1. LEARNING OUTCOME

Students will become aware of the career-readiness competency Teamwork/Collaboration and connect this competency and the skills associated with it to the assignment topic.

2. OBJECTIVE

The following exercises are designed to help you identify your teamwork/collaboration skills and put them into practice. As you move through them, reflect on what you believe are your most significant strengths and weaknesses when it comes to teamwork/collaboration.

3. TEAMWORK/COLLABORATION DEFINED

In many instances, our jobs will involve working with others. Many work-based projects will involve collaboration. This is a product of both the “information age” as well as globalization, phenomena that lend themselves to complex challenges, requiring solutions that are multi-layered and carefully vetted.

Employers increasingly place emphasis on the ability to work collaboratively as this sort of work often results in more effective problem solving (Goltz, Hietapelto, Reinsch, & Tyrell, 2008).

Effective Teamwork Involves:

- A sense of trust among those in the organization
- Good communication skills
- The ability to see issues from multiple vantage points
- The ability to see, understand, and appreciate competing views
- Patience and flexibility

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

PLEASE READ/COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS:

1. Learning Outcome
2. Objective
3. Teamwork/Collaboration Defined
4. Exercise 1:
   I. Read About Models of Teamwork
   II. Organize a Committee to Find a Solution to a Problem
4. **EXERCISE ONE**

**I. Familiarize Yourself with the Following Models of Teamwork**

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**Cog’s Ladder Versus Tuckman’s Stages**

Cog’s “polite stage” mirrors Tuckman’s “forming” stage. In this stage, team members are simply getting to know one another; this is similar to a “meet and greet.” Individuals are generally polite during this stage, but will often engage in internal (mental) assessments of the personalities and strengths of their fellow team members.

The second stages of each model (“why we’re here” and “storming”) are also similar to one another. During this stage, group members will likely discuss the reasons why they find themselves in this group or team and begin to toss around some preliminary thoughts about how to proceed.

In Cog’s “bid for power” stage, group members compete for power and position. It is common for individuals to try and assert their ideas and their will upon others. Some individuals will attempt to take the lead, asserting the primacy of their ideas over others. They may also begin to assign roles, create a timeline, and assimilate into the role of group leader. Conflict is somewhat likely during this stage. Further, alliances may begin to form.

Tuckman’s “norming” stage involves the assignment of roles. It may also involve the creation of a calendar and specific guidelines for how each group member is to proceed. Norming, then, is essentially the creation of a specific blueprint for the group. Deadlines and responsibilities are established.

The final stages, as delineated by Cog and by Tuckman, are somewhat distinct. For Cog, the final stage is marked by happiness and excitement that the goals of the group were achieved. Often, there is a sense of renewed energy, friendship, and loyalty among group members. For Tuckman, there may also be a sense of relief that the task was accomplished. However, the final stage can be experienced as one of loss as group members mourn the end of the work and must say their goodbyes (Staggers, Garcia, & Nagelhout, 2008).
II. Organize a Committee to Find a Solution to a Problem

Scenario/Context:
You serve on the Parent-Teacher Association for your child’s school. In visiting the school recently, you notice that there is a significant amount of trash on the school grounds. You mention this to the president of the PTA and he confirms your suspicions – the appearance of the school and its grounds have come under criticism by the city council and by many of the residents in the community.

He asks if you would be willing to serve on (not lead) a committee which will consider this problem and devise 2-3 solutions. As a concerned parent and environmentalist, you enthusiastically agree.

He has already recruited 4 other members of the PTA to serve. Although you are casually acquainted with these individuals, you do not know them well. You would not consider them “friends.”

The PTA president mentioned that you could invite others to serve and/or to participate in the conversations.

Focus:
In small groups (perhaps groups of 5 to mirror the example), work through this exercise. For this activity you will work on both aspects of the task/committee building, assignment of roles & responsibilities, overall organization and strategy/solution building.

Steps:
1. As a group, draft a proposal addressing the first phase of this project:
   - Who do you involve and why?
   - How many individuals do you want working with you?
   - What is your time frame?
   - How will you divide the work?
   - What challenges do you anticipate?

2. Identify and discuss two possible strategies to the problem itself:
   - What are your 2 top strategies or solutions?
   - What are the strengths/obstacles/limitations of each proposed strategy?
   - How realistic are your proposals to implement?
   - Is there cost involved?
   - What resources are needed?

Challenges with Working Collaboratively
Cliqués are likely to develop during the “polite” and “forming” stages. As the formation of a clique implies the establishment of “insiders” and “outsiders,” cliques are not helpful to group- or team-based projects.

Conflicts are common during the “bid for power” and “storming” stages. Conflict management skills are necessary at these stages. It is not ideal to suppress conflict, but rather to deal with it openly and constructively. Tools for success include – good communication skills; the ability to give & receive feedback in ways which are supportive and non-threatening; an openness to competing points of view; and mutual respect for group members.

During the work stages (“constructive” and “performing”), some group members may attempt to tackle the work on their own. If so, they may begin to withdraw from the team. Group members must guard against the tendency to retreat into a private, individual mode of work that is characteristic of western culture.