

Working Effectively in Interdisciplinary Teams Part Two

Karen, let me ask you a quick question, okay? Suppose we have a team that has some established norms of behavior but they've never really established ground rules. What would you recommend they do?

I'd really recommend you write down your ground rules. I work on a team right now where we have norms of behavior. It works okay but I think there are times when it would be helpful to have the ground rules written down so that maybe there's some member of the team who doesn't feel comfortable without having written ground rules and it would make them feel more empowered and in control of the situation.

Great, thanks a lot, Karen.

Can I add something to that previous question? Without good facilitation, I think that those situations can happen all the time, and so I encourage you to choose facilitators that are able to handle the group at hand and you may need to change them or get more skills and training for them.

Thank you both very much, and thank you for the call-ins this morning. I would like to say that John Snyder in Medford has won a book this morning for being our first responder to our first question. This is a good book, I understand. I haven't read it myself but it's called "the team building tool kit," and congratulations, John. So now we'd like to go back to the Soaring Eagles again and see what they have to say about

ground rules.

One thing we do is on our minutes on the back of them we have just kept our ground rules so every time at our meeting on the other side our minutes is a copy of our ground rules, and I think we're all pretty aware of them, and some of the -- one ground rule that I think is pretty good is no disruptions and no side conversations. Try to keep it to a minimum, anyways. That really helps, when you don't have those kind of disruptions, helps the meetings flow better, people don't get frustrated, people don't get distracted and lose their train of thoughts, and will we'll point it out to people, hey, you're interrupting, hey, you guys are having a side conversation, can we keep to that a minimum?

Thanks again, Soaring Eagles for those insights. It's really great to see you all again. Let's talk about the techniques to develop ground rules. Our key process is brainstorming. The definition of brainstorming is it's an intentionally uninhibited group technique for generating a lot of ideas. We're looking for quantity here, not quality. We're actually encouraging wild ideas. The reason for wild ideas is sometimes those wild ideas bring up or surface an idea that wouldn't have come up if the wild idea wasn't mentioned. There are no criticisms, nor judgments allowed in the brainstorming process. Judgments can also be positive statements such as, "that's a great idea." Saying that can discount other ideas or people. All ideas are recorded during the brainstorming process. It's important to avoid wordsmithing. Record actually what the person says. You save time by doing this because you're only going to be wordsmithing what you agree to.

Using a facilitator can really help this process as Jude talked about just a moment ago. Let's go ahead and talk about our fourth criteria. Our fourth criteria is to establish a communication process. This involves methods, schedules and procedures for your communication process. Some of these can be actually established in your ground rule. But let's review just those that are related to communication. Remember to set schedules for meetings. Always establish an agenda. Consider once again using a facilitator, especially for the examples we just heard about how you keep the group from going outside of their mission, vision and ground rules. Listen actively and avoid interruptions. Share information within your team and with other teams that are important to what you're doing. Joe, let's go to you.

Thanks a lot, Linda. Now we're going to hear from Howard Parman in Roswell who have given an example of the importance every sharing information in the team. Howard, you're up. Hello, Howard, are you connected with us by phone this morning?

Our technology failed thus morning, so we're doing the back-up with the telephone.

Okay great. Good morning. How are you doing Howard?

We're talking about communication?

How do you share information within the team?

We do all the things we've talked about so far. We set the agenda. We have, if not a formalized set of ground rules and behaviors, there are some standards we all try to

live up to. The thing that really helped our team come together as we were practicing this several years ago is we discovered our outdoor recreation planner had -- what came to be termed a super secret cave map and we had to impress upon this individual if you really want to do your job right by the resources, you would have to share the information with us and then we could all work together to protect the resources that we're supposed to manage or allocate the correct amount of use. Once we got past that, we really seemed to come together better as a team.

Okay. Thanks a lot, Howard. Can you tell me a little bit about how you share information among other teams in your office?

We make probably too much use sometimes of e-mail. We try to share it around with each other. We have a coordination meeting once a week where we start bringing in various projects and programs that we have within the office, and we talk about opportunities, problems, things that we have to get done, this whole melding of the different skills we bring to the table so that we got a pretty good idea what's going on out there.

Fantastic. Thanks a lot, Howard, for those great insights this morning. I must admit that e-mail has been a great technology, hasn't it, for sharing information, almost too much information at times coming our way. Another thing we would like to do right now is go back to the Soaring Eagles and we're going to check in with them because Linda touched on the use of facilitators. So let's see how the Soaring Eagles handle facilitation.

Using a facilitator has really helped our team meetings. We've really seen some progress in our meetings in the last 6 months to a year we've been using the facilitator. We've been able to stay on track throughout our meetings and make sure that everything gets covered, make sure everybody has a voice throughout the meeting, and I think the facilitators have been doing a good job with that in making sure everybody gets heard. A lot of times there's people that are overbearing or some people that don't talk as much, and with the facilitated meeting, everybody has a chance to say what they want. What we do is we rotate the facilitation duties every six months. So-so far we've had three team members who have been doing the facilitation, and that works real well because you have -- everybody gets a chance to do this and brings their different styles to the group.

Robin, those were some great insights this morning. I know up in Roseburg we have a team of trained facilitators on district and we often call upon them for different meetings we hold. We probably have 20 trained facilitators on district and that's a great thing to have on your district. Right now we would like to move onto the fifth criteria of team effectiveness. Linda, back to you.

Thanks, Joe. Our fifth criteria is establishing guidelines for team decision making. Teams need to agree on and use a decision-making or planning process. Developing specific actions to achieve the goals, monitor ring the processes and evaluating results. Let's define consensus. There's a lot of confusion over what consensus actually means, however, not within this group. By the way, I'd like to compliment all of you, your pre-assessment scores show that you have a good grasp on what consensus actually is. 95% of you got this question correct. Congratulations! Yea. We

really appreciate all of you that completed the pre-assessment. Let's go back to consensus. Broken down, the word consensus means, "with a sense of verbal action or agreements." Karen, can you add to that?

Thanks, Linda. Consensus is not a unanimous vote or a majority vote and it doesn't require that everyone be totally satisfied although if your team can achieve that, that's a great thing. What consensus is, is a proposal acceptable enough that all members can support it and move forward in the project. Jude?

And consensus requires that enough time is used to address the issues, active participation by all, quality communication skills and also creative thinking and open-mindedness. Abbie?

Thanks, Jude. Successful teams know time required in the beginning saves time in the long run. Because the commitment is made and there is little time spent rebuilding commitment and dealing with unproductive behaviors. Joe?

Thanks, everyone, for that great team effort this morning. Now let's go back to those Soaring Eagles in Grants Pass Resource Area and see how they view consensus.

One thing that's important to our team is reaching consensus on a decision, and I think you need to have shared consensus on a team even if it means you're kind of changing the decision a little bit, any way you can do it so everybody is pleased with the result. The way our team has learned to do it is that when a decision comes around for a decision to be made, we kind of do this thumbs up, thumbs down, you know,

halfway like this, and if everybody goes like this, well, that's great. It's easy. If somebody goes like this or like this, we say, "You know, what would it take for that team member, we ask them, what would it take for you to get from here to here?"

That leads into a discussion about, well, I don't like this and this part of the decision or this part of the project, and then we just have a real open discussion about how things can possibly change, be modified a little bit, not drastically, and I think our team environment is very open and comfortable for people to express their feelings and we talk about it and maybe that person won't budge, and then, you know, you have to kind of figure out what you want to do from there, but generally we are able to get people from here to come up to here.

Everyone is involved and everyone may not completely agree with the resolution, but at least they know the process that we went through to get to it, and no one is left out of the decision making process.

Everyone doesn't always agree, but we eventually come to some kind of a decision before we leave a room. We like to get consensus, but with everybody at least being able to live with it or we don't leave the subject. One time recently we had a decision that one of the folks didn't like, but to move on and progress they could live with it by showing us the thump they can live with it. I have my own opinions on things and I'm not afraid to argue a point, although, I also know when to concede that I can live with a project so we can proceed. Because in my opinion, doing something as a compromise is better than doing nothing, which is what was happening where I came from.

What is the role of consensus? Last time I sat with the team, they went through trying to arrive at consensus and I'm not sure they ever quite got there. Every once in a while they would call one another on it because they would think they had agreement but a couple of people were observing that they really didn't have that agreement and that they were kind of moving forward without real agreement, and that's pretty subtle, but the team seemed to pick up on it and keep going back and keep going back until they really had some kind of consensus.

Okay, Soaring Eagles. I can tell you're clearly an empowered team that has a great decision making process in place.