

# 5 techniques to cure your team's negativity



When teams sputter, conflicts can erupt. Disgruntled participants point fingers, place their own interests above the group and assume negative intent in others.

As the leader, you can insist that difficult personalities find a way to get along. Encourage diverse teams to look past their differences. Use these techniques:

- 1. See the best in people.** If you project negative traits onto team members, your low expectations can dull your effectiveness as team leader. Instead, strive to understand each employee's viewpoint in a fair, unbiased manner. Assume that everyone wants to contribute to collective success.
- 2. Restate the team's overriding purpose.** Explain why the purpose matters and how the team can make a positive, bottom-line impact. Shining a spotlight on a larger purpose can turn petty combatants into cooperators.
- 3. Dangle carrots.** Reward teams for acting in a coordinated manner to achieve specific objectives. If they complete an assignment within a tight deadline, for instance, promise to give every member a cash bonus.
- 4. Attain quick wins.** Celebrate short-term victories such as finalizing a key decision or streamlining the data-gathering process. Teams that can share in triumphs, even modest ones, tend to build momentum.
- 5. Run experiments.** List all the options and stage a few pilots to test different proposals. Emphasize that the *team* will get the credit for whatever ideas work the best, rather than the *individual* who initially suggested the idea.

— Adapted from *Personality Style at Work*, Kate Ward, McGraw-Hill.