

## How To Pick Your Team In A Corporate Environment

"The key elements to a successful sled team are a steady driver, and three strong runners to push the sled down the ice." -Sanka Coffie, "Cool Runnings" (1993)

Young professionals who have already found a job and ask me for advice are often focused on a single question: which group in their company will give them the best exit opportunities. After all, who doesn't want to land an even better job and make even more money? But you shouldn't pick your team based solely on exit opportunities. It's true that some groups in your company may place more employees into higher-paying jobs than others, but if you're smart and have performed well, you can find a good job afterwards regardless of your group. And who knows? You may end up liking your job and wanting to stay. What young people often overlook when deciding on a group is the value of your team. Good Team, Bad Team

Good senior teammates will reward good work. Do you remember Randy Pausch's Last Lecture when he said that you help yourself become successful if you help those around you? It's easier to achieve your goals with a little help along on the way. You might not even mind working hard for these folks. Bad senior teammates will use-you-and-forget-you (unless they need someone to yell at), disrespect your time, and generally care nothing about your professional development. Perhaps they're unstable people, or they're the type to be more personable to clients than to their own mothers. Either way, they're bad news for you. Team preferences can be complicated if all the "good" people in your office have little power, or if they work in areas in which you have no interest, but you should strive to pick out the good apples in your early weeks on the job. Observe carefully and pay attention to what those around you and older people at your office say. Yes, rumors are often false, but in the workplace every rumor has a kernel of truth in it. Your ability to get the scoop early on will prevent much pain and suffering later.

Picking Your Team This works differently in every job. Some places hand out team assignments immediately after getting you like heavenly mandates; others rotate you into different groups until a team wants you permanently assigned to them. Things are more interesting when you actually get to pick your co-workers. You can influence who you work with by declaring your passionate interest in a particular area or your fierce admiration for the head of a certain group, if that's what you're interested in. On the other hand, if you feel yourself caught in the gravitational pull of a team you would hate working with, consider expressing your interest in that other group - quickly! Once you are assigned to a team (unless it's a 50-person "team"), your maneuvering room is much more limited. Your cards might be limited to the old "I have personal problems with so-and-so", but the prudence of playing this card depends on your situation. But I Spent 22 Years Of My Life Getting This Job And Now I Hate Myself

If you end up on a truly unbearable team, you have a few options. First and most obvious is to complain to even higher-level managers about your situation and avoid being staffed on projects with the problematic team member(s). This can work, but usually only if he/she has received complaints before; the other key is to frame your problem as a conflict that is affecting the firm and not just you personally; do not attack the offender but instead give specific examples of how his/her behavior prevented work from getting done and prevented revenue from coming in. Aside from complaining internally, you could also try to switch groups entirely. If your situation is only moderately bad and you're interested in other opportunities, this approach makes sense. Once you've exhausted the correction and switching groups/offices options, there's always quitting. With today's job market and a looming recession, I would not recommend doing this, especially without a plan.

### About the Author

Ian Spellfield, a former investment banker, advises students and young professionals on how to get investment banking jobs and work effectively once they get them. You can read his blog, Mergers & Inquisitions, at <http://www.mergersandinquisitions.com/>.

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