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MOTD

" *The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team*

— Phil Jackson

Introduction
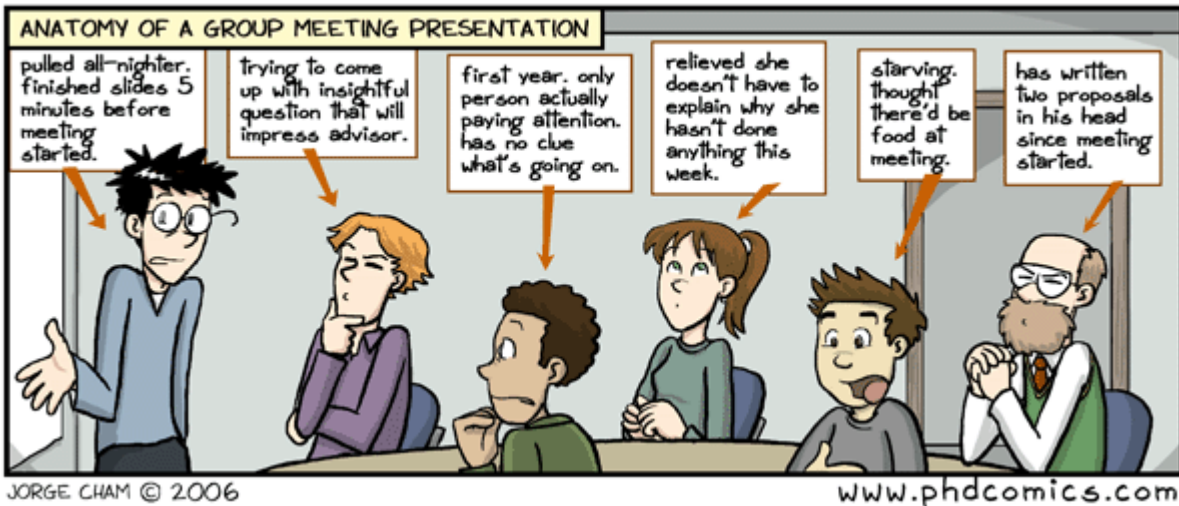
Navigating professional relationships within a team can be challenging. Interactions, even among amiable teammates, don't always guarantee smooth collaboration. Understanding the dynamics of working together is crucial.

There is a whole set of skills needed to work successfully in a team, covering areas such as dealing with conflict, maintaining morale, and keeping everyone organised and pulling in the same direction, which we'll look at below.

A Model of Team Coherance

> *Team effectiveness is enhanced by a team's commitment to reflection and on-going evaluation.*
>
> —*Judith Stein*

> *The most commonly used framework for a team's stages of development was developed in the mid-1960s by Bruce W. Tuckman.*
>
> —*Judith Stein*

Tuckmans stages of Team Development: Part 1

1. Forming

Hopefuly the stage where people are excited to work together.

- Going to be a lot of questioning how things will work to lower anxiety.

- The most importatant time to create **structure, goals, epectations**.

2. Storming

- The team will likely have feelings of imposter syndrome as excitement dies down.

- People will become less polite and voice more concerns

- Restructure of the team may need to occur to stop the team falling apart.

Tuckmans stages of Team Development: Part 2

3. Norming

- Discrepencies between expectations and reality shrink people start feeling more positive.

- Group members will be more active in solving discrepencies, and be more willing to ask for help. Inside jokes returning are a good sign.

- Energy is shifted towards the teams goals and an increase in productivity occurs. Good time to evaluate and perfect processes.

4. Performing

- Team is at their highest level of satisfaction, things seem to just click.

- Can do attitudes from everyone is a sign you're hitting the peak. Being more fluid and working to each others strengths.

- Lagest amount of progress happens here.

Tuckmans stages of Team Development: Part 3

5. Termintating/Ending

- When appropriate a team sometimes meets it's goals.

- If a team hit the performing stage work quality may deacrese knowing that the project is winding down. Focus will decrease if fear isn't present. But deadlines may cause some stress that may still push continued productivity increases.

- Plan a closing celebration, discuss time spent together, try to make those final tasks more of a communal effort.

Dealing with conflict

Working with other people can be difficult because they are probably not the same as us. The Belbin Team Roles describe some general types of behaviour, but the truth is that there are as many types of people as there are people: everyone has their own unique set of quirks and preferences.

For example people often disagree on

- Holding discussions in person vs via email/messaging
- Levels of interruption tolerated at their desks

Disagreements as small as this often lead to disagreements.

Minimising friction

The key to minimising friction is, as with many things, effective communication

- Understanding what each person needs in order to be happy and productive allows compromises to be agreed.
- Valuing ideas and concerns are heard and considered lets people know that they are a valued member of the team, boosting morale and enthusiasm.
- Taking part in non-work-related team activities can also help, as it provides an opportunity for more relaxed communication and to consider teammates as entire human beings, instead of just whatever their role is the team.

Morale

Teams are successful when everyone is pulling in the same direction.

This may not happen for two reasons

1. The directions are different, i.e. conflict.
2. Not Everyone is pulling.

The latter may be as a result of conflict that hasn't been properly dealt with, so that some members feel that there is no point in making a contribution, but there can also be other factors (such as personal circumstances) that would cause an individual to lose momentum, which can have a detrimental effect on the rest of the team if not handled well.

Besides avoiding conflict and making sure everyone feels valued, there are positive actions that can be taken to boost morale, including group activities (even taking a tea break can help), setting immediate

(fun) goals and giving each team member responsibility for some part of the project.

Organisation

The organizational Structure of a Team is vital for productivity and value generation, and task organization for uninterrupted productivity.

Ideal Task Planning

- Tasks planned to maintain continuous productivity. (Sprint Board)

- Avoid dependency on external factors or team members. (Try not to rely on team members, handle what task need to be done daily on standup)

- As I've said before bad agile is worse than no agile.

Personal Survival

In a professional context, you may find yourself stuck in an irrideemable team

- If it's truly iredeemable you may need to look at quitting, though this isn't always possible.

- Your own personal health should always be priority.

- Fulfilling your minimum obligations and responsibilities, while limiting emotional investment is generally the best way to keep going until you can change your circumstances.

- Having a good support system outside of work (friends and family) is pretty much a must in these tough situations.

The bright side

Despite me having to talk about survival strategies in the previous slides there are many good things about working in teams.

- Increased Pool of Ideas

- Wider variety of talents

- Quicker output

- etc.

And it is often working with people that work and think differently from us that we can push our own proffessional capabilities – in fact, it's been suggested that working with people who think differently from us can sharpen our intellects and improve the team's decision making!

Suggested reading/watching: Conflict

- The secret to teamwork isn't managing personalities

- Ways to deal with team conflict effectively

- 6 strategies to resolve conflict at work

- 10 ways to deal with a dysfunctional team when you're not the boss

Suggested reading/watching: Morale

- 7 great ways to boost your team's morale

- The 4 Rs of motivation

Suggested reading/watching: Planning

- Using the Stages of Team Development

- Teamweek (free Gantt chart planner)

- Best free project management software

Suggested reading/watching: Survival and Benefits

- The dysfunctional workplace survival guide

- Why diverse teams are smarter

Suggested activities

Think about the teams you've been a part of in recent memory, including your current GA team.

For each team, consider

- Which of Tuckmans team stages are you in? / did you finish in?

- For current/previous problems in the team:

  - What were the main challenges or problems within the team?

- What efforts were made to resolve these problems? Were they effective?

- Could the situation have been handled better? How?

- Was there anything you could have done to improve the team's general atmosphere (that doesn't rely on anyone else "playing along")?

- How did being in that team affect you, positively and negatively? Did you learn, or gain, anything from dealing with the challenges?