

Linda Wolff Reed, extreme right, uses ALCA members to demonstrate how great teams can be different because people are different.

Building a team: **Maybe the most important thing you'll ever have to do**

People who complement each other and know how to work together make a great team.

■ "You must create the magic that makes a team work," says Linda Wolff Reed, an organizational development consultant based in Portland, Ore.

"Every employee must know the company's mission," she says. "The company's goal is the common goal. There is no other agenda. But don't get so over-committed to accomplishing the goal—the end result—that you don't focus on the process."

"I look at a team as the entire company. If the employee sees him or herself as working for one person, the team concept won't work," she says.

Communicating with employees is the first step in building a winning team. "It's the first step in creating trust," Reed continues. "Eighty percent of communications is listening."

She says the key to establishing trust is DWYSYWD: "Do What You Say You Will Do: your actions must follow your words."

Reed suggests you ask employees for written responses to these questions:

1) If you could change two things in this company, what would they be?

2) Do you really think the company listens to you? How?

3) What two things do you like most about the company?

4) What resources are here that we're not using?

5) How are we at recognition?

6) What should the company do this year?

"Not a lot will change in the first year, except that you'll build trust," says Reed. "Tell your people what you learned, how you're going to accomplish it, and what role they will play. And putting it into writing to your employees makes you accountable."

"As people see targets developing, the trust is created. But they will hold you accountable, and it is not fun."

Finding leaders is the next step in creating a winning team.

"In any given situation, anyone can be a leader," Reed notes. "Leadership qualities have been over-emphasized. In a team, the pieces all fit, so you must first find out people's strengths."

Look past what

might be negative conations, or instincts, in a team player, she says. Look to the positive. "When you're building on strengths, there are no weaknesses."

According to Reed, there are four forces that drive the actions of employees:

1) The instinct to **probe**, to ask why. This kind of employee might always be argumentative, but he or she is also an answer-finder.

2) The instinct to **pattern**, a person who is driven to completion. Though this kind of employee won't deviate from a pattern, he or she sees the "big picture."

3) The instinct to **innovate**; to ask "what if." Though this type of employee might be entirely too impulsive, you can depend on him or her in a crisis.

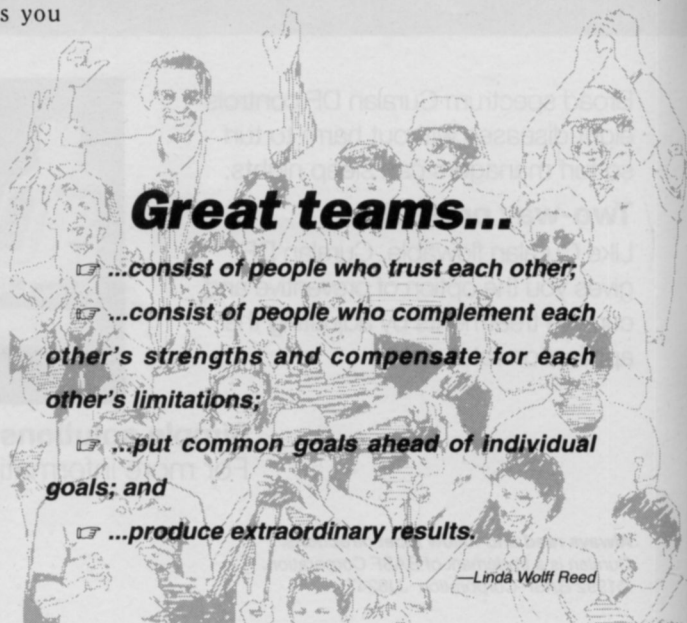
4) The instinct to be **physically demonstrative**. While this employee might be non-communicative, he or she can show you how to more efficiently perform physical tasks.

"The respecting of differences is the way to accomplish trust and strengthen one another," Reed observes. "Respecting differences is the most difficult thing we have to do as human beings. Our society is very individualistic. So if the leader is unwilling to respect differences, no one else on the team will."

What happens with a good team? Synergy—the sum of all the talents you have assembled is greater than its parts. And that should be the goal of your team-building process.

Reed made her observations at the Associated Landscape Contractors of America's annual conference last November in Indianapolis.

—Jerry Roche



Great teams...

...consist of people who trust each other;

...consist of people who complement each other's strengths and compensate for each other's limitations;

...put common goals ahead of individual goals; and

...produce extraordinary results.

—Linda Wolff Reed