

Building Effective Work Teams

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Course Syllabus

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

Course Overview.

You will learn how to build highly effective work teams, which are typically characterized by, for example, (1) a strong and shared commitment among team members to a compelling purpose and set of core values, (2) collective member buy-in to an array of concrete performance objectives, (3) general adherence by members to appropriate work rules and roles, (4) a robust team culture, and (5) mutual interpersonal trust and respect among members. Qualities such as these promote the capabilities teams require to perform extraordinarily well.

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 teamwork principles and ways to apply them that you can further assimilate and build upon as you develop your core teams and the other teams in your life that you need to achieve goals.

Course Materials. Course articles and cases will be available via Canvas. Additional materials will be distributed in class.

Class Session Format. Class sessions will involve various combinations of lectures, participant presentations, concept and case discussions, and experiential exercises. The course is designed as a workshop. Everyone is expected to actively and thoughtfully participate.

Course Requirements. Course credit will be determined by performance in the following areas:

Participation: Class members will earn participation points according to the quality of their contributions. So, attend each course session fully prepared to engage others in various cooperative learning activities. Pre-session reading and thinking (e.g., attempting to answer study questions) are essential for high-quality participation.

“Who Are We?” Exercise: This exercise calls for each team to develop a presentation to be delivered during our first class session. Directions will be available on Canvas.

Team Charter (also called a Contract): Each team is required to develop and submit a team charter. Details will be provided when we meet and also via Canvas.

COURSE SCHEDULE

DAY 1 IMPORTANCE AND CHALLENGES OF TEAMWORK

Session Overview

We will examine the incredible potential benefits of teamwork and consider why these benefits can be so difficult to attain. We will begin to explore the teambuilding process because teamwork effectiveness crucially hinges on it. The concepts of team identity and team identification will be highlighted.

Required Pre-Readings (listed in alpha order)

1. Garvin & Roberto, "What you don't know about making decisions" (*HBR* Classic and Bestseller!)
You will learn about how to make better collective decisions. This classic and bestselling article from HBR introduces cornerstone principles applicable to effective teamwork that we will refer to and build upon throughout our course.
2. Janis, "Groupthink" (*Psychology Today* classic!)
Janis discusses a variety of social psychological factors that undermine team performance.

General Study Questions

Prepare to discuss the following questions in class.

1. What have you liked *best* about working in groups and why? What do you believe you will probably like best about working in your Core Team and why? Overall, what are the main benefits of teamwork?
2. What have you liked *least* about working in groups and why? What concerns you most about working in your Core Team and why? Overall, what are the main drawbacks of teamwork?

Exercise

1. "Who are we?" *Exercise*: Prepare to work intensively with your teammates prior to the course. The deliverable is due during our first class session. Directions will be available via Canvas.
2. Teamwork exercise (materials will be distributed in class)

DAY 2 KEYSTONES OF EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK**Session Overview**

We will consider how to identify and develop fundamental building blocks of teamwork effectiveness. The Team Performance Model (TPM) will be introduced as a tool for creating, improving, and repairing teams. The team decision-making process will be featured.

Required Pre-Readings (listed in alpha order)

1. Halvorson, "Get your team to do what it says it's going to do"
This article describes a simple but powerful technique for shaping team behaviors to achieve team goals.
2. Katzenbach & Smith, "The discipline of teams..." (*HBR* Classic and Bestseller!)
This classic and bestselling HBR article explains fundamental building blocks of teamwork effectiveness. We will refer to and build upon them throughout our course.

Case and Case Questions

- The Satera Team at Imatron Systems, Inc.
The Satera Team leader, Gary Pinto, is in a very difficult position. But, the challenges he faces are not uncommon in teams, and they were certainly predictable for the Satera Team.

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 of the breakdowns?
3. What can Pinto do *now* to get the team on track?
4. What could Pinto have done differently at the team's inception to avoid the breakdowns?
5. What lessons from the Satera Team case apply to your Core Team?

Exercise

- Teamwork exercise (materials will be distributed in class)

DAY 3**SETTING THE STAGE FOR EXTRAORDINARY TEAM PERFORMANCE****Session Overview**

We will continue to consider how to identify and develop fundamental building blocks of teamwork effectiveness, based on the *Team Performance Model*. We will cover how to (a) improve team conversations about performance and (b) preempt team conflict. We will investigate how to create a “living” team charter that will enable your team to perform extraordinarily well.

Required Pre-Readings (listed in alpha order)

1. Darling et al., “Learning in the thick of it”
This article explains how to conduct productive conversations about team performance, in terms of the after-action review (or AAR).
2. Toegel & Barsoux, “How to preempt team conflict”
You will learn about an approach for improving the odds that your team's diversity will produce great value for team stakeholders.
3. “Team charter exercise”
The levels and components of the TMP are detailed. Creating a team charter to build team capabilities is explained.

Case and Case Questions

- Harry and Learning Team 28
Team 28 has become fairly dysfunctional. Most of the dysfunctional behaviors exhibited by Team 28 members appear to revolve around Harry's difficulty in learning finance.

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 of the breakdowns?
3. What can Team 28 do *now* to get on track?
4. What could team members have done differently at team inception to avoid the breakdowns?
5. What lessons from the Team 28 case apply to your Core Team?

Exercises

1. Teamwork exercise (directions will be distributed in class)
2. *Team Charter: Organizing for Team Effectiveness Exercise* (directions will be distributed via Canvas, due date TBA)