

Look Within Before Passing on Blame

Teamwork is a tricky concept. The ideal situation for a team is for everyone to get along and work together. But personalities are different and are bound to clash. When things go wrong, some team members will automatically blame other members when in fact, they are the ones that made the error.

The key to avoiding this situation, is to make absolutely sure that the steps you took did not lead to the problem, whatever that problem may be. Double check facts, or if you are on a programming team, recheck your code, to make sure that your work is not the cause. Once you make the mistake of blaming someone else and it is later revealed that you are to blame, this is a very difficult situation to save face. It also creates a mistrust with the entire team, and possibly even the manager. It's best to completely avoid this situation altogether.

If you are sure that you are not to blame and you know who is, it's important for the team members to approach the person tactfully and avoid any appearance of ganging up on him or her. Otherwise, the team member may feel vulnerable and that will likely put him or her on the defense. This is simply a waste of time and can be avoided. If it's a serious error, it may be wise for the team to escalate the situation for the manager to handle it, although the ideal situation is for the team to take charge.

You may find that some members will continually pass on blame, even when it's been shown time and again that they are the responsible party. If you find a member that does this to you, the best course of action is to not get defensive yourself. Simply be prepared to show them, nicely, that what you did was not the cause. You don't even have to mention that you know they are the cause at that moment. Discuss it with the team and again, try to find a way to show this person that they are the cause. If all else fails, then it becomes a management issue.

There will never be a perfect team environment and you will almost certainly have team members who are sloppy and make constant mistakes. This can create a challenge for the team but by remaining calm

and focused on solving whatever the problem is, the team can move forward with the project.