

# *Multicultural* **TEAMS**

Creating and sustaining an environment  
for learning from perspective diversity  
that maximizes team effectiveness



E-BOOK

ROBIN DENISE JOHNSON, PH.D.

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Robin Denise Johnson, Ph. D.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This handbook will help you design your team for success in five steps and covers the five skills you need to leverage perspective diversity on multicultural teams.

Multicultural work teams outperform all other kinds of teams under two conditions:

1. When you need creativity, commitment and buy in.
2. And when these teams are designed and managed well.

In this handbook you will learn how to create and sustain an environment that encourages and protects perspective diversity - the gold to mine in multicultural teams.

We know that building effective teams is a skill that is highly correlated with individual promotion and organizational success - yet it is the rare leader who knows how to build effective teams. In part because we misuse the word 'team' to describe collections of individuals who really have not bonded as a team; we fail to define the team mission clearly and just tell people what to do without tapping into why it is important to do it; and we over-emphasize getting things done without regard to who will use what we've produced and how to produce something in a way that gets and keeps people committed to implementation. When we have multicultural teams things can get worse when we discount ideas, or people, because they are different.

Multicultural teams have the potential to bring a wealth of perspective diversity because of the ways life experience impacts our thinking. Talent comes in all kinds of packages. We can learn from gender, race, ethnicity, ability, language, cultural, religious, and sexual orientation differences. But we have to be intentional in aligning those differences towards achieving a team mission.

I teach multicultural awareness, diversity and inclusion, leadership, team building, career management and other organizational behavior topics to practicing managers. When people ask me what I do - I say *I teach people to be kind to each other at work*. I was an international finance manager for years, and have training in lots of quantitative subjects and methods. But I noticed that models don't matter unless you engage people around what is motivating for them. Individuals have some impact. But lots of work today gets done in teams. Yet many of us dread team work because

- we don't know how to do it well,
- we have to work with slackers,
- we have toxic conflict-ridden interpersonal interactions, nobody uses the work we produce so it was a waste of time and energy, or
- we get dis'd - disrespected, discounted, and distracted by diversity.

Yet when teams work well, life is good. Things get done, we enjoy each other, and we learn. So I've spent a significant portion of my career looking at ways to empower all kinds of

people in teams so that we actually manifest the potential of the multicultural team.

My intent through this handbook is to share cutting-edge research and five practical suggestions, steps that will help you design your team for success. You will also use five interlocking skills that maximize learning from diversity.

- Step 1 is Focus through a Clear, Motivating Mission
- Step 2 is understanding two preparatory processes - Design the team right and guide it through its development stages
- Step 3 means 3 types of performance metrics - Output, Learning, and Satisfaction
- Step 4 is answering 4 questions that help you decide your Team Type and choosing one of four types.
- Step 5 refers to the 5 Interlocking Skills that help you leverage diverse perspectives for learning

I go over each of those 5 steps in detail in the first half of this handbook. I offer step-by step suggestions for how to articulate your team mission and how to motivate team members through the all-important 'why' discussion - *Why is this mission important to our organization? Why is it important to us?* and *Why is it important to me?*

In the second half of this handbook I address the five skills. I share the inclusive behaviors that create a learning environment that works. I've been teaching diversity, inclusion and cultural competence for decades. I have learned that there are a few behaviors that when used regularly, truly

make a significant positive impact on teams by making all members feel involved and committed. Two of the most powerful are listening with your undivided caring attention (and your mouth shut) and using names with ideas.

We want teams members with different viewpoints to exercise minority influence to help the team avoid groupthink. But it's not always easy to be the odd one out. It brings conflict to the team and pressure to conform. I share three research-based minority influence strategies that work without silencing the minority voice or unfairly stressing your minority members.

Team members must stay accountable to each other and to their stakeholders. Learning to notice what people do right and give them positive feedback, while figuring out how to give negative feedback constructively so that you don't have to deal with unnecessary defensiveness is a key team-relations skill that every team member needs.

And not only do I examine behaviors that cause conflict on teams, I share culturally competent collaborative behaviors that prevent unproductive conflict and help team members actually enjoy team work.

Multicultural teams are a fact of life at work today. And rightly so! Our companies need the creativity, commitment, mental flexibility, and talent of people with different perspectives working together to solve organizational challenges. Teams, in general, and multicultural teams, in particular, can tackle complex tasks extremely effectively.

- Diverse teams **generate more ideas.**
- Perspective diversity in groups helps teams come up with **creative solutions to complex problems.**
- Perspective diversity also requires team members to explore a **wider range of viewpoints** that generate **greater confidence in their decisions.**
- When effective, inclusive multicultural teams produce stronger **commitment to decisions.**
- And **implementing those decisions is easier** when people have been involved or represented in the decision-making process.

Therefore, in addition to general information about groups and teams, I review ways to maximize effectiveness in multicultural teams, with the 5 skills you need to make sure your multicultural team is a high performing one.

Designing a team correctly increases the probability that your team will be successful, and protects your team from poor team leadership or dysfunctional team dynamics. The team design factors include team mission, task interdependence, authority to do the tasks their way, and S.M.A.R.T.E.R. performance goals. Structural design factors include diversity, team size, group rewards, stable membership, training, organizational support, and resources.

While designing a group for effectiveness is powerful and important, you must have solid interpersonal management

skills to get the most out of your multicultural team. Team process management requires both task and relational skills. Selective attention, stereotypes, and attitudinal distortions can contribute to group problems, interpersonal conflict, and unfairness in the workplace. Moreover, decision-making is a complex process far less rational than many of us would like to admit. So you must learn to avoid those pitfalls while mastering the basics of motivation, feedback, and conflict management to get the most out of your team.

So let's start by defining what I mean by team, and a quick review of some powerful multicultural-teams research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **DEFINING TEAMS**

A team is two or more people who must work together<sup>1</sup> to accomplish a common purpose (that might be to provide a service or complete a task<sup>2</sup>) and are held accountable by their stakeholders<sup>3</sup> for the results<sup>4</sup>.

There are four key concepts in that definition:

1. work-together,
2. provide service or complete a task,
3. accountability to stakeholders, and
4. results.

Real teams are not just a collection of individuals reporting to the same manager. They are people who must depend on each other to get the job done – they must work together because they are *inter*dependent.

They have a common purpose - a purpose they all agree to achieve. It's not about any single individual's goal - but a shared goal, a goal that is bigger than any individual and any one person's ego. That is important for leveraging their differences during the inevitable conflict that is a normal part of team life. Everyone on the team subordinates their individual ego to achieving the common purpose - generally providing a service or completing a task. They have a sense of sink or swim together – even if that sense lasts for only the time it takes them to finish a specific project.

And who will use that service? Or the team's output? Who cares about what the team does? The team members care! They are always stakeholders in the team process. They hold each other accountable for their work and for their attitudes. But there are usually some external stakeholders too - a boss, senior management, customers, clients, patients, the community, etc. The team has to accomplish something that meets, or exceeds, the expectations of those stakeholders - the people who care about what the team does, and how the team does it. The team, to work well as a real team, must be held accountable by those stakeholders - including accountability to each other.

And the fourth aspect is results. The team needs to produce something - to know that it has achieved its task or provided a service. You need to know at a minimum

- *Did you actually do what you set out to do?*
- *Did you achieve your team goal? Other questions related to this would be How?, How well?*
- *Did you learn? How did you work together? What could you improve?*
- *How happy were your stakeholders? How much do you care about their experience vs. your collective result or your collective experience?*

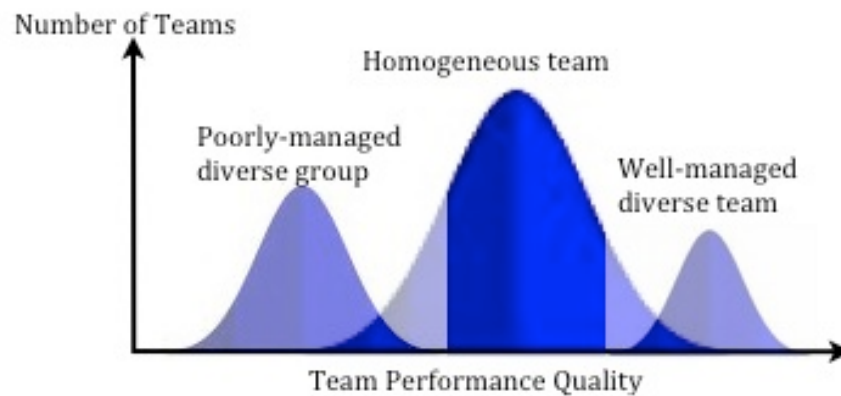
These are all questions that are also important when it comes to evaluating team results.

### **CHAPTER 3**

## **MULTICULTURAL TEAMS RESEARCH**

According to research, when you put together a group of people who are similar in significant ways (backgrounds and experience), you get average performance from that homogeneous group, with slightly poorer than average performance when it is managed poorly and slightly better than average performance when that group is managed well.

When you put together groups with diverse perspectives – and manage them well – then you get high-performing teams that outperforms the homogeneous groups. When you put people together who are diverse in significant ways but manage them poorly – the teams do worse than the homogeneous groups and *far* worse than the diverse high-performing teams.



So, well-managed diverse teams are more effective. But remember! the diversity that truly matters in this regard is *perspective* diversity. The key ingredient in high-performing teams is that all of the team members contribute different, diverse ideas from their various perspectives – with the ideas coordinated to serve the team mission.

It turns out that perspective diversity is positively correlated with cultural, gender, and functional diversity. Being male, female, Latina, Asian, African-American, French, Thai, Turkish, old, young, gay, straight, able-bodied, or a person with a disability can influence the ways in which a person is *likely* to think about issues.

Be careful though. Not everyone in a social identity group will think exactly the same way, nor will any individual necessarily have perspectives representative of his or her group. Just because a person wears a skirt does not mean she has a lock on the female perspective. Expecting individuals to represent their group is stereotyping.

And yet cultural diversity does provide a powerful source of new information and opportunity for learning in multicultural teams. People's backgrounds may, in part, shape their perspective on issues. Leaders of high-performing teams seek and use those diverse perspectives to achieve the team's mission.

If diverse teams are so great, then what is the problem? The problem is that the potential for high performance in multicultural teams only becomes real when they are managed well. Your team's diversity will become a distraction from completing the team mission if team members get bogged down in conflict, stereotypes, or behaviors that disrupt respectful communication of their different perspectives. If the diversity on the team is mismanaged, you will have a poor, rather than high performance.

One of the most common mistakes people make with multicultural teams is trying to homogenize away the differences. Well-meaning people often make this mistake. They think they should be culture blind; thinking that it is best to treat everyone exactly the same way. But the research shows that trying to avoid or wipe away important aspects of people's identity makes it more difficult to bring up, discuss, resolve, and for the team to learn from different ways of seeing the world. Learning from different perspectives is what you want to leverage in order to get high performance in multicultural teams.

Robin Ely<sup>1</sup> at Harvard Business School has done significant research in this area. She noticed that there are two types of learning in multicultural-diverse teams that you want to leverage.

First, there is specific learning that comes from the team members' social identity and cultural knowledge. You want to use that when it is relevant for the task.

Second, there is learning through the interaction of people with different perspectives when they are doing generic interpersonal management tasks. Generic interpersonal tasks are things such as giving feedback, managing conflict, or coaching people. You always need this kind of learning and competency on a team.

Moreover, you want to create a climate where cultural and social identity are considered team resources. People's social identity is a source of insight, skill, and experience that is a valuable potential resources to the team. Having a climate where social identity is seen as a resource for learning makes a big positive difference in creating and sustaining high performing multicultural teams.

Ely's research also demonstrates how avoiding cultural difference discussions, avoiding all conflict around social identity, and trying to homogenize away differences, or having a culture where social identity is invisible - all of those behaviors contribute to low performance on multicultural teams. It is not helpful to say *I don't see your nationality*, or *I don't care about your religion*. Instead, in the Learn-from-Differences perspective from Ely's research, you must actively **seek and use differences as a team resource**.

It is better to treat **inter-cultural experiences as opportunities to learn**, even negative ones like discrimination, rather than to avoid, or to suppress them. If you try to minimize, avoid, or suppress differences, you end up making the potentially negative experiences un-discussable. And then it is just a matter of time before unresolved conflicts infect your team.

Behaviors correlated with multicultural members reporting that the team is open to learning from cultural differences include:

- a team leader who encourages different styles and to solving work problems,
- members who seek and value different perspectives,
- a space where people are encouraged to offer new and better ways to do things

And how did Robin Ely measure high performance in her research? She considered revenue, customer satisfaction, and performance - specifically

- more revenue,
- higher customer satisfaction ratings, and
- better performance scores.

Robin Ely's research is powerful because she studied over 800 intact working, multicultural teams and got statistically significant results for teams.

Ely's research makes it clear that everyone on the team contributes to creating and sustain a learning environment in

the team. In such an environment everyone feels included, there is no gap in perception between your majority team members and your low-power minority team members - all of them believe they are working in a supportive environment. Team members are not inadvertently disrespecting each other, and every team member seeks to learn from each other's perspectives.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **MAXIMIZING MULTICULTURAL TEAM POTENTIAL**

Maximizing multicultural team potential is as easy as counting 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

1 Focus, the Mission

2 Steps, Design and Develop

3 Motivating Metrics: Output, Learning, Satisfaction

4 Questions to Answer (to decide team type)

- *Do you need a real team?*
- *How much decision-making authority should they have?*
- *How competent are they?*
- *What is the trust level?*

5 Interlocking Skills

- Articulating a Clear, motivating mission to keep team members focused and aligned
- Inclusive behaviors that create and sustain a learn from different perspectives environment
- Minority influence strategies to keep the team from groupthink and make sure the different views are not discounted just because they are in the minority
  
- Accountability by offering each other feedback during the process on what behaviors are effective and working, and which ones are not
- Collaborative behaviors and caring conflict management - keeping differences in viewpoints from degenerating

into personality conflicts by staying focused on how to do the task and solve the problem that brings the team together.

The remainder of this handbook will provide more detail about each of those five steps and skills.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **ONE MISSION**

First and most important is a clear, motivating mission. It is important when convening your team to let the members know why they are being brought together, what the mission of the team is, and what the final result is that they are to accomplish. They may be told WHAT they are to do, but not HOW to do it.

The second word is motivating. Some researchers use the word engaging. The point is that the mission has to be seen as worth team members' time and effort. In order to gain commitment from team members for the task it is helpful to communicate *why* this mission is important and allow team members to engage in a discussion about why the mission is important.

The clear, motivating mission orients team members and allows them to make intelligent trade-offs. Remember, the end is given, the team members need to be allowed to develop the means.

You also use the team mission statement to manage inevitable team conflict. If and when a team member brings up an issue that you are not sure is related to the mission, ask that person how his or her issue is related to the task at hand.

You might have one situation where the team member is on a personal soapbox. In such a situation, he or she will be hard-

pressed to link their personal need to the team mission.

Another situation might exist where the team member is really passionate about the issue. In this case you might set aside a fixed amount of time, either then or later, to explore it.

And a third situation involves several members who think this issue might be important. Then you should probably take some time to explore how the issue links to the team mission.

But in all three situations set the expectation that team members' energy should be focused on the team mission. This helps you keep conflict in task-relevant, rather than personality channels.

In the research literature, the team mission is sometimes called a ***superordinate goal*** - *a goal that motivates people to put aside their personal and ego needs in favor of achieving and succeeding as a team*. As you have probably noticed, there is no "I" in TEAM. On the other hand, you want to make sure everyone knows that the mission can only be accomplished if every team member contributes.

Pay attention to addressing the following issues when discussing the mission. Being clear in your mind and in your communication about these issues will guarantee that your team members are all on the right track from the start.

*Clarity.* The team mission should be clear to each and every member. If it is not clear, clarify it. You need to communicate the mission in the language of all the team members - sometimes what is clear to you, is not clear to them. Ideally, every member of the team should be able to quote the team mission easily. You could post the mission, put the mission on the top of the agenda for each meeting, or start meetings with a statement of the mission, for instance.

*Constraints.* As you describe what team members are expected to do, you should also let them know about any constraints to their job. Common constraints include budgets, team membership, and time limits.

*External Stakeholders.* The team's mission includes an output that is likely to affect somebody in the company. Let the team know who has a stake in that team's output. It is also wise to check with these external stakeholders around midway through the project to make sure your team is on track.

*Metrics.* You should let the team members know right away if there are any specific measures associated with accomplishing the mission — for example any revenue targets, market share, new customers, reduced complaints, product rank, reduced defects, etc. **Metrics motivate!** Be sure to have some quantitative measures so that your team is clear about their expected output.

*Purpose.* The team mission is central to success because it reminds people of what their *common* purpose is. Teams really need this mission so that all of the differing perspectives can be linked and channeled to serve that common purpose.

***Motivating.*** The real skill is in framing the mission so that it provides motivating direction. It turns out that answering that question *why?* is pretty important when you want commitment and high performance in the work place. Leaders and managers may set the direction, parameters, and boundaries for a task, but they cannot get alignment and engagement, to use the current buzz words, without discussing and answering the *why* question.

- *Why* is this important strategically?
- *Why* is it important for *me* to do this?

Both of those are important to get strategic alignment; personal motivations must be aligned with the team goals.

The most effective leaders figure out how to explain the mission in diverse, wide-ranging ways. And they make the time to do so. The work has to be meaningful for people. When you do not bother to engage and explain, we see that phenomenon of team members dragging their feet, chipping away in small ways at the mission, or even overtly resisting.

To motivate your team members, consider the following:

*Context.* In general, adults do not like being told what to do without any discussion of why they should do it. It is

important that you give your team members the information that will help them understand their mission in terms of organizational and strategic contexts. In emergency situations or crises, you may not have time to discuss why team members should act in a particular way. But in most organizational situations you have the time and responsibility to let team members know why their mission is important to the organization. This context gives meaning to their actions and helps them make better tactical decisions when they have some sense of the strategic big picture.

*Motivation.* After getting everyone focused on the team mission, you have to go to the micro-level and help each team member see what is in it for him or her. *People work better when they are internally motivated rather than externally driven.* When you tap into their internal motivation they move forward under their own steam — and that makes your job on the team much easier. Ideally, team members would share their motivations with each other, get to know each other better, and get all that information out on the table.

Articulating and engaging team members around the mission is one of the key tasks for the first team meeting. A starting point for a team mission statement would be to take the definition of a team and fill in the 4 parts.

Remember that definition? A team is two or more people who must work together<sup>1</sup> to accomplish a common purpose, to provide a service or complete a task<sup>2</sup>, and are held accountable by their stakeholders<sup>3</sup> for the results<sup>4</sup>.

1. Name the team. Naming the team increases identification, attachment and emotional bonding with each other and starts putting a boundary around the team that can be helpful. By naming the team you get increased identification with the team, with the task, and with each other.
2. Service or task. Decide what the common purpose is - whether it's a service or task, and name the service or the task.
3. Accountability by stakeholders. Discuss who will use the product of the team team. Who will hold you accountable for doing a good job?
4. Results. Name the results you want.

Here is a sample mission from a team in the health care arena.

*The Cancer-Care Task Force will design and deliver a 3-hour program, to be offered weekly starting June 20XX, aimed at helping patients and their families understand and cope with physical and emotional changes associated with recovery following cancer surgery.*

The name of the team is the Cancer-Care Task Force. They will complete a task - design a program; and provide a service - deliver a weekly training course. The stakeholders are the patients and families of people who have had cancer surgery (plus themselves and the healthcare facility). The result is the actual delivery of the program. Later they may decide to

address quality issues. But this mission works for them initially.

Here is a sample mission from a team in the entertainment industry.

*Team Sports-Masters will create, acquire, and schedule premier content to engage fans and maximize audiences on all platforms for the next 12 months.*

In this case the team simply named their team - SportsMasters - and described what they had to do - create, acquire and schedule content. The stakeholders included fans and audiences. And remember there's also the team members. And presumably there are also internal customers who must place the content on the wide range of platforms - video, cable, portable devices, etc. They have not yet defined specific objectives or named the platforms and that is something to be done during the team process. They did put in a time limit - 12 months - which is very helpful.

In both examples I chose TEAM mission statements, not department or organizational mission statements. The Team's mission should align with organizational and department mission statements, but be specific to the common mission, task, or service for that work team.



## **CHAPTER 6**

### **DESIGN FOR SUCCESS**

There were 2 preparatory steps - Design the team for success, and understand group development.

Let's look at team design. When Ruth Wageman<sup>2</sup> researched high performing self-managed teams she found that designing a team well not only increased the probability of success for that team, but also protected the team from poor leadership and dysfunctional intra-team dynamics. The best performing groups were those that were well-designed AND had effective group dynamics. But if you have to choose, go for high-quality design.

#### **SELF-MANAGED TEAM DESIGN FACTORS**

1. Clear, engaging direction
2. Task interdependence
3. Authority
4. Performance Goals
5. Group Rewards
6. Size 4-8 people
7. Stable Membership
8. Relevant diversity
9. Training
10. Resources

There are 10 design factors that make a positive difference in team effectiveness.

*1. Clear, motivating mission.* (Clear, engaging direction). The first and most important factor.

*2. Task interdependence.* Task interdependence is one of the definitional criteria for forming a team in the first place. It also helps if the team members are cross-trained and thus able to help each other as needed. If you provide feedback about the group's task performance, it is better to give only group-level feedback thereby acknowledging task interdependence. Hybrid tasks, tasks that are partly individual and partly interdependent, pull the team in conflicting directions.

*3. Authority to manage the project, their work and their tasks.* Team members together should have the decision rights over their basic work strategies. That is authority to manage the project, their work and their tasks. They decide which actions to take, who will do them, and when they will be done. It is important that team leaders do not tell team members how to do the task.

*4. Performance goals.* The team needs to come up with actionable goals for achieving the team mission. There should also be ways to measure the team's effectiveness vis a vis learning and member satisfaction. Every team member should be able to articulate the mission and understand how each goal supports the attainment of that mission.

5. *Group rewards.* One of the most challenging research findings to implement from the Wageman research is this issue of group rewards, the fifth factor. One of the reasons people do not like to work in teams is that it is difficult to determine whether every one is doing their fair share of the work, and if someone is not, it is hard to do anything about their free loading. So we avoid rewarding the team and give individual rewards instead.

When the group is rewarded as a group, many people think that means that everyone in the group will receive exactly the same reward or compensation for completing the task. This is not the case.

It is important to motivate the team as a team by giving the entire reward to the team and then allowing team members to decide on a *fair* distribution of the reward.

Also avoid giving positive feedback to individual team members in public.

Team leader attention is reinforcement and if you want to reinforce team behaviors, rather than individual behaviors you have to reinforce team behaviors. It is fine to give positive feedback about contributions to the team to individuals in private.

Giving team-based rewards reinforces the purpose for having a team in the first place and their interdependence.

6. *Team size.* Effective self-managed teams usually do best with 4-8 members. Each member in the group adds exponentially to the communication and conflict management complexity within the group. The tendency when groups get larger than 8 is for members to form subgroups. Fewer than four team members usually limits perspective diversity and therefore team effectiveness.

7. *Stable membership.* Every time someone joins or leaves the team, the team starts the group development process again. In the beginning of this process very little output is generated because members are getting to know each other. If you have put a team together, design the task so that it is doable within a time frame where all members can stay together until completion of the task. In practice, this means setting up several smaller projects towards a big mission.

For instance rather than having a single 2-year project where you know team members will be rotating in and out of the group, you might design four consecutive six-month projects that still lead towards the final mission you had in the 2-year project. At the end of each 6-month project you assess where you are vis a vis the end mission, allow rotation on and off the team, and then continue with the next step towards the 2-year mission.

8. *Diversity.* You want relevant task and demographic diversity. Diversity helps teams that need to find creative solutions to problems, generate new ideas, and solve problems that affect a

wide range of people. Under those conditions diversity of perspective contributes to team effectiveness.

*9. Training.* Groups need training to do any new tasks required by the project as well as group-process training to handle conflict and keep communications smooth.

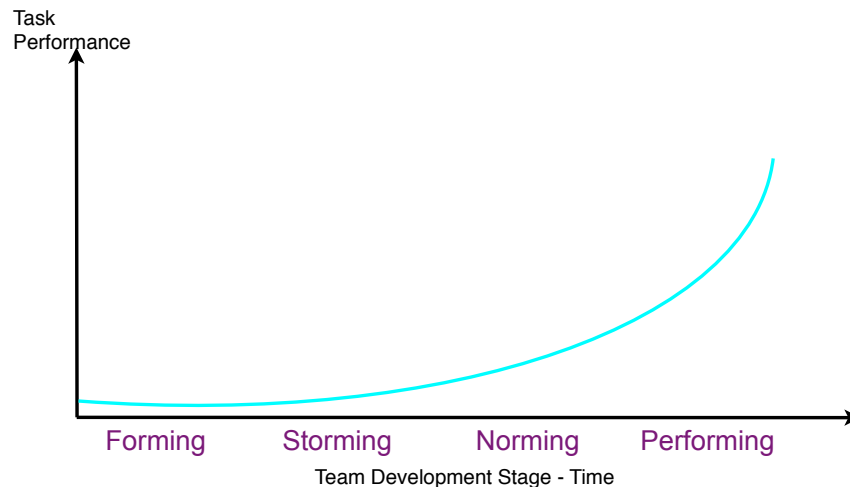
*10. Sufficient resources.* Asking a group of people to perform a task without enough time, without an appropriate budget, the right people, or sufficient resources is demoralizing. High performing teams do not waste their team energy trying to do tasks that the organization is not willing to support in a tangible way.



## CHAPTER 7

### UNDERSTAND GROUP DEVELOPMENT

The second of the two steps for preparing yourself includes understanding group development. Tuckman<sup>3</sup> described four stages teams go through over time, each with increasing task performance – Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing.



The *forming* stage is characterized by discussion about the group purpose, deciding who can make decisions, and making sure all the appropriate people are in the group. The group's core tasks during this stage are to clarify that purpose, determine their relationships, and decide how they plan to work together to accomplish the team mission. The team leader at this stage should be task-focused while allowing the group to develop the relationships they need.

The *storming* stage is characterized by challenging the authority structure that emerged in the first stage, conflict - sometimes overt, sometimes hidden - and probing the group's tolerance for deviant behavior. Team tasks at this stage are to clarify roles and expectations more clearly and maximize participation of all members. People leading the team at this stage need to have a more coaching style - a high concern for both the task and the relationships between the people.

The group starts to stabilize in the *norming* stage, spending less time on group process issues and more time on output. The *norming* stage is characterized by more clarity about who is doing what, how they do it, and agreement on work methods, interaction patterns, and routines. At this stage there may have been some rotation or broadening of the leadership roles. The team leadership style that is most effective at this point is one that supports and encourages the team members. By now, they generally know what they are doing. Someone cheering them on makes a positive difference. Now the group is getting some of the task done.

In the *performing* stage some groups will reexamine their operating methods or refine their methods so that the tasks are done efficiently. This is usually a high energy time for the team. Many teams do not need leaders at this point, but rather enjoy a strong sense of everybody sharing in the accomplishment of the goals.

Connie Gersick<sup>4</sup>, another researcher in teams, discovered in her systematic observation of teams that there are also several temporal phases in teams – no matter how long the team has to do its task.

There is the *beginning phase* where certain patterns of interaction develop and continue until the midpoint.

There is a *midpoint transition* – not specifically correlated to any the Tuckman stage of team development I just discussed – where the group reassesses what it is doing and why, in order to continue or change direction.

And then the direction set at the midpoint continues until *the end* – for the good or ill of the team's performance.

*The Right Intervention at the Right Time.* Gersick's findings have implications for the type and timing of team interventions.

We know that the first meeting sets the course. At that meeting be sure to:

- ***Establish clear and engaging direction.*** This sets a lasting perception about the value of the task.
- Pay attention to the team design factors, especially team composition.
- Set goals for the task and set goals for individual member development.

- Discuss norms for planning, for conflict resolution, participation and operating procedures.
- And identify and approach stakeholders – the people who care about and will use the output from your team.

At the midpoint transition you explicitly confirm or change direction. The midpoint may be the last opportunity to significantly influence the direction of your team.

- Re-evaluate the goals and objectives for the project to make sure they are correct and feasible.
- Summarize your experience so far in doing the tasks and in working with each other.
- Address effective and ineffective team norms. Continue the effective norms, add effective ones you are missing, and commit to eliminating the ineffective behavioral norms. This includes changing the meeting routines, rotating roles, making team roles explicit, etc.
- Interact with key stakeholders for resources and assistance if needed.

One of the biggest and most frequent mistakes in teams is the failure to contact stakeholders at the midpoint point to get course corrective feedback. Team members often assume that communicating with outsiders will slow them down or distract them from their internal processes. But that communication and outside perspective can increase team effectiveness by making sure the team is on track. It is quite frustrating to climb to the top of the mountain only to discover that you are on the wrong mountain.

After the team has completed its task the opportunity for learning from the experience is still great.

- An after-action review of what worked and what did not work can help members go to the next team task with far more skill, and affirm the positive intentions of everyone in the team.
- Celebrate your accomplishment.



## CHAPTER 8

### CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING

While there are many process functions in teams, one stands out as particularly important – maximizing participation through consensus decision making. When participation is low or uneven, you might

- clarify points that fell through the cracks,
- reinforce someone's point by asking for more information, or ask silent people to speak.
- The dialogue process -- where everyone goes around and gets to have their say without interruption and everyone else listens without commenting - helps make participation more even.
- Planning meetings and sharing agenda items with people beforehand may also increase participation from quiet, introverted, or more deliberate group members.

When the team mission is to make a decision, you should aim to have consensus on your decisions.

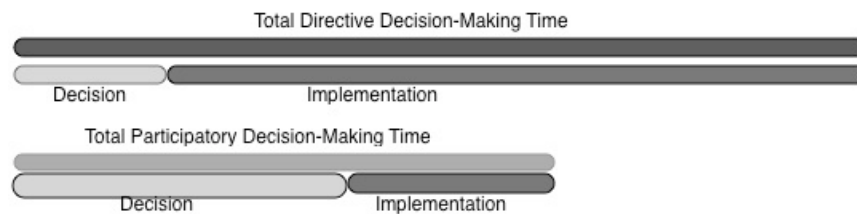
*Consensus is not unanimity. Consensus means everyone is willing to live with the decision because their key concerns have been heard, weighed, or addressed.*

***Consensus Decision-Making increases both the quality and the acceptance of your team decision.***

There is robust research that suggests effective decision making is a product of the quality of the decision and the degree of acceptance of the decision by all team members. If you do not have quality input into the

decision, it is not effective. If the team does not accept the decision, it is not effective.

You have a team because you have a complex problem that requires creativity, commitment, and buy-in from many people, with a wide range of expertise. You involve everyone on that team in the decision making process to get the higher quality decision as well as a better-accepted decision. And having a better-accepted decision makes implementation of the decision easier in most cases.



Using a directive process where one person makes the decisions for many, the decision-making time may be relatively short but the implementation time can be very long, sometimes indefinite.

With directive decision making you will often have a less effective decision and a poorer decision quality when you needed the good thinking of all team members in order to get a high-quality decision. You have less learning from each other because the director did not seek and mine the gold of experience and insight

in the team. And you have less satisfaction because people felt discounted and excluded. The people who have to carry out the decision might resist it, fail to buy into it, misunderstand it, or even directly sabotage it.

With participative decision making it takes longer to reach the decision but the implementation time is much shorter and the result usually more effective - better output and satisfaction because people learned from each other. When the people responsible for implementing a decision have been respectfully involved in the decision making process, when your minorities' viewpoints have at least been respectfully heard, everyone feels a sense of ownership about the decision. Even if the decision made by the team is not any individual member's first choice, inclusion in the process increases their commitment to the result.

People support that which they help create.



## CHAPTER 9

### THREE MOTIVATING METRICS

I have mentioned team effectiveness a number of times without actually saying how we know a team is effective. Richard Hackman's<sup>5</sup> research describes three types of team metrics that determine team effectiveness: Output, Learning, and Satisfaction.

**Output** means *The completed task, decisions, products, or services meet the standards of the team and of those who have to use the team's output.*

Most people would agree that a high performing team must accomplish their mission and complete their task. High-performing teams are productive. High performing teams know that they have a job to do, and they want to do it well – that is their output. Output has to be high quality – and the people who use your team's output are the ones who decide how high your team's output quality is.

**Learning** means *the team experience enhanced the capability and willingness of group members to learn, now and in the future. Learning includes the ability to detect and correct errors.*

High-performing teams learn more about their job and improve their skills so that they can continue to do their work well. Members of high-performing teams also learn how to collaborate, manage conflict, and generally work cooperatively with other people. So on high-performing team, members

learn both *task skills* and *people skills* by working as a team.

Because you only use a team when you have task interdependence, learning is not just about individual task skill. *Learning at the team level must include a willingness and ability to gather information from other team members and create a result that is greater than the sum of individual member skills: this is called **synergy**.*

Learning measurements usually have to do with improvement; an increase in a positive metric or decrease in a negative metric. A common mathematical formula is a percentage change in something. To get a measure of improvement you must know your starting point and your ending point so you can measure the change from start to end.

*For example, you have a collection of individuals working for a manager handling customer complaint calls. There are 6 people in this nominal group. (Nominal groups are collections of individuals who are groups in name only. They're not necessarily a team yet.) The average number of calls individuals handle is 50 per day (with a range from 25 to 75). So together the team handles 300 calls a day. You decide that with such a range in average number of calls, some people must be better at handling calls than others.*

*So now you start to create a team. You bring them together, talk about your team goal of increasing the average number of calls handled per day and why that would be strategically important. You mention the constraints; the same people will do the work, the same number of people will do the work, there will not be more*

*hours added to the work day, and the customer satisfaction numbers for complaint resolution must stay at the current level or improve.*

*You ask team members to share the things they are doing right (the people who have high numbers will probably do this); and you learn from the things that might be hampering them (listen to the people who have the lower numbers of calls per day). No blaming; just learning what works, what does not.*

*Suggest people try the strategies that work given the team goal of increasing number of calls per day. Notice that the focus is on the team goal; not on a competition between them as individuals. The constraint on customer service quality also matters so that they do not compete with each other in a way that decreases customer satisfaction. And there will be no prize for the best individual performance – only recognition for the entire team if the team numbers improve.*

*Then you train team members to respond in ways that resemble the behaviors from the high producers - for example high producers may listen carefully to customer complaints without interruption. Or they may apologize for any company errors without making excuses. You also give each team member the authority to overnight mail a replacement of the product without having to check with managers, and ask team member to check in with that customer personally in a few days to see that they got the product, are satisfied with the replacement, and willing to complete a customer satisfaction survey. These were best practices you learned from your high-performing individuals.*

*A month after using the new approaches you measure the number of calls that same team handles in a typical day. You find that the team now handles 360 calls a day and you have had an increase in team customer satisfaction numbers. The range of calls handled by individuals is now 40-80. Every individual has some improvement in average number of calls handled in a day, so everyone has improved – although some more than others. The team has a significant improvement of 60 calls per day, or 20% improvement in a month since the intervention. The improvement of 60 calls per day, and the 20% positive change are your synergy measures.*

We had three performance metrics, output, learning and satisfaction. Let's discuss the third, satisfaction.

**Satisfaction** means *The team experience contributes to the personal well-being and development of all involved.*

High-performing teams enjoy working together. We have all been in groups where we got the job done, but the experience was so unpleasant we never wanted to work with those people again. That negative experience becomes emotional baggage that we drag into our next team experience.

It is everyone's job on the team to make sure that people do not "dis" others on the team – *disrespect, discount, discriminate, or dismiss* different ideas.

And on multicultural teams you want to be particularly aware of any attempts by team members to use diversity differences to *distract* the team from its mission to get the job done well.

The team leader must model and set the expectation that team members will interact respectfully and inclusively.

Measuring team member satisfaction quantitatively can be challenging. Given the size of a team (4-8 members), quantitative measures are not always that helpful. More important would be opportunities to discuss how people feel about working together, some time to discuss and resolve expressed or simmering conflicts, and time to celebrate accomplishing the mission together.



## **CHAPTER 10**

### **MARK PROGRESS**

Amabile and Kramer<sup>6</sup> published their research in the book, The Progress Principle with interesting findings. They found that team members will continue to engage in goal-directed behavior, that is be motivated, if they feel they are making progress towards achieving a meaningful goal. Small, daily wins make a huge positive difference. Three things are motivational keys on teams:

1. *Progress in meaningful work.* (Setbacks decrease motivation)
2. *Catalysts. People, things, events that help them progress* (inhibitors decrease motivation)
3. *Nourishing interpersonal events* (Toxic people relationships reduce motivation)

I repeat myself when I say the most powerful motivation is intrinsic (internal) motivation. Extrinsic (external drivers) can actually decrease motivation on teams. The problem with intrinsic motivation is that it is internal. People will not always tell you what is internally motivating for them. You have to pay attention and and you have to get to know them.

You want to give people choice about whether to do their tasks, and tap into their desire to do something meaningful, while encouraging them to persist. Many people, especially in our organizations nowadays, have strong intrinsic motivation until something interferes. All too often that's the manager or some bureaucracy. Your job is stay stay on the motivating side of the

equations above, helping the team avoid setbacks by being as clear as you can about the mission and its strategic importance, keeping outsiders from micromanaging aspects of the team's work or blocking their progress, and helping the team collaborate productively. You definitely want to make sure they do not dis' each other and you want to make sure outsiders do not dis' your team.

The positive motivators – progress, catalysts, and positive people – predict goal-directed behavior and productivity in teams. Unfortunately, the negatives can outweigh the positives by about 3 to 1. That is a small negative event can undo the power of up to 3 similarly-sized positive events.

So mark progress along all three effectiveness dimensions, output, satisfaction and learning.

- *Are you moving forward in getting the task done (output)?*
- *Detecting and fixing mistakes (learning)? Getting to know each other (learning)?*
- *Bonding and building the relationships on the team (satisfaction)?*

## **CHAPTER 11**

### **FOUR QUESTIONS TO ANSWER**

Working in teams and making them effective requires energy and skill. Before creating a real group or team, ask yourself four questions.

1. Do you need a team?
2. How much decision-making authority should the team have?
3. How skilled are they for carrying out their decisions?  
(How competent are they? Will they learn from each other? Can they notice and correct their mistakes?)
4. Do I trust them to do a good job, share information, and do the right thing? Do they trust each other? Will they be respectful and be fair to each other.

To answer question 1. *Do you need a team?* You need a group ...

- When everyone's buy-in is needed
- When there is no clear answer
- When the task is complex
- When there is too much or not enough information
- When creative ideas are needed
- When the problem crosses functions
- When the solution affects many people

The second question about decision-making authority is that you have to give them authority sufficient to do their task. Usually the power given is circumscribed by the task and how they do their work.

Question three, competence, is usually related to experience, along with willingness and ability to learn quickly.

Question four, *How much you should trust them?* depends on their experience to some degree and the risks involved in relation to their skills.

Questions 2, 3 and 4 are really asking you how empowered this group should be.

When I was researching and defining empowerment for my doctoral dissertation<sup>7</sup>, I learned from the people who participated in that research that empowerment, as they define it in practice, includes three interrelated relational concepts – Authority, Competence and Trust.

- **Authority** is the right to make decisions appropriate for your work role.
- **Competence** refers to skills you need to carry out your job tasks, as well as the ability to learn to do your work better.
- **Trust** is fair respectful relationships between you, your managers, your co-workers and your company.

You have to have all three in the work relationship for people to experience it as empowering. Authority – decision rights; Competence – Task-relevant skill; and Trust – respectful, fair relationships. The three are interrelated, and they are relational concepts. They don't refer to something individuals can do by themselves.

- Authority without Trust, or without Competence feels unfair and risky – like a set up for failure.

- Trust without Competence may feel good, but not get the results important for sustained performance.
- Competence without Trust makes the work feel meaningless, and makes people feel like machines.

I combined these definitional factors for empowerment-disempowerment with the definitional factors for teams vs. co-acting individuals and the result was four types of 'groups'.

The first type are a collection of people - a group in name only. They are not empowered nor are they a team. This is appropriate for people who are learning a new skill, or working in a place such as a nuclear power plant. In a power plant there is no need for a team to perform a task and it is very helpful for each individual to do exactly what they are told to do.

Type two are still collections of individuals, but this time they ACT - they have Authority, Competence and Trust. This is appropriate when you do not need a real team of people working together because their tasks are independent or when you want individuals to compete with each other for some reason. This might be appropriate for university faculty from different academic disciplines, or sales people, or stockbrokers.

Type three describes a situation where there is a real team but they must follow orders. They are not empowered. They do not have decision making authority to decide what to do. The military term, platoon, is used because this is an appropriate design in many cases for military teams.

Type four is the empowered or self-managed work team. Empowered self-managed teams have the authority they need to accomplish their interdependent task, the skills necessary to do a good job, and they trust each other and management trusts them to meet the team mission. This is appropriate for new product development teams, for instance.

## CHAPTER 12

### FIVE INTERLOCKING SKILLS

High performing multicultural team members use five interlocking skills. To **interlock** means *to connect different parts or components of something in order to coordinate and synchronize their action*. Members of effective multicultural teams use these five skills to connect, coordinate, and synchronize their actions and leverage their diverse perspectives to achieve the team mission.

1. They focus their attention and energy on the team mission
2. They are inclusive, intent on learning from each other
3. Members exercise minority influence effectively
4. They have high expectations of each other and they offer members feedback, thereby holding each other accountable for the team experience and results
5. They manage conflict respectfully

#### **Mission**

The importance of a clear, motivating mission cannot be overstated. Many organizational strategists talk about creating high-commitment and high-performing organizations. The clear-motivating mission is a powerful skill you need for aligning and directing the energy in teams. I covered mission earlier in Chapter 5 of this handbook.



## **CHAPTER 13**

### **INCLUSION**

The second skill set is using inclusive behaviors. I am going to list 10 different kinds of inclusive behaviors that leverage perspective diversity on multicultural teams. Not every one on the team will do all of these behaviors, but using any of these behaviors demonstrates your intent to include and involve every one on the team in the process.

Examples of inclusive behaviors include:

***Using respectful, inclusive language.*** A couple of examples of habitual but unhelpful language come to mind that can be challenging on teams.

The first is use of the universal 'he' - he did this, or he did that, or you guys - any terminology that refers only to the masculine and is not inclusive of women. So watch out for those kinds of words.

The second is inappropriate informality. I think of this in multicultural teams where the interaction between people should be a little more formal than might be typical within the U.S. cultural context. So pay attention to where you are so that the language you use is appropriately respectful.

***Using names.*** Sometimes just pronouncing someone's name can be a challenge. Make a point of learning every team member's name. Ask! Ask them how to pronounce their name,

or how to spell their name – and do your best to repeat it as they do.

Many people trip up in multicultural teams because they do not know what to call people. If you are in doubt what terminology to use for an ethnic group or cultural group, Ask! Ask a friend or colleague (or team members) how they would prefer that you refer to their group.

***Giving credit for ideas by connecting names to ideas and contributions.*** One of the most powerful things you can do is to summarize team members' contributions and use their names with that contribution. Many conflicts and dysfunctional team behaviors will be avoided with this tactic. Even when the team does not agree with a member, knowing that someone heard and acknowledged his or her contribution makes a huge positive difference in creating a learn from differences environment.

For example, let us say one of your team members is really good at developing graphic models to summarize complex data. This person has just designed and presented such a model at a team meeting — say, a new model for reviewing risks and opportunities. Instead of just jumping in and building on this person's ideas, or critiquing the model, or showing how it could be improved, slow down and say *I really like Zeyno's model for looking at risks and opportunities. Let us use it when we prepare our report.* I assure you that Zeynep will be pleased to know someone noticed that effort.

The idea is to personalize recognition for contributions made to the team effort in such a way that you engage everyone on the team.

Acknowledging contributions by using names also helps you avoid the pitfall of someone else getting credit for ideas initiated by a woman, or a person who may have had frequent experiences on previous teams of not being heard. I mention women specifically because research reports that it is common for an idea a woman has had to be picked up by a male team member, and then that man gets credit for that idea and the woman's contribution becomes invisible. Paying attention to who contributes and giving him or her credit can keep your team from falling into that trap.

***Drop the jargon!*** A more subtle way people will exclude is through the use of insider terms, jargon, technical terms, or acronyms. Many people are impressed with themselves and their ability to use organizational culture speak.

On the positive side using this kind of language helps people demonstrate their awareness of the common organizational language and connects them to each other.

On the negative side - many people will not know what you're talking about, and they are likely to avoid letting you know they don't know what you're talking about. So learning and communication will be hampered.

***Seek and use different perspectives.*** The best way to make sure you get different viewpoints is to ask for people's viewpoints and then shut up and listen as each person shares his or her ideas. If other team members interrupt a speaker, ask the interrupter to wait until the speaker has finished (or to wait for his or her turn).

***Make sure that everyone shares and is heard.***

- If a person comments *I agree*, ask them to state exactly with what they heard that they agree with.
- If everyone says the same thing, ask *Does anyone have a different idea?* or suggest brainstorming different ideas.

Some teams will be more or less willing to share differences in opinion, depending on how people in their organization have treated people with different perspectives in the past. You lose the value of a diverse perspectives on your team if you do not seek **and use** those perspectives.

***Take notes and paraphrase.*** It is really helpful to have someone take notes (preferably on a board so that all team members can see them). After every team member has spoken to the issues on the agenda, you might paraphrase what was said and who said it. This use of notetaking, summarizing, and paraphrasing will help manage participation and handle both your dominating, extraverted members as well as quiet or more introverted team members.

All of the above team inclusive behaviors are very important with virtual teams. But there are a couple of additional behaviors you can use when most of your meetings are virtual

meetings through teleconferencing.

***Ask team members to say their name each time they contribute to the conversation.*** This is a really good teleconference norm to establish when you cannot see who is speaking because it is often challenging to track every person's voice just through the tone of voice. You can then take notes while each person makes his or her contribution and thereby keep track of who has contributed.

***Call on people to contribute.*** Business and Law school professors do this cold calling all the time. Many team members multitask during telephone meetings and are not paying close attention to what is being said. By using people's names in association with their ideas you get their attention.

Also, calling on team members by name and *asking them to build on another person's specific idea* alerts them to the fact that you are listening with your undivided attention to each and every team member, and that you expect them to do the same. Of course, this means you actually *do* have to listen with your full attention.

***Keep team meetings short, sweet and focused*** while using all of the above skills, and you will be well on your way to leading your team to high performance. It takes time, attention and intention to make sure we do not unintentionally exclude people. Just using people's names and giving members credit for the contributions will go a very long way towards inclusion.



## CHAPTER 14

### MINORITY INFLUENCE

*Minority influence<sup>8</sup> is the process of trying to get majority members in a group to consider a perspective that is different from theirs.*

There are three kinds of minority influence situations that are likely to occur on your diverse team, and each one has to be managed a bit differently.

- The first minority situation is the person who has a different idea from everyone else on the team but who is otherwise like the majority of his or her teammates. We call this person a *single minority*.
- The second situation occurs when the leader of the team has a different opinion.
- The third situation is the person from a demographic or cultural minority group, and who also has a different perspective. We call this person a *double-minority*.

To exercise minority influence in any of the three situations, the person with the minority perspective has three possible strategies available.

- I call the first strategy the **Earned-Right-To-Be- Different** strategy. In the social science literature this is called the **Idiosyncrasy Credit<sup>9</sup>** strategy.
- The second strategy is to be **Consistent, Persistent, and Objective**.
- The third strategy is to **Build Alliances**.

*The Earned Right to Be Different (Idiosyncrasy Credit) Minority Influence Strategy.* To earn the right to be different, a team member has to contribute to the team for a while, demonstrate competence to team members, demonstrate that they care about other team members and the team mission, and generally go along and get along with everyone. Over time this person builds up credit with the other team members by being such a good team player. When that person has a different idea, the other members of the team are willing to listen because they have earned the right to be heard.

The catch is that any team member using the earned-right-to-be-different minority influence strategy has to be careful to choose issues that are really important to him or her because you use up the earned rights for that issue. You then have to re-build your earned-right-to-be-different account. If you have a negative balance you lose influence in your team. So you really don't want to build up your credit and then be overdrawn.

The earned-right-to-be-different strategy usually works well when:

- The team is all or mostly male, *or*
- The person exercising minority influence is the leader, *or*
- The person is a single minority (that is they have a minority perspective in the team and are not considered a demographic minority).

The earned-right-to-be-different minority influence strategy is often familiar to men because men often grow up playing team-

based, win-lose games where players earned the right to influence each other by being good team players – skilled, loyal, and reliable. Team members will give another team member — who fits with the team in all ways except for a different perspective — the benefit of the doubt when he or she offers a different viewpoint and assume that if an otherwise competent, reliable, loyal team member is making a different suggestion, it is because they really care about the team.

It is more difficult for a double minority – a demographic or cultural minority member who also has a different perspective. It is not as easy to exercise earned minority influence because team members now have two possible ways to interpret their behavior.

- Members might think the double minority is pursuing his or her minority-related *special* interest – and that would not be considered a legitimate use of earned influence in the team.
- Or the double minority could be pursuing the team interest – which is legitimate.

The problem is that in new, multicultural teams, the majority team mates will not know which case is which.

Unfortunately for double minorities team members this means the majority team mates tend to assume *special* interest. It is not fair! And it is not fun! But it is the way tends to be! That said, it is helpful to know another option for exercising minority influence if you are a double minority.

*The Consistent, Persistent, Objective Minority Influence Strategy.* What you want to do is to bring up the important issue consistently, to persist, and to use objective data that link your idea to the team's mission. Because team members do not *assume* that an idea necessarily serves the team mission, the minority team member using this strategy has to make the connection to the team mission *explicit*.

The dominant style of communication in most businesses is an objective behavioral style. Many double minorities have behavioral styles that are not considered objective -- be they highly animated, or having an emotional, values-driven style -- so employing an objective behavioral style can be a challenging aspect of exercising minority influence in a business context because that style may not feel natural.

*Building Alliances Minority Influence Strategy.* An alliance is better than being a lonely-only. A minority of one is a lot lonelier and a lot less powerful in terms of exercising influence on the team than a minority of two. Find others who agree with all or part of your perspective so that you are no longer a lonely-only offering a single but different view. There may be someone who comes to you and supports your opinion after the meeting, or in private. Discuss the issue with that person and ask them to support you in public, in the meeting.

Pay attention when it comes to team dynamics to whether the dominant norms on your team tend to be more fact-based, or feeling-relationship based.

- If the norms are more relational but you have a minority style that is consistent, persistent, and objective – you may find you exercise greater influence by establishing high quality relationships with your team mates, and using a style akin to the earned-right-to-be-different strategy.
- If the norms are more objective-fact and based and you have a more relational style, you may find it helpful to use the consistent-persistent-objective strategy to exercise influence.

Minority influence is valuable. Whichever strategy members of your team use to exercise minority influence, it is important that you keep doing it. *Remember! Perspective diversity is the gold to mine on your team!* You want team members to bring their different ideas to the table. Teams that have members who exercise minority influence make better decisions and are more effective. And healthy exploration of minority viewpoints is an effective way to avoid harmful groupthink.

There are a few other important points to remember about minority influence.

- *Leaders exercise minority influence more easily.* It is easiest for the team leader to exercise minority influence on the team.
- *Minority influence brings conflict.*
  - People do not like conflict.
  - People dislike minority influencers because they bring conflict. Team members who exercise minority influence are usually disliked (for a time)

by their teammates. This can be very difficult for people, especially when they are doing their best to contribute their ideas to the team. Most people dislike conflict, and any person who contributes a different idea from what the majority of the people in the team think is actually bringing conflict into the team. But high-performing diverse teams need healthy conflict – conflict that stays at the level of ideas and does not degenerate into interpersonal attacks. But that does not mean that people like it. So it is important to support minority perspectives and contributions during this time in a team's life.

- *Minority influence is latent but lasting.* This means that encounters with someone who truly thinks differently from you sticks with you and the other team members. You may not agree with the person now, but the very fact that he or she is willing to stick to his or her ideas in the face of possible rejection from teammates will keep you thinking about it. The next time you hear an idea similar to that one, you are more likely to entertain whatever small part of truth you heard when your teammate brought forth the idea the first time.

Minority influence is particularly important to learn from different perspectives. You actually want to seek and use minority viewpoints. Yet, for the person trying to share a minority perspective, exercising influence in the team is challenging because they are taking a risk to present an idea different from others' and they may be rejected because of that. Keep the team environment as safe as possible for team

members to share their differences. That makes a huge, positive difference.

So if you're the one who is exercising minority influence: decide which strategy might work best for you:

- *Earned-Right-To-Be-Different* or
- *Being Consistent, Persistent, and Objective*, or
- *Building an Alliance*.

If you are a team mate wanting to be an ally to a minority member, or if you are the team leader, watch for subtle and overt cues that team members are discounting or dismissing a double-minority's ideas by assuming that the idea is serving that individual rather than the team. Instead as an ally, suggest that team members consider the idea for a while in light of the team mission.



## **CHAPTER 15**

### **ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH HIGH EXPECTATIONS AND FEEDBACK**

#### **High expectations** (The Pygmalion-Rosenthal<sup>10</sup> Effect)

If you have high expectations, people tend to rise to meet those expectations. If you have low expectations, people tend to fall to meet those low expectations.

You get what you expect!

Through tone of voice, eye contact, facial expressions, and body posture, you signal to the people on your team that you expect high, mediocre, or poor performances from them. Your beliefs about them will leak through your body language and nonverbal communication channels. And it is very hard to control body language. It is easier to control your words and to monitor, or even change your beliefs.

When your team believes it is capable of doing a great job, you take on challenging assignments that expand team members' skills.

When your team thinks it is not quite good enough, you are likely to be over controlling and bogged down in boring, routine, and mindless work.

When you are interested in the growth and development of your team members, you seek their opinions and allow them to

speaking without interruption. You give them positive reinforcement about what they did well and constructive coaching for things they need to improve.

When you have low expectations, you ignore team member performance, fail to provide any positive feedback, and criticize their efforts and results.

When it comes to team behavior, remember you get the behaviors you expect.

You get the behaviors you reinforce.

## **CHAPTER 16**

### **FEEDBACK**

*Feedback is information!*

We receive feedback-information constantly – from our bodies (bio-feedback), from our environment, from other people.

When feedback is given and received effectively, both the individual and the team benefit. Interpersonal feedback, feedback from other people (especially our managers and team mates) tends to come in two forms:

1. objective–descriptive and
2. evaluative–developmental.

*Objective–descriptive feedback contains specific descriptions of behavior based on objective, verifiable data.* For this to be effective, these descriptive statements should be “owned” by the giver.

*Evaluative–developmental feedback provides a view of our behavior as right/wrong, good/bad, acceptable/not acceptable.* Evaluative feedback is most effective when it follows, rather than precedes, objective–descriptive feedback, and when it is amplified by specific suggestions for how to improve our behavior to meet the other person’s expectations.

For example, the statement *During our team meeting, you interrupted the speaker five times* is an example of objective–descriptive feedback. In contrast, the comment *You’re rude!* is an evaluative statement.

Objective–descriptive feedback also avoids the he-said-she-said type of hearsay information. If you wish to offer an interpretation of the behavior, own your interpretation.

For example, you might say, *In my view that many interruptions made it difficult for me and others to hear everyone's viewpoint about our new product launch.* An appropriate evaluative statement might be: *Frequent interruptions of other speakers in meetings seems disrespectful.* You could then provide developmental suggestions. *In the future, please wait your turn to talk.*

## **CHAPTER 17**

### **GIVING FEEDBACK**

Giving feedback involves providing information about an action or process. This information may be reinforcing or course-corrective. Both kinds of feedback can be experienced as beneficial if both the giver and receiver have learning as the goal and caring in their attitudes. It is helpful to convey reinforcing feedback with authentic appreciation, and course-corrective feedback with neutrality. Feedback can be a gift when it is an honest disclosure of perceptions and experiences designed to assist the recipient in more effectively achieving the team goals.

Giving feedback can:

- Enhance respect and rapport
- Teach the importance of owning your perceptions and suggestions because your feedback may or may not have accuracy or value for the recipient.
- Provide an opportunity for you to refine your feedback delivery skills. How you give feedback will largely determine its acceptance. It's not so much what we say that determines our effectiveness; it's so more in how we say what we say.

You want to give more positive feedback than constructive feedback. This may mean training yourself to pay attention to what people do right. Only positive feedback provides directional information to people – tells them what you want them to do. Ideally positive feedback should be completely

separate from negative feedback sessions. Negative feedback tells them what NOT to do, but the not-to-do list is infinite.

Be careful not to give the message *be like me or do as I do and you will be fine*. You want to acknowledge them as individuals in their own right. In a multicultural context you also want to be careful to understand cultural differences.

To give positive feedback effectively,

- Tell them exactly what they did right (specific, descriptive, objective, behavioral)
- Tell them the impact (quantify if you can)
- Tell them why you care (link to strategic, team goals and mission)
- Express your appreciation
- Ask for their personal motivation (to learn intrinsic motivators and mark progress)
- Thank them

Most people manage by exception. They only provide negative or constructive feedback because it is easier to see when something is wrong than when something is right. And we often assume that people are being paid to do the right thing so we do not need to tell them when they are doing something right.

But positive feedback makes their work meaningful and helps people learn is much more motivating.

Nonetheless, negative feedback can be constructive when it helps people learn from their mistakes, develop, and grow. An effective Constructive Feedback process would be:

- *Provide objective, descriptive, neutral information about behavior.* In order for you to be neutral, you have to do some work so you see yourself as providing information to the person, not attached to their need to change.
- *Describe negative impact*
- *Ask for their interpretation* of what they were doing, why?, and then listen to their answer
- *Offer your interpretation of what happened.* Don't skip this step. You're not asking them to change; you're sharing information.
- *Choose your response*
  - *Reinterpret intent.* Very often with information you can reinterpret their behavior because you know more about why they did what they did.
  - *Ask them to change.* If you really want them to change their behavior, and that's an expectation you have, you can ask them to change. But you cannot force them to change. They must choose to change.
  - *Hold them accountable.* You can hold them accountable for having their intent match impact. If they say *I didn't mean to do that*, or *that was not what I intended*, you can say *well this is the result of what happened and if you continue with this kind of behavior I think you'll continue to get this kind of result.* You are communicating to them that their actions have a consequence. You expect them to be,

and you will hold them accountable for whether their behavior gets the results they intend.

- *Suggest a change in behavior.* Suggest a change grounded in what they can do and who they are. I call this tweaking. It is when you have paid attention to what people do right, and you ask them to tweak their behavior, make a small shift in what they're already doing right, to make the team more effective. You're asking them to build on something they already know how to do. They're usually much less defensive, and more more receptive to making that shift, that tweak in their behavior, that increases the effectiveness of the team.

Most people enjoy giving positive feedback, at least when they remember to do it. The response from the recipient of the feedback is usually very positive.

On the other hand, we dread giving constructive, negative feedback. When we are giving feedback we sometimes put on a kind of emotional armor to protect ourselves from whatever defensive response we expect from the person we're criticizing. The person receiving the feedback is often defensive; and the person giving the feedback is often defensive. The person receiving the feedback is defensive especially when they feel they have been doing their best and the only time they get your attention is when something goes wrong.

But we need to offer people feedback - information. Giving constructive feedback is really important, and it can be so difficult to do. We are actually taking a risk when we offer people this kind of information.

In a team you have both relational and task interdependence. What you think about your team members, and what they think about you, both matter. If you don't communicate what is working and not working for you - they won't know - and you cannot build trust. The relationship risk of offering feedback - without strong emotional attachment to *them* changing to do it *your* way - is really worth it. Knowing how to communicate your expectations and work through differences constructively is a key team skill. Giving and receiving constructive feedback can also help avoid unnecessary conflict later.



## CHAPTER 18

### GIVING FEEDBACK EXAMPLE

So let's walk through an example. You had a meeting in which one team member, Jan, was perceived as dominating the conversation. You decide to give Jan constructive feedback.

Step	Example
1. Provide objective behavioral information	You might begin your feedback by stating <i>Jan, during our team meeting, you interrupted five times.</i>
2. Describe the negative impact on team	<i>In my view, that many interruptions made it difficult for me and others to hear everyone's viewpoint"</i>
3a. Ask if that was their intent and	<i>"Was that your intent?"</i>
3b. Listen to their response.	Jan may say, <i>I interrupt because I am so passionate about this project and its possibilities, that I want to let everyone know. Or Jan could say, I did not mean to be disrespectful, I just wanted to clarify things about the idea people did not seem to understand.</i>

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 4. Share your interpretation of their behavior. Own it. | <i>When you interrupt so often, I think you are being disrespectful.</i>   |
| 5a. Ask them to change,<br><br>or                       | <i>In the future, please wait your turn to talk or Please let people finish their thoughts before you make your suggestions.</i>   |
| 5b. Reinterpret intent,<br><br>or                       | <i>Now that I know your interruptions are a sign of your passion for the project, I can live with that. You might want to share that with other team members though, so they understand why you interrupt.</i> |
| 5c. Ask Jan to flex.                                    | <i>I can understand your wanting to clarify details. How about keeping track of them and then offering those clarifications when that person has finished?</i>   |

Any and every team member on a multicultural team can model respectful communication this way in terms of offering feedback.

It is particularly helpful when the team leader does it.

It would not be helpful for you to make a comment such as *You are rude!* Why? Because that is an evaluative statement. It is based in your own unshared interpretation of the behavior. And such a comment runs the risk of stereotyping or sounding disrespectful. It is not effective to ask for respect by

disrespecting the person you think is disrespectful. In other words you should model the behavior you want.

*I did not mean to is not an excuse.* A common response from people when you ask about their intent is *I did not mean to do that*. That statement alone is not enough. *I did not mean to...* does not excuse the behavior or eliminate the negative impact. At the very least, the offending person has to say what their intent was, not what their intent was not. You ask about their intent because you want to make sure that you are not assuming that there is only one valid way to interact.

*When you're giving feedback, especially constructive feedback, focus on people's behaviors as just different; try not see the people as difficult or deficient.* The behavior is just behavior – neither good nor bad, neutral. It is the *interpretation* we give to that behavior, and then our actions based in our unexplored judgments about that person (rather than their behavior), that cause problems on teams.

*Frame mistakes as learning opportunities.* Chris Argyris<sup>11</sup> at Harvard defined learning as the ability to detect and correct mistakes. In some situations people hide their mistakes. Depending on the cost associated with those mistakes, that can be a really big problem. But what Harvard researcher Amy Edmonson<sup>12</sup> found, is that while mistakes are indeed costly, hiding mistakes is MORE deadly, and MORE costly – because the mistakes are not detected and corrected. That is people are not learning from their mistakes. So when procedures were put in place in hospitals and banks, for instance, to detect

mistakes, that caused an improvement because now those mistakes could be corrected. Once a mistake is made and detected, you have a choice to make. You can either punish people for making a mistake. Or you can use the mistake as an opportunity to learn, to teach the team how to do things correctly, and to provide developmental feedback to the people who made the mistake. When you frame mistakes – for everybody – as opportunities for learning, you create and sustain an environment that is more motivating for everyone.

## CHAPTER 19

### RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Most of us are far more willing to give feedback than to receive it – especially negative or constructive feedback. We all receive feedback in ongoing ways whether we recognize it or not. Feedback comes to us through the experiences we attract, the ways other people respond to us, our reactions to people and situations, and from our own inner processes and perceptions.

Even positive feedback, complements, can be difficult to receive. *Being open* to receiving relevant information regarding our behaviors, attitudes, and thought processes is the first step in receiving feedback effectively. The second step is *considering the value of the information* for influencing and modifying our behavioral choices. We can help ourselves stay open to useful feedback by remembering that feedback is simply information. If we attach our sense of identity to the thoughts, judgments, feelings, behaviors, and perceptions of others, then we lose contact with who we are. If you do not like the feedback, or you cannot use it, feel free to ignore it. Yes, I understand that ignoring feedback from managers and significant others can have negative consequences. Nonetheless, YOU decide how, when, and whether to accept and use feedback as information. You decide if the feedback is helpful or useful to you.

Receiving feedback can:

- Assist you in answering the questions: *How am I doing? Is what I'm doing working? What could I do to be more effective?*
- Provide an opportunity to identify our intentions and the impact of our behavior to make sure intent and impact are aligned.
- Teach discernment in processing feedback information from various sources.

In short, one of the best ways to learn about our selves and our performance is by being open to receiving and using the feedback we receive.

In addition to the informal feedback you receive constantly, you may received feedback through structured instruments, like 360 degree feedback reports, or through performance evaluations. Structured feedback always includes shared perceptions about your strengths and weaknesses, and there can be perceptual gaps about your strengths and weaknesses.

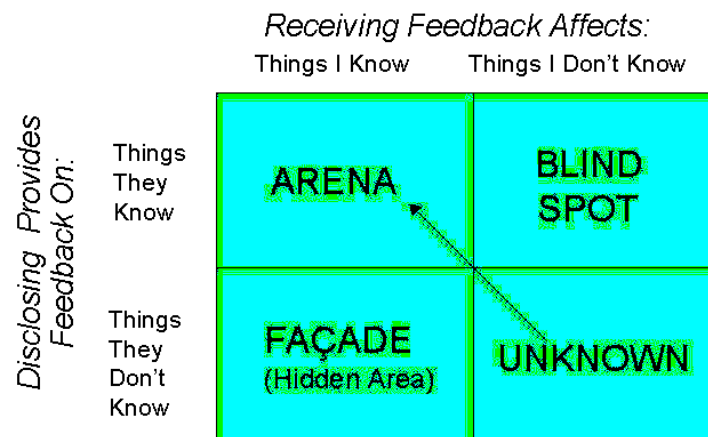
Feedback can help you confirm your positive characteristics, skills and attributes - these things you know about yourself and others agree that you have these positive qualities. These would be confirmed strengths.

You might also have some less effective qualities, skills or attributes and others agree that you have these less attractive characteristics. These would be stumbling blocks and opportunities for improvement.

The Jo-Hari window is a model of interactions that describes the degree of space occupied by

1. those things that we know about ourselves and choose to disclose to others - Arena,
2. those things we know about ourselves but do not disclose to others - Façade,
3. those things others know about us that they do not share with us - Blind Spot, and
4. things we do not know about ourselves, nor do others - Unknown.

The model is named for the two men who conceptualized it—Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham.<sup>13</sup>



Jo-Hari Window

The Arena is comprised of things we know about ourselves and choose to share with others. The arena increases in size as the level of trust increases and as more information is shared.

According to this model, we aim to increase the size of the arena and decrease the unknown area by giving and receiving feedback about our behavior.

There is also your facade - the area where we conceal feelings, perceptions, or opinions from other people for one reason or another. There are many reasons for our façades.

- Sometimes we choose to withhold information about ourselves from fear that others are not interested, or they would attack or reject us because of it, or they would be offended by it.
- Other times we withhold information because we do not feel supported.

The only way to test the above assumptions is to reveal or disclose these things about ourselves.

- Occasionally, we fail to share information about ourselves in an attempt to control or manipulate others.
- More positively, we may refrain from disclosure in specific contexts where it is not appropriate to share personal information.
- Or, we could simply have different degrees of preference for privacy.

The key point to remember about the façade is that we use it to protect ourselves in situations where it does not feel safe or appropriate to disclose aspects of who we are.

We also have blind spots - this term that refers to characteristics that we do not know about ourselves but that others perceive. You can actually have two types of blind spots.

- The first type is where you see yourself in a positive light and other people see you in a more negative way. This is the most common way of thinking about blind spots.
- But you could also have some strengths or talents that others see, but you are not aware of them. These would be unacknowledged or hidden strengths.

One of the biggest gifts from receiving feedback is being able to see and eliminate both types of blind spots, thereby learning more about both your strengths and your weaknesses.

*Research with effective leaders shows that it is not as important what your strengths or weaknesses are, as it is that you be **aware** of what your strengths and weaknesses are.*

Both giving and receiving feedback are opportunities to practice trusting members of your team.



## CHAPTER 20

### COLLABORATIVE BEHAVIORS

Collaboration and Conflict are two sides of the same coin. I used to talk about conflict management. But people want to avoid conflict. They see it as negative and destructive. What they really want to learn is how to collaborate. So now my focus is more on encouraging collaborative behaviors - rather than managing conflict. By making the collaborative behaviors a habit, you are more likely to avoid destructive conflict.

<i>Collaborative-Culturally Competent Behaviors</i>	<i>Conflict-Causing/Escalating Destructive Behaviors</i>
<b>ACTIVE</b> Seek-use different perspectives Creating Solutions Expressing Emotions Reaching Out Ally behaviors Using Names (w/ ideas)	<b>ACTIVE</b> Winning at All Costs Displaying Anger Demeaning Others Retaliating Stereotyping Bias
<b>PASSIVE</b> Reflective Thinking Listening Delay Responding Adapting	<b>PASSIVE</b> Avoiding Yielding Hiding Emotions Silent Collusion Self Criticizing

I adapted this framework from the Conflict Dynamics Profile developed at Eckert College. We can collaborate in ways in active or passive ways, or we can have active or passive behaviors that cause conflict, or cause conflict to escalate.

The six active culturally competent collaborative behaviors for multi-cultural teams are:

1. Seeking and Using Different Perspectives
2. Creating Solutions
3. Communicating Emotions
4. Reaching Out
5. Ally Behaviors, and
6. Using Names w/Ideas

*Seeking and using different perspectives* is asking for everyone's views, listening with an open mind, acknowledging their viewpoint, and sometimes using their ideas. Perspective taking is putting yourself in the other person's position to understand that person's point of view. This is the most productive collaborative behavior on multicultural teams.

*Creating solutions* is working with other people to create solutions to the problem the team is trying to solve that are acceptable to everyone. It might be brainstorming and contributing ideas that build on each other's suggestions, or combining ideas into something novel. These are both **output solutions**. We usually recognize people on teams who come up with answers to problems as having made a positive contribution.

Creating solutions can also be suggesting an integrative process to find a solution that involves everyone - a **process solution** gives due consideration to all the options on the table and suggests ways to weigh the relative merits of the options. Process solutions are helpful when the team is bogged down

and needs more time to reflect, or to gather more information before making a final decision. These solutions that involve and engage members are just as valuable to teams as output solutions, but not always recognized as such.

*Communicating emotions* is talking honestly and clearly expressing your thoughts and feelings. This is not displaying anger or hurt but rather accurate *verbal* communication *about* your feelings.

Many teams have norms that allow positive feelings to be expressed. They may also allow controlled disagreement, frustration, or passion. This is task and idea-based disagreement that does not include anger displays or attacking another team member. There must be room for such emotion to be communicated on the team too.

Emotions that are suppressed usually erupt later when the person who suppressed his or her emotion gets back at the team by attacking another person's idea, regardless of the idea's merit. Moreover, the attack is usually disguised as a substantive or procedural issue.

It is usually more effective to deal with the emotion directly in the first place by using this constructive emotion communication approaches. Effective team leaders model and encourage such emotional maturity. Avoiding or suppressing all emotion, passion, and intensity will cause multicultural teams to under perform.

*Reaching Out* is deliberately making the first move to break a stalemate, or trying in some way to make amends to somebody else when you have a difference of opinion.

*An ally* is someone who speaks up on behalf of someone else, supports their idea in public, or stops destructive-discounting-stereotyping that might be directed at someone who may or may not be present.

*Using names with ideas* is simply calling people by their preferred name and acknowledging their contributions by connecting the two.

There are also four behaviors that are passive culturally competent collaborative behaviors. These are reflective thinking, delayed response, adapting, and reinterpreting-assuming positive intent.

*Reflective thinking* is analyzing the situation, weighing the pros and cons, and thinking about the best response. It might also include doing some homework to understand more about others' cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors, while clarifying your own.

*Delayed response* is waiting things out, letting matters settle down, or taking a time out when emotions are running high. Counting to 10, taking a walk, or taking deep breaths actually do work. People who use delayed responses are coming from an empathetic compassionate emotional space with some ability to control their retaliatory impulses. You can have

feelings without acting them out in situationally inappropriate times and places. Knowing what to express, how, and when, is seen as emotional self-mastery - a sign of high EQ - emotional intelligence<sup>14</sup> and maturity.

*Adapting* is staying flexible, accepting things that can't be changed while making the best of the situation, staying engaged and alert, or following the team decision when you've had consensus decision making even when the decision made was not your first choice.

*Assume positive intent.* If you're going to make an assumption about others on a diverse-multicultural team, assume positive intent. Assume that people's behavior makes sense from their point of view. Assume they, like you, are trying to do a good job.

You can combine this with reflective thinking and perspective taking to reinterpret their intent. When you have more information about, or can imagine why they would do something in a way that is different from how you would do it, you can then reinterpret their behavior as rational and positive when seen from their perspective.



## CHAPTER 21

### CONFLICT BEHAVIORS

Of course we have some behaviors that actively cause conflict, or increase conflict on multicultural teams. There are six of these including winning at all costs, displaying emotion inappropriately, demeaning others, retaliating, stereotyping, and bias.

*Winning at all costs* is arguing vigorously for your own position, holding out against the opposition, and trying to well, win at all costs. This may work in a one-time transaction. But teams are interdependent relationships that continue over time. Even if your time in a team is for only of short duration, when it is a work team, and you try to win at all costs, word gets around and your negative, aggressive reputation will precede you.

*Inappropriate emotional display* includes openly expressing anger, raising your voice, using harsh, angry words or gestures, or crying. What is considered inappropriate emotional display varies by culture and gender. Within the U.S. business context, many people see displays of anger as a sign that someone lacks sufficient control over their aggressive impulses.

*Demeaning others* includes laughing at another person, ignoring or ridiculing another's ideas, rolling your eyes, or using sarcasm. People who demean others are seen as having poor aggression control and are more likely to report anxiety and personal distress during a conflict.

*Retaliating* is obstructing another person, or trying to get revenge on somebody later after the original conflict occurs. It is a conflict escalating behavior on teams. As Gandhi said it ... *an eye for an eye and the whole world goes blind.*

*Stereotyping* is the act of applying an over-simplified, often overheard and internalized image or statement about a group of people, to an individual. It could be making such statements yourself, or sharing such images about a group of people.

*Bias* is having attitudes or beliefs that predispose you to see events, people, or items in a positive or negative way. Bias is often invisible to us, and can contribute to invisible privilege, and blind people to the impact of their actions.

And then we have the passive conflict escalating behaviors. Most people who use these five types of behaviors are under the mistaken impression that they are innocent bystanders to conflict. In actuality, these passive behaviors cause conflict to escalate and destroy the safety required to learn from different perspectives on a team. They are avoiding, yielding, hiding emotions, silent collusion and self-criticising.

*Avoiding* or ignoring the other person, and acting distant and aloof is not the same as reflective thinking or delayed response. You can tell if you are avoiding when you feel interpersonal hostility, or you have little empathy for the other, or you go out of your way to avoid interacting with them because you

feel you have limited control over your retaliatory behavior. If you feel irritability, resentment, suspicion, and anxiety when you think of interacting with them, and that's why you are behavior coldly, you're avoiding.

Try focusing on the problem, rather than the person, to see if you can shift to a more collaborative space.

Teams may try to avoid conflict by avoiding important issues for fear they will cause conflict. If your team is avoiding conflict in general or avoiding conflict about key issues, you might comment about what the team is avoiding and suggest setting aside some time to deal with it.

*Yielding* is giving in to another person in order to avoid further conflict. Conflicts are not resolved by giving in. Usually the issue or concern you have resurfaces in some unconscious, dysfunctional behavior elsewhere. It is better to get your core needs met and address underlying concerns than to just give up or give in.

*Hiding emotions* is trying to conceal your true emotions when you are upset. They leak out later and in non-verbal behaviors. People know something is wrong, that you are upset, and will eventually treat you as if you are lying (emotionally), or as if you are immature emotionally. Find a safe, appropriate way-place-person to express your emotions and do something that you enjoy to rebalance. For most people that is engaging in a motivating interest - like sports, exercise, music, dance, reading, playing with yourpets, etc.

*Silent collusion* is going along with bias, stereotyping or other active conflict behaviors through silence. This is often seen as consent to the actions of the perpetrators by the victims, although colluders have a range of learned reasons to stand by when negative things happen to others. We collude when we don't speak up thinking using excuses such as - I would speak up if

- Other people would speak up too
- I felt comfortable in the group
- I were the manager
- I thought I could stay calm
- It were my responsibility
- I knew what to say
- If they were talking about me
- If I thought I would really make a difference
- If I wouldn't be misunderstood
- If I thought my boss would support me
- If I knew others would agree
- If I didn't feel they would target me
- If I thought people were serious
- If someone listened

These are examples of why we silently collude from Leslie Aguilar's fantastic video program called *Ouch! Your Silence Hurts*.<sup>15</sup> Silence is the door to consent. Rather than stay silent, be an ally. Speak up! Leslie's program gives you great techniques for speaking up and using the collaborative behavior of being an ally.

*Self-Criticizing* is mentally replaying the incident, and criticizing self for not handling it better. Replaying things over and over and over in your head is not productive. Try communicating your emotions with someone you trust. Practice what to say out loud. And then reach out.

Remember! The best action is to use the collaborative behaviors so often that they become a positive habit. That is more important than trying to avoid the conflict escalating behaviors. Focus more on doing the yes, the collaborative behaviors, because these help your team work together well.



## **CHAPTER 22**

### **ADDING CULTURE TO THE MIX**

Cultures exist at multiple levels in the world. We have the international-country level – with national cultures such as Japan, India, South Africa, Turkey or the U.S. We have subcultures with nations – racio-ethnic-religious groups such as the Flemish in Belgium, or the Chinese in Malaysia. There are industry level cultures such as the computer-high tech industry, the automobile industry, or the film-media industry. There are also corporate cultures such as those in IBM, McDonalds, Disney, Toyota, etc. And there are functional cultures such as Finance, Marketing, Management, Workers, etc. Culture describes the shared behavioral norms, beliefs, and values of ANY large group of people.

Because values are deeply, strongly, often unquestioned beliefs with emotional content, it can be very difficult to resolve values-based conflicts that come from people's culture. People believe they have a right to keep and live by their values and will often resist any attempt to change behaviors that look like values violations.

Sometimes the values-based conflict can be resolved by appealing to a shared, superordinate value – a value that is more important to all parties than the values that seem to be in conflict. In order to get to such conflict resolution all parties may need to:

- Explicitly articulate their own set of beliefs and values

- know that they have chosen-learned their set of values-beliefs from an infinite set of other values-beliefs,
- be willing to explore shared values
- understand that each person's culture and values, when understood fully, are usually functional within their social identity group and makes sense to them
- be willing to shift values to meet the most important values priorities

Team members do not have to accept others' values-beliefs, nor change their own beliefs, unless and until they believe change might serve them better in the specific context. For this reason decentering – that is experiencing the world from the perspective of another person - is the most effective intercultural collaboration behavior. When we have walked a while in another's moccasins we learn to respect their difference, even if we do not choose to walk in that manner ever again.

On a team we may see a conflict between two members as personality conflicts. But each of those people may be expressing conflict that other members of the group have suppressed. So the conflict is really a group issue, not an individual or interpersonal issue.

Similarly, two members of the group may be in conflict because they represent their department's or function's view of things. This is then an inter-group conflict getting played out inside the group. It is challenging to distinguish the interpersonal

conflicts from the intergroup conflicts. Groups are dynamic. Conflict is dynamic. And a conflict can actually be both - interpersonal and intergroup.

When it comes to conflict within a group, my default rule of thumb is start dealing with within-group conflict as group and intergroup conflict. It may get played out individual-to-individual, but often the intra-, group, and group-to-group power issues are usually having an impact on the motivations of the players and stability of the resolution. If it is a group or intergroup conflict and you try to deal with as a purely interpersonal issue, you won't get stable conflict resolution.

Within multi-cultural teams it is not uncommon to have these kinds of intergroup or social-identity issues involved in conflicts. *Social identity is that part of your self-concept that derives from your knowledge of your membership in a social group together with the value and emotional significance you attach to that membership.* Social identity theory not only talks about the importance of defining dimensions of identity that are significant for you, but goes on to explore and explain other important social dynamics specifically social categorization, social comparison, in-group favoring, social-identity esteem management, and some of the power issues that are part of a society associated with social identity.

Social identity rests on comparing one's group to another group in order to confirm, maintain, or establish qualities about one's group as distinct and favorable when compared to the 'another group', all of this is motivated by an underlying

need for self-esteem. Identity is an individual level of analysis issue because it is about what is important to you. But social identity blends the individual, interpersonal, group and inter-group issues because it is about how you interact with others who share (or do not share) that identity.

In the active, destructive conflict behaviors above I listed stereotyping. Most stereotypes are negative evaluations; although some are intended to be positive. Whatever the intent behind the stereotype, the impact is negative because stereotyping blinds us to the individual person and precludes genuine interaction between team members. Some situations make stereotyping easy and therefore should be avoided. These include things like:

- Joke telling. (Make sure your jokes do not depend on assumptions about social-identity groups).
- Name calling - Labels. Only use the names people want to be called. If you are unsure what to call someone as a member of a group, ask them what they want to be called.
- Making assumptions about individuals based on their social identity, and then acting on your assumption without checking. For instance assuming a person in a wheelchair would not want to travel and so you do not even offer them an assignments that would require travel.
- Statistical stereotyping; using statistics, real or imaginary, to justify treating an individual in a way that is consistent with that statistic.

These are just some examples of how stereotyping could escalate or cause conflict, especially in multicultural team.

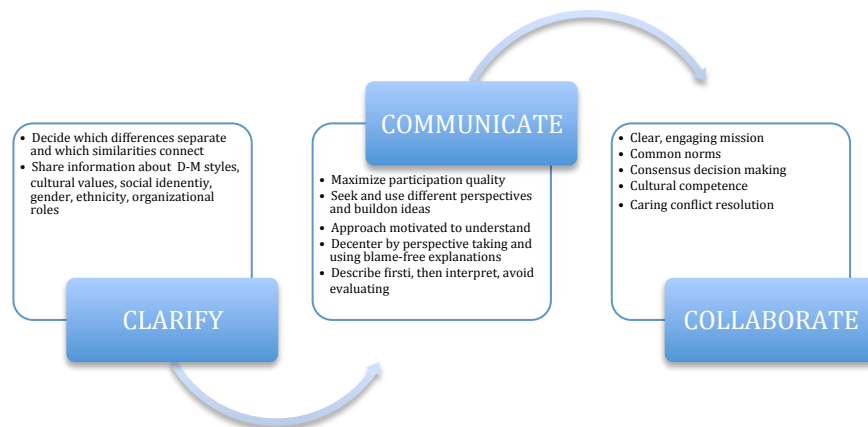
Another active, destructive, conflict causing behavior is biased communications. One way to uncover our biases about people, and our bias in interpersonal communication is to use a turnaround test. If we put the other side in the comment and it sounds very strange to us, we may become more aware that there was some bias in our communication that had been comfortable for us, yet remained a discount for others.



## CHAPTER 23

### FROM CONFLICT TO COLLABORATION

Moving from Intergroup Conflict to Multicultural Collaboration requires us to clarify, communicate, and collaborate. Clarify relevant identity aspects, especially social identities that are important in your team. Not all differences matter, or matter equally. Share information with each other about those differences that are important for you to work well together – both the visible ones and the invisible ones. You will undoubtedly begin to discover similarities that might help you bridge intergroup differences through that clarification process. Moreover, this process builds a shared language for discussing differences and similarities and makes that a legitimate team activity.



Next communicate. In order to communicate well people have to be *motivated* to engage productively with each other, to be

*confident* that they can interact effectively, to be able to *take the other person's perspective* into account, and to *avoid blaming* or assuming that other people are just trying to be difficult when disagreements occur.

People act in ways that make sense to them.

Understanding how they make sense of their behavior is key. Open-minded, open-hearted non-judgmental listening is the most important communication skill you can use. Learn more about them and their culture - and you will learn more about your own. This information then allows you to find and *shared views, shared goals, and shared characteristics* to build a set of *common team norms*.

Maximize participation from all team members. Create that learn-from differences environment by seeking and using different perspectives, building on the range of ideas, exploring the value of different perspectives without blaming or judging people who are different. It is easiest for people to feel heard, become confident, motivated participants, when differences are described, rather than judged. Unfortunately the tendency to judge usually start with evaluating *them* as worse than *us*. You avoid falling into that trap if you describe, rather than evaluate differences in behavior and differences in culture. This starts to create a shared view of reality.

Collaboration occurs when we focus and align energy for solving problems. This comes back to the ever-important clear, engaging mission. You can have some flexibility about

*how* people do the team work – and you want flexibility and diversity of approach and opinion. Perspective diversity about *how* to solve the problem is the source of synergy and learning.

Seek solutions through synergy.

If you have everyone engaged, involved, and their contributions respected, the likelihood of commitment to, and effective implementation of your decision is high.

When all is said and done, well-managed multicultural teams move from ethnocentrism to multiculturalism, from conflict to collaboration.

Ethnocentricity	My way is the only way
Awareness	There may be another way
Understanding	There are reasons why you do it your way, and why we do it our way
Acceptance	Our ways each have value
Selection	Sometimes your way is better. Let's try it. Sometimes my way is better.
Multiculturalism	We flexibly choose the most effective way in this present situation.

*From Zareen Lam, Leslie University, Cambridge, MA*



## CHAPTER 24

### CONCLUSION

Groups and teams are a fact of life at work today. You have an opportunity to maximize your teams' success by designing it right, and by intervening in group process the right ways at the right times.

#### **What you need to know about teams in a Nutshell**

1. The clear, motivating mission is the most important thing - share what to do, discuss why it's important, then let the team figure out how best to do it.
2. Design the team for success and understand the team development process.
3. Use three effectiveness metrics: Output (getting the job done), Learning (including detecting and correcting your mistakes) and Satisfaction (enjoying and respecting each other).
4. Ask four questions: *Do you need a team?* Yes if you have complex interdependent tasks, you need a lot of creative solutions to complex problems, you want buy in and commitment to the team decision for rapid implementation. The other three questions are *how much authority does the team need?* *How competent are they?* and *How much trust do they have?* These questions all deal with how empowered the team needs to be. Depending on your answers you decide group type: automatons, empowered individuals, platoons, or empowered self-managed teams.

5. Finally, you want to use the five interlocking skills to leverage perspective diversity in your team:
  - ✓ Focus attention and energy on the team mission
  - ✓ Include everyone with the intent of having them learn from each other
  - ✓ Exercise minority influence strategically
  - ✓ Hold the team accountable through high expectations and feedback and
  - ✓ Use culturally competent, caring collaborative behaviors and manage conflict.

Thank you!

Peace

## ENDNOTES - CITATIONS

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# *Multicultural* **TEAMS**

**Creating and sustaining an environment for learning from perspective diversity that maximizes team effectiveness**

Multicultural work teams outperform all other kinds of teams under two conditions:

1. When you need creativity, commitment and buy in
2. And when these teams are designed and managed well.

This book teaches you how to create and sustain an environment that encourages and protects perspective diversity - the gold in multicultural teams. Dr. Robin shares cutting-edge research with practical suggestions to help you design your team for success by using five interlocking skills that maximize learning from diversity.

## **Design for Success in 5 Steps**

- Step 1: Focus = Clear, Motivating Mission
- Step 2: Processes = Design and Develop
- Step 3: Metrics = Output, Learning, Satisfaction
- Step 4: Questions = Team Type
- Step 5: Interlocking Skills = Leverage Diversity

## **Five Skills That Leverage Diversity**

1. Articulating Mission with "Why" discussion
2. Inclusive behaviors that create learning environment
3. Minority influence to avoid groupthink
4. Accountability feedback with high expectations
5. Culturally competent collaborative behaviors

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