



## Success Teams



*Description by Sabine Schmelzer, President BPW Switzerland*

### 1 Where Does It Originate?

#### 1.1 Origin

The idea of success teams comes originally from Barbara Sher from the USA. She wrote books about it and installed success teams many years ago.

The idea was brought to Germany by Ulrike Bergmann, a BPW from Munich. Then BPW Frankfurt heard of it and started the first success team in September 2003. There were five members in the first success team, each with a different goal. As it was a great success and the idea fit extraordinarily well to the aims of BPW to support professional women, Frankfurt regularly started new success teams. Twice a year all club members are invited via e-mail. Every BPW who is interested may join and come to the kick-off meeting.

Sabine Schmelzer, formerly member of BPW Frankfurt, joined her first success team in March 2006. Her goal was to move to Switzerland, which she realized at the end of 2006. She took the idea with her to Switzerland and spread it there as well as in other countries she has contacts with.

We collected this description to forward this excellent idea to BPW all over the world.

#### 1.2 BPW Frankfurt

As mentioned before BPW Frankfurt starts success teams twice a year. How do they do it? First there is an invitation e-mail to all members (only members can join the success teams) that a new team is about to start. Naturally, mainly those who want some change in their lives are interested in the concept.

Do you want to change jobs, get a step ahead in your career, to start a new education or write a book? Whatever your goals are, you probably made some attempts already, but it took too long or you were not really moving ahead. Then joining a success team is a good solution for you.

Success teams provide you with support and encouragement from other members and they also increase self-discipline by regular meetings. Thus initiating or participating in a success team will help you to reach your goal more efficiently.

The kick-off in Frankfurt is done by a member of a former success team. She explains how it works and what rules the team has to observe. There are basic guidelines distributed which contain the main points which everyone should know. Afterwards the team will have its first meeting along the lines provided. Its members organize their regular meetings and manage the process all by themselves.

### 2 What Do You Need?

#### 2.1 Trust, Confidence, Open-mindedness

Within the group you need trust, confidence and open-mindedness from every member. There might come times where not everything is going forward as planned and then it will help to be able to talk about those experiences as well. There should be no competition among the members. There is no right or wrong way of doing things; every member chooses her own way and speed to develop her personal path towards her goal. The team offers a supporting environment which will help also through frustrating phases.

#### 2.2 Commitment, Assistance and Encouragement

Each member should be committed to participate in the team for the period agreed at the beginning. Some might reach their goals earlier than others. But they should commit to participate in all the meetings until the very end. The members should be supportive and encouraging to help each other with their experience, knowledge and contacts. That's why you joined the success team in the first place. You will get support from the others in as much as you provide assistance to them.

#### 2.3 Team Size

The success team should consist of 3 to 6 members. This number should not be exceeded, as every person has a time slot of 20 to 30 minutes during meetings. With 6 members, the meeting time will run to about 3 hours in total. Having more attendants can easily cause exhaustion and frustration among members. Particularly when meeting after work, it is more effective to limit the number on a team to 4 or 5.

#### 2.4 Goals

Each member should have her personal goal. The goal should fit the SMART formula:

**S - specific**

**M - measurable**

**A - attainable**

**R - realistic**

**T - timely**

**Specific** - A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. Ask questions such as: What do I want to accomplish? In which time? And where?

**EXAMPLE:** A general goal would be, "Get in shape", while a specific goal states, "Join a health club within two weeks and work out 3 days a week."

**Measurable** - Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the realization of your goal. When measuring your progress, it is easier to stay on track, to reach your target dates, and to experience the exhilaration of achievement that spurs you on to continue your efforts to achieve your goals.

To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions such as: How much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?

**Attainable** - When you identify goals that are most important to you, begin by figuring out ways that will help you to achieve them. In this case you will develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach them. You start to see previously overlooked opportunities that will bring you closer to what you want to achieve.

You can achieve almost any of the goals you set when planning your steps wisely and establish a time frame that allows you to carry out those steps. Goals that may have seemed far away and out of reach eventually come closer and become achievable, not because your goals shrink, but because you grow and expand to match them. When you list your goals you support your self-worth. You see yourself as worthy of these goals, and develop the personality traits that allow you to possess them.

**Realistic** - To be realistic, a goal must represent an objective toward which you are both willing and able to work. A goal can be both high and realistic; you are the only one who can decide just how high your goal should be. But be sure that every goal represents substantial progress. A high goal is frequently easier to reach than a low one because a low goal contains lower motivational power. Some of the hardest jobs you ever accomplished actually seem easy simply because they were a labor of love.

Your goal is probably realistic if you truly believe that it can be accomplished. Additional ways to know if your goal is realistic is to determine if you have accomplished something similar in the past. You could also ask yourself what conditions have to exist to accomplish this goal.

**Timely** - A goal should be grounded within a time frame. With no time frame tied to it there's no sense of urgency. If you want to lose 10 lbs, by which date do you want to lose them? "Someday" won't work. But if you anchor **it within a timeframe, e.g. "by May 1st"**, then you've set your unconscious mind into motion to begin working toward the goal.

Success teams meet for a limited time of 6 to 12 months. If you have a really big goal for which you need a lot of money or an additional education, it may be possible that you don't reach the final goal because you need more time. But, with the success team, you will come much closer to it than by yourself.

## 2.5 Timeframe

The commitment period for the success team is usually limited to 6 to 12 months. This should be determined at the start. The timeframe depends on the member's goals and their needs for support.

If several persons are looking for a new job, which may include moving to another city or country, a period of 6 months might be enough. If you want to start your own business or company you will need some more months.

Discuss right at the beginning, how long the members are willing to commit. Discuss possible implications, like "What will happen, if someone really has to move to another city because of a new job?" A good start is an initial 6-months period, with the option to prolong after that time.

## 2.6 Location for Meetings

The best option is to meet at somebody's home or at a meeting room as this provides a calm and comfortable atmosphere. The hostess has to provide for some (non-alcoholic) drinks. Offering food will consume too much time and drains attention during meetings.

If you don't have any of those opportunities, look for a calm bar or restaurant where you can meet, preferably in a separate room. You definitely need a location without music or any other distractions.

If you want to have dinner together, use it to celebrate a milestone or other achievements. Room for chit-chat is necessary, but keep it strictly separate from your "teamwork time".

## 3 How Does It Work?

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### 3.1 Kick-off Meeting

Start a new success team with a kick-off for all members interested. In this initial meeting talk about the following points:

- What is a success team (content of this paper)?
- What are the rules and guideline for meetings?
- Introduction of each participant
- Who has which goal?
- How often and where do we want to meet?
- For how long do we want to commit?
- Find the date(s) for the next meeting(s).

Sometimes goals are not yet clear for everyone, especially with regard to the criteria measurable and time. Define everyone's goal as precisely as possible with the help of the other members. If this is not done in the kick-off meeting, do it at the next regular meeting.

### 3.2 Meeting Time

This depends on you how often you want to meet and how much time you can provide besides your normal schedule. Agree on a rhythm that suits everybody. Usually meetings every 2 to 3 weeks are a good timeframe to do your "homework" between meetings. Longer period between meetings should be avoided in order to keep the energy level high.

The meetings follow a proven structure. Each member has an allotted period of time which depends on the size of the group. If there are three members only, everybody is allotted 30 minutes for her report and the group's support; for a group of five or six restrict the allotted time to 20 or 25 minutes each.

### 3.3 Meeting Structure

**At the beginning** find a time-keeper and a keeper of the minutes. The time-keeper is in charge of controlling that each member gets the same amount of time (20 to 30 minutes) and keeps that timeframe. The minutes of the meeting don't have to be detailed. It is important that each member's tasks (what she wants to achieve until the next meeting) are written down and distributed to everyone.

Start always on time. Don't wait for those who arrive later. This will cost too much time.

As mentioned, each member has the same amount of time for the following points:

#### A) Information About the Current Situation (appr. 5 minutes)

- What has happened since the last meeting?
- Which steps did I take?
- What did I achieve?
- What was successful, what not?

## **B) Mutual Support** (appr. 15 - 20 minutes)

- Where did I slow down?
- Which information do I need to move ahead?
- What might help me in this situation/with a specific issue?

## **C) Homework/Tasks to Complete until Next Meeting** (appr. 2 - 5 minutes)

- Which steps will I take until the next meeting?
- What else am I willing to do?

The first part is done by the member herself. During the second and the third part the others can assist and encourage with their knowledge and experience. Some groups find it beneficial to establish a rule that a member needs to ask for help or suggestions. As sometimes we are all shy to ask for help this might be something that needs practice.

End of meeting: Define the date or dates for the next meeting(s). Leading a busy life, some groups define two or three dates in advance.

## **4 FAQs**

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### **4.1 How Can We Start Success Teams in Our Club?**

Start with explaining the idea of success teams during a regular meeting or a separate presentation to your members. If they don't know what it can offer they will not join. After this initial presentation ask, who is interested. You may also distribute a list for people to sign in.

With those interested arrange a date for a kick-off meeting about 2 to 4 weeks later.

Decide if you want to restrict a success Team only to members or if you want to open it for everyone. Restricting it provides an incentive for non-members to join your club.

### **4.2 Do We Need a Moderator/Facilitator?**

In general you don't need a facilitator. As business and professional women we are used to work in a professional manner. It should come natural to find a time-keeper and a keeper of the minutes. These roles are to be switched around in every meeting, so that everyone is assigned with one of the responsibilities from time to time. It also provides an opportunity to develop new skills.

You may find it helpful to have someone from a former success team to introduce the various aspects of this paper to the new members at the kick-off. Any insights and experiences are beneficial for the new team

### **4.3 Are There Any Costs Involved?**

If you meet at a restaurant or bar, there will be costs for catering. If you meet at someone's home or in a meeting room, you may want to share the costs for drinks or little snacks.

If you invite someone from another club to facilitate the kick-off meeting, you should take care of her travelling costs.

### **4.4 Drinking and Eating**

Always consider that you are meeting for business and to support each other. Thus drinking and eating are not the most important part of a success team meeting. If you start with dinner before the formal meeting it may result in rather extended meetings.

If you meet at somebody's home and she prepares snacks and drinks, everybody should contribute some money for it. Or someone else cares for the snacks at the next meeting.

### **4.5 Someone Wants to Quit**

It can happen that someone wants to quit early for various reasons, mostly during one of the first few meetings. In this situation you can either look for someone to replace this person (if you are a small team) or you just go on with a reduced number of participants.

### **4.6 Can Someone Join Later?**

In the first two or three months it might occur that someone wants to join the team or that you want to replace a member that left the team early. Even though it might seem a good solution, it is not recommended after the third meeting. At that time the team has found its own way of dealing with each other and a good basis of trust has been established which may easily be disturbed by a "new kid on the block".