Effective Teamwork:

Strategies for Working Together

Presented By

Dan Fallon LPC, CEAP

1-800-275-3327

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Objectives

- Learn what factors make up an effective team

- Understand the barriers to constructive teamwork

- Discover ways that you can contribute to making your team better

- Learn skills for productive communication and conflict resolution

- Learn the benefits of the Employee Assistance Program

Your role at work

How do you fit into the team?

- *Required:* The job we were hired to do wherein the tasks are spelled out in your job description. These tasks make up the bulk of your work, and they're usually the things that are measured for evaluations.

- *Expected:* Other duties or required expectations that go beyond our job descriptions. They may not be spelled out explicitly, but they're your part of doing what is necessary to get the work done, like helping out with projects in your free time, or representing your team on a committee, or contributing to a work event.

- *Assumed:* Tasks or "appropriate behaviors" that aren't spelled out anywhere and usually aren't talked about. These deal more with the "how" of work, like how you interact with coworkers and the quality of your work.

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Barriers to effective teamwork

▪ *Experience or bias:* Our past experiences and our impressions of our coworkers can sometimes make working with them difficult. For example, if a coworker let you down in the past, you may have difficulty trusting them in future projects.

▪ *Bad communication:* Spending more time thinking about what we want than listening to what others are trying to communicate, or being over-aggressive or passive in communication

▪ *Offering premature solutions:* We immediately suggest solutions to solve the problem before fully understanding and giving validation

▪ *Quick judgements:* Making assumptions, jumping to conclusions, being critical and diagnosing before getting enough information are all counterproductive approaches to working together.

▪ *Stress:* When we are under stress, we do not see things the same way as we do when we are calm. What we see and believe at a particular moment is based on our state of mind.

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Shaping the environment

▪ *Pay attention to all verbal and nonverbal cues:* Remember that our body language may be inconsistent with our words and typically makes more of an impression on listeners.

▪ *Say what you mean, respectfully:* Avoiding the idea that's on your mind, skirting around the issue at hand, or speaking passively can all send unclear messages. It's usually better to be direct, but this doesn't mean we have to be brutally honest.

▪ *State the facts and work together to solve problems:* Trying to control others is a sure way to lead to problems. You don't need to keep problems to yourself. Let your teammates support you.

▪ *Don't assume you know what they are thinking:* What they meant by a statement, what their motive is, etc. When in doubt, don't assume the worst, give people the benefit of the doubt. Check out your perceptions with the other person. Be sure to clarify what you assume someone said, especially with email, where it can be easy to misunderstand and jump to conclusions about someone.

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Shaping the environment *(Continued)*

- *Share information and sources freely:* Sharing information freely and letting people know where the information is coming from facilitates trust, respect and spontaneity and makes others feel like a valuable part of the team.

- *Validate others' emotions:* Even if someone's expressions seem overly hostile to us, letting them know we can identify with their problems, understand their feelings, and accept their emotional reactions, go a long way toward creating a supportive environment

- *Keep any sense of superiority in check:* Conveying a sense of superiority will only fire up others' defenses. This will color their interpretations of anything and everything you say from that point forward and can strain coworker relationships. Remember that you don't have all the answers.

- *Acknowledge when you are wrong:* It's better to own your mistakes than to try to justify yourself and insist you're right. We are all human, so mistakes are inevitable and part of the learning process. Admitting when we are wrong is not showing weakness, and it can create opportunities to grow, improve our skills, or expand our abilities.

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Considerations for dealing with conflict

- *What is the struggle?* It's important to recognize what is causing the conflict. What do you want, and what does your teammate want, and why are those wants incompatible?

- *Perceived or actual disagreement?* Your goals, values or agendas may only *seem* incompatible for there to be conflict. There may be perceptions or misunderstandings that lead to a communication breakdown or conflict. As you try to understand each other's ideas and goals, you may realize that there only *seemed* to be a disagreement.

- *Aiming for cooperation?* You don't usually have conflict unless people need to work together in order to accomplish something – otherwise they could each do their own thing and ignore the other. It's not unusual, then, to have conflict in a team. Remember, though, that your goal is to find a way to work together, not to prove yourself right or someone else wrong.

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Considerations for dealing with conflict

- *Professional or personal conflict?* In general, you can have two types of conflict in a team: *operational* and *interpersonal*.

  - ✓ *Operational Conflict-* Deals with professional or business issues, which could include debates about marketing strategies, discussions on the best way to resolve customer service problems, or how to deal with a flaw in a product.

  - ✓ *Interpersonal Conflict-* Results from individual differences such as personality, values, lifestyle, etc. Operational conflict can be healthy for a team, but interpersonal conflict is usually unhealthy. Sometimes these two areas can become blurred, like by taking work meetings personally, which can cause more complicated problems for the team.

- *What are your common goals?* Finding common ground is important to resolving conflict and moving forward together as a team. Thinking about the goals you want to accomplish as a team can help you identify mutually beneficial solutions.

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Benefits of conflict

- *Increases awareness that problems exist:* When you have conflict, it brings problems to the surface to be resolved.

- *Fosters sensitivity to needs and values of others:* Dealing with conflict can teach us how to better understand and treat our coworkers.

- *Encourages creativity and collaboration:* In an environment of productive conflict and constructive criticism, workers can feel more comfortable offering new ideas and building on the ideas of others. Two coworkers may disagree about the direction of a project, but through that conflict they can come up with creative solutions.

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Benefits of conflict *(Continued)*

- *Motivates people and improves morale:* Following the previous idea, having productive conflict improves morale as coworkers play more active roles in the team. Conflict that opens discussion of new ideas gives employees a sense of ownership in the developments that spring from it.

- *Helps team members understand each other's strengths, weaknesses and work styles:* As we run into conflict, we can learn more about our coworkers. Disagreement over responses to a customer, for instance, can show how one person's strength is with personal service and another's strength is with logistics and reporting.

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Qualities of an effective team

- *Purpose:* In effective teams, their purpose or mission is always clear—workers know what is expected of them. They know what the team is trying to do, and how their role will help everyone get there.

- *Support:* Coworkers on effective teams show each other support, encouragement, and appreciation. They treat each others' mistakes as learning experiences, rather than assessing blame. They also want their leader to succeed, and work to help him or her do so.

- *Feedback:* The freedom to disagree and give negative feedback is an important part of effective teamwork. Coworkers feel free to express their observations of the group process, especially when it gets off track. They encourage each other to express differences of opinion.

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Qualities of an effective team *(Continued)*

- *Communication:* The members of effective teams listen to each other at least as much as they advocate for their own point of view. They avoid expressing a lot of sarcasm or cynicism. Even if team members don't agree, they communicate openly to better understand each other.

- *Participation:* Everyone in an effective team participates actively. No one is neglected by the group, and everyone feels involved. Team members all contribute talents and perspectives, and those talents and perspectives are valued.

- *Focus:* Effective teams focus on the task at hand, and quickly come back to it after occasional diversions. Everyone on the team has a drive to succeed and produce quality work, so they approach assignments with focus and diligence.

- *Trust:* It takes trust for a team to operate effectively. Teammates trust each other not to have hidden agendas. They also trust that their coworkers will do their best to help them all succeed.

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Working for a better team

- *Respect:* Respect is simple courtesy, plus a lot more. It is taking time to say "Hello," or "How was your weekend?" It is accepting people, allowing for differences of perception and opinion. It is taking into consideration the needs and feelings of others. Other ways of demonstrating respect are being on-time—to work, to meetings and with project deadlines. Avoiding participation in gossip. Giving full attention when meeting with a co-worker, listening carefully, not interrupting. 80% of communication is non-verbal, so your gestures, facial expressions and your tone of voice say more than your words.

- *Recognize:* Everyone in an effective team participates actively. No one is neglected by the group, and everyone feels involved. Team members all contribute talents and perspectives, and those talents and perspectives are valued. Publicly recognize peoples' accomplishments. Be confident and secure enough to share the credit by acknowledging all those who have contributed. It doesn't cost anything to recognize a co-worker for their accomplishments, and people never get too much of it. This can be done verbally or in writing, but a quality **thank you** details specifically what the person did and how it was helpful to you, the customer or the organization.

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Working for a better team *(Continued)*

- *Support success:* Help co-workers succeed. How can we create opportunities for co-workers to succeed? We can give them more autonomy and responsibility when it is appropriate. Ask for their opinions. Involve them in decision-making whenever possible. Value their input.   You can also offer your strengths to a coworker's project to help them produce the best product they can. If you have an idea, a tip or a solution that would help a team project, share it!

- *Encourage talent:* Each of us is unique and brings to the workplace our own individual wisdom, skills, experiences and talents. When you see those skills or talents in your coworkers, encourage them. When you are working on something, invite one of your coworkers to offer their expertise. It could be as easy as asking someone to proofread a document or getting someone's perspective on an email to a customer. It gives everyone an opportunity to be and do their best.

- *Offer help:* Pitch in and help when you can. If a co-worker is overloaded and you have a free minute, lend a hand. Or if you need help, ask for it. As a team, everyone should be able to help each other when they need it. A related issue is doing a job well and thoroughly so someone else doesn't have to come along later and fix it. People may forget how fast you did a job, but they remember how well you did it.

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Working for a better team *(Continued)*

- *Cooperate:* Cooperation is necessary for a team to function well, as a team needs to work together to accomplish shared goals. Cooperation requires flexibility, a willingness to go along with someone else's idea even though we may be more comfortable with our own. Think about ways that you can be flexible and put the team's goals above your own.

- *Give the benefit of the doubt:* Peoples' motives are usually positive or at least neutral. When someone does something that feels like an affront to you personally, be careful not to assume the worst. Give them the benefit of the doubt and think of possible positive alternatives. Either ask the individual for clarification, or just drop it.

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Rewards of effective teamwork

- *Understanding:* In an environment where workers are free to express their opinions, ideas, concerns and problems, there is a better understanding of each other, more creative problem-solving and more of a win-win approach to conflict resolution.

- *Leadership:* Leadership is not a job or a role; it is an approach to life. We can lead by our attitudes, by our words, and by our example. In a work culture where each teammate is encouraged to contribute their best, anyone can become a leader.

- *Self-esteem:* By helping one another to succeed, every person experiences their value in the work setting, and this builds confidence and self-esteem.

- *Job satisfaction:* When we feel that our contribution to the workplace is recognized, valued and makes a difference, we gain greater satisfaction from our work.

- *Quality and productivity:* When a team works well together, each person giving the best of their talents, skills, and cooperation, to both their work and their co-workers, think of the impact on the quality and quantity of the work that gets done.

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Your Employee Assistance Program

The EAP is a benefit that is paid for by the Capitol Region Council of Governments to help employees and their dependents find resources to solve personal problems, which if not resolved, could adversely affect the employee's job performance.

- Emotional difficulties
- Coping with stress
- Depression and anxiety
- Major life events
- Relationship issues
- Dependent care

- Alcohol and drugs
- Parenting challenges
- Effective communication
- Change and transition
- Legal and financial concerns
- Grief and loss

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Benefits of the EAP

- Employer sponsored benefit

- Available to employees and their household members

- Assessment, counseling and referrals

- Up to three (3) in person sessions per problem

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Benefits of the EAP

- Convenient appointments with local licensed clinicians

- Crisis intervention and support

- Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

- Confidential within the limits of the law

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Work-Life Services

Our Work-Life Services are designed to provide personalized resources and referrals for dependent care challenges, legal and financial concerns, and educational needs. Online services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

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Work-Life Services

Dependent Care

- **Online child care resources and referrals** *(Including, but not limited to prenatal, adoption, special needs, colleges, etc.)*

- **Online elder care resources and referrals** *(Including, but not limited to end of life issues, caregiver support, long term care options, etc.)*

Legal and Financial

- **Telephonic legal consultations, online resources and referrals** *(30 minutes of free telephonic consultation and up to 25% discount on hourly rate, when retaining a network attorney).* ***This service is not available for consultations about employment law.***

- **Telephonic financial consultations, online resources and referrals** *(30 minutes of free telephonic consultation and up to 25% discount on hourly rate, when retaining a network financial specialist)*

Online Educational Resources

- **Articles, videos and interactive training courses**

- **Health assessments, videos, quizzes and tools**

- **Legal forms and financial calculators**

- **Personalized life coaching resources**

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Work-Life Services

To Access Work-Life Services

- Go to: https://www.worklifeservices.net/clients/wheelereap/welcome.jsp
- To begin, register as a "new user" using your company code: **WH-CRCOG**

To Access Legal and Financial Services

- Go to: https://www.wheelerclinic.org/services/wheeler-eap/work-life-services
- Click on: ***Access Legal and Financial Resources Here***
- To begin, register with user name: **weap** and password: **Wheeler1**
- For legal and financial telephonic consultation call: **1-888-254-8104**

To View a Brief Introduction to Work-Life Services

- Go to: http://employeecare.net/demo.html

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Questions

Thank You

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