

Executive **EDGE**

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

A person's style in the kitchen can reveal quite a few personality traits: whether one likes to try new things, for instance, or whether one is more comfortable following directions than improvising. These traits carry over into management styles, too, and that's the reason for the new popularity of cooking classes for dysfunctional management teams. The challenge of group cooking under a deadline fosters trust, cooperation, and communication, as well as new respect for unsuspected skills in teammates.

Cooking by the Book, a New York cooking school, is offering 16 corporate cooking classes this year, up from just two in 1995. Among its clients: Viacom Inc.'s MTV and Nickelodeon Networks. Since 1998, HMS Travel Group, of Santa Rosa, CA, has seen demand triple for its team-building program, which it offers in conjunction with the Culinary Institute of America; its clients have included Sun Micro-

systems Inc. and Genentech Inc.

Many classes include personality tests and discussion sessions before and after food preparation. Rick Phillips, who leads the HMS-Culinary Institute team-building courses, sees a correlation between kitchen behavior and workplace traits. For example, a person who doesn't read the recipe through is a micromanager, not a strategic planner. One who prepares all the ingredients beforehand is more practical than visionary; a cook who arranges a dish artfully is customer oriented, focused on how a product will be received.

Communication turns out to be the key missing ingredient when a team given 45 minutes to prepare a dish takes an hour and a half. Disagreements about the best way to proceed eat up valuable time; successful teams do up-front planning so everyone knows what his or her task is.

From Eileen Daspin, "Memo to the Team: This Needs Salt!" Wall Street Journal, April 4, 2000, p. B1.



PITFALLS OF E-MAIL NEGOTIATIONS

Negotiations, like other business communications, are increasingly conducted through e-mail. But this is risky. For a number of reasons, e-mail negotiations all too easily go wrong.

Carelessness at the Keyboard Because many people are careless typists, they let slip incorrect, inaccurate, or even unintentionally insulting things that they would very likely recognize and amend if they were dealing with the other person face-to-face. And such errors are compounded by the fact that, being written rather than spoken, they become part of the permanent record.

Heidi Roizen, a venture capitalist in California's Silicon Valley, has an advantage over most others conducting cyber-business because she is an English major who can type 90 words a minute. "Re-read each piece of mail before you send it, from the point of view of the recipient," she advises e-mail negotiators; "and when in doubt, leave it overnight."

Letting Emotions Leak In E-mail negotiators may, even when careful about their typing, hurt recipients' feelings by permit-

ting negative emotions to color the message they are trying to send. John Kay, a British economist and consultant, has made it a rule in his office that e-mails bear information only—no emotion allowed.

Michael Morris of Stanford University has conducted studies involving mock negotiations done by e-mail. He and his associates discovered that such talks went more smoothly when the participants first introduced themselves to each other with a brief telephone call. In other experiments, e-mail negotiators improved their chances of success when they began by trading photos of themselves.

Richard Hill, a professional mediator and information technology manager who helped the University of Massachusetts set up an online mediation service, nevertheless believes that e-mail is *not* the best medium for long-distance negotiations. He prefers the old-fashioned telephone conversation, which he says is simpler, faster, and frequently more informative.

From The Economist, April 8, 2000, p. 65.