

Take Action to Enhance Teamwork in Your Workplace

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Are you looking for ways to strengthen and develop your professional team? Whether you are a department leader or have just entered a new position, you can influence how you and your coworkers operate as a cohesive unit. As a newer member of our team, I have observed how an emphasis on strong teamwork can lead to stronger client relationships, an organic development of professional ideas, increased efficiency and a more positive work environment. I invite you to consider what actions you can personally take to ensure the continued success of your current team in the workplace.



Fostering a Positive Community: A positive culture within your team can affect how your unit functions as a whole, as well as your daily operations. One way that team members can develop a positive atmosphere is to strategically plan for opportunities to learn more about one another. Consider incorporating a brief, five-minute icebreaker to launch your regularly scheduled meeting. Team members can take turns planning the brief question, activity or game. If you are a leader, consider planning a longer, more formal team building event, such as a scavenger hunt or visit your local “escape room”. Managers and leadership should not be the only individuals responsible for cultivating strong team relationships, though. All colleagues can support one another by briefly checking in throughout the day or by simply offering a quick word of gratitude. Laying this groundwork for a strong team foundation can lead to colleagues feeling more comfortable sharing their ideas and viewpoints, allow for regular collaboration, and can increase the capacity for your team to problem-solve as a cohesive unit.

Opportunities for Professional Development: By using the strategies listed above to form positive, structurally sound teams, you and your colleagues can open many avenues in which you can gain knowledge and resources from each other. Strong teams can rely on one another when it comes to problem solving for unique situations that may arise. When a coworker feels comfortable asking you for help with a

problem, they can learn about your past experience with a similar situation, and vice versa. Team members can also take turns teaching one another about any new knowledge related to their field or workplace procedures. At my department's monthly meeting, we take turns sharing out one new insight that we discovered since the previous meeting. Incorporating this routine with your team can launch a platform for clarifying information and open discussions about new developments in your profession. Attending professional development as a team can also lead to a deeper understanding of the material, since conversations about the information can continue after the class is over. If you attend a class or seminar independently, don't forget to share what you learned with your teammates too!

Streamline Communication: You may also want to consider whether your team can expand on the way in which you communicate. If your team relies heavily on email chains that clutter your inbox, contemplate using specifically designed programs for collaborative office work. [Hive](#) and [Slack](#) are two popular platforms that allow for chatting and document sharing. Are your team's procedures and workflows in need of streamlining? Review and revise your workflows together and document them in an easily accessible location. Use a program that allows everyone to edit the workflow documents, such as Microsoft's [OneNote](#) or [Google Drive](#). Having your team's procedures outlined clearly can increase the consistency of work completed and it can also support the training process for any new team members.

Assigning Roles and Responsibilities: It could also be beneficial to engage in a discussion with your team about individual responsibilities. It may be in your best interest to assign certain roles to individuals based on their strengths. Consider which members of your team enjoy conversing with clients, communicating with other colleagues, planning and organizing, or designing items digitally. With these types of skill sets in mind, you and your team can assign roles accordingly. However, your team may benefit from sharing other tasks and responsibilities equally. My current team divides most of our responsibilities evenly, which allows for the consistent service to our clients and completion of tasks every day, even if a member of our team is on vacation for an extended period of time. Regardless of how your team completes tasks and assigns roles, it is important to have clear communication and tools to coordinate your team's assignments and responsibilities.

You as an individual member of your professional team can be intentionally mindful of your team's daily interactions. This will allow for excellent client service, an increase in efficiency, and many opportunities for you and your teammates to grow in your field. To achieve this goal, focus on taking active steps to encourage a positive community, discuss and assign roles strategically, and encourage colleagues to learn from each other's experience and knowledge set.
