

December 2007

Something Else to Think About -- Where Do Teams Fit In?

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Recommended Citation

Massey, Mary E. (Tinker) (2007) "Something Else to Think About -- Where Do Teams Fit In?," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 19: Iss. 6, Article 33.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.5346>

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Something Else to Think About — Where Do Teams Fit In?

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Purpose! One needs purpose to survive in this world. Sometimes we cope and sometimes we don't, but purpose shows our character. Some have noted that I have boundless energy, but I believe that characteristic is actually purpose and drive. There is a slow release of energy that is being exhibited throughout the day to get things done. Purpose and drive are remarkable for their contagious aspects on a team. People seem to absorb and utilize the energy produced from their combination and pass it through the team in order to get procedures done. That specific energy is used to create ideas, perform procedures, change workflow, and complete projects. It is the heart and soul of team performance. Everyone understands that to connect with each other and share the energy level, helps to get things done faster and with a minimal effort from each of the individuals involved. It is like arranging batteries in a series and then throwing the switch — a relay of energy builds along the connections from one battery to another until the desired energy level is achieved and produces the complete and desired effect. Harnessing energy is the ultimate hope of the team in order to achieve the goal of completion of the task. We had a situation here a spring ago when the binding needed to be done. Normally this would not have been a particularly difficult task. We are required to wait until the last test has been given on campus before we remove the materials from the shelves for binding. That provides us with two days to get the binding slips written and checked against

the shelves/issues being readied, the issues removed from the shelves, and the materials double checked, tied and packed in boxes for pick up by the binderies (we have two). They will carry the materials away and we will get delivery returned in four weeks. That spring, we were given a lot of binding money from end of the year "found" funds and began the plans. There are normally three staff on our team plus two students. We met and decided where people's skills lay, then divided into sub-teams that could focus on specific tasks. Two weeks before the event, two of us went to our Special Collections and Periodical Stacks locations and made out the handwritten binding slips (duplicates), put them in order alphabetically (as they are in the shelving areas) and waited until that Wednesday afternoon when the testing period ended. We split into a team (two people) to pull, check and match the materials with the slips. The other team (three people) took the



materials and checked them against the slips, pulled one copy for a list to be compiled, tied and packed the materials in boxes, then one of our staff typed the list, duplicated them for each box and then the boxes were taped and marked appropriately. Normally, we would have completed about 400 volumes, but this time we completed 800 volumes when people told us we couldn't possibly do it. We all voiced the aim of the task and that we would do it, but more than that, we had fun! At the end, we all wore great big smiles and congratulated each other for a job well done. We were one, with one cause, one goal, one energy, and one mind! There were many contributions of ideas and variations as we did the task to increase efficiency, but we completed it together as a single team. There are many such tasks in the library. We have completed others, such as coming back from the tornado damage, handling incoming book shipments, etc..., that require on the spot teamwork to keep a smaller library from succumbing to overload or panic. We have a large team formed from the entire staff, but we have as many sub-teams as there are work units, which means that we can get things done even when they appear to be overwhelming. The basics for this kind of success are: communication, planning, and a team orientation. Oh my, did I forget the element of fun? We have it in spades! How many ways do you complete those overwhelming tasks with smiles? It's certainly something to think about and do! 🌿

Little Red Herrings from page 70

Lamentably this is not likely to change so long as education is held hostage by the **National Education Association**, but we'll let that pass for now. Add to these abominable reading pedagogies horrific "young adult books," and you have a recipe for disaster. But teachers aren't the only ones to blame. The report also points to a lack of models — i.e., parents — who read well or much. Add to all this a weak-kneed **American Library Association** — which longs to call itself the American **Google** Claques — and you have our present state.

All of this is especially puzzling when one takes into account the multifarious benefits of reading: readers are more involved with the community; they are a better informed elector-

ate (they actually vote, for example — perhaps because they can read the ballot?); they support other arts initiatives (plays, art galleries, newspapers, bookstores and so on); they are more philanthropic-minded than non-readers; and, they are likely to be much more involved in community matters, whether it's **Habitat for Humanity** or protests for nuclear power. The point is, these are highly involved, passionately committed people representing a vast array of ideologies and concerns. Given all this, can we explain the silence of our profession? For example, why isn't **ALA** decrying all this? I mean, as much as they decry a lack of respect for, say, **Castro's** régime?

ALA's silence or lack of interest in this matter (**ALA** rushed forward with **Kaplan's** complaints but not the actual report) notwithstanding, any librarian who thinks these reports have little meaning for him or her, or for the

profession, must be 65 or older. For the rest of us, this is Belshazzar-like wall-writing of reckoning. Unless we fight — and vigorously — for more awareness of these matters and for strong proposals to reverse them, there will be no "libra" in library. And sadly, it will come much sooner than those of you who can still read this think. 🌿

Endnotes

1. Sources for the headlines, respectively, are as follows **CBS News**, July 8, 2004; *The Muhlenberg Weekly* September 9, 2004 (Amy Cookson, author); *New York Times*, November 17, 2007 (**Motoko Rick**, author); *Chronicle of Higher Education* November 19, 2007, (**Jennifer Howard**, author). The latter two have been used to write this column.