**Collaborative Group Work**

Everyone works together, sharing information, co-creating knowledge, leveraging strengths, expanding capacities – it’s a much more rewarding and productive experience.

The team creates a really cohesive “story” by planning the direction, creating a structure, and combining all the pieces of the assignment into a clear, logically connected whole.

By sharing knowledge, everyone on the team learns more and hears ideas and perspectives they might not think of on their own – so the story becomes richer and more impactful.

**Here’s how group work benefits you**

* The chance to explore a topic or idea from multiple angles
* The opportunity to interact with diverse peers and perspectives
* Helps you create something bigger or better than what you may have been able to do on your own

**Which leads to**

* Broaden your horizons by learning from different perspectives
* Strengthen your interpersonal, planning, organizational and leadership skills
* Enrich your learning and your outcomes by co-creating knowledge and resources with others

**Summary**

* Understanding the team
* Communicating effectively
* Planning the project[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Tips on how to ensure effective teamwork in the workplace**

* **Share the spotlight and celebrate**

You want people to get the recognition they deserve for the great work that they’re doing. It really is demotivating when you’re putting a lot of hard work and energy and no one recognizes it.

Ensure as well that you are celebrating those milestones, have those celebrations in place. It could be as simple as sending out a congratulatory email like ”Hey guys, we made it to the next stage, woohoo”.

* **Use project management tools**

Projects are all about your team and how they perform. If you want an effective team, then definitely start adopting project management techniques and tools to help you.

Tool 1 is a scope template. Defines exactly what it is that you’re doing.

Tool 2 is a WBS (Work Breakdown Structure). An action plan that is updated and tells you what to do.

Tool 3 is a SharePoint site. A central location for all your critical information. Communication, key documents, anything they need to know. One stop shop for everything.

* **Communication is key**

If you’re going to have effective team and effective teamwork, your team needs to know how to communicate. Ensure that you have a place to put announcements.

* **Don’t procrastinate**

A lot of our individual activities have dependencies, whether we’re dependent on someone or someone’s dependent on us. So when we procrastinate, because there’s days it happens, we need to really be aware that if we’re going to have effective teams and be effective with our teamwork, that we really have to be respectful of deadlines and really be cognizant. Is what I’m doing impacting anybody else? Do they have to wait for me to be completed with my task?

* **Honesty is the best policy**

If you want an effective team and you want to have effective teamwork, it is so important that people feel safe. Because if I always have to look over my shoulder and wonder if I’m going to get “stabbed in the back” because we don’t have trust in our team, it really makes moving things forward very difficult in a team. And I’ve been on many projects where we are developing teams and we’ve gone through the forming stage where everyone is really polite and then get into our storming stage, which is the next stage of team development, and guess what? We don’t have trust. We’re not open and honest. Some people have hidden agendas.

Honesty, you also open yourself up to vulnerability. So it’s important that the lead of your team, whether it’s a manager, a project manager, a team lead really understands this and sets the tone and really promotes this honesty.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**5 Ways to Encourage Input...And Teamwork**

**1.) Make it safe**

One way to do that is to be open and honest yourself. When employees know that they can express an opinion or ask any question without judgment or punishment, you'll start to get real communication. Which means you'll get problems solved faster, and your perspective on issues may change

**2.) Reward Free Speech**

This doesn't have to be elaborate. Listening carefully, thanking people, maybe giving greater responsibility to employees who speak up honestly.

**3.) Listen. Really listen**

Leaders: How many of you think that you listen well, or moderately well? *According to a Forbes study, humans listen at a 25% comprehension rate.* But you can change your culture (or team dynamics) simply by beginning to listen. I've watched this happen with my clients. The shift to listening can be startling to subordinates, but I guarantee they will receive it well. And leaders, you will be surprised by how much of importance you will learn.

**4.) Ask Questions**

Just saying that you are open to honest feedback doesn't always make it happen. By asking the right questions you make it easier (and safer) for your people to express their concern or bring up alternate ideas.

**5.) Ask The Right Questions**

"Is everyone ready to start this project?" or "Does anyone have any concerns they'd like to have addressed before we begin?" are two very different questions. If you are already asking questions but the response you usually get includes no eye contact, shuffling, and mumbling, (but no answers), then you are not asking the right questions. Or you are not asking your questions the right way. Make your questions open-ended requests for feedback, not requests that have only "yes" or "no" as the possible answers. This allows people room to voice an opinion.

**The Leadership Responsibility**

It can be hard for leaders to open themselves up to honest opinion. It can bring criticism and negative comments as well as constructive input, and some leaders feel that entertaining critical opinions undermines their authority. While I understand their concerns, the reality is that an open exchange of ideas is almost always beneficial to the leader. It does require courage, and a leap of faith to initiate, but isn't the improved collaboration and teamwork, and profitability, worth it?[[3]](#footnote-3)

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UL0uEywO-EA&ab\_channel=Teaching%26LearningatYorkU.Libraries [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S7PhGkEQUWw&ab\_channel=AdrianaGirdler [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/change-conversation-5-ways-encourage-inputand-teamwork-kristi-royse [↑](#footnote-ref-3)