

Managing high performance teams – team paper reflection essay

[Business](#), [Decision Making](#)



Over the past 5 weeks since my first reflection paper, something strange had been happening to my group. Seemingly innocuously, yet swiftly and silently, it had pervasively taken over our whole group's dynamics. Our group seemed to be drifting apart. What had gone wrong? This 2nd reflection paper will go through the events which lead up to the present stage, and suggest recommendations on how to improve the situation. Hopefully all will be well soon!

Event 1: Paper tower exercise During class 5, our group was supposed to build a paper tower, with the aim of building one taller than the professor. Although the professor gave us some rules and guidelines, for example how we had to fully discuss our thoughts and plans, our group jumped straight into the project, and started to attempt to build the tower on our own, to see which model and design would work. When we realised that we were engaging in self limiting behaviour, I tried to get everybody to contribute ideas which I recorded on the back of my lecture notes. Unfortunately, we engaged in more self-limiting behaviour by immediately discrediting designs which appeared to be flawed in our eyes, which lead to self-censorship by some of our group members on their ideas. After a few minutes, we gave up discussing, and continued to work on our individual ideas. Usually BK or I would play the devil's advocate or the facilitator, however this time round, he was the observer and had to keep quiet, while I was too busy advocating my own idea, to be my own devil's advocate! In the end, we did not decide via consensus, rather, by who was the loudest and quickest at assembling a working model (Mine and Noriko's).

If only we had not discredited Alarice's idea, and used a better decision making process, we might have arrived at the optimal solution! I learnt much from this exercise. Firstly, I learnt that by actually showing people a working model can result in the presentation of a compelling idea, which can make team members involuntarily give up. However, this method will result in a sub-optimal solution. I also realised the importance of following the group decision making process properly in order to arrive at an optimal solution! If we had listed all ideas with an open mind, and not discredited anybody's idea no matter how important it is, we might have arrived at a different answer. I felt genuinely apologetic towards Alarice for my bad behaviour! Another improvement we could have made was that we should have at least 2 "facilitators" and "devils advocates" assigned, to enhance discussion and facilitate our decision making processes.

Additionally, we should have set a positive tone at the start of our exercise by working on the task as a team, instead of breaking into individual groups. Finally, we could have post meeting feedback/evaluation, to praise or encourage group members to understand group member's behaviour, and to raise everyone's awareness of their behaviours and the consequences such that we can work better as a team in the future. Key Event 2: Vocational Exercise For this exercise, our team was highly unproductive and did not arrive at any solution, agreement or compromise by the end of the exercise. We were relieved when the exercise ended abruptly, as we did not have to argue much longer about who should get the "rights" to the holiday. This outcome, lead me to realise that our group was a bit too cohesive, and

beginning to display some signs of group think and conflict avoidance. We were too busy enjoying being a cohesive group, to the extent that we did not dare to go against each other's decisions, especially in a scenario whereby we all had conflicting objectives and agenda. Our negotiation was low on assertiveness, as we giggled and laughed and was generally unserious throughout the discussion. At the same time, we were low on cooperativeness, as none of us were willing to give/take during the role-play, and we hoped that the " manager" (BK) could give us the easy way out, and make a decision for us.

What I learnt about my team, was that when we had head on conflicts, we tended to have excessively poor time management skills, and decision making skills! One way we could have improved on this situation, was that we should not be afraid of conflict, rather, be willing to embrace it, and become a " fighting team" as it has been proven that teams who engaged in healthy conflict over issues not only made better decisions, but moved forward more quickly than before. Key Event 3: A day at the Pet Shop It was otherwise a day of fun activity as a group. Although several members of the group were horribly late (I was late for an hour) the punctual members were very forgiving and understanding towards our lateness. It can be seen that we were low on assertiveness, and high on cooperativeness, and accommodated each other's shortcomings. After observing the group at work for many hours, we left to have dinner together! Having our first meal together at the same table, and sharing the same dish, really had profound effects on all of us. I could really felt the team bonding, and becoming closer.

It might be underrated, however personally I feel that taking time to eat meals together really help to build team spirit, as we really get to know each other better through conversations during this mealtime. Key event 4:

Exercise 1- Which technique is better? & Exercise 2-1 Wish During exercise 1, our group was assigned to practice the “ Brainwriting” technique.

We were proud to be at the top of the class, having generated the largest number of ideas. However, I realised that one of the short comings of Brainwriting was that we did not have time to build on each other’s ideas, as the consolidated list was a compilation of all of our ideas. Thus, although our group had the greatest quantity, as production blocking or evaluation apprehension was absent, we did not have good quality, unique ideas, as we were unable to capitalize our group members ideas and leverage on the strengths of our group. One thing that I noticed was that Alarice actually came up with many ideas of good quality and uniqueness. I started to wonder, if actually Alarice had much more she could share with the group, but she did not dare to, as she was suffering from evaluation apprehension. My suspicions were later confirmed, when we did the “ WISH” exercise, and she mentioned that she thought that she should speak up more. I promised myself that next time, I would pay special attention to her as a facilitator and help her to get over her fears and apprehension, such that she can contribute more, as it has been proven that better decisions result when all team members freely and enthusiastically participate in the decision making process. Key Event 5: Missing-in-Action (MIA) Group members! Problems

started to surface after recess week, where, Thursday class sessions our group had absent, and/or late group members.

We also did not have our weekly meeting on Tuesday, as we had conflicting priorities, and some of us could not see the point in meeting weekly. As a result, our meetings were put on permanent hold. Worst of all, at our most recent class where finally all of our group members were present, there was no practice for us to do as a team! At first, this lack of interaction seemed harmless.

However, as the weeks went by, I started to realise the harm of this. By not spending enough time together and not being able to do our practices in class as a whole team, members of our team were starting to drift apart, while others were starting to become closer to those which they spent more time with. The progress on our group project and report had also stalled to a halt. Something had to be done! Key Event 6: Team Cohesion Exercise Truth is that I am still very happy and satisfied with my group. Overall I feel that we are an amazing group, and we always have tons of fun and laughter together. Once again, our team scored the highest for this exercise. Although it seems as if nothing was wrong with our group, we were smooth sailing, and we all felt the same way, and we all loved being a part of this group! So what went wrong? I think one of causes of the problems at this stage, was due to our lack of conflict, our increasing cohesion and rampant group think. As a result, our team started to lose our effectiveness, and become superficially harmonious.

We started to become unaware of situations, and assumed that everything was perfect as we grew complacent, and started to put in lesser and lesser effort into developing our team dynamics. What I would have done differently if I could start over As described from the key events above, it is apparent that the development of my team has seemed to reach a peak and ended up in a rut. So one of the things I would have done differently, if I could start over, would be to enforce our weekly group meetings as compulsory. By meeting together frequently, we could gain the familiarity and mutual confidence needed to express dissent, such that we could become a fighting team, to prevent groupthink, and fear of conflict. Also, to motivate our group forward and keep us on track to complete our tasks, we should meet up and set clear, attainable yet challenging goals, as a team, such that we can to set direction for our meetings, and to motivate our progress and performance. We should also delegate tasks, and give our team members the authority to manage their work.

This would be beneficial as it was a critical ingredient for becoming a high performance, self managing team. Most importantly, our first official meeting since recess week is omorrow! Wish us luck! Off to work then! ????