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Team Process Report

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Executive Summary

Communication and teambuilding are essential components of any organization. Having well established communication procedures and teambuilding guidelines are necessary for a company to become successful. The teams that make up a company, whether they are project, functional, or virtual teams, all need to excel at their communication and teambuilding skills. This paper discusses Team 3's communication and teambuilding skills, and how we went from individual members to a successful team. It takes an in depth look at how Team 3 built their team performance, how they overcame their team problems, and what ingredients were needed for a successful team. The meeting minutes are provided in the appendix, which supports the development of Team 3.

Team 3 consisted of three team members with extensive work and school experience, and two members who were full time students. The three experienced team members helped to guide the team from being individual members to a high performing team. Meetings were well organized, and the team worked well together to arrive at a consensus during discussions. This paper will begin by addressing how Team 3 built their team performance to become a successful team.

Building Team Performance

There is no clear formula for building team performance, but there are factors that separate a high performing team from other teams. These factors include establishing a sense of urgency, carefully selecting team members, examining first meetings, establishing rules of conduct, setting performance goals, challenging the team, spending time together, and providing positive feedback. This section looks at the common approaches to building team performance as established in *The Wisdom of Teams* [1] and how our team used these factors to become a high performing team.

The establishment of urgency and direction sets the tone for the team and prevents the team from floundering. It provides them with a sense of purpose, and they know what is expected from them towards team contribution. By following this approach early on, we were able to perform our tasks/assignments with fewer questions as to how they should be completed. Even though we knew this was a ten week course with time to work on projects, we understood that procrastination was not to be allowed. We discussed meeting dates and timelines for our projects and also the milestones that would be needed each week.

The selection of members based on current skills and skill potential is very important to team performance. Teams must have complementary skills to complete the project. Too often is a team formed where the root belief is that all the complementary skills need to be present at the start; this can be next to impossible in some situations. With the exception of some advanced functional or technical skills, most people can develop needed skills after joining the team. The key issue is getting the right balance of members that have the needed skills. Our team unknowingly followed a similar approach by mixing in ETM students that were close to graduation and had years of work experience with full time students that were new to the program. Our team was selected based on location more than skill sets. We were able to utilize the skills of each team member to perform better as a team. Dyer et al [2] suggests that the development of "skill plans", an outline of the skills that team members need to develop, can be useful to a team member's advancement in the team. The use of a "skill plan" would have helped our team by exploiting those skills that needed help.



The first meeting a team has sets the tone of meetings to follow. A high performing team will have an agenda during the first meeting, and they will follow the agenda closely to stay on track of the time. Setting the rules for current and future meetings is very important for the first meeting, as that helps the team to understand their roles. It is also important to have fun during the first meeting and make time to socialize and learn more about the team members. Our first team meeting occurred during the second week of class, as we had time in class to work on our projects. We were able to accomplish much as we knew our agenda and didn't have much time to wander from it. The rest of the team meetings went well and we completed our agenda items by staying focused and having fun.

High performing teams develop rules of conduct to help them achieve their purpose and performance goals. Rules of conduct are mostly implied for high performing teams, but it is a good idea to review them to ensure all team members are aware of them. Most of our team rules were not written or discussed. We knew that the basic rules of teams needed to be followed, such as those on attendance, discussion, and contribution. There were times when a team member was late for meetings and lacked the material that needed to be completed by the start of the meeting. The team leaders did not get upset, but yet they took the team member aside and informed him that this was not acceptable if the team was to be successful.

Setting performance goals is essential for high performance teams as it provides a sense of accomplishment. Performance goals help a team know where they are at and know where they want to be. Teams trace their advancement to key events that forge them together. High performance teams can set such events in motion by immediately establishing goals that can be reached early on. Our team's performance and execution of the first class ownership is a great example of this. We helped each other develop presentations that would fulfill the performance goal requirements of class participation, in addition to making the presentation interesting and informative. The recognition from Dr. Dryden at the end of that class helped show us that we were on the right path to becoming a high performance team. We successfully accomplished our first team goal by being prepared and learning from the previous teams who delivered their class ownership.

Team leaders look for ways to challenge their team members. This can be accomplished by raising the performance bar and also by providing new information. Our team tried to raise the performance bar by delivering the best class ownership possible, and by providing a unique and unforgettable team process presentation. New information can cause a team to change its process in completing a task, thereby improving efficiency. During the first week of February, Jerry informed our team that he had researched team process reports, and he noticed that many of the research and process reports were split up between team members. We agreed that splitting up the report between team members was the best way to go. Rafael and Farzad worked on the research report, and Reed, Bailey, and Jerry worked on the team process report. This was a challenge for our team, as we had to rely on our sub teams to complete the projects. We decided that the positive aspects outweighed the negative, as this would save much time and frustration.

Most articles and books that discuss team building describe the importance of team members spending adequate time together. They point out that it is essential for teams to utilize their meeting times effectively and efficiently and to ensure that the goals are accomplished. Our team scheduled several meetings outside of class, usually on the weekends. During these meetings we would spend time going



through each team member's part in the upcoming class ownership. We provided constructive feedback to help each other so that we would have a successful presentation. We ensured that our presentation was cohesive and tied to each other's topics. In addition to class related subjects, we also learned about team member's personal lives. These interactions were very important to team growth and cohesiveness as it provided a deeper relationship between team members and a better understanding of each other's goals. In addition to our face to face meetings, we used email as our primary source to communicate with each other. This may not sound related to spending time together, but in *The Wisdom of Teams*, it stated, "...we found out that the time need *not* always be face-to-face. Increasingly, team members are using telecommunications to bring them together." [1]

The last approach to building team performance is the use of positive reinforcement and recognition. Positive recognition is a very valuable tool not only for team leaders to use, but also for team members. Recognizing accomplishments with praise and gifts can go a long way toward building a high performance team as it shows the team that the members care for each other. Team members who receive praise feel a sense of worth and appreciation for their hard work. Our team leaders were excellent at using this approach, not only with team members but also with class participants. Their use of positive feedback and recognition helped keep the class discussions moving forward by involving everyone in the class. The use of this approach was also very valuable during team meetings, as no one on the team was afraid to give his insight even if there was already a consensus.

Common Team Problems

Team 3 was a diverse team with various experiences, and our common goal was to do well in class in order to obtain the highest possible score. There are many issues relating to a team environment, and the following section covers the ten common problems from *The Team Handbook* [7] that apply to team development. Since the class duration was only ten weeks long, we experienced only a few problems.

During different stages of a project, teams often have trouble deciding what they should work on next. Floundering occurred at the beginning of our team development, as we were unsure of our tasks and ownership. The team members were new to each other, and it took time to familiarize ourselves with the different experiences and backgrounds that we each offered to the team. Typically within a new team environment this is common and expected. The key to success is to quickly find a way to overcome this issue. We identified the steps to overcome our floundering rather quickly. The tasks and roles were assigned to team members to ensure we had deliverables for our next meeting. We also agreed to have a communication method (email) to update the team with work progress.

Overbearing and dominating team members can disproportionately influence the team and consume the team's time. One positive aspect of our team is that we did not have dominating nor overbearing participants in our team, which is common for a team environment. Our team had mutual agreement in the distribution of the tasks. We thought of new ideas and evaluated the risks associated to them as a team. If the risk was too great, we would then research an alternative. Overall, we did not have someone drive the decision process, but instead, we made decisions based on feasibility and risk.

Reluctant team members rarely speak and are the opposite of overbearing and dominating team members. There were times when we experienced reluctant participants during our meetings, and our



remedy was to bring them on board quickly and make sure they understood their role and commitment to the team. We ensured that each individual provided feedback and vocally participated in the activities and deliverables. We gave the team members the space and time to create their own ideas and then evaluate it together as a team. This created trust within the team and provided excitement in their creativity and confidence. According to Pamela Meyer "...confidence develops over time through safe, repeated opportunities to practice in informal and formal learning and work settings. A safe space is co-created by leaders who model the behaviors they desire in others; by facilitators who reinforce key concepts and provide valuable coaching; and by all organizational participants who co-construct the relational dynamics in each day-to-day interaction and collaboration." [3]

Team members who express unquestioned acceptance of opinions as facts can be dangerous to a team, as the team assumes they are hearing a presentation of facts. Fortunately, our team did not experience this phenomenon with the team members, as we based our information on facts and experience, such as our research report and class ownerships. We provided data and scientific methods to back up our information so that we did not take time to disprove ourselves.

Rushing to finish the project and losing track of the purpose of the project (wanderlust) are two problems that can easily happen in a team environment. Teams that experience these problems need to ensure the agenda is followed and refer to the team charter to keep them on track. Our team did a great job of avoiding these two issues as we wanted to have a quality project, and we kept focus on what we had due via the syllabus.

When a team confronts attribution, discounts, and feuding, it can lead to dysfunctional behavior, which will make the team less productive. A high performing team knows how to avoid these problems by utilizing the scientific approach, having clear communication, being open and honest, providing constructive feedback, and having one-on-one discussions with those team members prone to problems. At the beginning of our team development, we had some attribution challenges, but we were able to overcome them by helping each other identify our own assumptions. Discounts and feuding did not exist in our team.

Ingredients for a Successful Team

The ingredients for a successful team as discussed in The Team Handbook [7] starts out with clarity in the team goals. Clarity is very important as it provides the team a chance to set expectations and keep everyone informed of the outcome of the work. When the goals and purpose are clear, the team works better. According to Andrew Filev [5], "Teams must have very accurate task assignments to avoid duplication efforts. If the task is a new and non-typical one, ensure that the team member has a clear understanding of the goals." Once our team created the Team Charter, we had the foundation of our goals. The syllabus provided the information as to when our work was due, and we estimated how much time the different projects would take. Later on in the course, we redesigned the work load so that we wouldn't have all five team members working on the same report, as discussed previously. This not only saved time, but it also made the meeting arrangements easier.

The next ingredient for a successful team is a plan for improvement. An improvement plan assists a team with the resources they need to reach their highest level of performance, and we consistently



looked for opportunities to improve. The first opportunity availed itself in the Class Ownership project. Since we were the last team to complete a Class Ownership, we had a great opportunity to improve upon the previous team's results. We knew that class participation was a must, so we focused much of our time to ensure the class had opportunities to be involved in discussions and activities. We also knew that utilizing all of the class time was acceptable, so we ensured that we had covered the topics well and provided plenty of time for class participation. After the first Class Ownership project was completed, we discussed ways to improve it for next time. With Rafael returning from his business trip, we knew we would use the entire class time to present the selected readings and team handbook presentation.

Having clearly defined roles was an objective that we strived for during each of our projects, and they helped our team understand the deliverables. When we had our meetings, we came to a consensus for our project roles by finding the strengths of each individual and fitting them to the project. For instance, during the first class ownership project, we agreed that Jerry would begin the class with an ice breaker and then follow with the first presentation on the selected reading. Then Farzad and Reed would split the chapter from the Wisdom of Teams for their discussion. Finally, Bailey would conclude with his topic and provide the flexibility to shorten or lengthen his presentation as needed. The second class ownership was similar, as we had four selected readings to present, which worked out well as this completed our goal of turning in five selected readings as a team. We went through a similar process of defining the roles and presentations for both class ownerships. We also clarified our roles for the Team Research and Process reports, as we divided the team in order to be more efficient and effective on working on our projects.

The next ingredient for a successful team is having clear communication. According to McShane et al, "Effective communication is vital to all organizations because it coordinates employees, fulfills employee needs, supports knowledge management, and improves decision making." [4] If teams are not strong in communication, then deliverables will be overlooked. If ownerships are not readily defined, members will be confused and deadlines will be missed. Our team practiced good communication techniques, but there was room for improvement. We communicated well via emails and during our meetings, and we understood our goals, roles, and objectives. Even though we communicated well, we still missed a couple of key points on our projects. One was the due date to turn in the written report for the research project. Luckily Rafael and Farzad worked on the project in advance, but we thought we had more time to improve the paper and proof it. Another communication problem we had was that one of our team members did not have his presentation ready during our team meetings, which did not provide the chance to give feedback. The final communication problem occurred when one of the team members did not realize that a two page report for the selected reading was due in addition to the presentation. These communication problems could have been avoided if we paid better attention to the details and updated each other with work progress.

Similar to the section on carefully selecting team members described above, selecting beneficial team members was one ingredient that we did not have much opportunity to pursue, although we ended up having team members that were very beneficial to our team. We had three team members who had extensive work and school experience, and two team members who were full time students. Everyone contributed and provided benefits to the team. Our different viewpoints, backgrounds, and experiences provided a rich opportunity to enhance our projects with unique examples and real life situations. We



helped and supported each other on the projects by providing constructive feedback and proof reading. We encouraged each other to do our best and to provide meaningful presentations and reports.

Having well defined decision procedures is a must for a successful team, especially teams that have a multitude of decisions to make during a long period of time. Donald A. Pillittere [6] worked on a team that was able to make decisions as needed without management input. He stated, "Clearly the managers played a small role in our success, but even without their backing, success was going to be ours. No one wanted to fail because we enjoyed the responsibility management provided for us to make key project decisions". Since our team would be together for only 10 weeks, and the decisions were minimal because of the requirements in the syllabus, having well defined decision procedures was not vital to the success of our team. Most of our decisions were based on suggestions and consensus. Everyone was agreeable to the suggestions that were recommended, and if someone had another idea, we were open to discussion.

A team must have balanced participation in order to become successful, as team members have a stake in the group's success. They should be engaged in discussions and contribute their talent. Without it, team members could become disgruntled and feel like they are carrying the team. During short term projects, an unbalanced team might be acceptable, but in the long run there must be a balance in the work load. For the most part, our team had balanced participation based on the experience of the team members. We contributed to the projects and provided useful input to help the team complete the projects. Everyone attended the meetings when they could and contributed to each project.

Having an awareness of the group process is essential for a successful team as it provides the insight and depth needed to understand the team dynamics. Team members should pay attention to the content of the meeting and to how the team works together. Our team members were sensitive to the non verbal signals, such as when one of the team members acted more reserved or reluctant to speak. We would try to draw them out and ask for their input or feedback. Moving from individuals to a team requires the understanding of how the group performs and interacts. Each individual brings their own strength to the team that makes the team greater than the individuals.

Use of the scientific approach is very helpful to make a team successful. It provides a way to use data and facts to support ideas and come to decisions faster. It assists the team by avoiding problems and disagreements by having the facts ready to support the provided information. Our team based the majority of our discussions on the scientific approach, as we referred to articles and research information to support our opinions. One area that this worked very well was during the team process report discussion. We were not clear on what was needed in the report, so we researched other team process reports to assist us.

Conclusion

For a team to become successful and efficient, they must pay attention to team dynamics, such as building team performance, finding the ingredients for a successful team, and being aware of potential team problems. This paper documented each subject matter and how it related to the success of Team 3. Each member has benefitted from the information learned in this class, and they will utilize the techniques to further their careers. Team 3 improved their performance as the class progressed and grew closer as a team.



References

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Appendix

Meeting Minutes

Wed, Jan 5:

The teams formed on the basis of location, as Tom mentioned that he would like to meet downtown and Bailey wanted to meet on the west side. The team members from the west side made introductions and quickly signed up as Team 3. The team then discussed the class assignments and broke down the work load. In regards to the Selected Readings, Jerry will do #1, Rafael will do #3, Reed will do #6, and Bailey will do #7 (David dropped out of class). We decided that a team member who has their Selected Reading due will send it to a few team members for a final quality check. We agreed to have our first meeting on Saturday, Jan. 15, at 9am and will meet at the Willow Creek building. After the decisions were made, we then had time to socialize and find out more about each other.

Wed, Jan 12:

Our team was able to meet during class to work on our Team Research Report, Team Charter, and Class Ownership for Week 4. We met our new team member Farzad, introduced him to the team, and brought him up to speed on what he missed last week. We worked together well as a team by brainstorming topics for our Team Research Report. We wrote down two or three ideas on our own, and then ranked them together. The topic we chose was "Working with Teams in Multi Locations via Virtual Team Dynamics". The Team Charter was also completed in class as a team and was submitted via Blackboard. We broke down the assignments for Class Ownership on Week 4, and we will complete our presentation slides before our class on Jan 19. Our scientific approach method involves gathering data and information from research reports and articles pertaining to our topic. Utilizing the scientific approach will help us combine systems thinking and data analysis to keep us focused on our work and have more efficient meetings. We will work on the Class Ownership on Jan 19, time permitting, and also Jan 22. Initial observation of the team leads us to believe that Bailey and Jerry are the team leaders, Rafael is the coach, Farzad and Reed are the team members, and Dr. Dryden is the sponsor.

Wed, Jan 19:

We only met for a few minutes during class to discuss our Class Ownership work. We were all still working on our slides, and agreed to meet on Sat. 1/22 at 9am in the class room. Rafael was not able to attend as he is on a work assignment out of state for the next few weeks. Our team is going through the Forming stage currently, as we are defining the homework and tasks, determining rules and work load, and understanding our strengths and weaknesses.

Sat, Jan 22:

We met today at 9am in the class room and went over each team member's slides. Reed will create his slides and send them to us in a couple of days. He has it drafted up but not complete. Bailey does a great job of keeping the team on track, creating the outline for our time frames for the presentation, and helping team members with their slides. We worked on the slides and the time keeper spreadsheet



for approx 2.5 hours. We provided feedback on the slides to improve them, and devised a schedule that would work best to provide time flexibility for the class presentation. Our meeting ran well as we had an agenda prepared, we started on time, everyone knew the role that they would play. Our team has skipped the Storming stage and has moved on to Norming and Performing. We are assisting each other and providing constructive criticism. We discussed our differences of opinions and are confident in each others work. Group problems have not appeared as of yet, but we fill confident that we can over come them.

Wed, Jan 26:

We conducted our Class Ownership today and it went very well. Jerry started out with an ice breaker on communication, and then presented Selected Reading #3. Farzad provided his presentation on the first half of Chapter 6 Wisdom of Teams. Then Reed presented the second half of the chapter. Bailey finished up the presentation on Force Field Analysis and the Interrelationship Diagram (ID). Everyone engaged the class well and we finished up at 8:45.

Wed, Feb 2:

Dr. Dryden was not able to attend class, so our team met to discuss the papers. Reed was also not able to attend class due to a scheduling conflict. We reached a consensus and decided to break up the two papers as follows: Rafael and Farzad will work on the Research report, and Reed, Bailey, and Jerry will work on the Team Process report. Rafael and Farzad will conduct research this weekend and meet on Monday. Jerry shared previous Team Process reports with Bailey and Reed to assist them with their write up. They will meet next week during class to work on the paper.

Wed, Feb 9:

After Team 1 presented the Class Ownership, Bailey, Reed, and Jerry met for a few minutes to discuss the team process report. We will work on ideas for our meeting on Saturday morning.

Sat, Feb 12:

Bailey, Reed, and Jerry met at the Willow Creek building to work on the Team Process report. We worked on it for 1.5 hours and completed a brain storming session to determine how we would present the report. Bailey's idea won over with his bridge building activity and we all reached a consensus that this project would work well for our team. This would provide the class participants an opportunity to take part in a project that would involve everyone, and each team member would have a role to fulfill, such as architect, builder, accountant, etc. Our role would be to observe how the team worked together to build the project, and then provide a report on their team dynamics and how it relates to our team process. Reed will obtain a price on the materials and report back to us. He showed us some balsa wood bridges that he worked on in the past. In regards to the report writing, Reed will cover the topic of what it takes to have a great team, Bailey will work on common team problems, and Jerry will cover the ingredients of a successful team. Our meeting ran well as we had an agenda prepared, we started on time, everyone knew the role that they would play, and we took meeting minutes.



Wed, Feb 16:

We had a few minutes to meet during and after class to discuss our reports and presentations. Rafael and Farzad sent us their rough draft of their Research report today. We will all review it in the next few days and provide feedback. Reed informed us about the material cost of the balsa wood project, and since it would be costly to build the bridge, Jerry came up with the idea of the Chaos tower, which he has all of the components. They will work on it during their next meeting on Sunday morning. One of the techniques that we will utilize in building a prototype of the chaos tower is the Five Step Plan for Improving Work:

- Understand the process: we will read the instructions for the chaos tower and understand how to create it. We will provide requirements that must be completed by the team in order to have a finished product (i.e. budget, time frame, part requirements, etc)
- Eliminate errors: we will build the tower and eliminate any errors or problems by ensuring the requirements are completed.
- Simplify the process: we will find ways to keep the project simple and eliminate unnecessary parts to build the tower.
- Reduce variation: we will create a uniform tower that is easy to build and replicate to eliminate common and special causes.
- Plan for control and improvement: we will ensure the tower is built correctly and continue to seek ways to improve it by using less parts.

Sun, Feb 20:

All five team members met on Sunday morning for 1.5 hours at Jerry's office, as the Willow Creek building was closed. We worked on our Team Ownership Presentation, as we will present it on Feb 23. Everyone was on time except for Reed, who showed up about 30 minutes late. We went through each of our presentations and assisted each other with helpful feedback. Reed did not have his presentation ready but informed us he would send it to us on Tuesday. (It turns out he did not send it at all and did not respond to our emails or voice mail. We saw it for the first time during our class presentation.) Farzad did not realize that a two page report was due with the Select Reading, so he did not have that ready for Wednesday's class, so he turned it in the next day. Our meeting ran well as we had an agenda prepared, we started on time, everyone knew the role that they would play, and we took meeting minutes.

Wed, Feb 23:

We delivered our Class Ownership presentation today, and it went well. We met for a few minutes after class to discuss the presentation and to setup our meeting for this Saturday. Our team has formed into a successful team, as we have had clarity in our goals and roles, improvement in our work, good communication, balanced team participation, and awareness of group processes and rules. For the most part, our team only experienced one of the Ten Common Problems. We floundered during the first two weeks as we had a change in team members. Otherwise we had no overbearing, dominant, nor reluctant participants. We did not experience unquestioned acceptance of opinions as facts nor did we rush to accomplishment. We had no attribution, discounts, wanderlust nor feuding team members. It was a well run group with a clear purpose and understanding of the objectives.



Our team has been able to utilize our skills to complement each other. Rafael, Bailey, and Jerry have many years of work and team building experience to assist the team with the projects. Farzad and Reed contribute their class experience and team skills to provide balance to our team. We have been flexible with our meeting times and roles and have been responsive to our work assignments. We have enjoyed our meetings and have had fun with this class.

Sat, Feb 26:

Bailey, Reed, and Jerry met at the Willow Creek building on Sat. morning to finalize our Team Process Presentation, which is due on Wed. Reed was 30 minutes late, but Bailey and Jerry were able to finalize the presentation and develop a game plan. When Reed arrived we presented our ideas and asked for his feedback. The presentation will be as follows:

- Introduction and explanation of the Chaos tower
- Assign project roles to the class
- Provide requirements for the tower
- Bailey, Reed, and Jerry to observe how the class team works together
- After the project is complete, we will present our observations and report to the class

Wed, March 2:

We completed our Team Process Presentation, and we were very pleased with the results. The class team did a great job working together on the structure, and we were able to report on how they did based on the learning from class. We incorporated how our team dynamics were similar to what we witnessed from the class team. A picture of the team working on the project is included below.

