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## 5 Tips for Better Office Teamwork

Written by Beverly Y. Langford Tuesday, November 15 2011



For the past institutions have had teams to accomplish. Conventional outperform individual collective IQ skill sets, and feel that the democratization process, and

Why then, do organization for strong performance

someone can coast along on others' accomplishments and share in the glory? Those many cases end up frustrated and wishing they could just do the work themselves.

Although it does not make the work easier, a high-functioning team is worth the effort. members may be, if a team does not put some communication guidelines in place, it members can't just let water seek its own level when it comes to effective communication about creating a climate for clear communication. Here are some communication strategies

### Build Trust First

When people trust someone, they feel safe. And, when they feel safe, they are willing to be superficial and tentative. Many times what people say is just the tip of the iceberg. Why? That's what makes an iceberg so scary. The real deal is underneath the water.

So, when a team member says, "I don't like this template you are using for our PowerPoint." "I'm upset because you didn't ask my opinion before you chose it."

When a team creates an atmosphere where it is safe to reveal not only what members' agendas don't create impediments to progress.

Teams can build trust by talking openly about their likes, dislikes, fears, concerns, and members can share these feelings without receiving strong negative reactions or a

### Establish Clear Communication Ground Rules

Of course, communication is more complicated when five, 10, or even 15 people are the reason, setting some ground rules for communicating in a team environment is critical. person's preferred communication vehicle. Does a team member prefer a text message twice daily, but always have their cell with them?

Further, team members should agree on how quickly they should respond to each other emails within a few hours, or does the nature of the team's work permit a 24-hour response acceptable in an interdependent environment. Certainly, team members should know for a period, but for a member to simply disappear creates frustration and anger from be available and engaged.

Team members should also commit to seeking and sharing information. If members everyone to bring them up to speed and then sulk if they aren't in the loop. Although they know what is taking place, it is also that person's responsibility to be assertive in finding

Information becomes currency in some organizations. "I have it and you do not." But if everyone has an obligation to share early and often.

Finally, teams should strive to master the art of straight talk, communicating with clarity to express rather than to impress.

#### **Acknowledge and Accommodate Communication Style Differences**

Many factors affect the way people communicate – age, culture, gender, language, and unaware of those differences can create significant barriers to effective team communication (*Teams*).

Some team members may love to talk, often generating ideas while they are still thinking information and synthesize it before speaking. They may not lead the charge in a brainstorming session but their ideas together with what appear to be everyone else's random comments.

Certain team members may be more assertive than others. Coming from them, a suggestion may be met with a lively argument. Other team members may shy away from taking on that person's ideas.

Not only should individual team members analyze their own communication styles, but also differences and find a way to accommodate everyone so that each person can make a contribution. How do you talk too much? Which ones talk too little? What does the team need to do to leverage everyone's strengths?

#### **Develop and Implement a Process for Dealing with Conflict**

The clearer and more open the communication, the greater the chance for disagreement. Team members choose sides when team members find themselves at odds with each other. Team members should work together to make sure that conflicts stay issue based and solution focused.

Keeping personalities out of conflict is easier said than done, but the entire team needs to work together to ensure team members don't fuel the conflict. If someone on the team feels hurt or angry, everyone should address the source of the problem directly rather than carping to other colleagues.

Some situations call for a cool-headed decision to say nothing and to let it go. Recognize when conflict is necessary, and team members should always strive to know when to pursue an issue and when to let it go.

#### **Spend Some Time Communicating on a Personal Level**

Strong relationships are key contributors to team success and help minimize both the stress and conflict. Although the relationship among team members is primarily business, teams are stronger when team members see each other as people.

Finding areas of common interest and communicating about nonwork related topics can help build trust and rapport on difficult projects. Showing a concern for illness in the family or celebrating the achievement of a team member can go a long way toward creating a solid, cohesive unit. Some social interaction, such as a birthday party or a team dinner, is appropriate, but also goes a long way toward making everyone feel a part of a community.

At the same time, respecting each other's privacy and observing proper boundaries can help prevent relationships from becoming too close and too involved in team members' personal lives.

Without effective team communication, even the most talented group of people cannot succeed. Intentionally creating an excellent environment for communication can pay big dividends as well as in forging long-term relationships.



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