



Team-Building

For CS Project Groups



Workshop Outline

3:00-4:00

- Teamwork problems
 - Organization/commitment
 - Communication/accountability

4:00-4:30

- Lil's lists for effective groupwork
 - Available on line if we run out of time.



Question

- What's the difference between a team and a bunch of individuals gathered together?



What is a team?

- A team is a group of *interdependent* people working together for a shared goal.
- What does a team need to be successfully interdependent?



Successful interdependence requires:

1. Trusting one another
2. Engaging in open, productive conflict
3. Committing to decisions made
4. Holding one another accountable
5. Focussing on end results

We'll be discussing each of these factors.



How does trust grow?

- Trust develops through
 - **Organizational factors** – a set of agreements that everyone understands and follows.
 - Do you have agreements around meetings, communication, and deadlines?
and . . .



How does trust grow?

- Trust develops through
 - **Interpersonal factors**
 - Getting to know each other
 - Revealing failures, weakness, and fears
 - Showing appreciation
 - Listening and responding thoughtfully



Organization & Communication

The more developed the group's organization is, the easier the communication.

The better the communication, the easier it is to get shared agreements about organization.



Organization & Communication

Good organization can save a team, even if their communication is weak.

Let's work on both.



Where's the Problem?

Organization and/or Communication?

- “People did not do what they said they would do.”
- “People did not respond to messages or show up at meetings.”
- “Decisions were made - no one told me.”
- “My ideas were ignored.”
- “I ended up doing more than my share.”



Statements, continued

- “I was given work that was not in my skill areas; then I was criticized.”
- “I spent the whole break working on the project; then they didn’t use my work.”
- “I could not get the help I needed.”
- “One person acted like the leader without everyone’s agreement.”
- “No one would talk about our problems.”



Scenarios (Handouts, p. 2)

- For each of the following scenarios, we will ask
 - What's the problem?
 - How can you solve it?
 - How could it have been prevented?



Scenario #1

You are creating an app to help your client. Your team has taken on different roles including programming, visual design, usability, and project management. While brainstorming improvements to the app, team members have ideas and are actively critiquing each other's ideas.

Sven, however, stays quiet throughout brainstorming, even though he is the one who will have to build the discussed functionality.



Scenario #2

When your group project is half done, the client suggests that you make significant changes to one part. You have a meeting and agree to the changes. Everyone is present, but no one records decisions.

It seems that everyone agreed to the new direction, but you get a text from Sabina saying that she has a good idea related to the original design – which has been dropped.



Scenario #3

In one week, your team will be presenting the final project to the client. Each team member prepared slides according to a design that you thought everyone had agreed on. You are putting together the final presentation, and everyone has sent you their slides.

In your opinion, Sly's slide deck is poorly done. You would be embarrassed to include the work, but you are reluctant to speak up.



#1: What's the Problem?

Scenario 1: Sven stays quiet throughout brainstorming.

His input is necessary.

Possible underlying problem: Sven doesn't feel safe sharing his opinions and feelings.



#1: How Can You Solve It?

The leader or alert team members can

- Mine for conflict, “Sven, you seem quiet about that idea. Do you think it is doable?”
- Go around circle having everyone contribute, including Sven.



#1: How Can You Solve It?

- Praise positive conflict in real time, “This discussion is good.”
- Model accepting criticism.
- Give developer time to respond.
Summarize ideas and ask for comments on each.



#1: Can the Problem Be Prevented?

- Team members must create an environment where sharing ideas is safe.
- Build trust over time
- Make sure roles are clear and conflict is encouraged.



#2: What's the Problem?

Scenario 2: Sabina says that she has an idea related to the original design – which has been dropped

- Lack of commitment: group is disorganized.
- Commitment requires clarification about decisions.



#2: How Can You Solve It?

The leader can

- Thank Sabina for her text.
- Take responsibility for lack of clarity.
- Point Sabina in the agreed-upon direction.



#2: Can the Problem Be Prevented?

- Make sure everyone weighs in and feels heard.
- “You have to weigh in to buy in.”
- End meeting with **commitment clarification**. Say, “What exactly have we decided here today?” Record it.
- Follow up with written record.



#3: What's the Problem?

Scenario 3: Sly's slide deck seems poorly done. There is a week left.

- Expectations were not clearly set out and agreed on.
- The group did not have checkpoints along the way to see if they were on track with one another.



#3: How Can You Solve It?

- Immediately speak to Sly. Find out why his contribution seems weak. Name the problems specifically.
- Take responsibility for not setting dates for earlier drafts.
- Get Sly on track, if possible. Call on group members to help.



#3: Can the Problem Be Prevented?

- Clarify roles and responsibilities of all.
- Agree on standards of performance and checkpoint dates – in a written record.
- Be accountable to one another. All team members need to monitor checkpoints.
- Accountability includes reporting problems.



And the problems include:

The scenarios show problems with

1. Trusting one another
 - See online trust activities
2. Engaging in open, productive conflict
 - The more trust, the better the conflict
3. Committing to decisions made
 - Show commitment with reliability agreements



Reliability (Handouts, p. 3)

Together with partners finish this sentence:

In our team, reliability means



Accountability (Handouts, p. 5)

1. Write each team member's name.
2. Recall and write a specific positive contribution to the project made by each of your teammates and yourself.
3. Recall and write a specific less positive behaviour that affected team functionality.
4. Share



Five non-defensive things to say when receiving feedback:

1. Thank you for telling me.
2. What do you mean? Tell me more.
3. So you're saying . . . Is that it?
4. You seem worried that . . . Is that it?
5. What will happen if . . . ?

Try and understand other person's comments before defending yourself.



Accountability Questions

1. Did you feel uncomfortable giving honest feedback to another team member?
2. What factors held you back from being openly honest?
3. Is this something your group was previously doing? If not, why?
4. Was your self-reflection accurate?



A successful team requires

1. Trusting one another
2. Engaging in open, productive conflict
3. Committing to decisions made
4. Holding one another accountable

and



Focussing on end results

- Even with the other four factors, a team can still fail.
- Even if your part is done, you still have to work together towards the final goal.



Lil's Lists for Better Teamwork

1. Team Processes & Organization
2. Interpersonal Communication
3. Leadership



Three agreements to make as soon as the group has formed:

- Can we give each other all relevant contact numbers **RIGHT NOW** and state our preferred method of contact?
- Can we agree to respond to messages even if it's just to confirm receipt?
- Can we let one another know if we will be unavailable for communication at any time while working on our project?



Two ways to avoid problems:

- Can we agree to use a collaborative team forum for all communication?
- What is our policy regarding emailing questions to clients or professors regarding our team. Should we agree to always “copy all”?



One big group problem:

- *When people begin to become nonproductive and are letting others down, they waste energy denying, blaming, and making excuses; thus, further dragging the group behind.*



One policy for all members to affirm:

If I screw up by missing a meeting or being irresponsible about commitments, I will promptly admit it by

- apologizing for the specific problems that I caused the group,
- getting the job done, and
- asking what I can do to rebuild trust.

(See page 7 of handout)



One essential practice:

Hold one another accountable.

- Practice giving one another honest feedback as soon as possible.
- Invite feedback from teammates.
- Monitor defensiveness.

Another way to avoid future problems:



Identify Skill Areas: As soon as the group forms, say

- Let's identify the skills needed to do this project.
- Let's look at what skills and strengths that we each bring to the group and be open about the areas where we have less confidence and might need help.



Four questions groups should consider:

1. What is our goal?
2. How are we going to have fun?
3. How are decisions going to be made?
4. What is important to us about how we work together?

If problems arise, go back to these questions.



Two tips on how to run a meeting:

Meetings must be productive. Make sure that you

- Have a facilitator, a scribe, and a timekeeper.
- Create and follow an agenda.



Five things the facilitator must know before a meeting:

1. What is the purpose of this session?
2. What are the desired outcomes?
3. Who will be the scribe? Who will be the timekeeper?
4. What is the agenda?
5. How much time do we have to spend on each item?



Sample meeting agenda (p. 6)

Date: _____

Timer: _____

Time: _____

Facilitator: _____

Location: _____

Scribe: _____

Create columns with the following headings:

Subject | Responsibility | Desired Outcome | Time |

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.



Sample meeting minutes

Date/Time _____ Facilitator _____

Location _____ Scribe _____

Present: *List names of all present.* Absent: *List names of absentees.*

Regrets: *Mention if an absent member has informed the group.*

The minutes will be numbered with each number corresponding to an agenda item.

Follow the items on the agenda. If an item requires action on the part of a group member, record the item as follows:

- **ACTION:**
- **ACTION:**
- **ACTION:**
- Date of next meeting: _____



Six tips for brainstorming:

- Before starting, ask yourself, “Am I genuinely interested in everyone’s ideas, or just in my own?”
- Give everyone the chance to suggest ideas.
- Disallow criticism during initial phase.
All suggestions should be welcome.



Four things to do if you don't agree with an aspect of the plan:

- Share your doubts and reasons as soon as possible.
- Offer alternate suggestions.
- Respond thoughtfully to other's questions.
- If you remain in this project, be willing to totally commit to it.



Interpersonal Communication

Results of teamwork study:

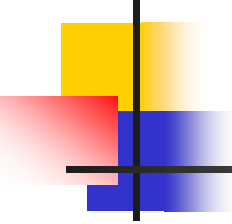
Another major frustration:

- *Misunderstandings due to unclear expression of ideas.*
- *Listeners must let the speakers know when they do not understand. Even if you think you **DO** understand, seek verification.*



Three things to say when group members' ideas seem unclear:

- I'm not sure I understand what you mean. Could you explain it again?
- Can you draw me a picture?
- So you're saying..... Is that it?



Two things to say when it seems that your opinions were not considered:

- I can see your point about...., but let me repeat my previous idea and perhaps you can tell me why you think it won't work.
- I won't feel right going ahead with that unless we consider this idea as well.



Three things to say to discourage communication:

- That's dumb.
- That'll never work.
- I don't think so.



Three things to say to encourage communication:

- Go on.
- What do you mean?
- What else were you thinking?



Four things to ask yourself if conflicts occur:

- What do I not know about this situation?
- What are your assumptions or expectations for the behaviour of others. Are these realistic?
- Do the members of the group have a shared goal? What is it?
- How can I present my concerns clearly?



Four questions the team should ask about leadership:

- Do we need a leader?
- What are the group leader's responsibilities? *or*
- How can we effectively share leadership responsibilities?
- In a conflict, how will decisions be made?



Take-Home Message

- One thing I want to remember to do when working with a team is
- Write your answer on page 8.

- Next meeting, compare your answers on the good team/bad team handout.
- It can be the best of times.