



Roundtable Mentor,  
**Carolina Perez**, a Global  
Leadership Strategy  
Professional, shared her  
tips for creating team unity  
in a dynamic environment.

## Mentoring **MATTERS**



*My team is made up of individuals with very different personalities which often makes it hard for our team to have unity. It seems one coworker is always bumping heads with another. How do I unify the team to create a civil working environment?*

Upfront, let me assure you that having different personalities in your team is a strength; an opportunity for you, and them. There are different points of view, ways to approach problems, and communication styles from which all can learn.

### *A Team is an Organic Unit*

One of the most important concepts for leaders to remember is that a team is an organic unit by nature. A whole entity comprised of individual human beings, not headcounts or employee IDs. As such, they are bringing their whole selves to the workplace: they may or may not be having their best day, or time in their careers, they have a life outside the office environment and they are regulated by different values and circumstances. Therefore, what motivates each of them, or drives them, is different. As a leader, this is an important fact to acknowledge, because, as with any living organism, the dynamics and state of the team will constantly change, impacting the balance of the team.

### *Goals are Unifiers*

Unification of this multifaceted organism revolves around the team goals. This is the glue that holds a team together when it comes down to productivity, decision making, and results. You will want your whole team to have a sense of achievement around the same objectives. You want to build a team that is able to have objective discussions, and use critical reasoning when evaluating alternatives and points of view. Reduce groupthink; you do not want a team where everyone agrees on everything and thinks the same.

If customers are the priority, then decisions are made based on what is best for the customers. It is not about who is right, it is about the goal, and how to achieve it as a team. As a leader, it is your responsibility to ensure that they are clear on these goals and that all of you share the same vision, and why. Reviewing goals is an ongoing exercise, and you need to check constantly that you are all on the right path, and that every team member is working on the right things to ensure that goals are met. This can be done as often as needed, depending on your team's goals, and its state of unity.

### *Lead by Example*

Your own mindset is essential with regards to how you perceive the dynamics of your team. For you, this awareness should be an ongoing practice. By paying attention to conversations outside the meeting room, interactions via different channels, tones, and relationships that are being built or broken, you can stay on top of potential issues. Team members also come and go, so anything can impact the balance of your team. As a leader, your role is to be aware of this and be comfortable with addressing it, as needed.

As a leader, you also have the responsibility to set the tone with your own behaviour and build trust. Be vulnerable and be consistent, which serves to reinforce that you are a human being as well. Acknowledge your own behaviours, and the need to work on your own development, to role-model the behaviours expected of your team. Ask for feedback and give feedback. The desired work environment begins with you, the way you communicate, and especially the way you behave.

### *Remember, actions speak louder than words.*

You build trust when you see each human being that is part of your team as an individual with their own potential, when you ask open questions from a place of curiosity vs. judgement, when you listen to everyone's perspectives, acknowledge their contributions, and are interested in them to meet them where they are.

### *Unification is a Constant Work in Progress*

To sum up, unifying the team to create a civil working environment is a continuous process. The leader's mindset is key: how you see the team, as an organic entity comprised of human beings, how you define and follow up on the team goals, and how you set the tone with your own behaviour. Now, it is up to you to make this happen, starting with identifying the opportunities you have with your group of individuals.



**Carolina Perez** is a designer by profession, a leadership development specialist by career, and a life-long learner at heart.

After completing her B.A in Industrial Design, Carolina has continued her development with certifications in Marketing, Adult Education, Training and Development, Coaching, and most recently in Innovation Leadership.

Carolina is a passionate professional at her job, leading a team that executes the global leadership program strategy of a large Canadian company. She has fifteen years of experience in the area of learning and performance, six of them dedicated to leadership learning.

Carolina currently focuses on empowering employees to take charge of developing their leadership skills, and figuring out ways for them to acquire a leadership mindset earlier in their career.



**Glain Roberts-McCabe** is passionate about the art of leadership and supporting ambitious mid-career leaders. She created **The Roundtable** to provide emerging leaders with the navigational skills, tools and savvy needed to manage increases in scope, pressure and leadership complexity.