

# WORKING



# TOGETHER

house had to be sawn in half and removed in two stages.

My interest in this project was observing the way the team worked together, jacking up the house. Each jack was taken up just so far and each man worked to a pattern to keep the house on an even keel. It was then that a large flat-bedded, articulated truck manoeuvred backwards under the house. That's when all eyes and ears were at work. Each man signalling the other to do what each had to do, to allow the house to be lowered onto the truck. It was a slow and laborious process of walkie-talkies, hand signals, moving planks, placing planks, until all was in place.

These men obviously knew what they were doing, and there was defi-

By Gael McInnes

**N**eed some help?  
Having difficulty  
working with others?

I recently spent time watching a house removal firm at work. It was all happening over my back fence.

What a complex process! Attachments required disconnecting, foundations needed exposing, and massive jacks needed placing at strategic points around the house. This

nately an overseer coordinating and giving directions. Each man closely followed instructions, impressing me by their teamwork, the enormity of the task and of course the responsibility. Fancy being responsible for the safe delivery of a house! All this took place during a week, then like a ghost in the night it was gone.

### Are you a team player?

How well do you work with others, or are you one of those persons who likes to 'go it alone'? Do you believe you can do the job better than anyone else, and certainly much faster and more efficiently? Do you think you are better than you really are?

What about the times when you just have to work with someone on a task or project? Do you take over, wanting it done your way, or do you actually listen to and discuss with your colleagues the various options? Or are you one of those people who sits back and lets those who want to get on with the job, get on with it, and not talk to anyone, but happily pick up your pay cheque each week?

I'm amazed at the way the volunteers work as a team on TV One's *Mucking In* show, when a garden makeover takes place in one weekend! Behind such a project there has to be a planner, a leader, and a team who have to negotiate with various firms for the required material, and make it all come together for the specific weekend. It certainly doesn't happen overnight.

We live in an individualistic society and it's easy to forget our interdependence with others. Our communities revolve around people doing their part to keep things functioning. Businesses, corporations and governments need people. What if your rubbish never got removed, or a broken water pipe never got repaired, or the sewerage plant broke down, and nobody could be bothered to attend to it? Just think about what your environment would be like! We are all needed in this world and there is job for everyone.

### Parts of a body

So how do we work together, be it a

large business, a local club or church, or a family unit? Well, it helps to think about the way the human body works.

A biblical illustration points out that "just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with the church. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other."<sup>1</sup> Everything needs to be co-ordinated. We need a 'nerve' centre – a functioning brain. We humans are born with individual personalities and talents.

When a joint project comes up we need all the talents and skills we can muster, and that's when we need to appreciate the skills and talents of others. We need to work at working together. Sometimes we are our own worst enemies – thinking we know it all and know what's best. We require leaders, and this is where we need people who have leadership experience, good communication skills and organisational abilities.

No one could have moved that house by themselves – it would be impossible.

So how can we bring a functioning team together? Ask yourself, "How do I treat those under me and how do I like to be treated?" Many people see power as a way to gain control over others, but a more enlightened view sees that "Leadership is a serving relationship that has the effect of facilitating human development."<sup>2</sup>

### Leaders who serve

To be a leader, a person must be a servant. This can be difficult for those leaders who find it hard to serve those beneath them. Jesus, who came to earth with all authority and power in heaven and earth, chose to serve others.

On one occasion, for instance, to the amazement of his disciples, he stooped down and washed their feet – a job for the lowest of servants. Then he told them to follow his example.<sup>3</sup>

I believe people work effectively together when they know what to do, how to do it, why they are doing it,

and how their work fits into the total plan of the organisation they work for. Effective leaders will set the right example. They will treat team members as individuals, get to know them and show genuine interest and empathy. They will instil a feeling of self-worth. They will communicate what is required and notify them of any changes in advance, obtain their co-operation and listen to their varying points of view.

A successful leader will not impose his leadership on a team, nor have to assert his position by trying to appear wiser and more competent than others. No, the successful leader will gain the respect of his team because he is skilful, knowledgeable and diplomatic in the way in which he carries out his role.

That's what makes for a successful team – the interdependence of one another.

After that house was removed, the ground was levelled and in came team after team to build four apartments. First came the foundations, then the pre-assembled framework, scaffolding, roofers, bricklayers, plumbers, electricians and many others. Twelve weeks later, there was the finished product and new residents moved in the next week. This couldn't have taken place without a leader to co-ordinate such teamwork and meet deadlines.

This 'house-removing' project was a great way to reflect on the need to be interdependent and help in serving others. We need each other. I hope you will take the time to watch a similar project sometime, and reflect on your own contribution to teamwork.

1. Romans 12:4-5
2. As quoted in *On Being a Servant of God*, Warren W. Wiersbe. p.47
3. John 13:14-15

