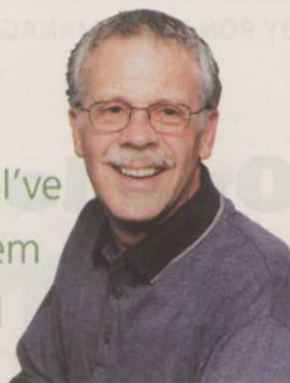


"Can your operation become 'Your Gang?' I think it can. I've seen more than one branch in which every activity, problem and serious challenge became a team event." — BH



Make 'Our Gang' work for you

Remember the old movies known as 'Our Gang' comedies? Fat little Spanky, Darla, Alfalfa (with that tuft of hair) and Buckwheat — a real cross section of humanity, stuck together with a mysterious glue most of us never thought about.

If you do remember them, you may recall that no matter what grief Butch, the neighborhood bully, cooked up, that gang always stuck together. At the end of each reel, when they stumbled through

the latest caper, there they were, laughing and having fun. And, every time, mean old Butch was defeated.

The 'Our Gang' team

What a strange crew they were. Do you think for one minute that Spanky could have made his "brilliant" schemes work without Alfalfa's help? And what about cute little Darla, who usually kept them from going off the deep end? How would Alfalfa have survived the panic brought on by singing in the school talent show? Win or lose, those kids went at it as a team — a gang, if you will. They worked together, faced challenges together, defeated the evil Butch together and always survived.

When the gang won, they won together. When they lost, they consoled each other, taking the sting out. Playing off each other and using the strength of their collective interdependence, they pulled up their socks and went right back at life — together.

Too often in our careers, we work to perform well and be recognized, to get ahead, pay the bills, support families and sock away money for the future. And sometimes it gets very serious, stressful, draining and downright lonely!

So I'm hoping that, in your work, you will see yourself as part of 'Your Gang.'

Get 'Your Gang' started

The beginning of 'Your Gang' may be as simple as a group meeting held informally after work, where you decide to come together as a team, a group of different individuals who believe in a common cause.

I hope you will consider all of this because I see too many wayward working people out there. They show up each day and go through the motions, but do it

Do you operate a team environment?

- ▶ Members are there by choice — not out of desperation or other pressures.
 - ▶ New team members are welcomed and quickly made to feel like they are part of the group.
 - ▶ Veteran team members discuss and agree on the rules for membership, procedures and problems that require solutions and group direction, sharing responsibility and inclusion in the team-building process.
 - ▶ Each new member is trained to high skill levels in gradual, logical and progressive steps, with ongoing recognition and feedback.
 - ▶ Veterans consistently "go the extra mile" to help new members and want them to succeed.
 - ▶ Members consider themselves personally responsible for the team's success or failure.
 - ▶ To insure team success, members demonstrate a heightened sense of dependability and reliability.
 - ▶ Team members consistently help solve common problems.
 - ▶ They tend to remain on the job longer, reducing turnover.
 - ▶ Team environments promote a high level of positive motivation.
 - ▶ Team members complain less and have fewer sick days.
 - ▶ Team members are promoted more frequently.
 - ▶ Team members earn more money.
- The list could go on and on, but you get the message.

completely on their own. And I know how much tougher the challenges are when you repeatedly face them alone without the gang to act as a support.

Another thing is consistent: They aren't having any fun, and that's a shame.

Can your operation become 'Your Gang?' I think it can. In fact, I've seen more than one branch operation in which every activity, problem and serious challenge became a team event from start to finish. Spanky and Alfalfa had the right idea. When you see a really cohesive team in action, it's a thing of beauty. And it's worth working to develop.

Why work toward teams?

Teams give you an incredible edge:

- ▶ Teams use the power of a common cause. Members feel better, stronger and more productive for longer periods when they believe in a cause.
- ▶ Teams build awareness of personal value. People are motivated when the team recognizes their contribution.
- ▶ Teams give a feeling of personal security. Fighting battles together and sharing the group's strength enhances each one's sense of a secure working environment.
- ▶ Teams build confidence. Each employee's confidence soars as others provide consistent and ongoing positive feedback.
- ▶ Teams solve problems more successfully. People working together to solve problems realize that the united group will always be more successful than the smartest single individual working alone.
- ▶ Teams have a lot more fun. As 'Our Gang' knew, it's fun to be part of something that works. And when people have fun, they try harder and work better.
- ▶ Teams win more often than solos.

I'm not talking about crew size here. Rather, I'm talking about building an atmosphere of teamwork throughout your organization. Think it over, is your business

staffed with individual soldiers? Or are you a team? Can you spot a Spanky or Alfalfa who might be a great team player?

You can win with a team of people who may not be stars but believe in what your organization is all about and want to

be part of it. In fact, you don't need stars!

You need team players.

— The author is director of training and development for Scotts Lawn Service in Marysville, OH.

THE ULTIMATE WHEELBARROW



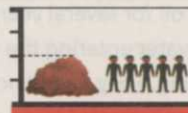
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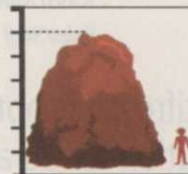
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