Building Effective Work Teams
2015 Course Syllabus

Instructor: Professor Gregory A. Bigley, MBA, PhD
Phone: 206-685-7686
E-mail: gbigley@uw.edu
Office: 561 Paccar Hall

This course introduces concepts and principles fundamental to building and maintaining effective work teams, including how to (1) establish strong, shared commitment to a compelling purpose, (2) bring about collective buy-in to concrete performance objectives, (3) insure adherence to a set of suitable work rules, and (4) build the interpersonal trust crucial to mutual team member support and, ultimately, extraordinary team performance. The concepts and principles covered in this course are applicable whenever and wherever you must put together a team to accomplish an objective.

The breadth of this course is immense relative to the amount of time we have together. Thus, our pace will be brisk. The aim is to introduce you to key concepts and ways to apply those concepts that you can further assimilate and build upon as you develop your MBA core teams and the other teams in your life that you need to achieve goals.

Course Materials. Course articles and cases will be available electronically. You will receive directions for accessing them. Additional materials will be distributed during our class. You will be given directions for a team exercise with a deliverable due during our first session when you receive your core team assignment. Please read assigned articles and cases and attempt to answer case questions in advance of our first session.

Class Format. Sessions will involve various combinations of lecture, participant presentation, concept and case discussion, and experiential exercise. The course is designed as a workshop. Everyone is expected to actively and thoughtfully participate.

Course Requirements. Course credit will be determined by performance as follows:

   Participation: You must attend each of the course sessions fully prepared to engage others in cooperative learning activities. Participation points can be gained (or lost) according to the quality of your contributions.

   Team Contract: Each team is expected to develop and submit a team contract. More information on this requirement will be presented when we meet.
SESSION 1  IMPORTANCE AND CHALLENGES OF TEAMWORK

Session Overview
We will discuss the criticality of teams, in general, and your core teams, in particular. Major challenges to effective teamwork will be identified. Team development processes will be highlighted.

Readings (listed in alpha order)
- Colvin, “Why dream teams fail”
- Janis, “Groupthink” (*Psychology Today* classic!)
- Soll, Milkman, & Payne, “Outsmart your own biases”

General Study Questions
1. What do you generally like best about working in teams? What do you think you will like best about working in your core team? Overall, what are the main benefits of teamwork?
2. What do you generally like least about working in teams? What concerns you most about working in your core team? Overall, what are the main drawbacks of teamwork?

Exercise
“Who are we?” Exercise directions will be distributed when teams are assigned. Prepare to work intensively. The deliverable is due during our first class session.
SESSION 2  KEYS TONES OF EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK

Session Overview
We will discuss fundamental building blocks of team effectiveness. Team decision-making processes will be emphasized.

Readings (listed in alpha order)
• Garvin & Roberto, “What you don’t know about making decisions”
• Katzenbach & Smith, “The discipline of teams…” (HBR classic!)

Case and Case Questions
• The Satera Team at Imatron Systems, Inc.

Case Questions
1. Who are the Satera Team’s stakeholders, and what do they expect of the team?
2. What team process breakdowns are apparent, and what are the root causes?
3. What can Pinto do now to get the team on track?
4. What could Pinto have done differently to avoid the breakdowns?

Exercise
• Decision-making situation (materials distributed in class)
SESSION 3  TOWARD EXTRAORDINARY TEAM PERFORMANCE

Session Overview
We will conclude our discussion of keystones of team effectiveness. A major focus of this session will be on leveraging course concepts and principles in developing your team contract.

Readings (listed in alpha order)
- Darling et al., “Learning in the thick of it”
- Halvorson “Get your team to do what it says it’s going to do”

Case and Case Questions
- Harry and Learning Team 28

Case Questions
1. Who are Team 28’s stakeholders? What do they expect of the team?
2. What team process breakdowns are apparent, and what are the root causes?
3. What can Team 28 do now to get on track?
4. What could team members have done to avoid the breakdowns?

Exercise
- Feedforward exercise (directions distributed in class)
- “Team Contract: Organizing for Collective Effectiveness” (directions distributed in class, due date TBA)

SESSION 4  BUILDING EFFECTIVE TEAMS—FOLLOW-UP
Purpose of this session will be discussed in class.