

THE POWER OF SUCCESS TEAMS - A secret in turning dreams into reality

by Bob 'Idea Man' Hooey

What is your dream?

To own a new home. To start a new business. To impact your community. Travel the world? To write a bestselling book or to become a professional speaker?

To build or expand a business that is a model of value-added customer service in your community?

If you've encountered a few detours enroute to your dream, experienced frustration or bouts with indecision, I'd like to suggest a helpful approach.

Success Teams can play a pivotal role in ensuring your dream becomes a reality, as I proved to myself a few years ago in my quest to become a more productive speaker and successfully enter a new arena.

How does a newcomer to Toastmasters International find himself speaking at the world class level with more experienced speakers in their Accredited Speaker Program? How do three Vancouver speakers audition, defy the odds, and earn the opportunity to speak at the world stage?

This incredible saga began with an exploratory Success Team meeting in April 1994, when seven Toastmasters discussed our common goal of the Accredited Speaker Program.

A solid commitment from each member to research and work as a team was agreed upon. Then as the work began, members assessed their own experience and qualifications. In light of a lengthy and onerous judging process, each of us brought our concerns, questions and fears to our monthly Success team meetings.

With mutual support and honesty, each question was answered, and basic qualifications double-checked. Qualifying speeches were drafted, practised and exhaustively critiqued by fellow team members, prior to recording our live audition tapes.

Each year, since 1981, Toastmasters International has invited a handful of speakers to present at their annual convention in the Accredited Speaker program, "...designed to recognise those Toastmasters who have attained a professional level of excellence in public speaking". To date (2002) only 51 Toastmasters have earned this coveted A/S award in their 78-year history.

In October 1994 three (A.S.K.) Advanced Speakers Klub members submitted application and audition tapes; I was one of them.

Of the 32 worldwide, who survived the initial screening process, only five would eventually be invited to San Diego in August 1995.

In February 1995 my two fellow team members and myself received official notification that the judges had voted to advance each of us to the world finals. We would speak in front of a live audience of about 300 or so, and panel of five judges.

Three for Three! Something that had never happened in Toastmasters International history. The normal applicant success rate in making the finals is only 20%.

Can Success Teams play a vital role in the achievement of your personal goals, in turning dreams into realities? Just ask Judy, Marg or myself!

Margaret Hope, A/S became the 41st person to become accredited in 1995. I had the pleasure of being presented with mine (number 48) in 1998, in front of a crowd of over 2500 excited Toastmasters in Palm Desert, California. **It works! Very well!**

Can a Success Team really help you in achieving your dreams? Can they help build your business and help your staff succeed? Bring your ideas to life? What are they? How do they work?

Success Teams gained wider recognition in 1979 with the publication of a book entitled "Wish craft" by Barbara Sher and Annie Gottlieb. "A SUCCESS TEAM is a small group of people whose only goal is to help every member of the team get what he or she wants."

The concept has been around for centuries. Napoleon Hill, author of "THINK AND GROW RICH", espoused a form of Success Team with his Mastermind principle, **"...whenever two or more minds are blended in a spirit of perfect harmony, for the pursuit of a definite purpose, there is born of that alliance a power which is greater than that of all the individual minds combined."**

Your personal Success Team may be focused on a specific project or a long-term goal. It may have a fluid format with members joining and leaving as their dreams evolve or a more structured membership. It's up to the individual members. It might be people in your own industry who bond to help each other win, or a group of your staff focused on improving your business.

These ingredients will help ensure your Team's success:

- **A firm commitment** by each member to encourage and assist team members in their personal growth and to achieve their goals.
- **Regular meetings** where dreams are shared, progress is reported, problems are defined, and brainstormed. Specific steps are then outlined to enable the members to make solid progress towards their respective dreams.

- **A positive attitude**, encouragement, personal integrity and confidentiality by each member. A high level of trust must exist if team members are to be open to honest input from fellow team members. This is where the real growth occurs.

One individual will often take the lead to recruit a team of fellow dreamers or achievers. Perhaps, they have observed the secret of synergy, of applied power, through shared purpose and focus, of building on the experience and insight of others.

Choosing your team is a unique learning experience! It helps if members are positive, have desires and some experiences in harmony with your team's needs. If for example, your Success Team has a business orientation, you might recruit members with a variety of specific business experiences along with members who are starting a new business.

Don't be afraid to pause periodically and re-assess your group, and your individual progress. Make any course corrections necessary to keep your group on track.

One of my earliest recollections of an effective Success Team was in college. A group of marketing students formed a study team to handle the weekly "killer" assignments. We would each read the required material and meet to brainstorm the assignment, break down the problem, suggest alternatives and solutions for each problem. Then, we'd retire to write our individual reports. **We lead the class in our understanding of the problem and in creative solutions for each assignment, and our marks reflected that leadership.**

Success Teams mirror some characteristics, in shared experience and contacts with networking. However, their difference and remarkable effectiveness is built on the principles of ongoing personal honesty and accountability. **They operate on the premise that YOUR group is dedicated to helping YOU achieve your dreams and to keep YOUR commitments, as well as acting as a resource for YOUR success.**

I worked even harder to complete my commitments, because I didn't want to let my Accredited Speaker team or myself down. I continued to learn the secret of setting realistic goals, organising my weekly objectives, and pacing myself to reach them.

Define group formats and meeting times early to ensure each member actively participates in a majority of the meetings and receives his or her share of time and assistance. This is essential to the survival and success of your team.

One of my groups meets weekly for breakfast. Each member gets 15 minutes of the group's focus. We take the first 2-3 minutes in updating the group on our progress during the past week, 7-8 minutes to outline and brainstorm problems, concerns, goals, objectives with input from group members, with the last few minutes spent outlining specific ACTION steps to be taken during the next week. Recently, we've been focusing on planning and scheduling our most important goals first.

(Update: one of our members now has a national best seller, one has gone on to a successful career in professional speaking and one has...well she has made some major moves in her life and is seeing some real success personally.)

Each Success Team will take on its own characteristics, as members share their essence and dreams. Often this will be the highlight or "power-point" to your week. You bounce ideas and problems off the creative minds of your team, while gaining their support and respect on your progress. Your team becomes a personal coach and cheerleader, to help keep your focus and energy in pursuing your dreams.

Dreams are a powerful part of your personal growth and "life message". As you build "foundations for success" under each dream, draw on the energy, insight and strength of your Team and, in turn give them yours. TOGETHER you will all succeed!

I believe in the power of success teams, having experienced their support and help over the years. I'd suggest finding other people in your community who are as dedicated to building their careers and businesses as you and start your own. The results will be more than worth the investment.

A year or so back, I spent 3 days in Tempe, Arizona with 65 fellow leaders in the Speaking industry, talking and sharing ideas about how we could work together, and by combining our efforts achieve the common goals we all held. It was worth the time and investment needed to be there.

What is it you really want in life? In business? What will you change to make it happen? Have you the courage and the vision to draw people into your circle of success and form a team that helps each of you succeed?

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*Bob 'Idea Man' Hooey, DTM, PRA, CKD-Emeritus, Accredited Speaker, 2011 Spirit of CAPS recipient is an inspirational leader, speaker, and a prolific author whose works include 'Legacy of Leadership, Strive for significance – lead on purpose!', 'Speaking for Success' and 'The Courage to Lead!' His articles have been featured in a multitude of North American trade and global consumer publications. He is a respected leader who has been honored by CAPS, NSA, Toastmasters, and the United Nations for his leadership contributions. His creative Ideas At Work have allowed him to travel the globe sharing insights, encouragement in 61 countries, so far. With Covid-19 he has been zooming around the globe to share his ideas. His **innovative Ideas At Work!** have been successfully applied by global leaders as well as Canada's 50 Best Managed Companies.*