Team Norm Essentials

Predictably, teams can have trouble with particular components of interpersonal communication and interaction because they put a lot of diverse personalities and backgrounds into one space.

Following are some essential categories of team norms that can help alleviate many of the problems that may arise when employees work in cohesive groups:

Team members as coworkers:

All team members are equal; every team member's opinion will be thoughtfully considered; each team member will keep all commitments by the agreed upon due date; each team member agrees to constantly assess whether team members are honouring their commitments to the team norms.

Team member communication:

Team members will speak respectfully to each other, will not talk down to each other, and will recognize and thank each other for their contributions.

Team member interaction in meetings:

Team members will listen without interrupting; hold no side or competing conversations; follow the rules for effective meetings; attend meetings on time; end meetings on time; work from an agenda; use minutes recorded at each meeting as reference points.

Team organization and function:

Leadership will rotate monthly, and the team management sponsor will attend at least one meeting a month.

Team communication with other employees including managers:

Team members will make certain they have an agreement on what and when to communicate, and complaints about team members will be addressed first among team members.

Team problem solving, conflict resolution, and decision making:

Team members will make decisions by consensus, but the majority will rule if a timely consensus is not reached, and conflicts will be resolved directly among the people in conflict.

Developing Additional Team Norms

Team norms can be expanded for your specific needs and can encompass as many topics as the team deems necessary for successful functioning. It's best to start with a few team norms and add more norms as needed. Make sure your team norms are written and posted where team members are reminded of their commitment. The bottom line for using team norms to produce a contributing, successful team is the willingness to publicly identify when norms are not followed by the team members.

Warning: You need to constructively call each other out when team norms that you established and committed to following are not followed by team members. Only team members who are willing to bring up a failure to adhere to the practices you adopted are acting in concert with the living documentation of your team norms or guidelines.