



# turning managers into leaders

## Merge's Monthly Mega Minute – May 2010

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*Merge Gupta-Sunderji turns managers into leaders. Through engaging keynotes and facilitated workshops, she gives people specific and practical tools to achieve leadership and communication success. Contact her at [www.mergespeaks.com](http://www.mergespeaks.com) or 403-605-4756*

## Three lessons in teamwork from the world of dolphins

Dolphins usually live and travel in pods, in groups of up to a dozen individuals. This social behaviour serves many purposes, not the least of which is foraging for food. Dolphins employ techniques called herding and corralling to be more effective and efficient in their hunting. Behaving much like sheepdogs, a pod of dolphins will circle and herd a school of fish into a tightly-packed "bait ball", and if possible, even corral them into shallow water. Once there, the dolphins then take turns plowing through the bait ball, gorging on the fish as they sweep through. Scientists have observed that the dolphins have such control of this method that it is almost impossible for the fish to escape until all the dolphins have had their fill. Working as a team, the dolphins are much more successful (and skillful) than if they worked alone.

What can we learn about teamwork and collaboration from dolphins? Three things. First, there is strength in numbers. By working together, the dolphins are able to herd and corral the fish, something that an individual dolphin could never accomplish on its own. In much the same way, a group of people working on a single task can create synergy, the degree of which could never be achieved by one person alone. Second, it's important to focus on a common goal. When hunting, the dolphins are concentrating on one objective – food! When a workplace team is clear about its goals and can clearly articulate its purpose, then it is much easier for the team to attain its objectives. Third, everyone gets a turn. Each dolphin gets its chance to swim through the bait ball and feed on the tasty fish. When working in a team, it is important that every member of the group have their turn in the spotlight, an opportunity to be recognized by others for the contribution they make.

Are you putting these three principles of teamwork and collaboration into play in your workplace team? If not, perhaps it's time to learn from the dolphins!