Teamwork

Activities Workbook


Lesson 1: Building and Maintaining a Strong Team Environment

How About You?

To determine how clear your team’s purpose is presently, answer each of the following questions by circling the appropriate number on the rating scale. At your next team meeting, present the same questions to your team members and ask them to answer them privately. When everyone is done, team members should then share and discuss their answers.

1. Do you understand what your team is expected to do?  
   Not at all Somewhat A great deal
   1 3 5

2. Do the activities of your team seem focused and purposeful?  
   Not at all Somewhat A great deal
   1 3 5

3. Does your team have and use clear goals?  
   Not at all Somewhat A great deal
   1 3 5

4. Are team members motivated to excel?  
   Not at all Somewhat A great deal
   1 3 5

5. Do others in your organization understand what your team does?  
   Not at all Somewhat A great deal
   1 3 5
In addition to personal observations, trends can be identified from many sources. One good authority that gauges trends is *Travel Weekly* magazine, which conducts annual surveys. Other entities that research and analyze travel trends are American Express, Amadeus, and U.S. Travel Association.

Trends and their potential impact on our mission include:

2. **Individually write and clarify mission statements.**

   Once everyone reads and establishes a common understanding of their trend(s) and the ways they could affect the mission, the mission statement is ready to be developed or reassessed. It is essential that each team member voices his or her beliefs. By doing so, one team member may be able to build off another’s ideas. This part of the meeting produces a common understanding of the mission statement that each member wrote.

   As each team member states his or her perceived mission to the group, be certain that everyone has the opportunity to inquire about each person’s point of view. Probing should be greatly encouraged. Politely discourage disagreement with an individual’s perceptions. There will be plenty of time for that later.

   My perception of our mission is:
3. **Elicit views from others.**

While a common understanding of each individual mission vision is being discussed and achieved, each team member should note any important points that were not included in his or her perception of the mission.

Vision from others: Jot down ideas you think are worthwhile from what you hear.

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4. **Revise your mission statement.**

After listening to each team member’s beliefs, each person can now list what changes, if any, need to be made to his or her initial mission.

Modifications: What changes, if any, would you like to make to your initial mission?

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5. Develop a rough draft of the mission.
After any modifications to individual missions are made, small groups of six or fewer (with a minimum of three to a group) are formed to write a group mission. If there are six or fewer people writing the mission, this step could be omitted.

Write a group mission:

6. Finalize the mission.
After the group missions are completed, everyone is brought back to develop the final mission. The facilitator, while encouraging open discussion, combines the group missions on the flipchart or screen. Once the composite mission is written, a consensus must be reached to accept the completed mission statement.

Keep in mind that reaching consensus is not the same as saying the most votes win. Consensus is when, short of full agreement, there is sufficient discussion by everyone so that all support the final decision.

When the mission is written, everyone can be given or emailed a copy to review and think about for a few days. Letting the mission incubate will build more commitment to achieve it because everyone has a say in putting it together.

Write the mission, combining the multiple missions into one completed mission.
7. Identify potential barriers to the mission.

Once written, discuss what problems can occur or escalate to jeopardize success of the mission. Doing so can greatly assist your team not only to put out fires but also prevent them from starting. Barriers to the mission include:

- Placing it at the top of any meeting agenda. Seeing the mission can aid team members in staying focused and help in reducing negative conflict.
- Encouraging team members to make it the background or wallpaper of their computers.
- Including it as part of your signature or emails.
- Making it a part of your performance evaluation system. Place it on the front cover of the evaluation form so everyone, especially new team members, realize that the important work they do ties in directly to their team’s mission.
- Printing it on top of your fax transmittal sheet.

8. Communicate the mission.

The last part of the planning session involves looking at ways in which the mission can be communicated effectively so it becomes visible and active. Some approaches to communicating the mission include:

- Placing it at the top of any meeting agenda. Seeing the mission can aid team members in staying focused and help in reducing negative conflict.
- Encouraging team members to make it the background or wallpaper of their computers.
- Including it as part of your signature or emails.
- Making it a part of your performance evaluation system. Place it on the front cover of the evaluation form so everyone, especially new team members, realize that the important work they do ties in directly to their team’s mission.
- Printing it on top of your fax transmittal sheet.
Communicate the mission. How can the mission be communicated and kept alive? Write your ideas in the space provided.

Any departmental or project team mission always should be linked to the organization’s overall mission. When departmental missions are developed, every department should receive copies of other departments’ missions. Knowing every departmental mission can aid in breaking down some of invisible barriers that often exist between departments. It also can provide additional support in helping each department to achieve its mission.

With ever-increasing work loads and, at times, a shortage of qualified travel professionals, certain responsibilities, and authority to carry out the mission can become ambiguous. Use the following exercise to clarify your expectations.

**At Work**

Write a specific area of responsibility relating to your mission that you are confused about. Then describe what authority, if any, you have to execute that responsibility. Once done, meet with your director, manager, or supervisor and together establish a common understanding of what actual authority you have to accomplish that responsibility.

My responsibility is:
My perceived authority to accomplish my responsibility is:


Our common understanding is:


Many travel counselors are concerned about key issues such as: reduced commissions, suppliers selling directly to consumers, consumers bypassing travel counselors by researching and booking their own travel, rapid changes in technology, and the professional image of travel counselors.

Weaving a well-thought-out mission into the daily activities of your travel business will result in more travel professionals working together as one team toward a greater future.
Lesson 2: Ensuring Team Compatibility

Time Out

My definition of a team is:
Lesson 3: Understanding Team Roles

Time Out
Some companies give out awards for the “Best Mistake of The Year.” Can you think of and write one or more reasons why any organization would do that?
**Unit 4: Preventing and Solving Problems as a Team**

**Time Out**

Visualize a major problem you had lately. Try to dissect what may have caused the problem and determine what, if anything, you should have done differently. If you had sensed the problem earlier, could the problem have been prevented? If not, could the severity of the problem at least have been reduced?

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**At Work**

What problems can you sense during the following team meeting?

Helen Duane is president of Fun Travel, an agency with $6 million-plus in annual sales, with a mix of about 70 percent corporate and 30 percent leisure. She is sitting down with her team of nine experienced and inexperienced travel agents to go over the meeting agenda and to discuss a new incentive plan. Team members have been waiting to hear about the plan that will affect everyone.
As they discuss the details of the full-commission plan, Maureen, who sells leisure travel, basically sees it as a way to increase her income and is pleased with it. George, one of the newer agents, inquires if their agency’s independent contractors will be a part of it. Helen responds that they would, believing the plan would motivate everyone to excel. Helen then mentions a few more details of the plan and moves to the next item on the agenda.

List what problems Helen and other team members should have sensed as potential problems.

Some clues that might help uncover potential problems include the following:

1. Helen appears to have done little or nothing to develop the new incentive plan with her team members because they have been waiting to find out how the plan would be administered. Not including them in formulating the plan and limiting discussion of it could reflect a need to work on developing the team. When George asked the question about the independent contractors, Helen did not try to probe George or others in order to understand their perceptions regarding the independent contractors.

2. A potential problem soon will become real when one agent has to deal with the customer of a second agent or an outside contractor. Spending the time tending to another agent’s customer could reduce the first agent’s income and increase the time needed to solicit new business.

3. If the agency’s mission deals with providing exceptional customer service and working as a team, this incentive system actually could send a confusing message as to what Fun Travel is all about. The system needs to be communicated well and administered fairly.

4. If everyone at Fun Travel is on the same team, the program could negatively impact accounting or other support people. Can the support staff be involved and rewarded in some way for the agency’s growth?

5. Maureen, and possibly some of the other agents selling only leisure travel, may feel
the potential to earn more income is limited if they are unable to sell both business and leisure. If Maureen can’t increase her earnings and decides to work for a competitor for more income, Helen may find that the money that was invested in hiring and training her was wasted.

If problems such as these are not sensed and dealt with before they grow, they may become very costly to solve later. In some cases, if Maureen quits, it could be too late to resolve the problem.

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**Time Out**

Based on the three requirements, decide if the following are valid goals.

**Goal one:** James Crawford will conduct acceptable sales skills training for all new retail travel agents in his agency in the first six month of this year.

**Goal two:** Susan Wong will add two outside sales reps to her agency by the end of the calendar year.

Which, if either, of the above-listed goals is stated correctly? Why?

Both goals have identified who is responsible and when the goals will be reached.

Only goal two states a third criteria, the result that is expected (add two outside sales reps). Because goal one does not state what is meant by “acceptable” sales skills training, it is not a valid goal. Every goal must be measurable.
Lesson 5: Managing Team Conflict

At Work

Conflict primarily is a set of divergent aims, methods, and behaviors. To better understand how it can be negative and positive, complete the following exercise. Think of a conflict where you and your team members or others were involved, either at your present or previous organization. Answer the following questions.

What was the actual conflict about?

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Why did the conflict occur?

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Who were the key people involved with the conflict?

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Where did the conflict occur? Did the location influence the conflict?


When did the conflict first get identified?


How did the conflict affect the people involved and the organization?


List a few of the positive and negative results from the conflict.

Positive results:


Negative results:
Application Activities

Building and sustaining a collaborative environment requires commitment, learning, practice, and reinforcement. Ensuring your team’s success is not only the responsibility of the team leader. Everyone must share in managing the performance of their team.

Whether your role is that of a team leader or member, completing the following activity will assist you and your team to work synergistically.

Defining and Discussing Your Mission

Purpose

There are two main purposes of this exercise. The first is to have your team critically examine its mission and then to evaluate how you work together to achieve it.

Because a key component to any team’s success is achieving its mission, it becomes critical that your team clearly understands why it exists and how it is functioning as a team.

Another reason for the exercise is to provide an opportunity for a meeting leader to develop his or her facilitation skills.

Directions

1. Plan a meeting that includes all your team members to discuss your team’s mission. If necessary, get management’s support and approval to conduct the meeting.
   Develop an agenda and distribute it to all participants a few days before the meeting.
   Decide where and when the meeting will be held and approximately how long it will last.

   Select a facilitator to guide the meeting. He or she would plan materials needed for the session, such as a flipchart, markers, laptop, projector, printed handouts, pens, paper, and tape. The facilitator would keep the meeting on track, elicit open and honest feedback, moderate the discussions, write salient points on the flipchart or screen, keep track of the time and be certain that key points are distributed to every team member.

   Invite a trusted observer who will not participate in the meeting. The observer, who sits separately from the rest of the group, will take notes that reflect what is being discussed and how team members are interacting. At the end of the meeting or at some other appropriate time, the observer provides feedback regarding those
observations. Specific evaluation questions can be designed by the observer or provided to the observer by the facilitator and/or team in order to determine what needs to be evaluated.

2. Conduct the meeting, staying close to the agenda. Be sure that the final mission is read and thoroughly discussed. Key questions to ask follow, but you may want to think of others relevant to your team. Consider printing and emailing the questions with the agenda. This way members can start to think of their responses. You probably will have to schedule more than one meeting to discuss all of the questions in depth.

   • Do we have a clearly defined team purpose?
   • Do we have clearly defined goals to determine if we are achieving our mission?
     Are they prioritized?
   • Do we have clearly defined operating guidelines?
   • Do we know what team members need to learn in order to be successful on our team?
   • Do we know how we are functioning as a team?
   • Do we have ways to recognize individual and team contributions?
   • Do we know what is expected from us by management?
   • Do we have the right people on our team to accomplish our mission?
   • Do we know which people not on our team will be crucial for our success?

3. The facilitator should summarize, in writing, the team’s reactions. Summaries should be provided to all team members. If certain questions cannot be answered, elicit help from someone outside your team who can provide answers.

4. Before your meeting starts, decide whether your observer will provide feedback before other team members comment or after everyone else has commented. Once it is time for feedback, have the observer sit with your group. Key points the observer should follow include

   • reporting what is actually seen and heard; your observer should not report on what was read into statements,
   • following some type of order while being descriptive (for example, did any patterns develop?), and
   • giving any individual or team criticisms constructively.
5. Discuss the conclusions of the observer and those of every team member. Do they differ in any way? If so, why? Record the salient points covered.

6. Develop, with all team members, a list of all key issues discussed at the meeting. Using the nominal voting technique or some other system, prioritize the top three to five items that need to be addressed.

7. Have your team set appropriate goals and strategies that will address the prioritized issues.

8. Recognize your team’s progress and accomplishments, informing those who have a need to know of your team’s development.