

## Working Effectively in Interdisciplinary Teams Team Pitfalls

Let's move right along now into our next segment, the pitfall of teams. Linda's back.

Thanks, Joe. We got a lot of feedback originally before the design of this course that dealt with issues of the pitfalls on teams, and we're going to spend a little time on that because it was very important to you. One area that we have as a pitfall is a hidden agenda. These are agendas that are contrary to that that is established by the mission and vision of the team. Hidden agendas can come from a lot of sources. They can be personal feelings that individuals on the team may have towards management. They may have towards the organization. They may have towards the group itself or individuals within the group. I'd like once again to ask my team, what are some examples of hidden agendas that you've observed?

I've seen the need to protect our own budget, especially in this era of flat or declining budgets, that's becoming more of an issue for some people.

I would say protecting turf. Sometimes we encounter empire builders or somebody trying to build their own area of responsibility.

Sometimes you have just a personal bias. You may have an individual who is very supportive of commodity production and you have others who are pro protection, and that can create some problems.

Also with our changing in positions and job titles and everything, people might feel insecure in their job and want to position themselves in a team in an inappropriate way to save their spot, you might say.

Related to Abbie's comment, I would say sometimes people just don't want to see a project happen at all and they'll be working to stop that project in any way they can.

Another area we're going to be talking about is defensive competition. This can result between members, groups of members or between groups and their management.

This is where members are pitted against one another, constantly trying to win.

Another area that we're going to talk about is sabotage. Let's practice a round Robin on the kinds of sabotage you have seen in this team. Karen, I think you're going to start.

Thanks.

Not in this team, by the way.

Of course not, our team is working together in stage 3, no doubt. One thing would be missing -- regularly missing or late to meetings and then wanting to be caught up so the whole team has to stop and go back to the beginning of the meeting and repeat what's already been accomplished.

Sometimes you have folks who just simply forget their assignments, not sure what it is they're supposed to do, and they come to the next meeting completely unprepared.

I've occasionally seen some teams that have come to decisions and then you find one or two members really aren't happy with those and they're speaking out against them behind the scenes.

And I've certainly had examples where some members just aren't carrying their weight, aren't sharing enough of the work on the team.

I've seen, too, where people just won't come to the table, or they won't even take off their hat and coat when they're at a meeting, and they'll just stay disengaged for as long as they possibly can.

I've also seen people who talk and talk and talk and talk to stop the group progress and you're just kind of going on and on without getting anything accomplished in your meetings.

A filibuster. We've seen this happen, not just in I.D. team processes but in other teams, where when you're using the thumbs up, thumbs down, thumbs sideways process, there's somebody who always has their thumb down and they can stop progress repeatedly by maintaining that posture.

How do you deal with that issue, if there is somebody that is such a nay sayer who is always trying to stop a project.

You need to visit with that person and find out what is it about this project that's keeping you from reaching agreement, and keep going back and revisiting that wish

that individual. And sometimes you do have to take them aside, one on one, and find out, you know, is there something more to this that we're just not aware of, we haven't heard the whole story and hopefully through the team relationships bring it on to the table.

And perhaps to build on what Jude said earlier, getting out to the field and seeing the issues there on the ground is the good way to do it as a team.

I would like to add something on that, too. A lot of teams will say in their ground rules that we'll make all decisions by consensus and this just gives the ammunition to the person who does want to stop the process or the progress of the team. I think that we look at consensus as our preferred method. There is a point at which after you've listened to this individual who is always doing the thumbs down what it would take to get them in agreement and be here, and if they can't get there, then the team has to make the decision that we will move ahead with the decision because we have considered their viewpoints, we've tried to resolve those, the team still thinks it's the best decision to make and we do move forward.

Linda, you were talking about sabotage. Do you have any questions?

I have a question for the team. What do we usually do about -- what do we usually do about sabotage on our teams?

Ignore it.

Hope it goes away.

Does it ever go away on its own? Typically not. What should we do.

Surface the behavior, bring it out in the open. Make sure that you call attention to it.

Certainly do it earlier than later, the sooner you can do it the better.

Then correct it.

Absolutely. What's another thought?

I have another thought, especially with the idea of the public being involved in more of our meetings, is we may have to spend more time on the side with those publics to find out what the real issues are that they don't really want to live with and how they're going to undermine it at all costs unless they feel validated or participating in the process.

One thing along that regard, Jude, in a big effort that we had in Roseburg dealing with an adaptive management area we had to really define decision space early on, and the way that our team decided to do that was to give me an assignment of trying to summarize all the laws that we have to deal with in the BLM, and so eventually a 30-page document got prepared with about a paragraph about each that tried to just present to the public what some of our own agency decision space is, and I'm telling you, that was a nightmare of a project. But it's a handy tool and we still use it.

One last thing on that is again we keep bringing this up, but it's important here, and that's the use of a facilitator.