

Performing your team work

A team is a group of people which is formed to work together towards a specific aim or objective.

As individuals we may work in different ways and may usually like to plan our time in different ways. We also have different skills and abilities and will usually assume different roles when we are part of a team (see discussions by Belbin about team roles and behaviours). We also have different demands on our time, both personal (e.g. family, social time, sports) and work (both University work and part-time jobs) which can influence our availability regarding timescales.

Therefore, it is important that, when we are part of a team we should have a clear idea of the objectives that have to be achieved and the timescales for doing so. It should also be clear what our roles and responsibilities are. That way everyone is clear about who is doing what, and when, and shares a common understanding and purpose.

One of the main purposes of the coursework is to ensure that you get a chance to learn and apply the topics which are discussed during lectures (and which you will eventually be tested on during an exam). Therefore it is important that everyone contributes to the team work as best they can towards that purpose. If you need additional clarification about any of the course topics or concepts, please let the course lecturer know.

Communicate. Keep others informed of your progress and status. You probably have various deadlines and commitments to manage but keep other people aware of what's happening so you can work around things if you need to.

Belbin (1981) and Dewey (1910) offer some general information regarding teams, summarised below.

How to promote a good 'feel' in the team

- Try to involve everyone in the discussion and decision making process;
- Listen carefully to one-another.
- Try to avoid personalising discussions.
- Support every member who wants to make a contribution.
- Encourage openness, ideas and suggestions.
- Keep each other informed about what is going on.
- Remember individual needs as well as the teams

Pro-Group Behaviours:

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| • Involving other members | • Listening to others |
| • Reconciling disagreements | • Sharing information and resources |
| • Praising people | • Organising activity and members |
| • Communicating | • Giving opinions |
| • Relieving tension | • Seeking opinions |
| • Co-operating | • Elaborating and explaining |
| • Encouraging | • Looking for agreement |

Pro-group roles:

- Encourager
- Gate-keeper
- Harmoniser
- Standard setter
- Mediator
- Initiator
- Orienter
- Co-ordinator
- Evaluator

Members of a team which is motivated and working effectively will be able to

- give and accept suggestions and criticism in a positive way
- be impartial about ideas and problems
- give credit for good ideas and use them
- be aware of when to help other team members and give the help required

Belbin and Dewey also suggest what they consider to be Anti-group behaviours:

- Not listening
- Cutting people short
- Deflating people
- Picking on people
- Nit-picking on details
- Refusing to yield
- Messing about (too much)
- Inappropriate joking
- Inappropriate aggression, anger, arguments
- Self-pity

And Anti-group roles:

- Blocker
- Avoider
- Saboteur
- Critic
- Dominator
- Martyr
- Scapegoat
- Isolater
- Doubter
- Persecutor

References

Belbin, R.M. (1981) *Management Teams: Why They Succeed or Fail*. See also: www.belbin.com.

Dewey, J. (1910) *How we think*.