Norm 1: Work Norms

Work norms are rules and regulations put in place to balance work distribution and to play off of the strengths of each coworker. These norms usually involve setting up deadlines, splitting the workload in a fair manner, and balancing different working habits to work in the favor of the project’s development instead of being to its detriment. An example of this is during one of the projects I(Andrew Taormino) worked on, we had pretty constant deliveries(around 1 every 2 weeks). It was established that deliveries were always on a Thursday morning, and everyone had to have their work in on Wednesday night. Programming and design work had to be for the most part on that Monday as to give time for QA to test the product thoroughly before delivery.

These guidelines also involve what is to happen if deadlines are missed and how the work is to be reviewed and its quality checked. To build off of the previous example, there were a few times where deliveries were for some reason missed. Whether there was some persistent issue that was not being addressed properly or someone was missing deadlines themselves, some sort of negotiation had to happen with the client. Most of the time it was making the client aware of the issue that was occurring and making them aware that we are addressing it, but if the issue was too impactful many of the times our delivery would change format. We generally delivered via the client’s website, but if there were issues with pushing it to there we would deliver via a separate standalone, showing the client the work that was achieved. Sometimes, neither of these routes wouldn’t work, and if that was the case, the delivery was shifted, but this was more of a last resort situation.

Norm 2: Facilitator Norms

Facilitator norms establish if you need a facilitator, who the facilitator is, and what the facilitator will do. The facilitator may also be rotated if necessary. The facilitator is generally responsible for keeping the team on track for task completion and meeting deadlines. The facilitator is also vital for solving group issues and helping to provide alternatives to problems that have arisen in development. In my(Andrew’s) current work, this very much reminds me of 2 different roles, team leads and scrum masters. In the team I’m currently working on, the scrum master does not shift, rather it stays the same person, and as described he will go through how each individual is coming along with their assigned tasks, if there are any blockers and how they can be addressed. The scrum master also discusses future tasks that are coming up during the sprint and how they can possibly apply into future sprints. This individual is the programming lead on the project, though as discussed this doesn’t necessarily have to be the case.

Norm 3: Communication Norms

Communication Norms determine when communications are necessary and through what medium they need to be done through. In my work experience, most of my (Andrew) communications are done through Slack, where we have dedicated channels for each project so that questions can be asked and answered in an informal manner, with huddles in Slack being utilized as a means to discuss things without calling a meeting.

Norm 4: Meeting Norms

Similar to communication norms, meeting norms are vital to ensure that a team is on top of the tasks at hand and to make sure people are able to meet deadlines. These norms establish when people can meet, how often, and where to meet. These norms also establish what should happen if someone misses a meeting, or if necessary, what happens if someone misses numerous meetings. As an example the team I(Andrew) work with have meetings set up on zoom, set for Tuesday (the beginning of the scrum), and Friday(the end of the scrum). These will be adjusted based upon the availability of individuals, say for example if the scrum master is out sick or if there is a holiday. We then do an in person meetup, usually set up a few weeks in advance so that everyone can attend, to look over the project and discuss changes that need to be made. The scrum master usually handles when these should be set, however the producer on the team also will have some influence on when meetings will occur.

Norm 5: Consideration Norms

Consideration norms are guidelines on what is usually allowed to occur in the previous norms along with setting up ways for norms to be changed if something must change. In my(Andrew) experience, the consideration norms are generally to follow general professional behavior. For example, being respectful and professional on slack, and not using excessive language. Eating food, as another example, really doesn’t matter during meetings as long as you’re not stuffing your face. A norm change I have seen is on another project, when we would meet once a week, but that shifted to more when we had more to present, as this project was much more experimental.

Hints for Handling Difficult Behavior

Difficult behavior is something everyone will deal with in a team setting. One such behavior is someone being overly talkative. This individual can either be someone who is very enthusiastic about the project, a showoff, someone who is very well informed and anxious to show it, and or someone who is unable to pick up on the social cues of others to try and limit their behavior. While their discussion is useful, they can stifle others from presenting their ideas. Thus, if their behavior cannot be addressed subtly, then talking to them privately to limit this behavior will be necessary.

Another behavior that can be problematic is someone being too quiet. These individuals can often be either shy or disinterested in the project. Forcing some form of engagement, like questions directed at this individual to get their opinion, helps to keep this person involved and on top of their work.

Someone who is argumentative poses its own unique issues. This person may be critical of different processes, ideas, or even group members. Making sure this person is aware that being so obtrusive is detrimental towards the team, but being open to what they are saying about ideas and mechanisms because they may have experience on the matter.

Someone who complains can also pose an issue. This may be because of a pet peeve or just because they like to complain. If the person’s complaint is legitimate, bring it to the group as something that should be addressed. Otherwise, any way that can help alleviate their concerns without detracting from the team would be useful.

Being Someone who is rather quiet, I(Andrew) can definitely speak to the experience of working on a project where the team didn’t address this issue properly. Many times I felt unheard or just cast aside during work, which killed any motivation to work on the project. Addressing these issues is very vital for a healthy team.

I(Deaira) agree with Andrew. I have been on both sides of the table in regard to being someone who talks too much and can not pick up on the social cues to lay off and being the person who is too quiet and retracts away from the project. I have never had anyone address the talking too much side although it would have been extremely beneficial for it to occur. There is a way to express this issue without being offensive that I believe many people struggle to identify causing further issues down the line. As the receiver of constructive criticism, I can say that the biggest challenges in handling difficult behavior are establishing the tone of delivery and being able to accept the criticism.

Hints for Handling Group Problems

There are many issues that face a group that can cause a breakdown in cohesion. One such case is floundering, where individuals are just getting to know each other and how each other works and are struggling to keep to tasks. Constant communication, and drawing up tasks could help this. Another issue that happens is tangents. While they have a use in socializing everyone, one that goes on for too long proves detrimental for time constraints. Bringing the conversation back to the task at hand will help to cut tangents short. Some people will try to push to make a decision, even if it isn’t a good idea to do so yet. Ensuring everyone is on the same page and discussing all tasks that need to be accomplished may help to alleviate possible rash decision making. Counter to this, the group may struggle with making a decision at all. Multivoting, allowing for multiple votes on a couple different ideas, may be a good idea to help bring the group to a consensus. Conflicts can occur in the group, which grinds all work to a halt. These issues have to be addressed immediately, utilizing options possibly from handling difficult behavior. Exclusion of individuals is common, and detrimental to the workflow. Becoming comfortable with working with individuals you may not be comfortable working with will help team cohesion and thus task completion. One individual may not, for one reason or another, be doing their fair share of the work. Making this person aware of this and how this is affecting the team is vital.

I(Andrew) can definitely speak to a coworker I have that likes to go on tangents. If not controlled properly, a 10 minute meeting can go on for an hour and a half, which is an extreme waste of time. Thus, I would try to keep the person on topic as much as I can so that what needs to be discussed does get discussed.

I(Deaira) can attest to the conflict of decision-making. At certain points in time, it can become challenging to decide or have a difference in opinion out of fear of upsetting or isolating other group members. I agree that voting is a viable solution to resolving decision based conflicts. It gives a fair way to decide where the majority rules. They should also be addressed immediately but with a fair and thorough discussion of all viewpoints.