Team Tools for Collaboration

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Teams Matter™

Creating Team Purpose Statements

Purpose:

To enable teams to be aligned around a common shared purpose. To ensure team members are working together and effectively using resources to achieve a common goal.

Process:

Individually, each person is to write one statement of what they view the purpose of the team is. Consider what makes the team unique from others teams; what does this team do that no other team can do?
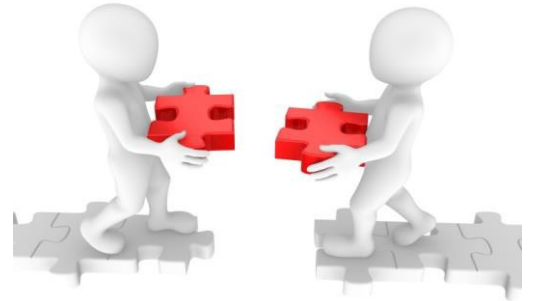
Share statements in pairs or as a large group.   Look for common themes and discuss until the team is ready to prepare one common team purpose statement.

May use the following wording:

"This team exists to….."

Common Ground Icebreaker

Purpose:

To help groups build relationships and get to know one another.

Process:

1. Get into groups of 5-6 with people you don't know.

2. In your groups, briefly introduce yourself (name, job, title, association with Organization)

3. Spend 5 minutes to come up with as many unique connections with the group as possible. **They should be interesting and positive**.

4. Winners: the team with the most connections and the team with the most interesting (note the other teams must vote)

Debrief:

1. What did you notice happening when you were in a group with people you did not know?

2. What happened as a result of this activity/exercise?

3. What's the value of that in a learning and planning environment?

4. How will this impact your learning and performance today? (People are more willing to learn when they feel comfortable and passionate)

Check In

Purpose:

Helps the group or team clarify its expectations and identify any issues that might be preventing someone from being fully present.

Process:

- **At 1st meeting, explain to the group its purpose for being present and what they should expect from the meeting.**

- **Ask for their expectations by asking why they are here, how they are feeling, what they would like to get out of the meeting, and whether there is anything preventing them from being fully present.**

Debriefs

Purpose:

Provide an opportunity for team members to talk about the effectiveness of the meeting process and to enable enhancements for the future.

Process:

After each meeting, ask the group to answer these questions:
- **How did we do as a team?**
- **What will you take away?**
- **What did you learn?**
- **What could we improve?**
- **What was powerful about this session or meeting?**
- **What's next?**

Take note of the ideas and recommendations and conclude by reminding of what they accomplished during the meeting.

Strategic Decision Making Model

Purpose:

Ensure that your team is aligned on the process of making decisions to ensure that the process is efficient and effective.

Process:

- Share the decision making model below.
- Facilitate the conversation and assign time frames to address each step.
- Debrief the process after decision is made.

Strategic Decision Making Model Steps

1. Define the decision you want to make
2. Define your desired outcomes, your objectives and higher purpose (musts/wants)
3. Identify decision alternatives and options
4. Select the best alternative
5. Identify potential roadblocks and setbacks
6. Develop an action or implementation plan.
7. Implement, monitor progress and revise the plan.

Decision Making Tool

Purpose

Many teams choose to try and reach consensus which is not easily possible, especially on complex decisions. Why not access if there is "enough agreement" to support the decision rather than wasting time to reach 100% consensus?

Process:

About ¾ way through the discussion on the decision, ask everyone to share their degree of support for the decision by displaying the number of fingers according to the diagram below. If everyone displays 3 or more fingers move on – decision is supported. If some display 1 or 2 fingers, consider postponing the decision and addressing their concerns separately.

Five fingers	**Love it. I completely agree and support the decision**
Four fingers	**Good idea.**
Three fingers	**I have some reservations but can support the decision to move forward**
Two fingers	**I have reservations and can't support this decision without further discussion**
One finger	**I can't support this decision**

STOP – START – CONTINUE ANALYSIS

PURPOSE

A Stop, Start, Continue Analysis is a proven approach to collecting valuable feedback. It is an opportunity to help an individual, team or organization determine what it needs to do to stay aligned to their goals and/or objectives.

Process:
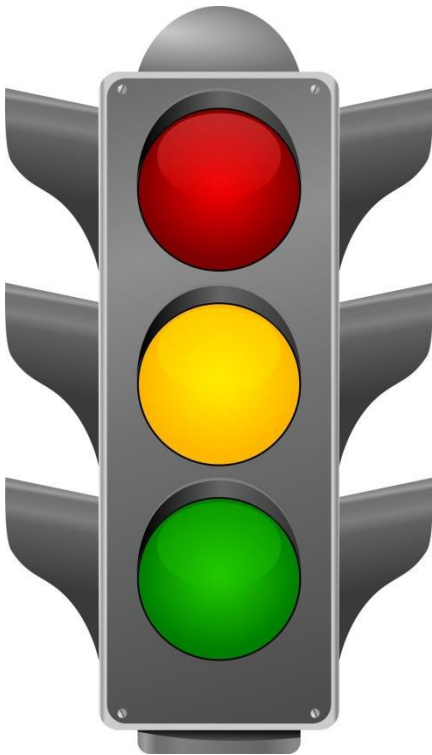
What are the things that are making you unproductive or that are not adding value to the team that you should **STOP** doing?

What are the things that you are doing as a team that are working well and that you should **CONTINUE** doing?

What are the things that you should **START** doing to make you more productive or effective?

Systems Thinking

Experiential Activity"

Purpose: Experiential exercise that helps to reveal the interdependent, systemic nature of groups.

# of participants: Eight people or more

Time**:**   15 minutes

Process:

Have the group stand in a loose cluster. If you've got some space to work with, feel free to spread out a bit.

Tell:
Ask each person to take a moment and identify two others in the group, but not to say or give any indication of who they are.

The object of the activity is to move yourself around so that you're always equal distance from the two people you have chosen. This could mean that you stand between them, or off to the side, the same distance from each of them. As your two people move, you are forced to move as well in order to keep equal distance from them. Likewise, people who have chosen you as one of their two will move in response to your movement.

Option A:
After a few minutes, ask several people to pick up the pace to simulate "change" entering the system.

Option B:
A variation on this exercise, if you have a large enough group, is to have a few people, say three, go outside of the room as you set up the exercise. Then, have them come in and witness the exercise as it unfolds. When you decide to stop the exercise (you'll need to do this yourself, as it can keep going indefinitely), have these witnesses talk about what they imagined was going on. This variation is good if you're working with a group of consultants as it highlights the challenges of trying to figure out the underlying patterns of a group you're not a part of, simply through observation and interpretation.

Debrief:
- Since everyone has two people they are trying to keep equal distance from, the entire group is in constant motion.
- At times, the movement is fast, wild, and chaotic and at times it will settle down and look like it's about to cease, but it always starts in again because the slightest step by one person keeps the whole process in motion.
- It's a great exercise to help highlight the interdependent nature of a group.
- Shows how one person's actions, even small ones, ripple outwards and effect everyone else.
- It's also good to reveal how the "unseen" dynamics of a group can powerfully shape and influence it.
- Help people notice the tension between meeting their own needs and being part of a larger group.

Systems Thinking Exercise cont…

Debrief - Other Themes

- change in one part of the system creates change in other parts of the system – everything is interconnected
- Communication – did people ask questions? The value of "Pause" before engaging in a task; "How" versus the "What"; task orientation; did people talk to one another?
- Strategy – did trios/individuals develop a strategy?
- Pace of change – what happened when the pace picked up? (confusion; collisions; more chaos)
- Were there different patterns? (trios working in different ways)
- Was there cross collaboration? Lack of information sharing across groups.

Team Norms or Operating Guidelines

Purpose:

Every team has its own agreements, many of which are unspoken, unwritten and un-negotiated rules of behaviour. They are the way "things are done around here". Team agreements are sometimes referred to as "rules of engagement" especially when they refer to disagreement or conflict on the team. Some teams refer to them as "team contracts" or "operating principles"

Creating the Team Agreement – Option A

1. Think of your best team experience. Recall the specific behaviours and qualities that made it so memorable.
2. Share those behaviours as requests for your current team to consider as norms.

Creating the Team Agreement – Option B

Start with the following questions and proceed through the steps:

1. In order for this team to be successful or effective what do you need from others? (e.g. actively listening; honest and open communication)
2. In order for this team to excel, what do you want for the team? (e.g. clear decision making responsibilities)

Tips:
- If participants having a difficult time brainstorming ideas, have them think of "their worst team" and reframe everything into the positive to create their "ideal team".
- Get participants to generate ideas individually first and then facilitate group discussion.
- Reinforce that these agreements are dynamic and additional agreements may be added over time and the first set may be modified over time.
- Best agreements are short statements that are memorable.

Steps To Creating A Team Contract

1. Brainstorm a list of ideas from the group and capture on a flip chart

2. Clarify ideas – focus on the behaviours (ask them what they would see people do in the workplace or what would they hear people say)

3. Prioritize in terms of importance for the group

4. Keep list short – e.g. 7 – 10 items

5. Discuss to ensure buy in from all group members

6. Adopt team operating agreement – ask everyone to raise their hand to show support

7. Implement team agreement – bring to every meeting; e-mail with agenda (have group brainstorm how they will keep them active and alive and visual)

8. Adopt over team life – update as necessary; introduce to new team members

9. Evaluate effectiveness of team norms (e.g. ask one person to be a thermostat and to check in with the group at end of each meeting or if behaviours are not adhered to; create a survey to evaluate effectiveness on quarterly basis)

Keeping Team Agreements Alive

- Post visually in meeting room (word document in brochure holder)
- Distribute to each person electronically
- Share at the beginning of a leadership meeting or team coaching session
- Do a check in at beginning of each meeting or coaching session to see if they are working or new additions etc.
- Have one person be responsible for updating them – rotate on monthly basis (ensure team coach is copied on them)
- Have individuals keep a copy in their notebooks/journals/laptops for easy reference
- Practice using at meetings in between coaching sessions.

Influence Stakeholder Wheel

Purpose

To identify all potential stakeholders who will be impacted by a change process and with whom you might need to influence.

Process:

Using the stakeholder diagram below:

- Identify any other potential stakeholders that you will need to influence
- Identify "when" you will need to meet with them and influence them to adopt the new change

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