Developing trust and cohesiveness in multidisciplinary team

XNB172 Nutrition and Physical Activity

Assessment item number 1 – Case Study Part B Reflection Template

1. Team Strength Identified: High Level of Cohesion, Communication &
   Trust

Reporting and responding

Over the past semester, I have worked in a multi-disciplinary group to complete two
studies pertaining to nutrition and physical activity theory. Throughout the assessme
period my group retained a high level of cohesion and trust, which can be attributed
communication. Unfortunately, this was not an antecedent to productivity and while
considered a strength, may have hindered our performance.

As soon as the group formed in week two, we appreciated that the assigned task wa
underpinned by reciprocal interdependence. In order to be successful, we were awar
our meetings could not be ad hoc events and we needed to increase the electronic p
between us. Consequently, we were quick to schedule weekly meetings outside of ou
tutorial time and set up a Facebook group. Despite our strong group drive, however,
almost stopped in our tracks by our fifth member's unexpected departure in week fo
Nevertheless, due to the cohesive ties we had already built and the trust we had for
other, we were undaunted by this initial setback. This is why I consider cohesion and
be essential teamwork skills. I believe we exceeded in this area, yet in hindsight, per
only remained unphased as we had produced very little content for the assignment.

In theory, attending weekly meetings in addition to tutorial sessions seems productiv
an effective means of tackling the assignment on hand. At least, this is what I believe
time. In retrospect, the constant ' assignment catch ups' were merely a safety blank

times, a complete disguise to the fact we were not making any decent progress.

Relating

Humans are not solitary beings and we have an innate ability to collaborate (Vosmer
Melis & Tomasello, 2013). When this is tapped into by just one or two members of a
like in this experience, it becomes truly apparent how contagious enthusiasm in tear
Up until now I have believed that high enthusiasm directly correlates to high product
however, this group experience was unlike any I have encountered before. In past gr
when absenteeism and accountability has been a problem, it could almost always be
attributed to a lack of enthusiasm by a group member. In these scenarios, I would er
members to express their ideas and try to form a collective group drive. Generally th
suffice as it would increase productivity. Nevertheless, the problem in this incident w
characterised by low productivity level in the presence of enthusiasm and high group

This scenario was unique in that my team members were so dedicated to the task th
would attend a morning meeting every week, but then do very little work at the mee
even less at home. Interesting, however, was the fact that meeting up once a week g
a great deal of trust amongst one another. I admit I have a predisposition to look at t
through rose-coloured glasses, but this reassured me that my group members did ha
intentions at heart.

Rather than brainstorm ideas on how to increase productivity, which I would have do
group with less cohesion, we opted for enhancing interpersonal microskills such as ra
and honesty. I knew if a member had not completed a task they had been assigned,
more beneficial for the group to know the truth and thus assist. As a result, we foste
environment where communication was so open and there was such a high degree o

among members that conflict never arose.

Reasoning

At a superficial level, it appears odd that group drive coupled with high cohesion and could impede on productivity. In fact, these very concepts have long been heralded cornerstones to quality teamwork (Offermann & Rosh, 2012; Greene, 1989). Nonethe this phenomena has been found in a plethora of studies and is conducive with the pr groupthink, a concurrence-seeking tendency that impedes on group decision making 2003; Mullen et al, 1994; Stodgill, 1972; Tziner, 1982). After analysing the literature, becomes apparent that my group experienced a mild form of groupthink. Despite ou intentions to create an environment in our meetings to efficiently bounce ideas off e other and trigger discussion, we created a task-stagnant environment. According to and Insko, we unintentionally created a social-emotional group as opposed to a task-group (1993). This was exacerbated by the fact we were a newly formed team with previous experience together and thus tried to avoid conflict.

Reconstructing

They say too much of a good thing can be harmful and, as evident in my most recen experience, cohesion and trust are no exception. My previous experience lead me to that if these qualities are rife, it would heighten our team's success. So I helped fost behaviour. Indeed, I now believe our group's greatest strength eventuated into one greatest weaknesses. As a newly formed team, I knew we would need to grow organ a working alliance; however, I did not realise our failure to mature in time. As a cons of this, I plan to strike an optimal level of cohesion and trust among my next team. team members should be trusted and have a right to express their views freely, they

also retain a degree of scepticism, inquiry and critique (Erdem, 2003). I have also be

aware of the importance of conducting productive team meetings. It is not merely er

schedule in days and then attend meetings, if those sessions have not been effective

planned (Weinstein, 2003). By learning from this experience, I aim to prevent groupt

the future and thus, positively impact on future group performances.

2. Team weakness identified: Lack of Goals & Collaboration

Reporting and responding

As previously established, the strengths of my group lead to the groupthink phenom

thus, decreased productivity. They also created a knock-on-effect, which impeded or

collaborative efforts and thwarted our personal opinions. It is ironic that we tried so l

achieve high levels of communication and managed to form great cohesive ties, yet

work as a cohesive unit. We were well aware of the reciprocal interdependence the

assessment piece demanded of us, yet produced a final case study that was merely

collation of different group members' ideas. Unfortunately, I then struggled to raise i

concerns regarding these discrepancies in the assessment as the group norm was no

disrupt the cohesion or create a hierarchy. This lack of consistency within our assess

piece could have easily been rectified if we had set goals and exploited the fact we w

multi-disciplinary team.

Relating

From past experience, I was aware of the importance of setting out priorities and

establishing a shared goal early on. In my last group assignment, we managed to eff

build common ground, which allowed team members to set out goals, determine pos

the group and create a purpose. Unfortunately, despite utilising a group contract to i

tasks, there was still confusion about the purpose and the desired outcomes within t

group. These differences in goals became obvious in our assessment piece, with eac

individual section hinting at a different overall conclusion.

Moreover, as a multi-disciplinary team of four, we had so much potential to merge ou

disciplines of Nutrition & Dietetics and Exercise Science into a collaborative branch.

believe each member's strengths were effectively utilised and consequently, this gro

lacked the synergy and cross-fertilisation of skills I have experienced previously. In p

groups, we adopted a similar ' divide and conquer' approach but, unlike my group fo

assessment, we took advantage of our differences and sources of weakness. In esse

lacked any true leadership roles this semester, which should have been assigned at

along with our goal setting – a process we completely ignored.

In saying so, I should have expressed these opinions to my group members. While w

open communication, the groupthink mentality misguided us and as a result, I held b

fully expressing myself to keep the peace. This also relates to the fact I am the youn

my family and among some very strong personalities, I tend to sit back and become

sitter. There is no doubt this impacts on the way I communicate in groups and I belie

helped foster the groupthink mentality of ' keeping the peace'.

Reasoning

Multi-disciplinary groups are imperative among health care practitioners and are ger

more effective at incorporating evidence-based care and considering all treatment o

(Atwal & Jones, 2007; Ellis, 2012). They allow a comprehensive and holistic view of th

scenario, which would have been particularly useful when completing the case studi

this assignment. Indeed, a collaborative approach like this allows the pooling of colle

knowledge and forms the crux of effective team learning (Andersson & Liff, 2012; Na

et al., 2013). Unfortunately, I believe goal setting was the underlying feature missing

group. As no time was set aside for goal setting in group formation, information was

appropriately disseminated and thus effective collaboration could have not taken pla

Understanding of other group members' roles in addition to the provision of goals ha

proven to significantly support group cooperation. Conversely, lack of management a

leadership can hinder this process (Kleingeld, van Mierlo & Arends, 2011). Though w

lay out specific learning goals at the beginning, these were disregarded and towards

of semester they had morphed into general " do your best" learning goals. Nahrgang

found these general goals can restrict a group's coordination and collaboration and I

this is what occurred (2013).

Reconstructing

Rather than focus on building cohesion from the moment of group formation, my gro

should have outlined our aims and assigned a team leader. After all, research sugge

a group's acceptance of organisational goals is antecedent to cohesion and producti

this what we all essentially aimed for despite having never verbalised it (Greene, 198

When I engage in similar experiences in the future, I will ensure time is set aside dur

group formation to set goals, discuss purpose and assign leadership roles. By approa

the assessment from the same angle, all group members will be able to effectively

collaborate as a single unit. Furthermore, goal setting will ensure tasks are designate

members to specifically utilise their strengths and thus the diversity of knowledge se

multi-disciplinary group. Importantly, by setting out specific learning goals at the beg

the group will decrease susceptibility to groupthink and consequently, improve prod

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Appendix

Evaluating teamwork processes rating scale

Process Rank = 1		Process Rank = 5
Goals & objectives		
There is confusion about the purpose and the desired outcomes	1 2 3 4 5	Team members understand and agree and objectives
Trust and conflict	1 2 3 4 5	There is a high degree of trust among

and conflict is dealt with openly and wo

through

There is little trust among

members and conflict is evident

Expression of differences

Disagreements do not arouse defensive

Disagreements produce defensive 1 2 3 4 5 reactions

reactions

Leadership

There is full participation in leadership;

One person dominates and 1 2 3 4 5 leadership roles are shared by member

leadership roles are not shared

Control and procedures

There are effective procedures to guide

There is little control and there is 1 2 3 4 5 functioning; team members support the

a lack of procedures to guide procedures and regulate themselves

team functioning

Utilisation of resources

Member resources are fully recognised

All members are not recognised 1 2 3 4 5 utilised

and/or utilised

Interpersonal communication

Communications between members are

Communications between 1 2 3 4 5 participative

members are closed and guarded

Listening 1 2 3 4 5 The team members actively listen to ea

The team members do not listen
to each other

Flow of communication

The discussion required a great
deal of backtracking and
reorienting

1 2 3 4 5

The discussion moved forward with suc
points built on previous ones

Problem solving/Decision making

The team has no agreed-on
approaches to problem solving
and decision making

1 2 3 4 5

The team has well-established and agre
approaches to problem solving and dec
making

Experimentation and creativity

The team is rigid and does not
experiment with how things are
done

1 2 3 4 5

The team experiments with different wa
doing things and is creative in its appro

Evaluation

The team never evaluates its
functioning or processes

1 2 3 4 5

The group often evaluates its functiona
processes

(Reference: Southern Cross University Division of Teaching and Learning
(2013) Southern Cross University Teamwork Guide. Downloaded from scu.

edu. au/teachinglearning/download. php? doc_id= 12945 on 18th February 2014)

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