

SALES AND SERVICE Excellence

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Build a Dream Team

They will help you get where you want to go.



by Joelle K. Jay

JEFF WAS A JUNIOR VP AT AN investment firm. He aspired to be the president of one of the company's regional properties. Even though Jeff was pegged to be a senior leader, he wanted to be sure he was prepared. So he brainstormed a list of leaders he hoped could help him. He then sat down with each person, one at a time, and asked them a few questions that would help him grow as a leader. By doing this, Jeff had created a "dream team" and was taking the lead in his career. You can do the same.

A dream team is a collection of advisors who help you get where you want to be. You turn to them because you know that on your path to success, they are further along than you. Your dream team might include: leaders you admire, leaders who have the positions you want to hold, leaders who have the skills you need, leaders who have achieved what you seek. Meet with these people one by one to ask questions, seek their guidance, and learn from their experience.

Unlike a mastermind group, you never assemble your dream team. Yet every member is hand-selected because together, they represent the best of everything you need to be the leader you aspire to be. Once you know who's on the team, you can draw on them one by one to support you in your success.

Take Five Steps

Here are the *five steps* to help you assemble the best dream team:

1. Choose the game. Get clear on *why* you want a dream team. What do you want to learn from meeting with your dream team members? The answer should be tied to your vision. Perhaps you want to: *Learn how to generate passive income, Learn how to enjoy life more without giving up your career, Learn how to smoothly conduct mergers and acquisitions for business growth, Learn how to triple my profits, Learn how to be the kind of leader that balances respect for people and the results of the business.* Notice that in each game, the focus is on *learning*. On your dream team, you're the rookie in this one area of your life.

2. Pick the players. Be strategic about who gets on the team. This is not the

time to hang out with good buddies and old friends; it's time to build new relationships with people from whom you can learn. It is helpful to have:

- **Advocates.** Advocates champion you, encourage you, and contribute directly to your success, perhaps by introducing you to influential people or making you a part of their team.

- **Experts.** Experts have *information* and *knowledge* you need to be successful. Instead of learning it all the hard way, experts help you jump to new levels of awareness by sharing their experience.

- **Inspirations.** Inspirations are people whose accomplishments make you want to be better yourself. As you watch a person who inspires you—whether that person is your most



courageous colleague, a person who has risen to the top of her field, or just someone whose approach to life you admire—you are moved to a higher level of contribution and achievement.

These roles often cross. In fact, people who can play more than one role are often your strongest supporters.

Now notice who is not on this list:

- **Friends.** Friendship is not requisite. You will likely see your members as friends, and your friends may become members of your team. But you can also learn from people you hardly know and may not even enjoy.

- **Yes-Men and -Women.** Do not put people on your dream team who will only tell you what you want to hear. You already have your own opinions. Your dream team is meant to supplement (not rubber-stamp) them.

- **Your Boss.** Just because bosses manage your position doesn't mean they can help develop your gifts. They may. They may not. You decide.

Go for diversity. *Cover as many bases as you can in terms of gender, age, race, and station in life.* Your eyes will be opened

to new perspectives. Look for diversity of gifts. People who are powerful, political, compassionate, intelligent, international, local, aggressive, spiritual, and reassuring can all add special value. So long as there's chemistry, the more wildly diverse combination of traits you can cover in your dream team, the better. You can't get all of that in one person—that's why it's a team.

3. Set the rules—how you want to play. If you don't set up the process in a way you'll enjoy it, you'll be less likely to see it through. For example, you might seek informal conversation *when the time is right*. Or you might prefer a formal introduction with a letter and a follow-up phone call. Or you might arrange meetings according to each member's choice (e.g. 5 minutes in the office of one, a 15-minute phone call with another, a lunch meeting with a third). Decide how you want the process to play out so you put your best foot forward and feel comfortable.

4. Define a win. What is the *best-case scenario* for this dream team? What will define a *win*? Are you hoping to develop long-term relationships? Do you just want information fast? Are you willing to talk to as many people as it takes? This step respects the time of the leaders whose advice you're seeking while also meeting the goals that matter most to you. If you want advice on how to set up a sole proprietorship, you can get it in short, one-shot interviews. But if you seek quality leadership, develop deeper, more substantial relationships with the people whose work you admire.

5. Get in the game! Approach the people you admire to be on your team—asking them to meet with you, talking to them, and applying what you learn as you work toward your vision. If a meeting with one of your dream team members is beneficial, ask them for a second meeting. Some conversations will be a waste of time; others will turn into mentorships that last a lifetime. These are genuine, respectful conversations (not manipulation) with people you admire to request the support you'd give someone who asked it of you.

Over time, meeting with inspirational leaders and role models becomes part of your personal development. You can achieve more, and faster, when supported by a strong, experienced team. With their help, you'll create the personal and professional life of *your dreams*. **SSE**

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ACTION: Build your dream team.