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Effective Communication and Team Work

Communication affects teamwork in positive and negative ways. The quantity *and* quality of communication within a team and from leadership affects teamwork.

The more collaboration your projects require the more assertive and intentional your communication should be. Every member of the team needs to take the initiative to communicate. When a team is not actively communicating, their work is at stake. It's important for everyone to learn how to communicate effectively to improve teamwork.

(1) Listen



A good speaker is a good listener. Learning how to communicate more effectively also means taking more notice. It's important to begin and end any form of communication with listening. This

doesn't mean you should ask an endless string of questions, but be sure that you're taking the time to truly understand what other people are saying and what they mean.

Good listening skills will help you engage in communication regarding what the other person is speaking about. Avoid the impulse to listen only for the end of their sentence so that you can blurt out your thoughts and ideas. Don't interrupt or talk over other people because this can make them feel insignificant, unheard and could lead to other misunderstandings.

Also, don't be afraid to ask for feedback from others to make sure that you were understood.

(2) Say What You Mean



Is your intention to place blame? Or, get to the bottom of an issue? Chances are, you want information about what is working and what isn't working. However, you may be using language that feels critical and seems like a verbal attack. This will hurt relationships within your team and leave you completely uninformed.

Work situations can get emotional, which can influence your clarity. Stay on topic, use the correct words and enunciate. If you're not sure of the meaning of a word, don't use it. When you use the wrong words, you will not be understood and people will doubt your competency the more it happens.

Avoid mixed messages. If you need more time to complete a thought before communicating about your ideas, take it. Schedule a time for your conversation later in the day or week. Make eye contact – which conveys truth and honor – and use *intentional* gestures. You can send the wrong message through body language or tone, which defeats the purpose of your attempt to communicate. This is especially important when discussing anything emotional.

(3) Practice

There are some additional tactics that you can practice within conversations or on your own:

- Slow down – don't speak just to respond too quickly.
- Speak clearly and don't mumble.
- Use appropriate volume.
- Write things down.
- Close the loop – is the conversation finished?

Good teamwork starts with a shared understanding of its importance. Communication bridges teams together and needs to be practiced to ensure a team is working smoothly and efficiently. Programs like Virtual TeamBonding, Applied Improv, and Inspirational Speakers will help you practice both team and individual communication.