

# Work with a Team

**Unit:** Communication Skills

**Problem Area:** Practice Team Work

**Lesson:** Work with a Team

■ **Student Learning Objectives.** Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

- 1 Identify key knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) for working on a team.**
- 2 Explain conditions that help support team performance.**
- 3 Identify elements for enhancing team performance.**

■ **Resources.** The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:

“Creating S.M.A.R.T. Goals,” *Top Achievement Articles*. Accessed April 21, 2009. <<http://www.topachievement.com/smart.html>>.

Thompson, Leigh L. *Making the Team: A Guide for Managers*, 3rd ed. Prentice Hall, 2008.



## ■ **Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities.**

- ✓ Overhead or PowerPoint projector
- ✓ Visual(s) from accompanying master(s)
- ✓ Copies of sample test, lab sheet(s), and/or other items designed for duplication
- ✓ Materials listed on duplicated items
- ✓ Computers with printers and Internet access
- ✓ Classroom resource and reference materials

## ■ **Key Terms.** The following terms are presented in this lesson (shown in bold italics):

- ▶ brainstorming
- ▶ collaborative problem solving
- ▶ conflict resolution
- ▶ equifinality
- ▶ goal setting and performance management
- ▶ human capital
- ▶ KSAs
- ▶ motivation
- ▶ planning and task coordination
- ▶ positive illusion bias
- ▶ recognition
- ▶ reward

## ■ **Interest Approach.** Use an interest approach that will prepare the students for the lesson. Teachers often develop approaches for their unique class and student situation. A possible approach is included here.

*Have students work in pairs to discuss the following scenario. SCENARIO: Think of a time when you were working with someone and had a disagreement about how to do some of the work. How did the disagreement impact what you were working on at the time? How did you resolve the disagreement?*

*Have students share their answers with the class. Use the discussion to launch into the KSAs and the skill of conflict resolution needed for working with a team.*

# SUMMARY OF CONTENT AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

**Objective 1:** Identify key knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) for working on a team.

**Anticipated Problem:** What are key KSAs for working successfully as a team?

- I. **KSAs** are knowledge, skills, and abilities a person possesses. Five important KSAs have been identified as helpful for successfully participating on work teams: conflict resolution, collaborative problem solving, communication, goal setting and performance management, and planning and task coordination.
  - A. **Conflict resolution** is the capacity to manage desirable and undesirable team conflict. Two common team conflict resolution processes are brainstorming and equifinality.
    1. **Brainstorming** occurs when the team opens the floor for any and all ideas to be expressed by team members. The purpose of brainstorming is to develop a range of ideas to use when the work begins.
      - a. Desirable conflict occurs when the team must eclectically discern the better ideas and decide which ones they will use and which ones they will not use.
      - b. The team must have the capabilities to effectively resolve any conflicting opinions about ideas to use or to reject.
    2. **Equifinality** is the reality that there are a variety of ways for a team to reach the same desired outcome. This opens the possibility of having conflicts about (sometimes insignificant) matters in the decision-making process.
      - a. Conflicts over insignificant matters are examples of undesirable conflicts (e.g., when selecting a font or the wording for a flyer). Equifinality says there are a variety of ways for creating the flyer.
      - b. Team members must have the KSAs to avoid or resolve undesirable conflict.
  - B. **Collaborative problem solving** is the capacity for team members to participate in productive dialogue that produces the achievement of the team's goals. It requires individuals to be able to listen and learn collectively. People must be able to change personal biases based on what they learn from each other or from third-party entities.
  - C. Communication is the capacity to understand others and to articulate one's own message accurately. To effectively communicate with a team, the following skills are desirable:
    1. Active listening
    2. Understanding (reading) nonverbal communication

3. Assertive communication
  4. Writing ability
- D. **Goal setting and performance management** is the capacity to set tangible, measurable, and realistic goals and to use measurement, motivation, and reward systems to enhance the likelihood of meeting goals.
- E. **Planning and task coordination** is the capacity to lay out an action plan and to ensure that team members complete work in an organized, sequenced manner that results in meeting the team’s goals.

Use VM–A to demonstrate the KSAs. Connect the concepts of conflict resolution and communication to the interest activity.

**Objective 2:** Explain conditions that help support team performance.

**Anticipated Problem:** What are some supportive conditions that support a team’s performance?

- II. Conditions that help support a team’s work and performance are numerous. Among the critical supports are adequate human capital for the task at hand; sufficient recognition, reward, and motivation systems; and adequate coordination of work activities and communication. Team members are active participants in implementing these supportive conditions.
- A. **Human capital** is the knowledge, talent, and experience of team members. When a team has adequate knowledge, talent, and experience, performance is attainable.
1. Individual team members must ensure that they offer their “capital” (talents) to the rest of the team while recognizing that the talents of others must also be called forth.
  2. It should be mutually understood by all team members that all team members should give their best and allow room for others to do the same.
- B. **Recognition** is honoring the contributions of team members. Recognition implies that team members tell others how they value and appreciate their individual contributions. A **reward** is some kind of compensation to individual team members or the team as a whole when productivity is achieved. **Motivation** is a desire for a team member or members to be productive. Team members can create motivation by recognizing and rewarding productivity.
- C. Coordination of work activities and communication include the use of information and communication technologies as support in the process of team members completing their work together.
1. Virtual teams complete a portion of their work without face-to-face meetings.
  2. Coordination of work activities and communication are particularly important while working in virtual teams.

3. Virtual team members must be willing to learn and use work design software and communication tools for coordinating and communicating, such as:
  - a. Online project management software
  - b. Blogs
  - c. Email

Use VM–B to demonstrate environmental supports of a productive team.

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**Objective 3:** Identify elements for enhancing team performance.

**Anticipated Problem:** How can team performance be enhanced?

III. Enhancing team performance

- A. There are additional elements for ensuring a successful work team experience. Some examples of these elements are using single-digit teams; using team contracts; increasing identifiability; promoting involvement while avoiding the positive illusion bias; strengthening team cohesion; training team members together; and minimizing links in communication.
  1. It is best to use single-digit teams. The team should contain enough people with sufficient human capital to achieve the team’s goals. When possible, teams should be comprised of less than 10 people.
  2. Some studies indicate that three to five people is an ideal number for a team. With 10 or more people on a team, it makes it more difficult to:
    - a. Plan meeting dates
    - b. Collaborate
    - c. Converge and come to a consensus on ideas
- B. It is important to use team contracts to develop and clarify the team’s purpose.
  1. Members contribute to the development of the contract, sign the contract, and revisit the contract frequently.
  2. Team contracts contribute to keeping the team’s purpose clear and help team members stay focused on their roles in fulfilling the contract.
- C. It is essential to increase identifiability.
  1. The assigned roles and tasks (and their achievement) are publicly posted.
  2. When a team increases the identifiability of productive and nonproductive members, it becomes more likely that team members will contribute and be productive.
- D. It is useful to promote involvement and to avoid positive illusion bias so team members become enthusiastic about their roles and tasks. This is achieved by conceiving the roles and tasks at a level that is appropriately interesting and challenging (not boring or unattainable).
  1. Team members get involved when they feel that there is an interesting challenge for which their talents are suited.

2. The **positive illusion bias** is an unwarranted belief that one's personal talents are superior to the talents of others. While engaging team members in interesting and challenging tasks, positive illusion bias will be diffused, thereby preventing team dysfunction.

Use VM–C to demonstrate additional elements for ensuring a productive and successful teamwork experience. Assign LS–A.

- **Review/Summary.** Use the student learning objectives to summarize the lesson. Have students explain the content associated with each objective. Student responses can be used in determining which objectives need to be reviewed or taught from a different angle. Questions at the ends of chapters in the textbook may also be used in the review/summary.
- **Application.** Use the included visual masters and lab sheet to apply the information presented in the lesson.
- **Evaluation.** Evaluation should focus on student achievement of the objectives for the lesson. Various techniques can be used, such as student performance on the application activities. A sample written test is provided.

## ■ Answers to Sample Test:

### Part One: Matching

1. j
2. b
3. i
4. f
5. d
6. h
7. a
8. g
9. c
10. e

### Part Two: Short Answer

1. The five KSAs in this lesson are conflict resolution, collaborative problem solving, communication, goal setting and performance management, and planning and task coordination.
2. Identifiability is the practice of making team members' successes and failures public for the whole team and organization.

### Part Three: True/False

1. F
2. F
3. T
4. T
5. F
6. F

# Work with a Team

## ► Part One: Matching

**Instructions:** Match the term with the correct definition.

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| a. brainstorming                  | f. goal setting and performance management |
| b. recognition                    | g. collaborative problem solving           |
| c. equifinality                   | h. KSAs                                    |
| d. planning and task coordination | i. human capital                           |
| e. conflict resolution            | j. positive illusion bias                  |

- \_\_\_\_ 1. An unwarranted belief that one's personal talents are superior to others
- \_\_\_\_ 2. Honoring the contributions of team members
- \_\_\_\_ 3. The knowledge, talents, and experience of team members
- \_\_\_\_ 4. Setting tangible, measurable, and realistic goals; using measurement, motivation, and reward systems
- \_\_\_\_ 5. Laying out an action plan and ensuring that team members complete work in an organized, sequenced manner that results in meeting the team's goals
- \_\_\_\_ 6. Knowledge, skills, and abilities a person possesses
- \_\_\_\_ 7. Team members express any and all ideas
- \_\_\_\_ 8. Productive dialogue that produces achievement of the team's goals
- \_\_\_\_ 9. A variety of ways for a team to reach the same desired outcome
- \_\_\_\_ 10. Managing desirable and undesirable team disagreements





► **Part Two: Short Answer**

**Instructions:** Answer the following.

1. List the five KSAs presented in this lesson.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Explain what it means to increase team “identifiability.”

► **Part Three: True/False**

**Instructions:** Write *T* for true or *F* for false.

- \_\_\_ 1. Human capital refers to deficiencies in employee skills.
- \_\_\_ 2. Providing recognition to employees often results in lower motivation.
- \_\_\_ 3. Rewards improve team performance.
- \_\_\_ 4. Using a team contract helps to establish clear objectives.
- \_\_\_ 5. Research shows that teams comprised of more than 10 people often outperform teams with single-digit membership.
- \_\_\_ 6. Collaborative problem solving involves team members defending their individual solutions to a problem.

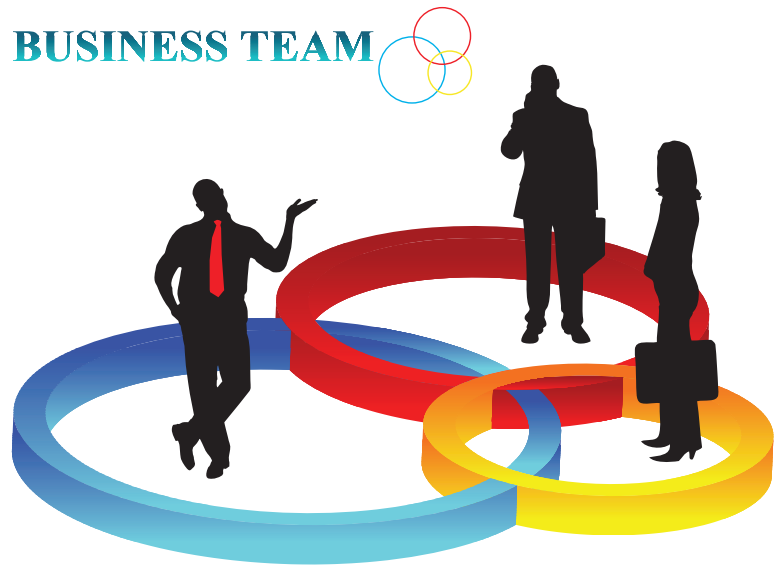
# WHAT ARE KSAS?

◆ Knowledge

◆ Skills

◆ Abilities

(that a person possesses)



## The “BIG FIVE” for Working with a Team

- ◆ Conflict resolution
- ◆ Collaborative problem solving
- ◆ Communication
- ◆ Goal setting and performance management
- ◆ Planning and task coordination

# CONDITIONS THAT HELP SUPPORT A TEAM'S PERFORMANCE

- ◆ **Human capital** is the knowledge, talent, and experience of team members.
- ◆ **Recognition** is honoring the contributions of team members.
- ◆ **Reward** is some kind of compensation to individual team members or the team as a whole when productivity is achieved.
- ◆ **Motivation** is a desire for a team member or members to be productive.
- ◆ **Virtual teams** complete a portion of their work without face-to-face meetings. Virtual team members must be willing to learn and to use work design software and communication tools for coordinating and communicating, such as:
  - Online project management software
  - Blogs
  - Email



# FOUR ELEMENTS FOR ENHANCING TEAM PERFORMANCE

## ◆ Use single-digit teams.

- Use teams of 10 or less people.
- Some studies indicate that three to five people is an ideal number.
- It is necessary to have enough people with sufficient human capital to achieve the team's goals.



## ◆ Use team contracts.

- Develop and clarify the team's purpose.
- Members develop, sign, and revisit the contract frequently.
- Keep the team's purpose clear.
- Help team members stay focused on their roles in fulfilling the contract.

## ◆ **Increase identifiability.**

- Publicly post assigned roles and tasks (and their achievement).
- Identify productive and nonproductive members.
- Members tend to contribute and to be more productive.

## ◆ **Promote involvement and avoid positive illusion bias.**

- Get team members enthusiastic about their roles and tasks.
- Involvement is enhanced when there is an interesting challenge.
- Positive illusion bias is an unwarranted belief that one's personal talents are superior to others.
- Positive illusion bias can cause team dysfunction.

# Creating Goals and a Performance Management System

## Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to increase goal-writing abilities and to create a system of team recognition and rewards.

## Objectives

1. Write goals for running a household.
2. Write a performance management plan for recognizing and rewarding team members for achieving goals.

## Materials

- ◆ paper
- ◆ writing utensil
- ◆ computer with word processing and Internet access
- ◆ flash drive
- ◆ printer

## Procedure

1. Break into pairs (in the role of parents).
2. Review the goal writing resource at <http://www.topachievement.com/smart.html>.
3. Read the scenario.



4. Brainstorm and discuss each question. Record your responses to each question on paper or on the computer (if possible). If a computer is used, save your answers to your flash drive.
5. Write three or more goals that would include methods for recognizing and rewarding the successful achievement of the goals.
6. Share your plans with the class.
7. Optional: Share goal plans with your real parents.

### Scenario

*You are playing the role of parents with two teenagers who live at home. You have decided to create a family team where everyone is responsible to help run the household. Your job as parents is to create household goals to help better run the household and to create recognition and rewards for the household team.*

### Questions

1. What tasks need to be completed to run the household?
2. How often does each task need to be completed?
3. Which members of the team would complete each task?
4. How would the methods for doing the work be dictated? (e.g., By the parents? Would team workers be able to decide how to complete the work?)
5. How will the achievement of each goal be recognized and rewarded?
6. How will goal achievement be measured? (How will the team members know when the goal has been achieved?)