Teamwork/Collaboration: Conference Organization

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:
   1. Read About Models of Teamwork
   2. Organize an Information-Sharing Conference
### 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 an Information Sharing Conference

Scenario/Context:

In small groups, you will organize an information-sharing conference for your employer. For purposes of this assignment, assume your boss has identified three individuals (you are one of them!) to work through this task together.

You can expect approximately 200 of your company’s senior managers to converge in Orlando for this conference. The conference will last two days and it will take place four months from now (see Staggers, Garcia, & Nagelhout, 2007).

There are three basic roles which are fundamental to the success of this effort:

1. Logistics manager for the conference site: Select the event venue, arrange for necessary furniture and equipment, and schedule conference dates/times.

2. Liaison for dignitaries/guest speakers: Make hotel and travel arrangements for the 20 senior managers who will be speaking at the conference, prepare the master schedule for speaking times, and communicate the conference agenda to the speakers.

3. Liaison for conference attendees: Inform attendees of the purpose and agenda for the conference prior to arrival, ensure hotel arrangements are adequate, convey important information about the conference, and organize a welcoming event.

Focus:

In groups of three work through the assigning of roles and divvying up of tasks.

Steps:

- How will the three of you divide the responsibilities?
- Which of these sets of tasks (above) is easiest? Which is the most challenging? How will you, as a group, decide on the division of labor?
- Will you create a calendar? If so, how will you organize the tasks?
- Will you need to elect one person to serve as the chair, or leader, of this group? If so, what factors need to be taken into consideration?
- How will you communicate with one another throughout the process? What if one of you prefers face-to-face meetings, one of you prefers phone/Skype, and the other prefers text messaging or email?

Challenges with Working Collaboratively

Cliques 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.