

Tips and Traps in Using Student Teams

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Tips and Traps In Using Student Teams

- Who's here?
- Pros and cons on using student teams
- The student team roadmap and some driving instructions
- Lessons learned along the way
- Best practices / discussion / resources

Q: Who's in this webinar – what is your role?

Q: What is your experience in using student teams?

Q: What is the typical team size you use for team projects/papers in your course(s)?

Q: For those of you using teams, do you incorporate team feedback into each student's grade?

**Q: What are some of your best practices
in using student teams?**

(Answers revealed later)

How It All Started

MGMT E-4100 Managing Yourself and Others

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Managing others may not be complex, but it is certainly not easy. Simple, straightforward management principles can often be deceptively difficult to implement. This course teaches the fundamentals of management from different angles—managing oneself, managing organizational life, and managing others (managing upward, downward, and sideways). Using a variety of readings, written assignments, in-class exercises, and case discussions, the class focuses on understanding individual strengths, preferences, and blindspots—our own and others'—and working with other people to advance career goals and organizational objectives. Management requires judgment and students should expect to grapple with ambiguous situations that do not have simple solutions.

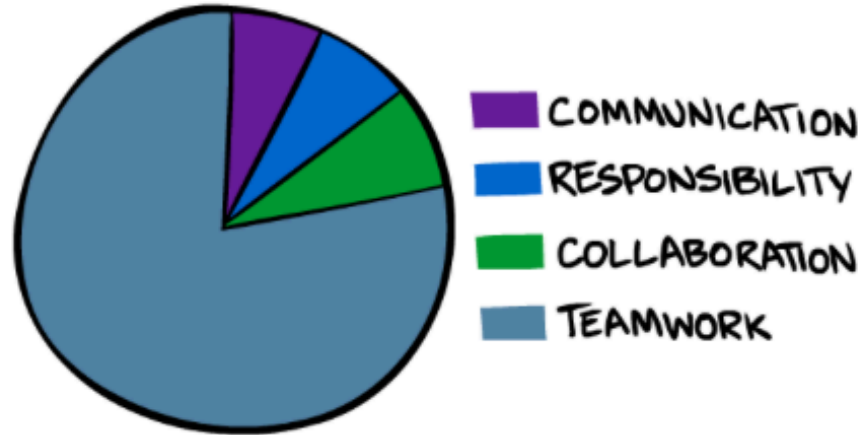
- Strategic Management
- Leadership and Decision Making
- Design Thinking Workshop
- Making Teams Work
- Advanced Team Skills Workshop

Why Use Student Teams?

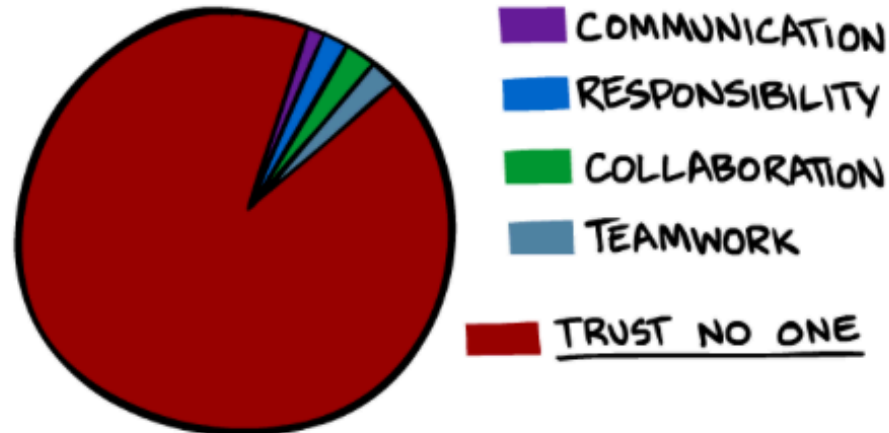
“Researchers report that, regardless of the subject matter, students working in small teams tend to learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the same content is presented in other instructional formats. Students who work in collaborative groups also appear more satisfied with their classes.”

The Student Perspective

WHAT GROUP PROJECTS ARE SUPPOSED TO TEACH YOU



WHAT GROUP PROJECTS TAUGHT ME



The Pros and Cons

Pro

- Students learn from each other
- Learn more than course subject material
- Teams can tackle bigger/harder assignments
- Higher quality work submitted
- Fewer, higher quality, submissions to grade

Con

- Instructor needs to also teach team skills
- Need to think through what makes a good team (versus individual) project
- Process/coordination time for students
- Hard to know which student did what work
 - Free riders
 - Plagiarism
- Team conflicts

Elements of a Good Team Assignment/Project

1. A sense of interdependence among team members
2. Accountability of individual students to both team and instructor
3. Frequent face-to-face interaction to promote team goals
4. Development of social skills needed for collaboration
5. Critical analysis of group process

What I've Learned About Using Student Teams

- If teams are set up well they can produce tremendous learning and lasting friendships – the reverse is also true
- Setting and managing student expectations is key
- I don't allow students to pick their own teams
 - Random is good
 - Diversity is good
 - “Disadvantage each team equally” in terms of time zones
- I now force them to do things they think are “silly” and “not needed because we're all adults” – such as spending time getting to know each other, doing a team charter, and discussing team process
- Teach them how to give feedback
- Conflict is (often) good
- Coach, don't solve
- Beware of taking sides
- Check-ins help
- Evaluations are key



Managing Student Expectations

Stages of Team Development

Forming

Storming

Norming

Performing

Adjourning

Orientation:

Members getting to know one another

Conflict:

Disagreement about roles and procedures

Structure:

Establishment of rules and social relationships

Work:

Focus on completing the task

Dissolution:

Completion of task and end of group

“Early process conflict not only helps a team develop better work processes and strategies but it teaches the team how to manage conflicts. This is why early process conflict is a predictor of later success for project teams. When these teams encounter problems in the later stages of a project, they have the skills to manage the conflict and develop alternative solutions.”



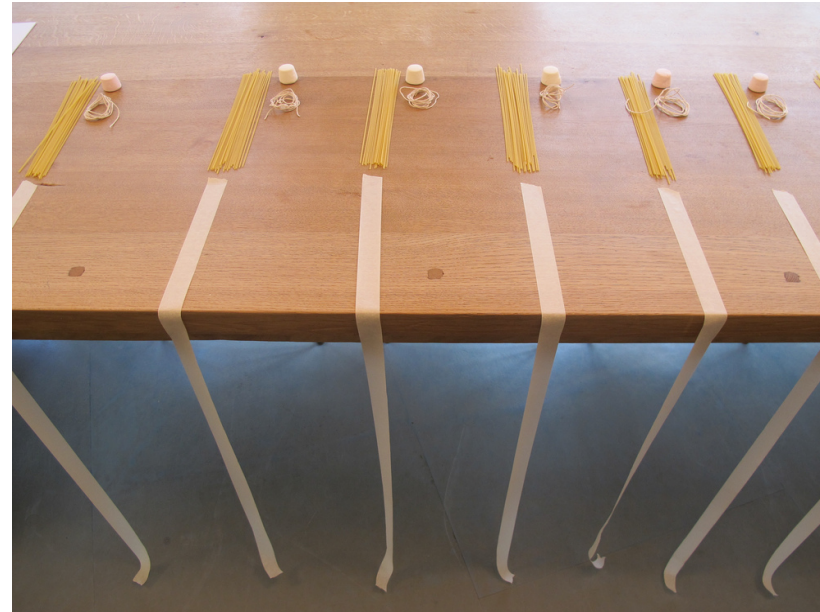
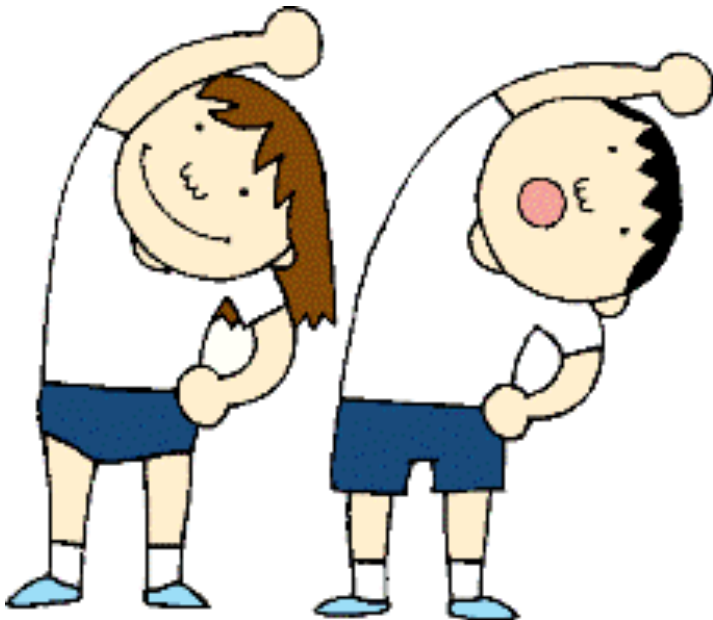
The Road Ahead



Beginning

Team Beginnings: Forming

HELLO
my name is



Team Communication Tips and Traps

Emails

- If you're not sure the tone is right, it probably isn't
- Don't send an email when you're mad
- When in doubt, don't hit 'send'
- Remember that email lives forever (and can take on a life of its own)
- Never assume that an email is private

Meetings (in person or virtual)

- Set an agenda
 - Four key skills
 - Ask questions
 - Listen actively / seek to understand
 - Give constructive feedback
 - Manage feelings
- Spend time on unique knowledge/perspectives of members (not on common information and what everyone already knows and/or agrees)
- Get everyone involved in the discussion; make sure no one is dominating

General

- As complexity or sensitivity of the subject or relationship increases, so, too, should the richness of the technology (e.g., from email to face-to-face)
- Consider culture of receiver
- It's nice to be nice
- When in doubt, benefit of the doubt

Team Contract or Charter



Elements to Consider for a Team Charter

Goals	What does the team want to accomplish? What are our standards?	Decisions	How should decisions be made? Must everyone agree for consensus? Should anyone have veto power?
Communication	Through what channels will we communicate? Is bcc okay? Reply all? Response time norms?	Roles	How will we assign roles (e.g., time keeper, facilitator, black hat, scribe)? Will we rotate at each meeting?
Meeting times	When should meetings occur? How often should the team meet? How long should a team meeting be?	Assignments	When assignments are made, what should be done when team members do not complete them, or complete them poorly?
Promptness	What should be done to encourage promptness?	Participation	What should be done to encourage everyone to participate?
Agendas/minutes	Who should be responsible for these activities? What other meeting roles?	Courtesies	How should the team encourage members to listen attentively and respectfully to others? Should the team have rules to limit interruption or prevent personal criticisms?
Attendance	What are legitimate reasons for missing meetings?	Performance	How will the team address performance issues?
Preparation	What happens if someone is unprepared for the meeting?	Enforcement	How should the team enforce the rules?

Virtual Teams

- Spend time together when possible
- Get to know each other – social time is not wasted time
- Make sure team members understand cultural differences in behavioral norms and language and customs
- Be sensitive to local cultures (e.g., family time, religion, customs, work hours)
- Be aware of your own communication practices (e.g., jargon, metaphor)



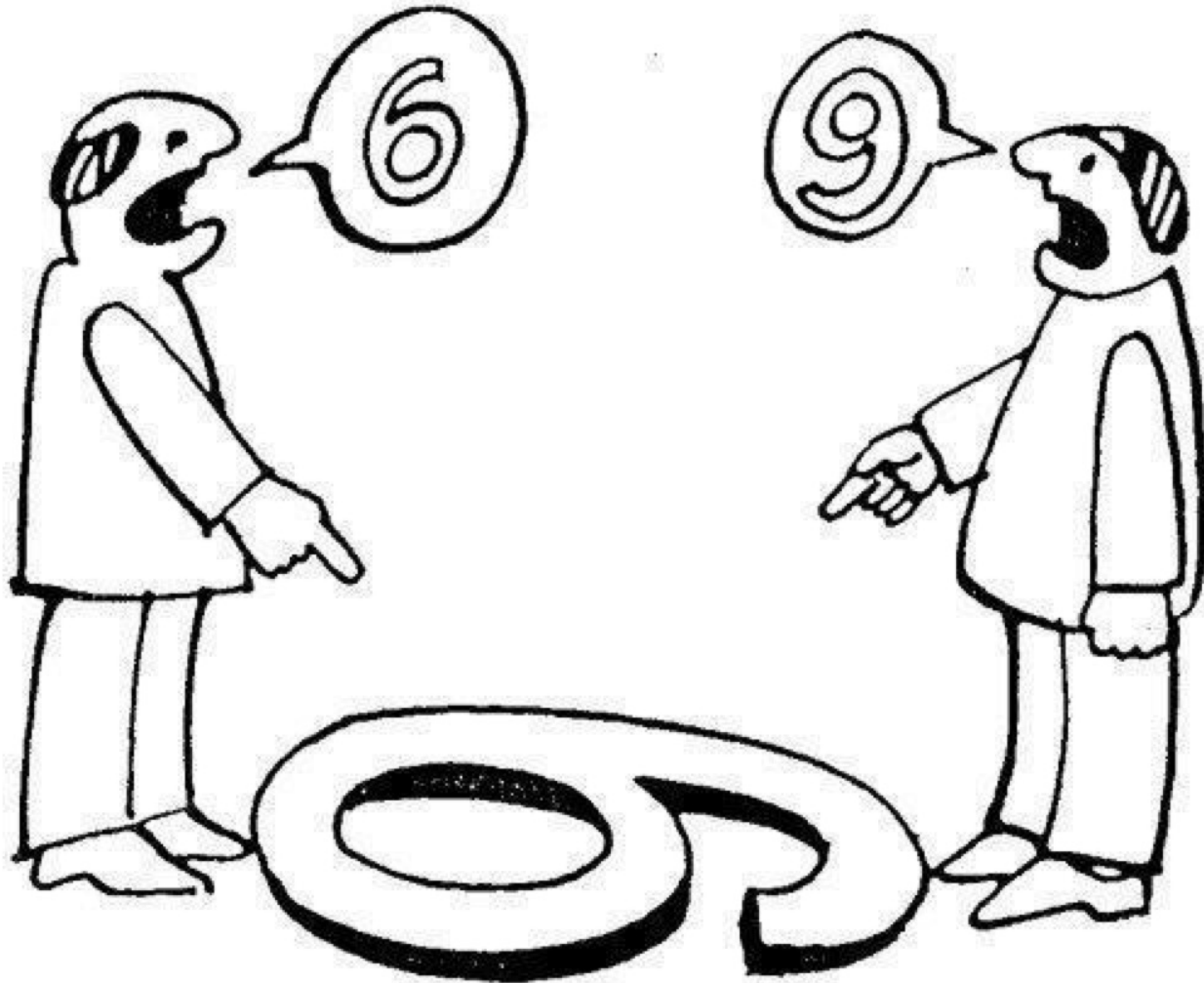
Middle

Conflict





Different Perspectives



Types of Conflict

Healthy Conflict

- Focused on task issues
- Legitimate differences of opinion about the task
- Differences in values and perspectives
- Different expectations about the impact of decisions

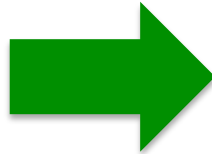
Unhealthy Conflict

- Competition over power, rewards, and resources
- Conflict between individual and group goals
- Poorly run team meetings
- Personal grudges from the past
- Faulty communications

Types of Conflict

Cognitive Conflict

- Task-oriented and process-oriented
- Focused on judgmental differences about how to best achieve common objectives



Leads to:

- Larger number of alternatives and perspectives
- Identification and recognition of a larger number of critical assumptions
- Evaluation of assumptions, ideas and proposals more carefully and critically
- Understanding group decisions in more depth

Affective Conflict

- Emotional
- Focused on personal incompatibilities or disputes



Leads to:

- Lower levels of individual commitment and acceptance of group decisions
- Lower levels of individual satisfaction with the group experience
- Less desire to work as a group

Managing Conflict

- Maintain a focus on factual information
- Seek more than two perspectives on issues
- Focus on common group and organizational goals
- Use humor to relieve interpersonal tensions
- Develop and maintain a balanced power structure
- Utilize mechanisms for calling the question and making a choice

Team Time



End



Wrapping Up The Project / Teams



Evaluation

- OUTSTANDING
- Excellent
- Very Good
- Average
- Below Average



What I've Learned (often the hard way)

- Spend time going over teamwork basics – what to expect, etc.
- Share with them your own observations about what makes teams successful and not successful in your class and/or in this type of project
- Have them to a team charter, no matter how much they roll their eyes
- Hold them to this team charter when they run into issues
- As much as possible, have them solve their own problems – be a good listener and coach, but intervene only in rare situations
- Give them time – during class – to do a mid-way team check-in session to surface any problems and address them before they fester

Your Best Practices



Thank You



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