

Notes About Teamwork*

What has been discovered is that: first, people will not voluntarily share knowledge unless they feel some moral commitment to do so; second, people will not share knowledge unless the dynamics of change favor exchange; and third, data without relationships merely cause more information glut. Put another way, turning information into knowledge is a social process, and for that you need good relationships.

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*adapted from Bruce Wellman and Laura Lipton

Group Development and Teamwork

- Attention to Task
- Attention to Process
- Attention to Relationships

Productive groups and teams pay attention to experience and learn by setting significant goals, monitoring performance, and reflecting on practice. Even in the short time your SPC spends in meetings, it is recommended to attend to relationships and the team process itself.

Attention to Task

The Team Task requires each team to be time and energy efficient. It is important to establish and maintain clear goals and criteria for success, keep on task, and use data to make decisions. Each group will decide how to operate and how to share and synthesize useful information that is relevant to your discussions.

Attention to Process

Sometimes, slower is faster. Keep in mind how the team is functioning. Process dimensions include: developing an agenda for each meeting and following agreed upon protocols and ground rules; assigning roles and functions; pausing, paraphrasing, inquiring; listening deeply and checking assumptions and; balancing advocacy and inquiry. See also: "The 30-minute Vision, Values and Ground Rules" for help with developing ground rules and process guidelines.

Attention to Relationships

Relationships grow when people feel safe and participation and contribution are balanced. Effective groups recognize and honor the need for diversity and anticipate that productive disagreement is part of striving for excellence.

Team wisdom arises from a "small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and an approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable." (Katzenbach, 1993). Although there is no clear consensus about the difference between teams and groups, teamwork seems to require three conditions:

- common purpose
- commitment to the goal
- shared accountability

Roles and Expectations

Group members may wish to decide how best to focus their efforts towards completing the work. Here are sample guidelines about team roles that may be helpful. Your group may alternate, combine or add roles as appropriate.

- Facilitator - chairs, keeps the agenda focused, seeks contribution, balances task and process, and summarizes key points
- Recorder/Reporter - keeps notes and records, organizes chart work and records key decisions
- Observer - observes and monitors team process and reflects impressions back to the group
- Timekeeper - watches the time allotted to agenda items and alerts the team to transition points
- Resourcer(s) - identifies useful outside resources and liaises with other groups
- Team Members - stay fully present, adhere to ground rules, and are accountable to the team for positive contributions

Suggestions and Tips

1. Start with an opportunity for people to check in; end with a wrap up or closure, allowing for individual comments.
2. Establish roles and a clear agenda for each team meeting.
3. Set realistic benchmarks for each meeting.
4. Decide how you will attend to team process (eg., comments from an observer, allotted time at the end of the meeting, time-out signal to refocus or attend to process).
5. Regularly adjust the schedule and timelines based on the demands of the task and the needs of the team.