

# Keys to Getting Team Players On-Side

## Practice Leadership: Influencing

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**Q:** I'm part of a large team working on a new software release project that promises to provide our customers with new and improved functioning. We are at the midway point and I see an opportunity where two steps could merge, resulting in an even better outcome than planned. I anticipate some resistance — how do I present this to my peers to maximize the chance of acceptance?

**A:** Having the ability to influence others is a valuable leadership skill. Good communication is key, and planning your approach will help you anticipate challenges in persuading your colleagues. It will also provide you with foresight and a chance to assess the potential risk involved. Here are some questions to provoke thought: Who are the key players and what roles do they play? How will this change impact them personally? What is my compelling reason for recommending this change? What is my bias, and what is theirs? Identify the gaps — if any exist, addressing them improves your chances of success. Think about how you will negotiate to move everyone towards a mutually beneficial result. Decide whether to communicate your idea one-on-one or to the team; both have merit. Consider talking first to the decision-makers in your group — if you have them on board, they can provide further insight and help advocate your initiative to others. A team approach may have some people less willing to voice concerns in front of others, which could eventually derail you. To promote a safe environment so collaboration can take place, establish the ground rules up front, such as respecting each other's opinions and keeping common gain front and centre. There are some good resources available to help. One of my clients recommends *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, by Robert Cialdini.

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