# **IDENTIFYING THE KEY STRATEGIC ISSUE**

## **Key strategic issue**

Paucity of communication [[1](https://hbr.org/2023/10/poor-communication-may-be-slowing-down-your-team)] restricts everyone to exchange clear, accurate and prompt information escalating the uncontrolled conflicts in the team. Absence of elective leadership resulted the formation of dysfunctional team that lacks a clear orientation, rules of engagement, pre-defined roles and authority. Inadequate comprehension of importance of team rules of engagement[[2](https://leadershipcircle.com/blog/set-meaningful-rules-of-engagement/)] and marketing knowledge catalyzed clash in ideology resulting in failure to produce any significant team dynamics.

## **Root cause**

To start with, the team lacked the cohesiveness due to the absence of mainstream unified, inclusive and two-ways communication channel that resulting in a communication gap. Like, Onyealisi was headed to DC for an interview therefore not able to go through the case study. No body knew until he notified on the meeting. This dented in the team expectation that would rehearse the case study thoroughly.

The absence of elective leadership [[3](https://www.harvardbusiness.org/good-leadership-it-all-starts-with-trust/)](leader) consequent on depravity of compelling team direction, team buildups, accountability, ownership and adherence of team rules of engagement in the team practices. The prevalence of ethnocentrism stimulated further unhealthy arguments till the point of team split-ups. For instance, Delery was outvoted by Prasad, Cooper, Griffin, Martin on not doing takeaways and, Onyealisi being neutral, Onyealisi googling OnStar, Cooper interrupts Griffin expressing ideas, Onyealisi being sarcastic about OnStar, picking phone and munching on cookies made by Cooper’s wife during the meeting.

The telltale signs of the team members behaviors depict that the psychological safety of the team members is compromised by frequent triggering of the SCARF element, such as Martin visibly upset upon Onyealisi’s ignorance, Prasad’s impoliteness while addressing an argument between Griffin and Cooper. As a consequence to this, Griffin being rude to Prasad’s quest about 4P’s, mumbling of Prasad, Griffin & Cooper, Prasad’s frustration on Cooper’ and Griffin’s arguments.

Finally, there are some disparities that exists for example, Martin being the only woman in the group and, taking most of the responsibilities like decision-making, checking on her teammates, taking document ownership, etc., even without any leader assigned to the group. Adding onto this, Cooper, the only married person in the group, to someone on-campus thereby, being ‘extra’ conscientious so as to not affect the relationship with his peers and staffs.

## **Best-, worst-, and likely- case scenarios**

In the best-case scenario, the learning team would somehow complete the case study however with no cohesion, due to the aforementioned disparities amplified by their cultural diversity. Also, splitting of the case study as suggested by Onyealisi. In the worst-case scenario, a series of disagreements between team members, causing recursive ego clashes eventually spiral down their relationship, sometimes even to the extent when ethnocentrism springs up. The likely-case would be the disintegration into two teams, each consisting of members with similar ideology.

# **GENERATING ALTERNATIVES**

A leader must be appointed to handle the discrepancies and disparities among the team members, if it comes to play, by taking an authoritative voice, unlike Martin. As she takes the lead without being assigned, she is hypervigilant about what others think of her, also that she is unaware of the demographics or characteristics of her teammates. If Marshall makes Martin the leader, she may take the stance, which is evident from her persistency of voluntary leadership. As a result, by socialization get to know her team members outside academics, accordingly can take on any leadership-style or a combination of it as and when the situation demands. On the flip side, the rest may take advantage of Martin’s earnestness henceforth, not having shared accountability.

A common channel must be established for communicating agendas, reporting errors, generating minutes of meeting, notifying changes, and sharing of any updates to the team. To give an example, none of the team members knew about Delery sending the case notes that Martin put together to Onyealisi deemed to have gone for an interview, which probably not. By broadcasting all messages regarding the case study, including that betwixt any two, the information silos can be eradicated for expediting coherence in the team. On the other hand, this can also lead to an increase in the differences of opinion as every conversation is now live thus, intensifying the team turmoil.

The team must also explore concepts for solving the case study for which they are not familiar with. It is difficult to solve a marketing case study (hereof OnStar) when no one in the team possess the relevant skillsets (a marketing expert), which in-fact supported by Cooper in two different conversations, one with Delery, the other with Onyealisi. Cooper’s entreaty should be accepted to have a smooth flow of solving the case study. On the contrary, parallel learning of the concepts may also incur delay if clear agendas are not set.

Since this is a newly formed team with members from diverse demographic and cultural backgrounds, it's essential to engage in team-building activities before jumping into the project. This process includes the stages of forming, storming, and norming[[6](https://learn.upgrad.com/course/7172/segment/52888/313509/950156/4742354)], which are fundamental to building a cohesive team. For example, if the team had decided to enjoy the cookies made by Cooper’s wife before starting the meeting, instead of it, they could have established some level of connection with each other.

This approach could help the entire team relax, socialize, and set a positive tone for a productive meeting. It would encourage openness and build rapport among team members. On the downside, some team members might perceive this activity as a waste of time or counterproductive, which could affect their engagement and view of the team's priorities.

**OFFERING RECOMMENDATIONS**

Establishing the right communication channels governed by clear communicational rules of engagement is the best course of action to achieve optimal team dynamics and develop shared vision for this team. A two-ways healthy communications encourage sense of accountability, responsibleness, unity and belongingness to the team while discouraging ethnocentrism that functionprevents to the team from becoming dysfunctional. [[4](https://learn.upgrad.com/course/7172/segment/52888/313509/950156/4742356)]

Without concise, constructive, and unbiased communication, selecting the right leadership (leader) for the team becomes challenging. Team-building exercises, selection of a leader and parallel learning activities will not be as effective without first establishing a fundamental communication because the team members. If not, they would not have the opportunity to socialize, understand each other traits and personalities, strengths and weaknesses, which is very fundamental recipe in forming, storming and norming an ideal team after that only we can work on sustaining the highly functional team.

**PREPARING A PLAN OF ACTION**

## **Goals**

The communication channels must be leveraged to develop trust & transparency among the team members. Besides, keeping their psychological safety in check, by enhancing feedback & recognition, enabling a polling system to elect the leader, imparting inclusivity without any biases. These channels also promote a shared responsibility in the team by keeping each of its member accountable for their assigned roles of action, whereby ensuring duly completion of the tasks or assignment within the stipulated time limits or deadline.

## **Who does what**

Martin can lead the learning team on their first assignment, due to her persistency and keenness in progressing with the case study, despite the miscommunication, conflicts, and turmoil in the team. From the team dynamics observed so far, Martin shall adopt a combination of democratic & autocratic leadership style for her team to be the most efficient.

Cooper will be elated to provide insights on the concepts related to the case study by learning from the concerned professors, as he had already stressed upon this to Delery and Prasad. Prasad being a tech graduate and an IT Professional, is well-versed with researching and collecting necessary information from authentic sources to back-up their opinions with evidences.

Griffin has portrayed a fair share of patience & tolerance in situations like bringing everybody back to the table when confusions arose upon recursive interruptions while discussing the first two questions on their case study. Griffin’s observed characteristics coupled with his analytical expertise, he is the best fit to set agendas and track individual contributions in meetings.

Delery with scientific knowledge and having a similar plan for his future as Griffin in investment banking, can enable them to work-together more closely therewith, the former being able to evaluate the team performance in detail followed by providing an exhaustive overview of each member and forecasting its effects.

Onyealisi’s professional, educational, and social backgrounds ironic to his degree of participation indicates his dearth in understanding of the group. Hence, he is the potential candidate for framing the team rules of engagement, which will guide him break free from the shell and start interacting with his team in a disciplined manner.

## **Timeframe for each activity**

A timeline for a period of one month will be ideal for the completion, being their first project (OnStar Marketing Case Study) since the commencement of the course (MBA). Following will be the implementations for each week. Orientation sessions can be held on the first week for getting to know each other personally and socially, serving as an ice-breaker for communication, both among the students in the team as well as with the faculty members. After which, the learning team shall be briefed about the importance of the case study, its goals, expectations and take-aways. A leader can be elected by the group on the second week thereupon, the division of roles & responsibilities among the members by the leader.

Traversing half-way across the timeline, now the leader shall provide a constructive feedback & justification for the designated roles of each team member based on their performance so far. This is so as to align their strengths with their corresponding roles without triggering any of the SCARF[[6](https://www.mindtools.com/akswgc0/david-rocks-scarf-model)] elements. At the beginning of the final week before the submission, the team members can get help from their mentors to finalize their case study write-ups and whether all its components are set in the right direction. Note that all these implementations are done in parallel to the progression of the case study for streamlining the processes around it.

## **Measures of success**

Qualitative measures of success involve the team’s ability to conduct a brain-storming session and successfully come to an agreement on the key elements, discarding the rest. Apart from this, the team must also be cross-functional wherein everyone’s point of view is considered in any given focused session. While the leader provides feedback to the team members, his/her conduct in partaking the meetings, appropriateness of language, and other team KPIs[[7](https://hbr.org/2020/12/use-okrs-to-set-goals-for-teams-not-individuals)] also need to be monitored and assessed by the mentors.

Quantitative measures of success involve whether or not the team completes the specified tasks within the allocated deadline, whether the project milestones and deliverables are completed in a timely fashion alas, how many new skillsets has each member of the team inculcate.

## **Possible coordination issues and its challenges**

The team members come from various professional backgrounds (finance, consulting, real estate, technology), leading to different approaches to problem-solving and task prioritization. This diversity[[9](https://www.forbes.com/sites/roncarucci/2024/01/24/one-more-time-why-diversity-leads-to-better-team-performance/)] could cause misunderstandings or conflicts during case discussions. Aligning the team’s diverse perspectives to create a unified approach requires consistent effort and communication. Overcoming these differences to foster collaboration may be difficult, particularly when members have deeply ingrained professional habits.

Some team members, like Jennifer Martin, are highly engaged, while others, like Onyealisi, seem less prepared or involved. This disparity in engagement can create frustration among more committed members and lead to resentment or a sense of inequality within the team. Encouraging equal participation and sustaining long-term motivation can be challenging, especially when engagement levels vary. Finding ways to involve all members equally without alienating or overburdening them is critical.

The team struggles with open and effective communication[[8](https://professional.dce.harvard.edu/blog/is-your-workplace-communication-style-as-effective-as-it-could-be/)], leading to some members feeling unheard or undervalued. This lack of clear communication is evident in Onyealisi’s dismissive comments and Martin’s frustration. Implementing structured communication processes that balance assertiveness and respect will be essential. However, members may resist these processes if they are used to more informal or flexible approaches, making it difficult to establish new norms.

These evidences illustrate how diverse backgrounds, varying engagement levels, and communication styles can create significant challenges in team coordination, requiring deliberate efforts to overcome them.

**CONCLUSION**

Lack of communication, leadership, and information were the main issues behind the team being dysfunctional, of which communication was an alarming concern. Tony Marshall shall mentor the team to channelize their individual competencies in materializing the case solution. With this implementation in place, by the end of project completion, each member would have explored the full depth & dimension of the case study thereby, gaining wisdom on various aspects surrounding it. The team appears to be successful and, doing far better in terms of both qualitative and quantitative fronts. They have gotten better in communication, collaboration, decision-making, accountability, sympathy, and knowledge sharing. There lies a huge potential for this team if they continue practicing all these features. Tony Robbins must paint the contrasting illustration of the team’s outcomes versus their efforts & time spent before and after the implementation of the recommended course of action, in their mind.[1] This will help the members realize their prospective efficacies and encourage them to boost their values as a team, highlighting the importance of communication therefore, accelerating their success.

# **REFERENCE**

## *references!*

# **APPENDIX**

## **Individual Contributions**

| **Sno.** | **Team Member** | **Contributions** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Abhay Nagarkoti | Brain-storming; fairing-out the sub-section *possible coordination issues and its challenges* |
| 2 | Bikash Baskota | Brain-storming; final corrections for overall cohesion & grammatical accuracy; fairing-out the section *offering recommendations*; references & referencing |
| 3 | Dhiraj Pradhan | – |
| 4 | Harika Devineni | Brain-storming; final corrections for overall cohesion & grammatical accuracy; fairing-out the section *offering recommendations* |
| 5 | Shaeestha Shaha | Brain-storming, established team rules of engagement |
| 6 | Muhammed Shahinsha | Brain-storming, fairing-out *possible coordination issues and its challenges*, generating work plan |
| 7 | Venkataramanan Mohandass | Leadership (assigning roles, setting agendas, providing the minutes, and coordinating with the team members on task completion), brain-storming, jotting of points, APA Formatting, confirming the facts with the evidences from the case study, generating work plan, fairing-out the sections *identifying the key strategic issue*, *generating alternatives*, *preparing a plan of action* (except the sub-section *possible coordination issues and its challenges*), *conclusion* and, *appendix* |