Successful Team Collaborations

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Successful Team activities (both at work and with outside volunteer groups) requires the need for improved collaborations. Listed below are some practices to consider – when involved in Team collaborations:

- Reorient your thinking to match the group you are representing, and also the Team you are working with – on each separate collaboration Team.

- Look for cross-applications and similarities between the various Team collaborations you are involved in.

- Choose the media and technology used for each collaboration wisely, and reevaluate its effectiveness often. Face-to-Face meetings are usually better than Tele-conferencing (WebEx, or other types of electronic communication). Real-time electronic communication is usually better than delayed electronic correspondence (e-mail, etc.). Delayed electronic correspondence is usually better than no correspondence. All communication methods may need to be employed at times, in various combinations.

- Team collaborative discussion, needs to eventually result in a useful activity – sometimes by a smaller group (or even by just one person). It's better to get volunteers rather than give out assignments.

- Be inclusive and representative, as much as possible, in each Team collaboration – but with real results as the key metric; don't just do something for appearances.

- Not everyone can function well in a collaborative environment and may need to be an "individual contributor".

- Better to build on an idea to make it better, rather than tear it down or be too negative.

- Some ideas and innovations may need to be phased-in to match the project's timing or even allow technology to catch up.

- A "devil's advocate" is often encountered on some Teams, but if encountered too often, or it's the same individual – is rarely helpful for long, and can impede achieving useful results.

- If an individual Team member is too disruptive, they may need to be removed from the Team, otherwise the Team's results may suffer and everyone will be blamed for the lack of success.

- Bad Time Management – whether the time is wasted or just ineffectively used (such as bad multi-tasking) – is a personal, controllable activity.

- Volunteers can easily be over-tasked – either by the Team, their management, or by themselves – by an inability to say "NO" to accepting new tasks, or to realize their current "absorption" capability. Actual results can be a useful metric to determine if an individual (or Team) capacity problem exists.

- Results, when a cost analysis is performed, should include the entire system's cost (and related impact) – to avoid a "sub-optimal" solution.

- Realistic deadlines are often helpful and allow group "synergy" on sub-tasks (like on a complex, longer project). But un-realistic deadlines – set by a manager or the Team members themselves – are often counter-productive and can dramatically reduce the quality of any results.

- Re-discovering older technologies and practices – can sometimes be beneficial. Also, cross-industry applications can be a way of having an easy-to-implement improvement, if applied appropriately and the necessary adaptations are considered.