

The benefits of collaboration

Mastering
Collaboration

LECTURE
SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

Why collaborative teams work

- ▶ Most people specialize in something, and when specialists come together as a team, their individual skills and expertise allow them to accomplish great things together
- **Collaboration: sharing decisions and responsibility for the outcome**
- Cooperation: focusing on your own work and helping others only when necessary
- ▶ **The benefits of collaboration for individual team members:**
 - #1 It improves people's work, leading to more effective solutions
 - #2 It speeds up work
 - #3 People learn new skills and techniques from other specialists
 - #4 Everyone understands the business better
 - #5 People develop interpersonal skills
 - #6 It provides safety and support by knowing you have trustworthy partners

► **The benefits of collaboration for managers:**

#1 It shortens development time

#2 It lowers costs

#3 It improves scalability

#4 It increases trust across the business

#5 It allows more flexibility as the business grows

- Collaboration isn't just a way of working, it's also a mindset
- When people collaborate with others, they help establish their credibility among colleagues

How collaborative teams work

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Covered in this lecture:

Best practices in collaborative teams

- ▶ Regardless of the industry, teams with good collaboration will usually do the following things:

#1 They collectively define the goals of their team

#2 They agree on roles and assign tasks

#3 They openly share information and their work with each other

#4 They work together to make important decisions

#5 They treat each other with trust and respect

- ▶ Most teams still require people to assume certain kinds of roles:

- team leader

- communicator or liaison

- researcher

- editor / quality assurance person

- Some people will naturally assume some of these roles based on their skills and personality
- Within a collaborative group, teammates should be willing to pitch in wherever they're needed to make sure everything gets done

The challenges of working in a collaborative team

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Covered in this lecture:

How to collaborate better

- ▶ A lot of people prefer to work alone, but when you consider bigger projects, collaboration becomes really valuable
- Sharing responsibility and dividing up work can significantly speed up results
- Relying on the experience and expertise of a team ensures better decisions are made
- When you bring together people who are passionate about their work, the possibilities are endless
- ▶ **How to be a better collaborative team member:**
 - #1 Be a good listener
 - #2 Trust your teammates and consider their ideas
 - #3 Challenge others constructively
 - #4 Trust in the process that the team agreed on to get work done

Overcoming differences to ensure collaboration

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Covered in this lecture:

Embracing diversity

- ▶ Collaborative teams should be formed around people with different backgrounds, different age ranges, genders, and with various cultural and religious beliefs
- People need to embrace diversity of ideas in order to generate creative and innovative ideas that will solve the problems they're facing
- Give your team an opportunity to get to know each other in meetings or after work social events
- ▶ Conflict is natural and shouldn't be avoided, so when facing an issue, follow these tips:
 - #1 Remain calm and optimistic
 - #2 If you're on one side of the argument, ask the other person to explain their position
 - #3 Explain your own opinion and reasons behind your ideas
 - #4 Be open to other ideas
 - #5 Make sure you have all the information you need and don't assume anything

Assembling and leading a collaborative team

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Covered in this lecture:

What to do when you're in a leading position

- ▶ If you're responsible for assembling a collaborative team, your goals and needs will determine how the team will look in the end
- In smaller, more focused teams, the people involved see each other a lot and everyone is really instrumental in the end result
- In larger collaborative teams, you have:
 - a core group of people doing most of the work
 - stakeholders who give the general direction
 - consultants who are only needed for certain parts of the project
- As you bring people together, you want to help them accomplish tasks and goals, but also build relationships to ensure better communication
- ▶ Explain why each person is there and how they should contribute

- ▶ Include at least two people who already know each other to get conversations going
- ▶ Encourage open and honest conversations
- ▶ Leaders should encourage 1-on-1 meetings and discussions as well
- ▶ Create opportunities where teammates can get together socially and get to know each other

Effective collaborative team meetings

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Covered in this lecture:

Best practices for meetings

- ▶ Most meetings follow a simple structure: you set an agenda, define meeting goals, engage in discussions and interactions, and make decisions
- Set an agenda for the meeting before you actually hold it - this allows you to invite the right people and arrange everything in advance
- Before the meeting, also define your goals, which will guide the meeting discussions
- ▶ Collaborative meetings should be more than one directional presentations
- Make sure there are opportunities for people to interact and jump in with ideas and questions
- ▶ Based on the discussions and interactions, the group should be able to make informed decisions that relate to the goals you've set

- ▶ In any meeting, problems can arise, like people being unwilling to participate
- Watch to see who's engaged throughout the meeting and encourage the others to speak up
- ▶ Treat everyone and their ideas equally - don't assume a more senior or experienced team member will always give the best ideas
- ▶ Keep revisiting your goals to make sure decisions are being made based on the right criteria

Collaboration lessons from different industries

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How others collaborate

► **Content marketing**

- people collaborate to push pieces through a workflow
- collaboration like this requires tools that allow people to contribute and then pass on the work to the next person
- everyone needs to work together to get content out on time

► **Software development**

- people follow a workflow to develop and launch apps and other software
- this work includes a lot of user testing
- collaboration with a community that gives feedback leads to great advances in this work
- example: the Github community can give great feedback and review new software

▶ **Education**

- teachers collaborate with fellow professionals through observation
- In some industries, people are protective of their knowledge and don't want to share it
- When people refuse to collaborate, teams fall apart

▶ **Healthcare**

- medical professionals collaborate with people they've never met in order to benefit the patients
- this kind of collaboration is based on trust in their system

Improving online collaboration

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SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

Collaborating with remote workers

- ▶ Online collaboration may present some unique challenges:
 - it's more difficult to have certain kinds of conversations or meetings
 - there are fewer chances for spontaneous meetings and exchange of information
 - people use different technology or using the same tools differently
- Establish a clear process for how and where work and discussions get done
- Choose the best tools for your goals
- Respect people's availability when you plan meetings with someone in a different time zone

Collaboration across teams

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Covered in this lecture:

Best practices

- ▶ Sometimes, you need to bring experts or skilled colleagues from other teams to work on a project together
- Welcome them and introduce them to everyone else, letting people know how they will help the team
- ▶ Invite them to your regular meetings to get a fresh perspective
- ▶ It's important for people to leave their titles at the door and work together as equals
- Include them in your online platforms to participate in discussions
- Hold meetings in the right location to encourage collaboration

How to create a culture of collaboration

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Promoting collaboration as a value

- ▶ **Collaboration needs to be an established organizational value - it needs to be a part of its culture**
- As a leader, you have to invest in collaboration and actively promote it
- ▶ Hire people with collaborative skills and tendencies
- ▶ Choose the right collaborative tools that allow people to communicate
- ▶ Consider an open workplace design or an activity-based workplace to encourage interactions
- Activity-based workplaces allow employees to choose where they want to sit every day, based on where they need to be
- ▶ Trust your team to make the right decisions and they'll be more invested in their work

Conclusions

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Conclusions

- ▶ Regardless of your kind of team and your goals, collaboration won't work without trust
- ▶ The better you know your teammates and the more you've worked with them, the easier it should be to trust them
- As a leader, openly promote collaboration as a value, and demonstrate your support by providing tools and training
- A collaborative team is sharing work and responsibility, but in the end they are also sharing the success they achieve