

## The Power of a Team

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With spring just around the corner, we look at the awakening of the earth with fresh and expectant eyes. Nature is coming into full bloom with rain-washed, vibrant colors. Our hearts begin to sing, so to speak, as everything revives from the long, cold days of winter. All things in nature work in harmony together to create a fresh and colorful landscape for us to live in and enjoy. It is as if all of nature begins again with a new determination to produce fresh flowers, food and weather for mankind to enjoy. Nature is a magnificent team of elements working together for the good of the world.

This landscape helps to remind us that as people living in nature, we have a responsibility to each other to help make things better. We are, in essence, a team with others and with nature. We can carry this concept even further and apply these principles to our profession of acupuncture and Oriental medicine.

Acupuncturists are a team. *Webster's* dictionary defines a "team" as a group of people joining in cooperative activity. A wise man once defined a team as a group of people who go out of their way to help one another, in order to make others look great. I have thought much about this last definition because it has been hanging in my office for almost a year. I have read it every day and have pondered its message from time to time.

Just recently, I attended an open meeting at which many acupuncturists sat around a large square of tables to talk about the conditions of the political landscape in California. This state has not been successful in its legislative efforts for several years. There seems to be a conflict about ideas, methods of reaching a successful conclusion and what would be beneficial for the profession. Maybe this is not a sharp disagreement of ideas, but more of an issue of language and translation, and of building bridges of trust.

One of the basic building blocks of professional team building is promoting the feeling that every acupuncturist is unique and adds value to the arena of Oriental medicine. There are three main questions that must be considered during the process of team building. How can we build teams? Where do we need to build teams? What is the benefit of having and or being involved in a team? Let's examine these questions one by one.

### How Can We Build Teams?

The answer is not easy, but one of the most effective methods for building teams involves networking. This simply means that each member of the profession reaches out to one other person and builds a relationship of trust. In my practice management classes, I teach that in order to get a referral, three things must happen:

- The person, business or other medical provider that is referring must know you or your

reputation. At the beginning of a practice lifetime, when someone is a new practitioner, they do not have a reputation (good or bad), so someone must know their name. How many of the practitioners do you know in your own town? Do you have a practitioner you trade treatments with, in order to keep your own health in tip-top condition?

- The referring party must believe that the interventions you are going to do will help the person they are going to refer.
- The element of trust is the key factor when someone is referring. They must trust you.

Receiving a referral is somewhat the same process of building a team within this profession. I believe this profession must begin the process of building trust with its members and between all of the associations. Simply stated, it must be less *me* and more *we*.

### Where Do We Build Teams?

Team building must be done in every city, county and state. Then we can move from state to state. Yes, each state in this country has its own set of laws and regulations, but we are all in this together. At present, the acupuncture and Oriental medicine profession is like a bunch of people in a moving elevator - we're all there together, but no one really seems willing to talk to one another. Instead, we need to be a bunch of people on an elevator that is broken - forced to think and work as a team to come up with a solution.

Vince Lombardi, the famous football coach, once said, "Individual commitment to a group effort is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work." Teamwork is what makes a profession as well as professional organizations work.

### How Does the Profession Benefit From Team Building?

According to Doug Smith, the benefit is: "Teams share the burden and divide the grief." The profession will gain in strength and unity. There is a Japanese proverb that says, "A single arrow is easily broken, but not ten in a bundle." Now is the time to bundle this profession so we cannot be broken or bent with the winds of change or dissention.

Now is the window of opportunity for this profession, according to an acupuncturist in New York. This profession has the ability to treat the problems of many of the returning wounded military.

Acupuncturists can certainly help the baby boomers with their ailments and problems. So now is the time to strive for Medicare coverage.

Henry Ford perhaps summed up team building best. He expressed his ideas on team building as the following:

- Coming together is a beginning.
- Keeping together is progress.
- Working together is success.

Now is the time to work together as a team to spread the word about acupuncture and the healing that this great medicine offers to the United States - and the world.

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