvin then took another bite from his sandwich. There was a pregnant pause in the room as everyone just looked at each other. It was so simple it was brilliant ... and it came from Melvin.

“Will that work?” we asked, thinking the block would slip out of the steel clamp since it would have weak points.

“Sure it will work,” Melvin said without looking up from his lunch. “I’ve tried it a few times when you were all on break. It works fine.”

So, we all went back to the die shop where Melvin cut the block in half, put it in the steel clamp and started up the machine. He was right. It worked perfectly.

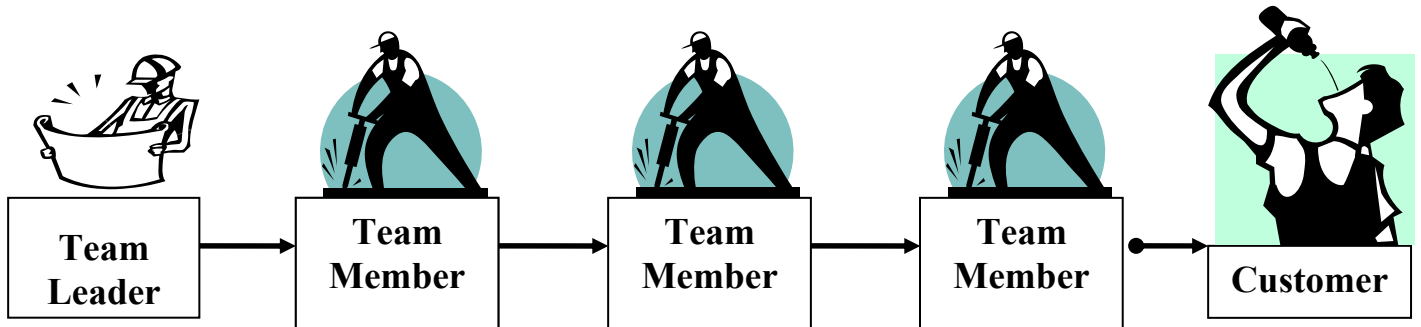
Why did Melvin never say anything? Kaiser was on the verge of bankruptcy and Melvin was just walking around with this idea in his pocket that would save the company tens of thousands of dollars and who knows how many union jobs.

When I asked Melvin why he never said anything before now, he responded, “I don’t tell them anything.”

Apparently, according to Melvin, “them” was management.

## How Does A Team Work?

### Is This It?



### What Are The Problems With This Flow...And Does It Matter?

Is this how you would diagram a team? Is a team linear, where one person gives a directive to someone else, who gives it to someone else, and so on with no opportunity for feedback or correction?

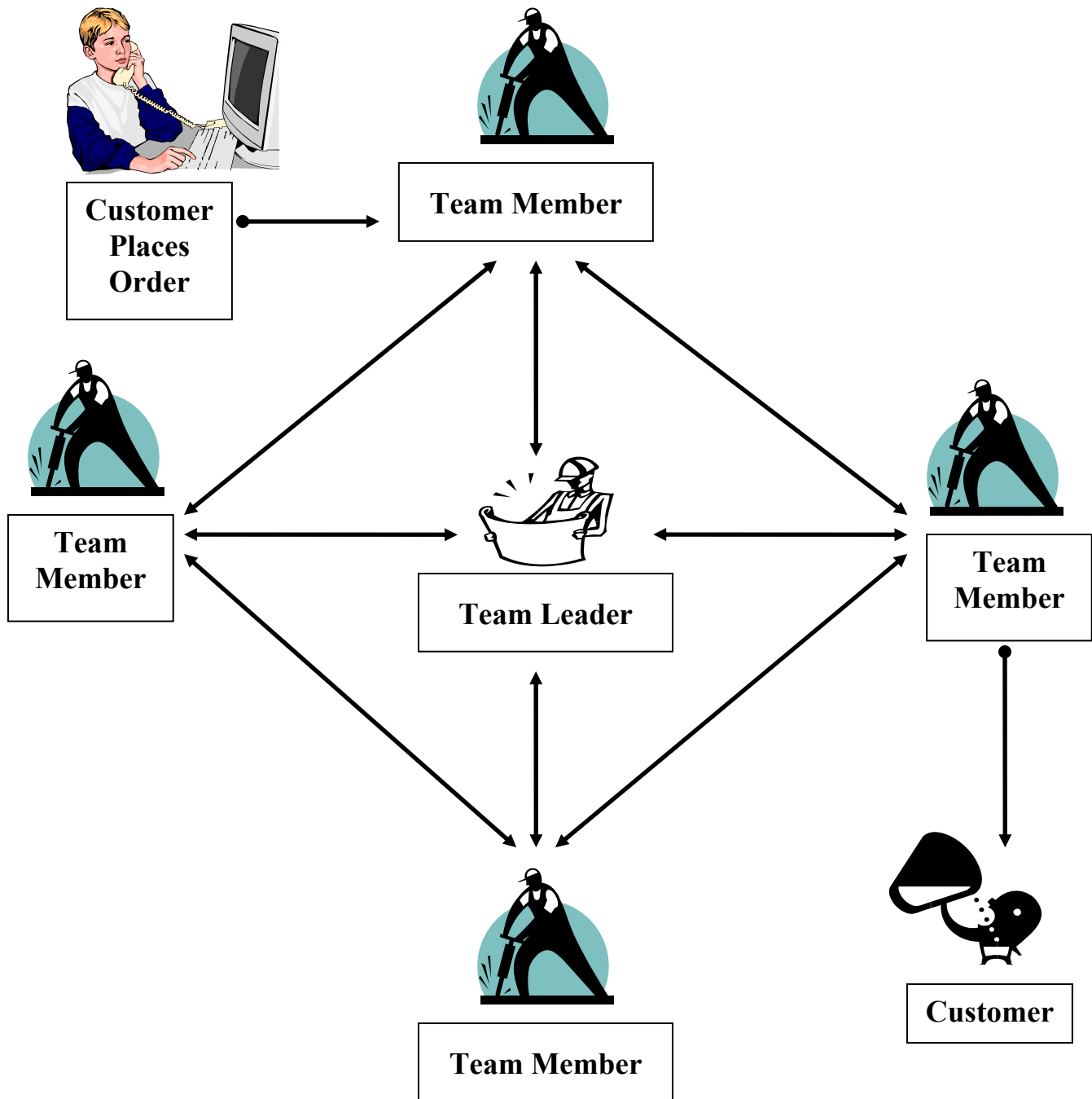
What would happen if this was how an organization worked?

*IS* this how most so-called “teams” work?

## What Would Be A Better Flow?

# How Does A Team Work?

## Is This It?



# Is This “Team Diagram” Better?

In this diagram, anyone can bring up any issue to anyone else. Anyone can “stop the line” or the process if they see a problem. Even though the team leader is in the center, the arrows of communication go in all directions. If an issue arises, or if someone sees a way to improve the process, any team member can bring it up to any other team member, or they can bring it up to the team leader. It is all a very logical process. But then, teams are not built on logic. They are built on trust, which is an emotional issue, not a logical one.

So, as you might have noticed in this illustration, an under age teenager is ordering beer on line. Let’s say the team member who took the order did not properly verify the customer’s age and actually placed the order for this youngster. If the original team member missed this very important fact, whose job is it to catch the error and speak up?

If *you* caught the error just before the order was completed, should you speak up? Really? Now think about this for a minute:

- If you speak up and reveal the error, what will your other team members think?
- Will your co-workers shun you for exposing the mistake of a fellow employee?
- Will the team member who made the error be upset with you for exposing the mistake? Can this person’s ego take being exposed for making a mistake?
- Will the team leader be an “attacker” and crucify the person for the mistake, or will he/she be a teacher and educate the person so the problem does not happen again?

In the end, it is all about building trust. If it is not safe to bring up issues, and if you do not work with emotionally intelligent people who understand that the main goal is the success of the organization and not to feed their ego, then the team will have a much better chance of functioning properly.

If not, it won’t. It is that simple.



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Scott travels the country presenting his revolutionary “**TOLERANCE FOR HUMANS: ANTS, Trolls And Emotionally Intelligent Communicators,**” which focuses on the **FOUR BASIC SKILLS** needed to combat **ANY** type of bigotry/bullying/harassment employees encounter in the workplace, rather than the traditional “Culturally-Based” types of programs that focus on only a few select different cultures. Scott’s program teaches the importance of becoming an Emotionally Intelligent Communicator, which leads to a more tolerant workforce between managers and employees, men and women, Muslims and Christians, odd people and “more odd” people and so on.

Scott’s clients include the Ohio Department of Administrative Services, The Ohio State University, Area Agency on Aging, Skyline Chili, The Ohio Supreme Court, Heinz Frozen Foods, Boeing, Honeywell, International Truck & Engine, MTD Products (Cub Cadet and Bolens Lawn Products), Honda of North America, Utah State Workforce Development, etc.

Scott’s academic background and awards include:

- Masters degree in Labor and Human Resources: The Ohio State University
- Capital University College of Law (Class Valedictorian (1st out of 233))
- The Human Resource Association of Central Ohio’s Linda Kerns Award for Outstanding Creativity in the Field of Human Resource Management and the Ohio State Human Resource Council’s David Prize for Creativity in Human Resource Management

***Solving Employee Problems BEFORE They Happen!***