

Effective
communication is an
essential element of
effective teamwork



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

As more companies become bicoastal and even international, the working team has evolved to fill many roles.

The advent of email and conference calls has had both positive and negative affects on the ability of teams to work efficiently. Using instant messaging programs can narrow the seemingly insurmountable gap between team members working together across town or across continents. Clear communication within that team is an integral component to overcoming the loss of nonverbal communication within virtual teams just as clear communication joined with nonverbal communication and inflection are indispensable within face-to-face teams. Well defined goals, trust, and clear conversation are vital aspects of team communication, without which teams can become ineffective.

Every team has a goal. Sporting teams want to win an event, debate teams want to prove a point, and work teams need to finish a project within a deadline. While the final goal is essentially the primary objective of a team, checkpoints and team meetings are often required to make sure the team is on track to reaching its goal. When a football team's coach calls a time-out, this is often used as an opportunity for the team to regroup and make decisions on their next play. This parallels conference calls and scheduled meetings in the work environment. A team that clearly defines short-term goals necessary to meet its objective is better prepared than a team working without these specific goals.

Pat Perry (2006) describes teamwork as a Viking ship, (which require the collective efforts of many workers), without a well coordinated effort

maintained by clear communication, the ship would move in circles, never reaching its port of call. Perry describes how many people working as individuals towards a common goal are ultimately ineffective without the communication and direction given to them to work together as a team (2006). Cullen Scott (2007) stated when referencing a Microsoft survey, “unclear objectives, lack of team communication, and ineffective meetings are among the top time-wasters that workers say make them feel unproductive for as much as a third of their workweek” (¶ 1). Focusing on goals rather than time used to reach a goal makes efficient use of a team’s dynamics. By assigning specific tasks to team members with the best talents to complete the task, a team becomes more efficient.

Scott further explains “ Depending on the task, employee productivity should be measured in results, not how many hours someone spends on a project” (¶ 8). By establishing task specific goals to team members best suited to complete them, and using meetings to verify results, teams can significantly increase their productivity. While assigning specific tasks to team members with clearly defined objectives is essential to team productivity, these tasks cannot be completed without trust. Many community programs and youth counseling centers including The South Bay Coalition rely on rope exercises and physical challenges to build trust as a framework for effective teamwork (2007). Each team member must trust that the others will successfully complete their tasks within the timeframe allotted.

Without trust, the team members cannot comfortably rely on each other to reach their goal. Trust can be built even between strangers who have never worked together before. Neil Middleton (as cited in Crash Course in...
<https://assignbuster.com/effective-communication-is-an-essential-element-of-effective-teamwork/>

Managing a virtual team, 2007) says “ Research has found that virtual teams that contained high trust spent half of their early communications in the first weeks of the team’s existence on topics such as their families, hobbies and weekend social activities” (¶ 3). Pete Battisti (2006) put it well saying, “ Communication gets better and better as people trust each other” (¶ 15). Teams who get to know each other and build a rapport early on in their work together will learn to trust each other and communicate effectively before conflicts arise. After building trust and establishing goals team members must learn to communicate clearly with each other to build momentum, verify progress, and effectively critique their work. According to Heidi Horn (2006), it is a myth to believe “ If you communicate the status or result of a repair to a staff member in the department, you can count on that person to relay the information to everyone who needs to know” (¶ 12).

Clearly conveying information to a designated team communication coordinator or to the entire team ensures that your work and progress have been presented to everyone who relies on your work. Relying on a single person to remit your progress to the entire team not only wastes time, but can also break a vital link in the communication chain within the team, ultimately delaying others from completing their work. Pete Battisti (2006) asks, “ Is communication simply teaching people how to converse clearly so others understand exactly what is said” (¶ 2). A misunderstanding during team communication can derail the work a team has completed, and work to diminish the trust that was built early on in the team formation.

A team’s effectiveness relies heavily on a balance between clearly

established goals clearly communicated to a team with a working trusting
<https://assignbuster.com/effective-communication-is-an-essential-element-of-effective-teamwork/>

relationship. Without clearly conveying information, trust can be lost, and goals can become unattainable. Trust can be maintained within a team by recognizing member's achievements and team milestones in ways that further motivate team members to be successful (Byrne, Houen, & Seaberg, 2002). While virtual teams face additional obstacles to overcome, teleconferencing and instant messaging can help overcome these obstacles. As technologies advance and further means of virtual teams evolve, "Media Richness" is becoming a new buzzword (Malhotra, & Majchrzak, 2005).

These technologies may revolutionize and speed up team communication, but companies must recognize the subtleties that can be lost in electronic communication. By allowing teams to develop personal relationships within the team and encouraging a variety of communication methods, virtual teams can benefit from new forms of communications without losing touch with the basics. Wisely chosen words, inflection, and clear meaning can help turn otherwise confrontational communication into a productive process while maintaining trust between team members. Establishing an open dialogue with respect for individual differences early in a team's formation fosters trust and an understanding of individual writing and speaking styles that allows a team to communicate and function effectively with productive results.

References Battisti, P. (Dec 2006). Team up. *Walls & Ceilings*, 69(12), 78-79.

Bergstrom, R. Y. (March 1994). When the blackboard isn't big enough. *Production*, 106(3), 61.

Byrne, C. , Houen, J. , & Seaberg, M. (April 2002). One team: communicating to unite a growing, disparate workforce under one umbrella. *Communication World*, 19(3), 28-31.

Cullen, S. (July 2007). How unproductive are you?. *Office Solutions*, 24(3), 6.

DeJanasz, Dowd, & Schneider. (2001). *Interpersonal Skills in Organizations*. The McGraw-Hill Companies. Haymarket Business Publications Ltd.

Sept 3, 2007). *Crash Course in...*

Managing a virtual team. (business communication). *Management Today*, 20.

Horn, H. (Dec 2006).

The big communication gap: get your team on track communicating with clients and improve customer satisfaction. *24X7*, 11(12), 32-35. Malhotra, A. , & Majchrzak, A.

(2005). Virtual workspace technologies: emerging technologies enable virtual and distributed teams to communicate—and innovate—more effectively. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 46(2), 11-14.