

Towards better student team communication

Business



Student Team Communication is something that cannot be done without if one takes the overall development of the student into account. In every sphere of life, communication is the primary tool to express, understand and provide feedback or decide the future course of action. It is because of that the management studies have made it mandatory for its students work in groups to do their projects. In their formative years the students gradually learn how to work in a group or team, before stepping into the bigger world. In this process, understanding with the peers and the instructors plays a very vital role, both to succeed in the collective venture and to operate in a much broader, responsible situation in the later part of life.

That is the reason why Student Team Communication has been looked up as a special tool to bring out the best in them, the future decision-makers or the dedicated workers, who would be more productive in all respect even under a trying condition. Thus this essay highlights this significance of the issue by citing various works of the researchers, besides summarizing the significant outcomes. Towards a Better Student TeamThe 'team concept' has always commanded for the enforcement of best policies or techniques to bring out the best in a team in the workplace. (A. R. Cohen, 1993; Hackman, 1990).

This urge has led to the various experiments regarding formulation of the best possible team to bring out the right measure of interaction and thereby the desired/targeted result. Accordingly, formal recommendation has also been came in the way to facilitate the proceedings (e. g., Strong & Anderson, 1990). The ExperimentsIn way to find what kind of team would serve the purpose most, many researchers have conducted various experiments concerning seven affecting factors on it, like the method of team

assignment, team longevity, the grade weight given to teamwork, the use of peer evaluations, team size, management education, and the quality of the instructions a teacher provides to a team (Bacon et. al, 1998).

To examine these variables, Bacon et al. surveyed 116 MBA students about their “ best and worst student team experiences in their MBA program”.

Contrasting these best and worst team experiences, they also tested hypotheses related to each of the contextual variables with a goal to provide teachers some plausible ways and means that have their foundations in the empirically supported data (Bacon, 1998). Team Assignment Three recognized approaches have been put to test (Decker, R. (1995), viz. Self-selection, Random Assignment and Teacher Assignment.

Out of these, some has recommended Self-selection because of its possibility of producing higher cohesion (Strong & Anderson, 1990), which is considered to be directly related to the performance of a student team (Gosenpud & Washbush, 1991; Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 1990; Wolfe & Box, 1988), especially when the time span of the team is short. Another opinion backed this idea with the view that it may be instrumental for the students to own the group problems besides helping them to tackle interpersonal crises more than any other method (Mello, 1993). Random Assignment This is also a tested and known method (Cook, 1981; Quirk, 1989; Vora & Akula, 1978), because of its fairness, though some disapprove it with the anticipation of average performance of all teams (Bacon et al., 1998), due to the lack of balance and cohesion. Teacher Assigned Approach This one is less used as it involves a wide range of criteria, and never rose above 18% of the teams (Decker, 1995).

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Thus, the focus was on the earlier two methods, which has fetched the following hypothesis: A. Best teams will include more self-selected teams than will worst teams. B. Best teams will include fewer randomly assigned teams than will worst teams. Team Longevity A team passes through different phases of development during their venture.

Tuckman (1965), has identified them as five stages: a) Forming- clubbing and orientation to the task; b) Storming- Divergent views and personalities of the team members surface; c) Norming – Views and personalities merge with acceptance of leadership and individual roles; d) Performing- Engagement in productive interaction and problem solving to complete the assigned task; e) Adjourning- An emotional departure from the bond that develops through camaraderie. However, some suggest that the proceedings might not be perfectly in that order (Gersick, 1989), while researchers like Katz observe that if a team carries on for too long a period, then that results into a loss of effectiveness (Katz 1982). These efforts fetched another hypothesis- “ Best teams will have worked together longer on average than will worst teams.” Weight of Grades is a well-accepted fact that students count good grades as reward for their performance (LeRosen, 1976). And thus the hypothesis: Best teams will have a higher percentage of the course grade associated with teamwork than will worst teams.

Peer Evaluations It is considered to be only natural for the students, young and vulnerable to the divergent attraction, to resort to social loafing. This on the other hand, might dampen the team spirit, as well as the productivity of the team (Ingham, Levinger, Graves, & Peckham, 1974; Latané, Williams, & <https://assignbuster.com/towards-better-student-team-communication/>

Harkins, 1979). To put a curb on this, peer evaluation is seen as an important tool, but at the same time, not widely believed to be one (Michaelsen, 1991; Cook (1981). This provides Hypothesis 4: A larger percentage of best teams will report using traditional (confidential, end-of-the-term-only) peer evaluations than will worst teams. Team Size is now almost accepted about the effectiveness of a small-size team (Comer, 1995; Strong & Anderson, 1990).

The prime disadvantage of a big-size team is mostly being seen in possible decline in coordination and social loafing (Latane et al. (1979; Bacon et al. (1998). This brings out Hypothesis 5: The average team size on best teams will be smaller than the average team size on worst teams. Management Education Team training proves the key to enhance performance and researchers also agree to that. (Zemke, 1993).

Hypothesis 6: Among the best teams, the percentage of those who have completed their basic management courses will be higher than among the worst teams. Quality of Instructions Vision and mission rest above all, and if these elements are injected rightly in the students, good result is bound to come (Fowler, 1995). The management should make the team-objective crystal-clear to each member of the team; the best team (hypothesis 7) usually conforms to the fact that their instructor/s provided them sufficient instruction to achieve their goal. The Revelation The outcome of the empirical research involving all the above factors fetched startling revelations to Bacon et. al.

, concerning the do-s and don't-s in formulating the best teams. Altogether they have six recommendations stemming out of their findings, and they are:

1. Teams must be adequately described about the outcomes and processes; 2. Team longevity should be maximized; 3. Each student should be encouraged to have a say in the team assignment; 4.

Peer evaluation, at best, be avoided; 5. Team size should be determined by pedagogical objectives; 6. There should be a constant endeavor to improve team training. While the above attempt wants to arrive at a plausible blueprint of a good team, Researchers in their pursuit of finding the “predictors of student team performance” (Bacon et al., 1998), delve deep into the subjects like “Effects of Individual Ability or ‘Member Heterogeneity’ on Team Performance”, keeping an eye to the increasing diversity in the student composition in the business schools.

Meanwhile the hypothesis, “Team performance will be predicted by the average ability of team members”, have gained ground (Dommeyer, 1986). Alongside, the hypothesis (Bacon, et al.), “The relationship between nationality diversity and team performance will follow an inverted U-shaped pattern, where teams with a moderate level of nationality diversity will outperform teams with high or no nationality diversity”, have also been supported by the findings. However, the notion that gender diversity adversely affects the productivity of a team, could not garner any support from the findings, though some studies (Astin 1977; Lee and Bryk 1986) suggested about students performing better in a single-sex environment, especially women students. This research comes out with suggestions towards finding the predictors of student team performance and they are:
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1. Team project should be given lesser weight to facilitate the reflection of the student's ability; 2.

Simple random assignment should be avoided; 3. It's better to keep the team size small; 4. Flexibility should be practiced in the gender makeup of groups. Still, the researchers find some additional niche to the subject, and that is, by no less important, is the development of trust among the team members. Armed with their empirical study, Huff et al.

(2002) have come out with the following suggestions: 1. Perceived trust is based primarily on categorical and action-based cues; 2. Justice and equity are particularly salient in temporary groups. 3. Communication is vital.

Active, open and honest 4. Consequential behaviors can often be counterproductive. 5. Both personal and group emotions are central to the experience of trust. 6. Orient students regarding the elements that contribute to effective group relations 7.

Establish strong lines of communication with each group; 8. Establish clear and enforceable penalties for opportunistic behavior; 9. Establish rapport with each group. This again, opens up the need to assess the personality of the students, and 'Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Test' (Known as MBTI; Goby and Lewis 2000) therefore is being used to assess the personality of the students. MBTI classifies individuals into 1 of 16 personality types and is based on the work of Carl Jung (1976).

CONCLUSIONThe volume of the research on the student team communication amply proves its importance in the modern world. The pattern of outcome also suggests that this field needs to be updated always, because some of the factors related to it, would keep fluctuating off and on, as it has been found in the case of gender diversity. This state of affairs assigns more responsibility to the teachers and the management, much like a rudder of a ship in the ever-changing sea