Cooperation Not Competition:
Building a Team

Background Notes

Characteristics of successful networks—and other teams as well—include a climate of trust and openness, a sense of belonging to something important, and honest communication wherein diversity of experience is encouraged and flexibility and sensitivity to others is practiced. When mistakes are made, members see the mistakes as part of the learning process. Open discussions help members find the causes of problems without assigning blame. Members of effective networks recognize their interdependence and the need for each other’s special knowledge, skills, and resources. They know that together they can achieve results that as individuals they could not.

Although effective networks often engage in a form of participatory leadership, they recognize that the role of the leader is that of a facilitator who

- Listens carefully,
- Creates a climate of trust,
- Eliminates fear,
- Acts as a role model,
- Delegates tasks,
- Shares information readily,
- Motivates and empowers members,
- Deals promptly with conflict,
- Keeps network on track, and
- Runs meetings effectively and efficiently.

Members of effective networks practice cooperation, not competition. They take responsibility for their individual roles in advancing network objectives, but they value their team identity. In addition to pooling their skills and understanding, they recognize that the team approach provides mutual support.

Advocacy requires hard work and a long-term commitment. It is easy for one person’s commitment and enthusiasm to wane. The synergy that comes from people working together productively on an important issue can sustain efforts, even through difficult times.
By the end of this unit, participants will be able to

- Describe behaviors that lead to team success, and
- Describe the stages of team growth.

1 hour and 40 minutes

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Overhead projector
- Copies of handouts
  - I.3.1 Background Notes
  - I.3.2 Behaviors that Facilitate Team Success
  - I.3.3 Stages of Team Growth

- For Activity 2, cut five squares as shown in the Broken Squares Template at the end of Unit 3.
- Use cardboard or heavy paper and make one set of the five broken square puzzles for each small group.
- Write the rules for the Broken Squares exercise on newsprint.
- For Activity 4, make overhead transparencies of “Stages of Team Growth” (4 pages).

**Introduction to Team-Building**

Time: 15 minutes

Introduce Unit 3 by reviewing the objectives and making a brief presentation on team building. Major points to include in your introduction follow:

- Members of effective networks function as a team. They know that they are interdependent and need each other’s special skills and abilities. They know that together they can achieve results that as individuals they could not.
- Within the network “team,” the role of the leader resembles that of a facilitator—someone who listens carefully, creates trust and eliminates fear, delegates tasks, shares information, empowers other members, handles conflict, and keeps the network moving toward its goals.
- Each member of the network is responsible for his/her individual contribution to develop a “team identity” among the members.
- Advocacy requires hard work and a long-term commitment. It is easy for one person’s enthusiasm to wane. The synergy that comes from people working together on an important issue can sustain efforts, even through difficult times.
- The purpose of Unit 3 is to help the participants recognize the importance of team-building within the network. Characteristics of effective networks include a climate of trust and openness, a sense of belonging to something important, and honest communication.
Broken Squares Exercise
Time: 45 minutes

Note to Facilitator: The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate the power of team problem solving. Do not share this purpose with the participants until the exercise is completed.

1. Divide participants into teams of five, and assign at least one observer to each team until all participants have been assigned.
2. Introduce the activity by explaining that the game the participants are about to play is a learning experience that will be discussed later.
3. Mix each set of 15 pieces and distribute three pieces at random to each of the five players on each team.
4. Instruct the teams, “Each member of your team has three pieces of paper. When I say ‘begin,’ the task for each of the five team members is to form five perfect squares of equal size. Your task will not be complete until each of you has a perfect square in front of you. The rules of the game are as shown:”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>No team member may speak</td>
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<tr>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>Team members may not signal others to give them a piece of the puzzle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>Members may give pieces of their puzzle to other members of the team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>Observers will watch to ensure that members follow the rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>You have 15 minutes to complete the task</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Tell the teams to begin.
6. Call an end to the game after 15 minutes.
7. Show the players who were unable to complete the squares how to do so.
8. Analyze what happened during the game and discuss the lessons learned. Use the following questions to guide the discussion:

- Who was willing to give away pieces of her/his puzzle?
- Was anyone willing to give away all of his/her pieces?
- Did anyone finish his/her puzzle and then separate from the rest of the group?
- Did anyone break the rules?
- Was there anyone who continually struggled with the pieces but was unwilling to give away any or all of the pieces?
- Was there a critical point when members of the group began to cooperate?
9. Explain that the purpose of the game was to demonstrate the importance of cooperation in solving problems. People need to share what they know in order to find solutions.
   • What happens to the team when one person finishes and stops working on the team problem?
   • What happens if you ignore another person’s task?
10. Ask participants to think about their own organizations.
    • What have you noticed in your own organization that was demonstrated by this exercise?
    • What lessons did you learn about being a more effective team member?

### Behaviors that Contribute to Team Success

**Time:** 20 minutes

1. Write the following heading on newsprint: “People on Successful Teams...”
2. Ask the full group to think about the behaviors and actions they observed during the game or in the course of other experiences that encouraged teamwork and led to successful outcomes. Ask participants to complete the phrase “People on successful teams...”
3. Write the responses on the flipchart. Be sure to include the following if not mentioned by participants:

   - Clarify roles, relationships, assignments, and responsibilities
   - Share leadership functions within the group and use all member resources
   - Tolerate ambiguity, uncertainty, and a seeming lack of structure
   - Take interest in each member’s achievements as well as those of the group
   - Remain open to change, innovation, and creative problem solving
   - Are committed to keep group communication on target and schedule, while permitting disagreements
   - Promote constructive criticism and helpful feedback
   - Foster trust, confidence, and commitment within the group
   - Foster a norm that calls for members to support and respect one another and remain realistic in their expectations of one another

### Transition

The Broken Squares exercise demonstrated quickly and clearly some behaviors that promote team work as well as some behaviors that inhibit team work. The discussion expanded on the characteristics of people who contribute to effective teams. It is easy to identify and even model these behaviors in a workshop setting; however, the real world of working in teams is very different. In real life, the tensions and expectations created when a group of diverse individuals come together to work on a shared task exert a strong influence on how and when the group becomes a “team.” It will happen—a team will emerge! The timing may vary, but all teams pass through similar stages of development on their way to becoming effective. The next activity explains these stages and reassures team members that the changes experienced by their team are normal.
### Stages of Team Growth

**Time:** 20 minutes

1. Refer to the newsprint with the “Stages of Team Growth” model and introduce the four stages to the participants.

#### Stages of Team Growth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Forming</strong></td>
<td>Transition from individual to member status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Members explore acceptable group behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feelings of excitement, anticipation and optimism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suspicion, fear, and anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attempt to define tasks, responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Many distractions—little work accomplished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Storming</strong></td>
<td>Members realize task is different and more difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decision-making process is not yet defined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Members are argumentative and short-tempered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Members resist collaboration—doubt success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pressures prevent work from progressing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Members begin to understand each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Norming</strong></td>
<td>Group norms established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Members accept roles and responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conflict is reduced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperation replaces competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feel relief that things will work out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Express criticism constructively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differences resolved; time and energy spent on work</td>
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<td><strong>4. Performing</strong></td>
<td>Diagnosis and problem solving begins</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Changes implemented</td>
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<td>Members accept strengths and weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfaction with team’s progress</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Members develop attachment to one another</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team is cohesive and effective</td>
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2. Using the notes from Handout I.3.3, present the transparencies on the characteristics of each stage of team growth.
3. After the presentation of the four stages of team growth, lead a general discussion of the concept by asking questions such as
   • What stage is this network in now? How do you know?

**Note to Facilitator:** Help the participants think about the characteristics and behaviors they are currently exhibiting and link those to one of the stages. New networks will be “forming” while older networks may be in the later stages. Ask the participants how they could reduce the length or severity of the difficult stages.

   • Why is it important and/or helpful to understand the stages of team growth?

**Note to Facilitator:** Understanding the stages of team growth can help network members recognize and understand what is happening within their group at any given time. It can also help relieve negative feelings or frustration if the group knows it is experiencing the normal characteristics of growth. Members can discuss what is happening at any stage and help move through the hard times.

Well-functioning teams get things done! After experiencing various difficulties in learning to work together and trust one another, teams develop clarity on their goals and specific roles. Members value clear communication and beneficial team behaviors. They have put in place procedures for group decision making and managing team logistics. **Distribute handouts for Unit 3.**

A critical task of networks is making group decisions. When many and often diverse opinions are represented, group decision-making skills can facilitate the process. In the next unit, participants will practice group decision making and identify the steps in the process.
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Behaviors that Facilitate Team Success

People on successful teams

♦ Clarify roles, relationships, assignments, and responsibilities.

♦ Share leadership functions within the group and use all member resources.

♦ Tolerate ambiguity, uncertainty, and a seeming lack of structure.

♦ Take interest in each member’s achievements as well as those of the group.

♦ Remain open to change, innovation, and creative problem solving.

♦ Are committed to keep group communication on target and schedule while permitting disagreements.

♦ Promote constructive criticism and helpful feedback.

♦ Foster trust, confidence and commitment within the group.

♦ Foster a norm that calls for members to support and respect one another and remain realistic in their expectations of one another.

As a team or network matures, members gradually learn to cope with emotional and group pressures. Generally, this happens in four stages.

**Stage 1 – Forming**

When a team or network is forming, members cautiously explore the boundaries of acceptable group behavior as they make the transition from individual to member status. Feelings in this stage include excitement, anticipation, and optimism as well as suspicion, fear, and anxiety about the work ahead. Members attempt to define the task at hand and decide how it will be accomplished. They also try to determine acceptable group behavior and how to deal with group problems. Because much is going on to distract members' attention, the group accomplishes little work. This is perfectly normal.

**Stage 2 – Storming**

This is probably the most difficult stage because members begin to realize that the task is different or more difficult than they imagined. They become testy, blameful, or overzealous. Still too inexperienced to know much about decision making, members argue about just what actions they should take, even when they agree on the issue facing them. They try to rely solely on their personal and professional experiences and tend to resist collaboration. Feelings include sharp fluctuations in attitude about the chances of success. These pressures mean that members have little energy to spend in meeting common goals, but they are beginning to understand one another.

**Stage 3 – Norming**

During this stage, members reconcile competing loyalties and responsibilities. They accept the team or network's ground rules (or norms), their roles, and the individuality of each member. Emotional conflict is reduced as previously competitive relationships become more cooperative. Feelings include a new ability to express criticism constructively and relief that everything seems likely to work out. There is more friendliness as members confide in one another and discuss the team’s dynamics. As members begin to work out their differences, they have more time and energy to spend on their objectives and start making significant progress.

**Stage 4 – Performing**

Members begin diagnosing and solving problems and implementing changes. They have accepted each other’s strengths and weakness and learned their roles. They are satisfied with the team’s progress and feel a close attachment to one another. The team or network is now an effective, cohesive unit.

Broken Squares Template

1. Broken Square Template 1
2. Broken Square Template 2
3. Broken Square Template 3
4. Broken Square Template 4
5. Broken Square Template 5
STAGES OF TEAM GROWTH

STAGE 1: FORMING

• Transition from individual to member status
• Members explore acceptable group behavior
• Feelings of excitement, anticipation, and optimism
• Suspicion, fear, and anxiety
• Attempt to define tasks, responsibilities
• Many distractions—little work accomplished
STAGE 2: STORMING

• Members realize task is different and more difficult
• Decision-making process is not yet defined
• Members are argumentative and short-tempered
• Members resist collaboration — doubt success
• Pressures prevent work from progressing
• Members begin to understand each other
STAGE 3: NORMING

• Group norms established
• Members accept roles and responsibilities
• Conflict is reduced
• Cooperation replaces competition
• Feel relief that things will work out
• Express criticism constructively
• Differences resolved; time and energy spent on work
STAGE 4: PERFORMING

- Diagnosis and problem solving begin
- Changes implemented
- Members accept strengths and weaknesses
- Satisfaction with team’s progress
- Members develop attachment to one another
- Team is cohesive and effective