



“One reason teams don’t make decisions on a timely basis is that they are unskilled at reaching consensus.”

Team Assessment: Group Process

In our last issue, we introduced Team Assessment Part I ~ The Basics:

- Goals
- Roles
- Relationships
- Meetings

This issue highlights Team Assessment Part II ~ Group Process:

- Decision Making
- Conflict Resolution
- Problem Solving
- Giving Feedback

Required Group Processes

The following five questions focus on the processes teams need to have in place in order to work effectively together. Using the following scale, assess your team’s group processes.

1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Don’t Know; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree

- The team uses appropriate decision making methods for each team decision.
- Team decisions are made on a timely basis.
- Team members effectively use conflict resolution tools to resolve conflict.
- The team uses an agreed-to problem solving process.
- Members actively solicit and provide clear and honest feedback to one another.

If the team scores 3 or less on any item, that is an area for focus.

Often team members just need to discuss and agree on a common process. If more is needed, see some of the tips in this newsletter.

If you would like to purchase copies of the Team Assessment, contact Susan. See the contact information on Page 4.



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Performance Appraisal for Teams?

Question:

I enjoyed your article on performance appraisal in the last issue of Collaborations. It certainly makes sense and takes the vagueness out of establishing goals and measuring an individual’s performance against clearly identified and agreed-to criteria.

We are trying very hard to foster closer teamwork and more effective performance out of groups where we need a high degree of coordination and collaboration among our people. Somehow it seems like our performance appraisal system ought to be able to address that also. How might we go about better aligning our performance appraisal system to teamwork and group effort?

Collaborations response:

Your instincts are on target. If your performance appraisal system is tied only to achieving individual goals and meeting individual performance criteria, then teamwork and group effort will not be optimized. This is particularly true if your performance appraisal system is closely tied to your compensation system.

Ideally, some part of the performance appraisal system will reflect goals for teamwork or group effort. This can be as little as one line item regarding teamwork (e.g. “Work with others to achieve team goals,” “Provide support to others in the organization,” “Demonstrate teamwork”)

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Performance Appraisals for Teams

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or as much as an entire plan that is common to all team members.

How much of each team member's plan is measured at the team level will depend on many things including percent of work that is group work vs. individual work, how much emphasis is placed on teamwork and the organizational philosophy of performance management.

The critical points here are that you put something specific in the plan to focus on teamwork and that you measure all team members on teamwork.

Involve the Entire Team

This will sound remarkably similar to last month's article on individual performance appraisal. It should be no surprise that we suggest the way to get clarity in the process is to involve the team in the entire process.

At the beginning of the evaluation period sit down with the team and jointly identify and agree on goals, objectives, and performance criterion which will be expected for the specified time frame. Ask team members to bring their thoughts, in writing, about what they might reasonably expect to achieve. You, too, should arrive at the meeting with your thoughts prepared in writing.

Together, come to agreement about what the evaluation criteria will be for the upcoming performance period. Discuss what performance looks like when it is at, above, or below expectations. Members can use that criteria to track their own performance throughout the time period.

When you meet periodically, use those clear, concise expectations as a basis for your discussion. Plan to meet at least quarterly (if anything, err on the side of meeting too frequently.) Of course, if there is a performance problem, you will need to meet more often and do some one-on-one coaching.

Give Feedback

Feedback to one another becomes a critical team process when you are doing team appraisal. As Ken Blanchard &

Spencer Johnson wrote in *The One Minute Manager*, "...the most important thing in training somebody to become a winner is to catch them doing something right -- (in the beginning approximately right) and gradually moving them toward the desired behavior." This is true both for individuals and for teams.

Experts say that for each piece of developmental feedback, individuals need at least four pieces of positive feedback (if your overall message is positive.) Our experience has shown that many team leaders and members don't take time to give enough positive feedback. Therefore, we've provided some help in this issue on Page 4.

The greatest good we can do for others is not to share our riches, but to reveal theirs.

When the performance period ends, both you and the team should write an evaluation and then discuss it together. This should be fairly straight forward and devoid of surprises if you've been communicating along the way!

Incorporate Teamwork and Compensation

If you are really serious about wanting, encouraging, and needing effective teamwork or group effort, we suggest thinking about tying part of your compensation system to achievement of team or group goals. For example: 60% of an individual's compensation could be determined by individual achievement and 40% determined by team achievement.

The team itself can learn to determine how the 40% of their compensation is to be distributed. That's usually pretty uncomfortable starting out and needs to be well facilitated. However, it can create a strong sense of ownership and control.

Why bother with team performance appraisal and even team compensation? When thoughtfully designed and implemented, it fosters sharing and collaborating which is good for the team and for the organization. Ultimately some part of appraisal and compensation can also be tied to the performance of an entire organization.

So, if you aren't currently doing team appraisal and it fits your need for more teamwork, get the team involved and give it a try!

Tools for Group Process

A Tool for Reaching Consensus

One reason teams don't make decisions on a timely basis is that they are unskilled at reaching consensus. A consensus decision is one in which all members input ideas and thoughts. The decision reached is one which all members agree they can "live with" and they will support.

Our experience is that consensus decisions can take a long time because members don't know when or how to move toward closure.



Conflict Resolution Process

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The following process can be very effective to use once all ideas seem to be on the table:

1. A team member proposes the solution and writes the proposal where everyone can see it.
2. Each member is asked, in turn, to respond to the proposal by saying “yes” or “no”. Any uncertainty or question is a “no”.
3. Each member who said “no” shares his/her reason.
4. The group discusses the concerns and clarifies/resolves.
5. A team member proposes an amended solution and the group repeats the above steps.
6. Once all members say “yes”, the decision is complete.

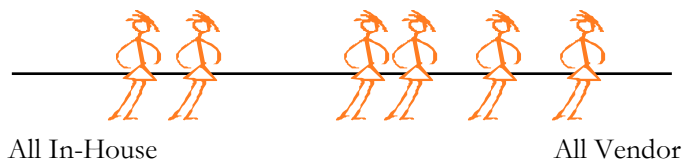
Notes on Reaching Consensus:

- Start with a different person each time you go around and ask “yes” or “no”.
- Move quickly through the responses -- don’t allow discussion until everyone has responded.
- It is rare for everyone to say “yes” the first time. Either the kinks have already been worked out, or people aren’t comfortable disagreeing.
- It is common for someone to say “no” on a round after they have responded “yes” previously. A comment may have sparked a new thought or the proposal may now be a problem.

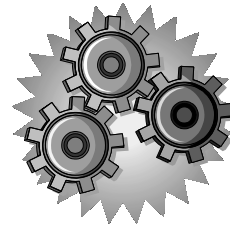
A Tool for Conflict Resolution

When a group is experiencing conflict on an issue, the conversation often becomes about the extreme and opposing points of view. It isn’t always clear where all team members stand on the issue. A way to check out how people feel is to create a continuum and have people physically place themselves on it.

For example, the group below is struggling with the issue of doing all training in-house versus all training through vendors.



Notice that nobody has placed themselves on the ends of the continuum (extremes of the issue). Now, with this as data, the discussion can continue on a more positive note.



If we manage conflict constructively, we harness its energy for creativity and development.

- Kenneth Kaye

The Bookshelf: Personality Conflicts? *Work It Out*

Dealing with tension among people of different personality types is always a challenge. This set of interview questions comes from the book, *Work It Out* by Sandra Krebs Hirsh. The book, based on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, is an excellent resource for any consultant or leader who wants to help people understand and resolve their differences.

Interview questions to use for a two-person conflict:

1. What contribution do you bring to the team (or organization?)
2. What actions or habits do you have that may be unsettling or irritating to the other person?
3. What does the other do that annoys you?
4. What do you find valuable about each other?
5. What outcomes do you hope for as a result of this conflict resolution process?





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The Ways We Choose

Oops, not so fast! If you were interested in Dave's new book and looked for it, you undoubtedly know it is nowhere to be found -- yet. There were a few little details still to be finished and the last issue of *Collaborations* went out anticipating quicker solutions.

The Ways We Choose: Lessons for Life from a POW's Experience is still alive and well. Dave expects publication in the February-March time frame. However, he has learned not to bet everything he has on it!

We will keep you apprised of the progress; and when (not if) this happens we will certainly let you know.

A Model for Giving Feedback

Giving and receiving feedback is critical for teams to operate successfully. This issue includes a model for giving positive feedback. Get your team started on this and in the next issue we'll give you the model for developmental feedback.*

Positive Feedback

- State Your Expectations
- Describe Your Observations
- Explain the Impact
- Say "Thank You"

Positive Feedback Example: "Fred, as you know, our goal is to expand our business into new areas."

"You really came through for us by identifying and closing business in the retail sector."

"Your effort means that we have added a new sector, and we will exceed our revenue targets in the 2nd quarter. Thank you for a job well done."

*Feedback Models developed by MTV Networks, Center for Education & Training