

Organizational Leadership

TEAMS AND ROLES

Overview

This is a short activity with one-on-one conversations as a basis for discussion about roles in teams.

Purpose

To define the characteristics of successful teams and team members and to foster team building among participants

Time Required

25 – 30 minutes

Materials

Flip chart, marker, copies of Handouts 1 & 2

In this short activity, one-on-one conversations are the basis for discussion about roles in teams. The purpose of the exercise is to define the characteristics of successful teams and team members and to foster team building among participants.

WHAT	TIME	HOW	MATERIALS
Step 1: Set the Context	5–10 min	Explain to the group, “Teams take many forms, such as groups working together, organized sports, or friends. Visualize a time when you were a member of a successful team. What was it? What did you do?”	
Step 2: Discussion	10 min	Say to the group, “Ask a partner the questions on the flip chart.” Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ When were you a member of a successful team? ★ How would you describe your role and contribution to the team? ★ What did others do? ★ How did you know the team was successful? ★ What did you learn as a member of this team? 	Flip chart with the questions at left written on it

WHAT	TIME	HOW	MATERIALS
Step 3: Reflection	10 min	<p>Record answers to questions (2) and (3).</p> <p>Give people Handouts 1 and 2 to check against and look back on.</p> <p>In this short activity, one-on-one conversations are the basis for discussion about roles in teams. The purpose of the exercise is to define the characteristics of successful teams and team members and to foster team building among participants.</p>	Copies of handouts at the end of this section

HANDOUT 1

Roles: What can you bring to your team?

As a member of any team, it is helpful to know what is expected of you. Ideally, what is expected of you will match your interests and skills. All teams should incorporate certain important roles. Below are descriptions of some of those roles. This list is really just a beginning; blank spaces are left at the end for roles unique to your team.

ROLE	DESCRIPTION
Future thinker	Thinks about the big picture and reminds people of what they can accomplish
Gatherer	Makes sure that everyone knows about meetings and activities and reminds them to come
Speaker/performer	Enjoys speaking or being in front of large groups of people to share information
Money person	Keeps track of current funds and makes plans for getting funds in the future
Organizer	Keeps track of time and deadlines
Networker	Makes partnerships with new people and groups
Facilitator	Creates processes for the group to reflect and to succeed
Documentor	Helps the team think about where it has been and what it has accomplished

It may take a while for people to decide what they are interested in and what they are good at. Roles change as people gain new interests and skills. Roles also overlap. People might play more than one role. You might also decide that you want to learn more about another aspect of leadership. Leadership—and all the things that go into being a leader—involves skills that you can learn and adapt to your own style.

HANDOUT 2

A bird's eye view of teamwork²

Geese can teach us lessons about building a good team. Next fall, when you see geese heading south for the winter, flying in V formation, you might consider what science has discovered as to why they fly that way:

- ★ As each bird flaps its wings, it creates uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in V formation, the whole flock adds at least 71 percent greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own.
- ★ When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird in front.
- ★ When the head goose gets tired, it rotates back in the wing, and another goose flies the point.
- ★ Geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.
- ★ Finally, when a goose gets sick or is wounded by gunshots and falls out of formation, two other geese fall out with that goose and follow it down to lend help and protection. They stay with the fallen goose until it is able to fly or until it dies; only then do they launch out on their own or with another formation to catch up with their group.

People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quickly and easily because they are traveling on the momentum of one another. If we share work and leadership, we will be able to stay moving in the right direction longer. It makes sense to take turns doing demanding jobs and to encourage people to keep up the good work.

² Adapted from a speech given by Angeles Arrien at the 1991 Organizational Development Network, based on the work of Milton Olson and circulated to Outward Bound staff throughout the United States.