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| **FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING CERTIFICATE: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY: SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT**  **ID 78965 LEVEL 4 – 165 CREDITS** |
| **LEARNER GUIDE**  **SAQA: 14920**  **PARTICIPATE IN GROUPS AND/OR TEAMS TO RECOMMEND SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS** |

**Learner Information:**

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| **Details** | **Please Complete this Section** |
| Name & Surname: |  |
| Organisation: |  |
| Unit/Dept: |  |
| Facilitator Name: |  |
| Date Started: |  |
| Date of Completion: |  |

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# Key to Icons

The following icons may be used in this Learner Guide to indicate specific functions:

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| Description: http://www.duluth.lib.mn.us/Images/BookStack.gif  Books | This icon means that other books are available for further information on a particular topic/subject. |
| Description: http://www.rpsrelocation.com/_borders/checklist.jpgReferences | **This icon refers to any examples, handouts, checklists, etc…** |
| Description: http://www.school-portal.co.uk/GroupDownloadAttachment.asp?GroupId=21353&AttachmentID=1300079Important | **This icon represents important information related to a specific topic or section of the guide.** |
| Description: http://cloud.graphicleftovers.com/11976/item34004/Cartoon-exercise-book.jpgActivities | **This icon helps you to be prepared for the learning to follow or assist you to demonstrate understanding of module content. Shows transference of knowledge and skill.** |
| Description: http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_0EodaYtqevU/TMun5XOj03I/AAAAAAAAAIU/lzrnWelQjgc/s1600/group-discussion.jpgExercises | **This icon represents any exercise to be completed on a specific topic at home by you or in a group.** |
| Description: http://edtech.kennesaw.edu/intech/images/rubric.gifTasks/Projects | **An important aspect of the assessment process is proof of competence. This can be achieved by observation or a portfolio of evidence should be submitted in this regard.** |
| Description: http://tell.fll.purdue.edu/JapanProj/FLClipart/Adjectives/busy.gifWorkplace Activities | **An important aspect of learning is through workplace experience. Activities with this icon can only be completed once a LEARNER is in the workplace** |
| Description: http://blog.mindjet.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/helpful_tips_image.jpgTips | **This icon indicates practical tips you can adopt in the future.** |
| Description: http://school.discoveryeducation.com/clipart/images/read.gifNotes | **This icon represents important notes you must remember as part of the learning process.** |

# Learner Guide Introduction

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| **About the Learner Guide…** | This Learner Guide provides a comprehensive overview of the **PARTICIPATE IN GROUPS AND/OR TEAMS TO RECOMMEND SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS,**and forms part of a series of Learner Guides that have been developed for **FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING CERTIFICATE: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY: SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT ID 78965 LEVEL 4 – 165 CREDITS** The series of Learner Guides are conceptualized in modular’s format and developed **FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING CERTIFICATE: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY: SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT ID 78965 LEVEL 4 – 165 CREDITS** They are designed to improve the skills and knowledge of learners, and thus enabling them to effectively and efficiently complete specific tasks. Learners are required to attend training workshops as a group or as specified by their organization. These workshops are presented in modules, and conducted by a qualified facilitator. |
| **Purpose** | The purpose of this Unit Standard is to **Participate in groups and/or teams to recommend solutions to problems** |
| **Outcomes** | **Participate in groups and/or teams to recommend solutions to problems** |
| **Assessment Criteria** | The only way to establish whether a learner is competent and has accomplished the specific outcomes is through an assessment process. Assessment involves collecting and interpreting evidence about the learner’s ability to perform a task. This guide may include assessments in the form of activities, assignments, tasks or projects, as well as workplace practical tasks. Learners are required to perform tasks on the job to collect enough and appropriate evidence for their portfolio of evidence, proof signed by their supervisor that the tasks were performed successfully. |
| **To qualify** | To qualify and receive credits towards the learning programme, a registered assessor will conduct an evaluation and assessment of the learner’s portfolio of evidence and competency |
| **Range of Learning** | This describes the situation and circumstance in which competence must be demonstrated and the parameters in which learners operate |
| **Responsibility** | The responsibility of learning rest with the learner, so:   * Be proactive and ask questions, * Seek assistance and help from your facilitators, if required. |

**Learning Unit1**

**UNIT STANDARD NUMBER :** 14920

**Participate in groups and/or teams to recommend solutions to problems**

**LEVEL ON THE NQF :** 4

**CREDITS :** 3

**FIELD :** Physical, Mathematical, Computer and Life Sciences

**SUB FIELD :**  Construction Information Technology and Computer Sciences

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| **PURPOSE:** | This unit standard is intended:  to provide fundamental knowledge of the areas covered?  for those working in, or entering the workplace in the area of Business and Organisational Communication ?  as additional knowledge for those wanting to understand the areas covered  People credited with this unit standard are able to:?  Contribute to team problem solving?  Contribute to group and/ or team function  The performance of all elements is to a standard that allows for further learning in this area. |
| **LEARNING ASSUMED TO BE IN PLACE:** | |
| The learner should have the competence to communicate in English (or the applicable language) at least at NQF level 3. | |

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| **SESSION 1.**  **Contribute to team problem solving** |
| **Learning Outcomes** |
| * 1. Contributions made are relevant to, and focussed on, subject matter and group/ team objectives. * 2. Contributions to problem solving are made in a range of decision making processes and contexts. * 3. Contributions to decision making are made on the basis of available data and are made objectively. * 4. Contribution utilises verbal and non-verbal feedback to show interest and opinion, and to encourage contributions from others. |

**What Is a Team?**

A team is any group of people organized to work together interdependently and cooperatively to meet the needs of their customers by accomplishing a purpose and goals. Teams are created for both long term and short term interaction. A product development team, an executive leadership team, and a departmental team are long lasting planning and operational groups. Short term teams might include a team to develop an employee onboarding process, a team to plan the annual company party, or a team to respond to a specific customer problem or complaint.

Three common types of teams include functional or departmental, cross-functional, and self-managing.

* **Functional or departmental teams:** Groups of people from the same work area or department who meet on a regular basis to analyze customer needs, solve problems, provide members with support, promote continuous improvement, and share information.
* **Cross-functional teams:** Groups of people who are pulled together from across departments or job functions to deal with a specific product, issue, customer, problem, or to improve a particular process.
* **Self-managing teams:** Groups of people who gradually assume responsibility for self-direction in all aspects of work.

**Team Building: Major Issues Facing Teams**

**Goals, purpose, and mission:** What are the team’s goals? What is the team’s purpose and/or mission? How do the team’s goals mesh with the organization’s mission and goals?

**Roles and responsibilities:** Who will play what roles and be responsible for what tasks? How will team members be helped and held accountable for their responsibilities? How will the team take collective responsibility for its work?

**Relationships:** How will relationships be formed and maintained within the team? How will relationships be managed with individuals and groups outside the team? How will the team find the time to both form relationships and work on the tasks it undertakes?

**Leadership:** Who will lead the team? How will leadership roles be shared or rotated? Who will facilitate the team meetings?

**Power and influence:** Who has power and influence on the team? How do they exercise it? How do team members react and respond to those with power and influence? How do members influence the team? How does the team influence powerful individuals and groups outside the team?

**Skills:** What is the mix of skills needed to do the team’s work? What technical or functional skills are needed? What problem-solving and decision-making skills are needed? What interpersonal skills are needed?

**Communication:** How will team members communicate with one another? What communication processes and systems will be used? How will the team communicate with individuals and groups outside the team?

**Problem-solving and planning methods:** What problem-solving and planning methods will the team use to do its work? What methods and processes will the team use to run its meetings?

**Conflict:** How will the team manage disagreements and conflicts?

**Progress and results:** How will progress and results be measured?

**Risk and rewards, successes and failures:** How much risk can the team take? What rewards will the team receive for its results? How will the team handle successes and failures?

**Creativity and innovation:** In what sense does the team see its role as being creative? What brainstorming and problem-solving processes will the team use to create innovative ideas and alternatives?

**Motivation:** Why do members want to be on the team? What’s in it for them? How can they help the team? How can they be involved in and challenged by the work the team is doing? How does the team help motivate its members?

**Contribute to team problem solving**

**Discipline 0: Plan**

Before you begin to assemble a team to address the problem, you need to plan your approach. This means thinking about who will be on the team, what your time frame is, and what resources you'll need to address the problem at hand.

**Discipline 1: Build the Team**

You should aim to put together a team that has the skills needed to solve the problem, and that has time and energy to commit to the problem-solving process. Keep in mind that a diverse team is more likely to find a creative solution than a team of people with the same outlook (although if outlooks are too diverse, people can spend so much time disagreeing that nothing gets done.) Create a **team charter** that outlines the team's goal and identifies each person's role. Then, do what you can to **build trust** and get everyone involved in the process that's about to happen. If your team is made up of professionals who haven't worked together before, consider beginning with **team-building activities** to ensure that everyone is comfortable working with one another.

**Discipline 2: Describe the Problem**

Once your team has settled in, describe the problem in detail. Specify the who, what, when, where, why, how, and how many; and use techniques like **CATWOE** and the **Problem-Definition Process** to ensure that you're focusing on the right problem.

Start by doing a **Risk Analysis** – if the problem is causing serious risks, for example, to people's health or life, then you need to take appropriate action. (This may include stopping people using a product or process until the problem is resolved.) If the problem is with a process, use a **Flow Chart**, **Swim Lane Diagram**, or **Storyboard** to map each step out; these tools will help your team members understand how the process works, and, later on, think about how they can best fix it. Discovering the root cause of the problem comes later in the process, so don't spend time on this here. Right now, your goal is to look at what's going wrong, and to make sure that your team understands the full extent of the problem.

**Discipline 3: Implement a Temporary Fix**

Once your team understands the problem, come up with a temporary fix. This is particularly important if the problem is affecting customers, reducing product quality, or slowing down work processes. Harness the knowledge of everyone on the team. To ensure that each person's ideas are heard, consider using **brainstorming** techniques such as **Round Robin Brainstorming** or **Crawford's Slip Writing Method**, alongside more traditional team **problem-solving** discussions.

Once the group has identified possible temporary fixes, address issues such as cost, implementation time, and relevancy. The short-term solution should be quick, easy to implement, and worth the effort.

**Discipline 4: Identify and Eliminate the Root Cause**

Once your temporary fix is in place, it's time to discover the root cause of the problem.

Conduct a **Cause and Effect Analysis** to identify the likely causes of the problem. This tool is useful because it helps you uncover many possible causes, and it can highlight other problems that you might not have been aware of. Next, apply **Root Cause Analysis** to find the root causes of the problems you've identified. Once you identify the source of the problem, develop several permanent solutions to it. If your team members are having trouble coming up with viable permanent solutions, use the **Straw Man Concept** to generate prototype solutions that you can then discuss, tear apart, and rebuild into stronger solutions.

**Discipline 5: Verify the Solution**

Once your team agrees on a permanent solution, make sure that you test it thoroughly before you fully implement it, in the next step.

Consider:

* Conducting a **Failure Mode and Effects Analysis** (FMEA) to spot any potential problems.
* Using **Impact Analysis** to make sure that there will be no unexpected future consequences.
* Using **Six Thinking Hats** to examine the fix from several different emotional perspectives.

Last, conduct a **Blind Spot Analysis** to confirm that you and your team haven't overlooked a key factor, or made an incorrect assumption about this solution.

**Discipline 6: Implement a Permanent Solution**

Once your team reaches consensus on the solution, roll your fix out. Monitor this new solution closely for an appropriate period of time to make sure that it's working correctly, and ensure that there are no unexpected side effects.

**Discipline 7: Prevent the Problem From Recurring**

When you're sure that the permanent solution has solved the problem, gather your team together again to identify how you'll prevent the problem from recurring in the future. You might need to update your organization's standards, policies, procedures, or training manual to reflect the new fix. You'll likely also need to train others on the new process or standard. Finally, you'll need to consider whether to change your management practices or procedures to prevent recurrence.

**Discipline 8: Celebrate Team Success**

The last step in the process is to celebrate and **reward your team's success**. Say "thank you" to everyone involved, and be specific about how each person's hard work has made a difference. If appropriate, plan a party or celebration to communicate your appreciation. Before the team disbands, conduct a **Post-Implementation Review** to analyze whether your solution is working as you thought, and to improve the way that you solve problems in the future.

**The eight disciplines are:**

1. Plan.
2. Build the Team.
3. Describe the Problem.
4. Implement a Temporary Fix.
5. Identify and Eliminate the Root Cause.
6. Verify the Solution.
7. Implement a Permanent Solution.
8. Prevent the Problem From Recurring.
9. Celebrate Team Success.

**Advantages and disadvantages of using a group to solve a problem:**

The disadvantages of group problem solving can include:-

***Competition***

Most people working in a group unconsciously perceive the situation as competitive. This generates behaviour which is destructive and drains the creative energy of the group. For example, we often perceive disagreement with our ideas as a put-down. The natural reaction is to regain our self-esteem, often by trying to sabotage the ideas of those who disagreed with us. Instead of looking for ways to improve on their ideas we choose to destroy them. Eager to express our own ideas, we may totally ignore what others are suggesting. Power-seekers may use ploys such as highlighting flaws in others' arguments, barbed questions and displays of expertise to show their supremacy. These types of behaviour create an atmosphere which is incompatible with effective problem solving.

***Conformity*.**

There is a strong tendency for individuals in a group to want to conform to the consensus. This can be for a variety of reasons, including the need to feel liked, valued or respected, and tends to make people censor their ideas accordingly. The comparative status of the individuals present also has an important influence. Senior members often want to maintain their image of being knowledgeable, while junior members want to avoid appearing the inexperienced 'upstart'. Because agreement on ideas can be gained quickly in a group setting, groups tend to select and approve solutions quickly, without exploring all the possibilities.

***Lack*of *objective direction***

Most traditional meetings and group discussions convened to solve problems are ineffectively directed. Sometimes there is no effective leader to give direction to the discussion, with the result that it wanders aimlessly. Even when there is strong leadership, the group leader or chairman often exerts undue pressure on the direction and content of the discussion. In addition, the ideas aired during a meeting are not usually recorded, apart from the minutes and individual note-taking, with the result that many ideas are forgotten and cannot act as a constant stimulus to the discussion.

***Time constraints***

Group problem solving is a relatively slow process compared with working alone. It requires individuals to come together at an agreed time, usually for about one hour, and this can cause organisational problems as well as impatience amongst participants to 'get it over with' as quickly as possible.

**The advantages**of group problem solving can include:

***Greater output.***

Simply because of the number of people involved, each with differing experience, knowledge, points of view and values, a larger number and variety of ideas for solving a problem can be produced.

**Cross *fertilisation***

The exchange of ideas can act as a stimulus to the imagination, encouraging individuals to explore ideas they would not otherwise consider.

***Reduced bias***

The shared responsibility of a group in arriving at decisions can. encourage individuals to explore seemingly unrealistic ideas and to challenge accepted ways of doing things. Individual biases and prejudices can be challenged by the ,group, forcing the individual to recognise them. Group pressure can also encourage individuals to accept that change is needed.

***Increased risk taking***

Shared responsibility makes individuals more willing to take risks. The discussion of different points of view also helps the group to be more realistic in assessing the risks associated with particular courses of action.

***Higher commitment***

When goals are agreed it gives a common purpose to the group, within which individuals can gain a feeling of self-determination and recognition through their contri­bution. Individuals who have contributed to finding a solution feel a greater commitment to its successful implementation.

***Improved communication***

When .people who are affected by a problem or who will be involved in implementation are involved in finding a solution, they will know how and why that particular solution was chosen. Also, people with knowledge relevant to the problem can communicate that knowledge directly if they participate in solving the problem.

***Better solutions***

Groups of individuals can bring a broad range of ideas, knowledge and skills to bear on a problem. This creates a stimulating interaction of diverse ideas which results in a wider range and better quality of solutions

**Nominal Group Technique (NGT)**

Nominal group technique (NGT) is a structured method for group brainstorming that encourages contributions from everyone.

**When to Use Nominal Group Technique**

* When some group members are much more vocal than others.
* When some group members think better in silence.
* When there is concern about some members not participating.
* When the group does not easily generate quantities of ideas.
* When all or some group members are new to the team.
* When the issue is controversial or there is heated conflict.

**Nominal Group Technique Procedure**

Materials needed: paper and pen or pencil for each individual, flipchart, marking pens, tape.

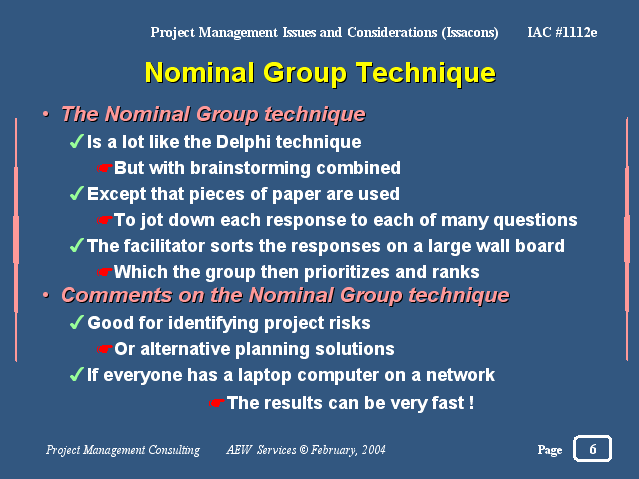
1. State the subject of the brainstorming. Clarify the statement as needed until everyone understands it.
2. Each team member silently thinks of and writes down as many ideas as possible in a set period of time (5 to 10 minutes).
3. Each member in turn states aloud one idea. Facilitator records it on the flipchart.
   * No discussion is allowed, not even questions for clarification.
   * Ideas given do not need to be from the team member’s written list. Indeed, as time goes on, many ideas will not be.
   * A member may “pass” his or her turn, and may then add an idea on a subsequent turn.

Continue around the group until all members pass or for an agreed-upon length of time.

1. Discuss each idea in turn. Wording may be changed only when the idea’s originator agrees. Ideas may be stricken from the list only by unanimous agreement. Discussion may clarify meaning, explain logic or analysis, raise and answer questions, or state agreement or disagreement.
2. Prioritize the ideas using multivoting or list reduction.

Nominal Group Technique Considerations

* Discussion should be equally balanced among all ideas. The facilitator should not allow discussion to turn into argument. The primary purpose of the discussion is clarification. It is not to resolve differences of opinion.
* Keep all ideas visible. When ideas overflow to additional flipchart pages, post previous pages around the room so all ideas are still visible to everyone.



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| **SESSION 2.**  **Contribute to group and/ or team functions.** |
| **Learning Outcomes** |
| * 1. Contribution supports the group in terms of complying with group/ team decisions, sharing responsibility for group/ team problems, and sharing credit for group/ team successes. * 2. Contribution overcomes obstacles and ensures that the team function is consistent with team objectives and agreed rules for team member behavior. * 3. Contributions made to the team's selection and use of techniques match the task requirements. * 4. Contribution monitors own behavior in order to accommodate team dynamics. * 5. Contribution ensures that delegated duties are carried out to team requirements. * 6. Contribution ensures that allocated tasks are carried out in a manner that reinforces the work of the team and contributes to the achievement of team objectives. * 7. Contribution presents outcomes and findings from allocated tasks in a manner that maximises their value to the team. | |

**The benefits of effective team working**



**Effective team working is essential in healthcare teams as it benefits patients and colleagues.**  
There are a number of things that need to be in place for a team to be effective, these include:

* shared goals and a common vision
* accountability
* clear roles and responsibilities
* good communication
* strong leadership

On the face of it these seem obvious, but if you sit back and think about it your team is unlikely to have all of these things.

**Shared goals and a common vision**

Many teams do not have clear objectives. Often, it is assumed that team members know the purpose of the team and what the team is trying to achieve. Having a clear sense of direction is one of the most important factors to create an effective team. Ask your team what they want people to be saying about them in two to five years’ time and you will start to develop a vision. When you set objectives, involve your team, keep them simple and make sure you have no more than six. Most important is that the objectives are measurable and have a specific time. Your team needs to know if it has succeeded and if it is making progress.

**Accountability**

Healthcare professionals are accountable for their own practice, but they are also accountable for team working. This means that they are expected to demonstrate the attitudes, behaviours and actions that promote good team working.  Much has been written about developing a safety culture in healthcare such as Patient Safety First 2010. Mutual accountability is key to maintaining this. Building an effective team means managing individual performance, including poor performance. This can be both challenging and time consuming but it's essential for building a strong team.

**Clear roles and responsibilities**

A lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities can lead to conflict, mistakes and poor use of resources. Don't assume because someone has a job description, they know what their job is. When did you last read your job description?

New starters must have an induction that spells out the expectations of their role (including behaviours and attitudes) and all members of the team must have regular and honest appraisals. Training is essential where people are undertaking roles previously carried out by others, for example, non-medically qualified personnel performing tasks previously undertaken by medical staff.

**Good communication**

It sounds obvious, but good communication is crucial for successful team working and that means effective team meetings. Although potentially time consuming, it is an important forum to allow everyone to have their say, feed back to the team progress against objectives and to recognise achievements. Meetings don't have to be held monthly and last for two hours. Many teams find shorter and more frequent meetings are much more effective. Make sure the meeting has a purpose, an agenda and that action points are followed up at subsequent meetings. Manage any inappropriate behaviour to ensure the meeting keeps to time

**Strong leadership**

A piece of research carried out by consultancy firm, The Hay Group in 2006, showed that the most common leadership style used by ward managers was affiliative. The research is based on six leadership styles that are directive, visionary, affiliative, participative, pacesetting and coaching. The focus of the affiliative style is on creating harmony. Leaders whose mostly use the affiliative style tend to avoid managing uncomfortable situations. The research showed that leaders who used around three to four of these styles were more effective. It also found that drug errors were 40 per cent lower on wards managed by people who used a wider range of leadership styles to suit the situation. Leaders are sometimes afraid to be firm because they think their team won't like them. Leading a team effectively is about mutual respect and part of building that respect is being "firm and fair".  Building an effective team is hard work, but it's rewarding in many ways and well worth the effort.

**Tips for good teamwork**

* Develop a team vision
* Set a maximum of six measurable objectives
* Manage poor performance
* Use an induction framework that outlines expectations
* Undertake honest appraisals
* Be a firm but fair leader
* Use different leadership styles to suit the situation
* Make the effort to build an effective team

**Ten Qualities of an Effective Team Player**

**Demonstrates reliability**

You can count on a reliable team member who gets work done and does his fair share to work hard and meet commitments. He or she follows through on assignments. Consistency is key. You can count on him or her to deliver good performance all the time, not just some of the time.

**Communicates constructively**

Teams need people who speak up and express their thoughts and ideas clearly, directly, honestly, and with respect for others and for the work of the team. That's what it means to communicate constructively. Such a team member does not shy away from making a point but makes it in the best way possible — in a positive, confident, and respectful manner.

**Listens actively**

Good listeners are essential for teams to function effectively. Teams need team players who can absorb, understand, and consider ideas and points of view from other people without debating and arguing every point. Such a team member also can receive criticism without reacting defensively. Most important, for effective communication and problem solving, team members need the discipline to listen first and speak second so that meaningful dialogue results.

**Functions as an active participant**

Good team players are active participants. They come prepared for team meetings and listen and speak up in discussions. They're fully engaged in the work of the team and do not sit passively on the sidelines. Team members who function as active participants take the initiative to help make things happen, and they volunteer for assignments. Their whole approach is can-do: "What contribution can *I* make to help the team achieve success?"

**Shares openly and willingly**

Good team players share. They're willing to share information, knowledge, and experience. They take the initiative to keep other team members informed. Much of the communication within teams takes place informally. Beyond discussion at organized meetings, team members need to feel comfortable talking with one another and passing along important news and information day-to-day. Good team players are active in this informal sharing. They keep other team members in the loop with information and expertise that helps get the job done and prevents surprises.

**Cooperates and pitches in to help**

Cooperation is the act of working *with*others and acting together to accomplish a job. Effective team players work this way by second nature. Good team players, despite differences they may have with other team members concerning style and perspective, figure out ways to work together to solve problems and get work done. They respond to requests for assistance and take the initiative to offer help.

**Exhibits flexibility**

Teams often deal with changing conditions — and often create changes themselves. Good team players roll with the punches; they adapt to ever-changing situations. They don't complain or get stressed out because something new is being tried or some new direction is being set. In addition, a flexible team member can consider different points of views and compromise when needed. He or she doesn't hold rigidly to a point of view and argue it to death, especially when the team needs to move forward to make a decision or get something done. Strong team players are firm in their thoughts yet open to what others have to offer — flexibility at its best.

**Shows commitment to the team**

Strong team players care about their work, the team, and the team's work. They show up every day with this care and commitment up front. They want to give a good effort, and they want other team members to do the same.

**Works as a problem-solver**

Teams, of course, deal with problems. Sometimes, it appears, that's the whole reason why a team is created — to address problems. Good team players are willing to deal with all kinds of problems in a solutions-oriented manner. They're problem-solvers, not problem-dwellers, problem-blamers, or problem-avoiders. They don't simply rehash a problem the way problem-dwellers do. They don't look for others to fault, as the blamers do. And they don't put off dealing with issues, the way avoiders do. Team players get problems out in the open for discussion and then collaborate with others to find solutions and form action plans.

**Treats others in a respectful and supportive manner**

Team players treat fellow team members with courtesy and consideration — not just some of the time but consistently. In addition, they show understanding and the appropriate support of other team members to help get the job done. They don't place conditions on when they'll provide assistance, when they'll choose to listen, and when they'll share information. Good team players also have a sense of humor and know how to have fun (and all teams can use a bit of both), but they don't have fun at someone else's expense. Quite simply, effective team players deal with other people in a professional manner. Team players who show commitment don't come in any particular style or personality. They don't need to be rah-rah, cheerleader types. In fact, they may even be soft-spoken, but they aren't passive. They care about what the team is doing and they contribute to its success — without needing a push. Team players with commitment look beyond their own piece of the work and care about the team's overall work. In the end, their commitment is about winning — not in the sports sense of beating your opponent but about seeing the team succeed and knowing they have contributed to this success. Winning as a team is one of the great motivators of employee performance. Good team players have and show this motivation.

**Building a Collaborative Team Environment**

Teams are expected to produce results, but performance is hindered when team members do not work well together. A collaborative team environment is essential for the team's success. To create a collaborative environment, team members must practice the following:

**Have a Common Purpose and Goal**

A team is defined as a group of people working together toward a common goal. Without a goal, there is no team. Ideas for creating a common goal include:

* Create and/or review the team's charter.
* Discuss why the team exists.
* Allow each team member to express commitment.
* Create mottoes, symbols, awards, or posters that portray the team as one unit.
* Use the common purpose to prioritize team actions.

**Trust Each Other**

Team members must trust each other if they are to work together successfully. Ideas for creating trust among team members include:

* Be honest.
* Work to eliminate conflicts of interests.
* Avoid talking behind each other's back.
* Trust teammates (you must trust them before they will trust you).
* Give team members the benefit of the doubt.

**Clarify Roles**

Knowing everyone's role and being familiar with the responsibility of those roles create efficiency and flexibility. Ideas for clarifying roles on the team include:

* Review team members' roles frequently.
* Relate team member expectations to the team's overall purpose.
* Clarify responsibilities when action planning.
* Learn what others do on the team.
* Figure out ways to help each other.



**Communicate Openly and Effectively**

Miscommunication can create hard feelings and undermine the success of the team. Ideas for improving communication include:

* Err on the side of over communicating.
* Seek to understand all angles.
* Take responsibility for being heard and understood.
* Work to clear up misunderstandings quickly and accurately.
* Reinforce and recognize team member efforts.

**Appreciate Diversity**

Team members come from all walks of life, with different backgrounds and perspectives. Ideas for taking advantage of team diversity include:

* Remember that reasonable people can and do differ with each other.
* Try to learn as much as you can from others.
* Evaluate a new idea based on its merits.
* Avoid remarks that draw negative attention to a person's unique characteristics.
* Don't ignore the differences among team members.

**Balance the Team's Focus**

**How People Function in Groups**

If a group is functioning well, work is getting done and constructive group processes are creating a positive atmosphere. In good groups the individuals may contribute differently at different times. They cooperate and human relationships are respected. This may happen automatically or individuals, at different times, can make it their job to maintain the atmospbere and human aspects of the group.

**Roles That Contribute to the Work**

**Initiating** - taking the initiative, at any time; for example, convening the group, suggesting procedures, changing direction, providing new energy and ideas. *(How about if we.... What would happen if... ?)*

**Seeking information or opinions** - requesting facts, preferences, suggestions and ideas. *(Could you say a little more about...Would you say this is a more workable idea than that?)*

**Giving information or opinions** - providing facts, data, information from research or experience. *(ln my experience I have seen...May I tell you what I found out about...? )*

**Questioning** - stepping back from what is happening and challenging the group or asking other specific questions about the task. *(Are we assuming that... ? Would the consequence of this be... ?)*

**Clarifying** - interpreting ideas or suggestions, clearing up confusions, defining terms or asking others to clarify. This role can relate different contributions from different people, and link up ideas that seem unconnected. *(lt seems that you are saying...Doesn't this relate to what [name] was saying earlier?)*

**Summarizing** - putting contributions into a pattern, while adding no new information. This role is important if a group gets stuck. Some groups officially appoint a summarizer for this potentially powerful and influential role.*(If we take all these pieces and put them together...Here's what I think we have agreed upon so far... Here are our areas of disagreement...)*

**Roles That Contribute to the Atmosphere**

**Supporting** - remembering others' remarks, being encouraging and responsive to others. Creating a warm, encouraging atmosphere, and making people feel they belong helps the group handle stresses and strains. People can gesture, smile, and make eye-contact without saying a word. Some silence can be supportive for people who are not native speakers of English by allowing them a chance to get into discussion. *(I understand what you are getting at...As [name] was just saying...)*

**Observing** - noticing the dynamics of the group and commenting. Asking if others agree or if they see things differently can be an effective way to identify problems as they arise. *(We seem to be stuck...Maybe we are done for now, we are all worn out...As I see it, what happened just a minute ago..Do you agree?)*

**Mediating** - recognizing disagreements and figuring out what is behind the differences. When people focus on real differences, that may lead to striking a balance or devising ways to accomodate different values, views, and approaches. *(I think the two of you are coming at this from completely different points of view...Wait a minute. This is how [name/ sees the problem. Can you see why she may see it differently?)*

**Reconciling** - reconciling disagreements. Emphasizing shared views among members can reduce tension. *(The goal of these two strategies is the same, only the means are different… Is there anything that these positions have in common?)*

**Compromising** - yielding a position or modifying opinions. This can help move the group forward. *(Everyone else seems to agree on this, so I'll go along with... I think if I give in on this, we could reach a decision.)*

**Making a personal comment** - occasional personal comments, especially as they relate to the work. Statements about one's life are often discouraged in professional settings; this may be a mistake since personal comments can strengthen a group by making people feel human with a lot in common.

**Humor** - funny remarks or good-natured comments. Humor, if it is genuinely good-natured and not cutting, can be very effective in relieving tension or dealing with participants who dominate or put down others. Humor can be used constructively to make the work more acceptable by providing a welcome break from concentration. It may also bring people closer together, and make the work more fun.

All the positive roles turn the group into an energetic, productive enterprise. People who have not reflected on these roles may misunderstand the motives and actions of people working in a group. If someone other than the leader initiates ideas, some may view it as an attempt to take power from the leader. Asking questions may similarly be seen as defying authority or slowing down the work of the group. Personal anecdotes may be thought of as trivializing the discussion. Leaders who understand the importance of these many roles can allow and encourage them as positive contributions to group dynamics. Roles that contribute to the work give the group a sense of direction and achievement. Roles contributing to the human atmosphere give the group a sense of cooperation and goodwill.