

Progressive Journal

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OLTM 335: High Performance Teams

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Week 10 Journal: Evaluating Team Effectiveness

Who are you as a leader when looking through a lens of collaboration and teamwork?

When I view myself as a leader through the lens of collaboration and teamwork, I am extremely driven to align all team members around a shared goal so that we can achieve it together. I view myself as an individual who creates an inclusive environment where each team member feels valued, while recognizing that I am a work in progress and continually learning how to improve in this area. Although I possess natural leadership tendencies, I recognize that my skills can be further developed through ongoing learning and practice. By working to be both inclusive and goal-oriented, I am intentionally developing the humble, hungry, and smart qualities Lencioni (2020) describes in his TED Talk.

What are your strengths and weaknesses in regards to working with others and specifically, working with others from diverse backgrounds?

My strengths include being detail-oriented, organized, efficient, empathetic, and a respectful team player who creates an inclusive team environment. I also excel at maintaining consistent communication and prefer to stay ahead on assignments rather than procrastinate, especially on group projects.

A key weakness is my tendency to take over and not always allow others the opportunity to lead. Even though I try to be inclusive by asking teammates questions, involving them in decisions, and seeking their feedback, I can become impatient and fail to give them the time they may need to respond. Even though I sometimes take the lead, I recognize that an 'ideal team player' balances hunger with humility and people skills, as Lencioni (2020) explains, so I am working to share leadership more intentionally.

When working with teammates from diverse backgrounds, it is even more crucial to provide space for others to respond at their own pace, particularly when English is not their first language, and they may need time to process what is being asked. I can become impatient with teammates when they do not follow clear instructions or fulfill commitments, but one of my strengths is self-awareness, which enables me to step back and recognize when I might be overreacting. One of my strengths is that I possess self-awareness and have the ability to take a step back and recognize when I might be overreacting. I understand that others do not work in the same way I do, and even when I become frustrated, I do not express that frustration to team members, which helps to maintain peace. However, this approach can also be viewed as a weakness because I tend to avoid conflict to maintain peace.

Where do you want to go with your leadership talents and knowledge?

I would like my leadership talents and knowledge to take me to a place where I can help many others achieve their goals. I envision myself helping a company rebuild its operations to run more efficiently and effectively. I can also see myself working with individuals with disabilities on a larger scale to empower them to achieve their goals and improve their quality of life. Lencioni (2020) emphasizes that success in modern organizations depends on teams comprised of humble, hungry, and smart individuals, and my goal is to utilize my leadership to help others develop these qualities as well.

How can you continue to improve upon your weaknesses?

To improve upon my weaknesses, it is essential that I continue to evaluate my performance when working in teams and reflect on what I have done and how I can improve it. Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla Motors, advises leaders to maintain a feedback loop by constantly thinking about what they have done and how they could be doing it better, which reinforces the

value of regular reflection (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2015). This means intentionally reviewing every step of the process, how I handled situations or tasks, and what I can adjust in future situations.

When working collaboratively, I need to step back more often and allow others the opportunity to lead, share their ideas, and ask questions, while ensuring that I provide team members with the space to do so on their own schedule rather than mine. Addressing issues directly is also an area of growth for me. I recently resolved a conflict with a teammate by openly sharing my frustration and explaining the reasons behind it, while clarifying that my intent was to address the issue before it escalated into something worse. She responded well, shared her perspective, apologized for her part, and together we agreed that addressing issues upfront would be more beneficial to the team in the long run.

Leann Renniger (2020) provides a four-part formula for giving feedback in her YouTube video, “The Secret Guide to Giving Good Feedback.” First, you ask a short yet important question to elicit a “micro-yes,” then you name specific data about what you saw or heard, next you explain how that behavior impacted you, and finally, you end on a question such as, “What are your thoughts?” By using this four-step approach, I can address issues more directly while still maintaining respect and collaboration within a team setting.

What elements of servant leadership will help you work collaboratively?

Empathy, healing, listening, and a commitment to others' growth are key elements of servant leadership that will help me work more collaboratively. The servant leader strives to understand and empathize with others, and becoming a skilled empathetic listener is one of the most effective ways to achieve this (Spears, 2010).

One of the great strengths of servant leadership is the potential for healing oneself and one's relationship to others (Spears, 2010). Many people have experienced emotional hurts, and

servant leaders recognize an opportunity to support healing and wholeness in those they serve. Greenleaf (1977/2002) suggests that when servant-leaders and followers share a commitment to seeking wholeness, something meaningful and transformative is communicated within that relationship, which reinforces the deeper purpose of collaborative work (Spears, 2010).

Week 9 Journal: Conflict Within Teams

Description of the Team Dynamics

Our COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) group consisted of five members: three students from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Noor Jifri, Shamma Khamis, and Mohammad Nahad, as well as Kym McGee and me. Initially, the team began with the understanding that we would have scheduled weekly meetings and equally contribute to the team project. Our group was diverse not only in terms of culture but also in age, communication styles, and levels of engagement. I naturally assumed the role of leader, organizing meetings, designing slide decks, and maintaining active communication to keep project momentum going. However, not everyone appeared equally mentally present, committed, or engaged. According to Aldag and Kuzuhara (2015), effective team dynamics depend on trust, open communication, and mutual accountability, all of which seemed to be lacking or unevenly distributed in our team (p. 221).

I recognized potential challenges from the beginning, including the time zone difference, cultural differences, and a significant age gap. However, none of these were a major issue. One UAE student left the project, without any notice, reducing our team to four. The remaining international students were quiet and contributed minimally to project ideas, which made collaboration and ideation difficult. This was understandable due to language barriers and the challenges of cross-cultural communication, although I made sure to create an inclusive team environment by regularly soliciting feedback on ideas and ensuring that space was provided for their contributions.

Description of the Team Conflict

The main team conflict was regarding member commitment, accountability, and task execution. Despite our agreement on meeting times and task responsibilities, Kym missed two of the five meetings, failed to follow up or communicate about the meeting, and when she did contribute to our shared slides, she ignored the task instructions. This led to frustration, additional work for other team members, and hindered the team's ability to work in a cohesive manner. As Lee et al. (2015) note, task conflict can stimulate deeper engagement; however, process and relationship conflict (including incompatible working practices and a lack of accountability) are typically detrimental to team effectiveness. This team situation reflects commitment conflicts and exemplifies both task and interpersonal conflict (Aldag & Kusuhara, 2015, p. 221).

Social skills and communication competencies are crucial in project-based learning environments, as team members who fail to communicate constraints or engage with feedback suffer a decline in productivity and group cohesion (Lee et al., 2015). The issue was further compounded when, at the agreed-upon time for recording our presentation, our team spent two hours revising Kym's section of the presentation because her section alone was ten minutes long, and the whole presentation was supposed to be no more than ten minutes in total. We were repeatedly put on hold, while Kym had to "do laundry," frustrating both me and the UAE students. When I brought to her attention that we had invested a significant amount of time revising her section and that the UAE students had other obligations to attend to, she seemed to lack the sense of urgency that we needed to proceed with the recording. The main issue was Kym's inconsistent communication, lack of preparation, and apparent disregard for the team members' time.

Conflict Resolution Strategies

I initially leaned toward an avoidance style by downplaying Kym's missed meetings and her slides not being on par with the rest of the presentation, in hopes of not escalating tension (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2015, p. 225). Although I used compromising and accommodating strategies by making concessions to meet the deadline and prioritizing harmony over confronting problems directly, which can create "win-lose" situations and even encourage future non-cooperation (pp. 225-226). Collaboration was necessary, so I offered to help Kym condense her content through open communication, aiming for a mutually acceptable solution, which is the ideal approach in most team conflicts (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2015; Brainy Dose, 2019). It is essential to remain calm, actively listen, find common ground, and collaboratively brainstorm solutions, as these are critical to resolving conflicts constructively (Brainy Dose, 2019).

In hindsight, a more effective approach to this conflict would have been to meet with Kym privately after she missed the meeting (even though I offered), using "I statements" to express my concerns about our project timeline. I should have addressed the fact that her slides were not properly done, and her script was not written prior to our scheduled time to record our presentation. As a leader, it is essential to strike a balance between assertiveness and empathy to address issues promptly, rather than allowing them to fester (Lee et al., 2015). Clarifying task assignments, reinforcing expectations, and establishing clear communication protocols early are crucial to preventing misunderstandings and "incompatible working practices" (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2015).

Lessons Learned

This experience taught me that clearly defining roles, tasks, and expectations from the beginning is important for team success. Maintaining open communication is essential because it

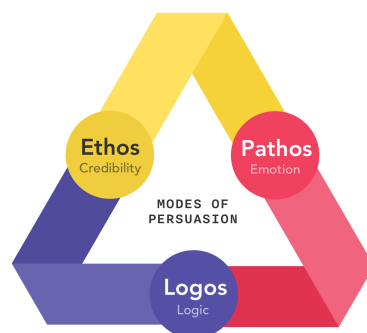
prevents misunderstandings from escalating into larger problems. I learned that while avoiding conflict might keep the peace for the moment, it does not help the team to improve or hold members accountable. I also realized the importance of directly addressing issues in a private and respectful manner, instead of letting them fester. For future group projects, prioritizing direct communication, encouraging everyone to participate early on, and ensuring that accountability is a team norm will be crucial elements in building trust, reducing misunderstandings, and ensuring that everyone contributes equally to the team's goals.

Week 8 Journal: Managing Change in Teams

Adjusting to change within a team can be challenging, especially when all meetings are held virtually. Having the necessary skills to communicate effectively and influence peers is essential in a team setting when faced with unexpected changes. The following journal entry will discuss the changes my COIL team has had to adjust to and how I applied the Rhetorical Triangle to help address these changes.

My COIL team encountered a few unexpected changes throughout our project. The first was the loss of a team member, who, unfortunately, did not notify us that they would not be contributing to the project or that they would no longer be part of the team; they simply disappeared. This added pressure and stress on the rest of the team, as none of us knew what was going on with this team member and whether they would be contributing to the assignment. The second challenge was when a team member failed to submit survey responses on time, resulting in our data being altered. The assignment had to be redone right before the submission time, when it was already nearly complete. I will provide further details on the approaches I used to help my team adjust to these situations; however, first, I would like to discuss the Rhetorical Triangle.

Figure 1. The Rhetorical Triangle.



Note. The image shows three ways to appeal to people and influence them.

Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle, which includes Logos, Pathos, and Ethos, can be used to encourage others to change their minds, feelings, and behavior (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2015).

Logos refers to using reason or logic to convince another person to accept a change, while Pathos refers to addressing your audience's emotional and psychological needs, and Ethos refers to utilizing your credibility with your audience (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2015).

Now, let's take a look at how I utilized the Rhetorical Triangle to address change within my COIL team. In the first situation, when we lost a team member, we did not learn that the team member was dropping the class until a few days ago. The team member never communicated to us that they would not be contributing to any of the projects, leaving the team stressed and frustrated. I used Logos by suggesting that we continue to include the team member on our assignments until we knew for certain whether they were dropping the class, and at the same time, I encouraged discussion on how we would like to distribute the additional work. An example of how I used Pathos is telling the group how I understood their stress and frustration due to the uncertainty of completing the assignments on time, as we were unsure whether the individual would choose to contribute or not. After several attempts to make contact with the team member, I used Ethos to encourage my team and assured them that I had experienced something similar in another group before. I emphasized the importance of accountability and transparency in maintaining trust within our group.

In conclusion, working through the unexpected changes within our COIL team required effective communication and adaptability. By applying the Rhetorical Triangle, using logic to guide decisions, empathy to validate emotions, and credibility to establish trust, I was able to support my team through uncertain times and continue our journey together.

Week 7 Journal: Facilitating Team Processes

Working with students from the UAE on the COIL Project has definitely presented some obstacles, but it has also provided many valuable lessons. With any team, it is crucial to provide structure to meetings, establish norms, and utilize strategies such as the round-robin process and nominal group technique to ensure that all voices are heard, ideas are shared equally, and decisions are made efficiently, to promote unity within the group. In this journal entry, I will discuss strategies to apply in virtual team meetings, explain why applying these strategies is important, and provide an update on the progress of the COIL Project.

Providing structure to a meeting can be challenging when there is no designated individual, such as a team leader, and most of the members are reserved. With every group project, I initially try to take a “backseat” and allow others to take the lead, but it always ends with me taking the reins. I am aware of my tendency to take charge and have worked hard not to always be that person. In the current team dynamics, UAE students are generally quiet and do not speak much unless asked a direct question. Although providing appropriate structure to a team meeting does not mean dominating the process, it instead gives team members clear bounds within which to operate (Aldag and Kuzuhara, 2015). To provide structure to our team meetings and create an environment where all team members felt welcome, I took the initiative to lead our team by starting with getting to know each other a little better. Each of us took turns introducing ourselves and sharing a bit about ourselves with the group. This helped break the ice and get everyone involved, which in turn helped us all realize we were a team.

Effective team meetings require clear norms and ground rules to promote respectful and productive interactions, such as arriving on time, minimizing interruptions, and actively listening to others (LeBlanc & Nosik, 2019). Our group was able to establish norms, or ground rules, early

on by setting designated meeting times, showing up on time, and making sure we all communicated if we could not attend. We all used active listening skills when another group member would speak, as we wanted each member to feel valued and heard. Our team members were all very respectful of each other, almost as if we were all tiptoeing to ensure we did not offend one another's cultures.

Hearing each team member's ideas was extremely important to all of us, as we wanted to ensure that everyone felt included in the project. With every decision we made, I would directly ask each member what they thought of our idea and if they had any suggestions to contribute. This is known as the round-robin process. The round-robin process allows each team member to share their ideas by circulating around the table (or virtual table) to hear what each person has to say (Aldag and Kuzuhara, 2015).

Our group utilized the nominal group technique to encourage all members to contribute ideas, prevent dominant members from controlling the process, ensure that all ideas received a fair hearing, and allow members to evaluate alternatives without fear of retribution (Aldag and Kuzuhara, 2015). Techniques like the nominal group process enhance participation among team members by ensuring ideas are contributed in an organized way, which prevents domination by a few and promotes equitable input (LeBlanc & Nosik, 2019). When our group was deciding how we wanted to present our data, for example, we each took turns sharing our ideas, and by using active listening, we were able to incorporate ideas from both the members who were present and contributed.

The day before each meeting, I send a reminder message to our group chat, along with the topics we will discuss, the meeting link, and ask if there is anything anyone would like to address in the meeting. During the meeting, I always take the time to ask each member, after

each issue discussed, what they think or if they have anything to add. At the end of each meeting, I summarize what we discussed, outline each team member's task to complete, and indicate when the next meeting will be, to give the team a sense of progress and accomplishment (Aldag and Kuzuhara, 2015).

In conclusion, although the COIL Project has not turned out as planned, it has been a valuable learning experience that has shown the importance of adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and intentional leadership in virtual team settings. The opportunity to work with a diverse group has deepened my understanding of facilitating effective teams and shown me that successful leadership requires stepping up when needed and knowing when to step back. The lessons I have learned through working with this group have strengthened my understanding of cross-cultural teamwork.

M6 Journal: Active Listening in Teams

Effective communication among team members is an essential part of achieving successful outcomes. However, a huge component of effective communication is active listening. Developing the skills to become an active listener can be challenging, but this is an absolutely necessary skill to have in a team setting. Active listening requires that you convey to the speaker a sense of trust, identify with their feelings and thoughts, and encourage them to be as specific as possible about their feelings and concerns (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2015).

In the following journal entry, I will discuss a time in a team setting when I used active listening, the skills I utilized to engage in the process, and the techniques that aided in this effort.

In the Spring of 2025, I had the pleasure of being part of a team where effective communication was used, and where I was able to develop my active listening skills. Typically, in a team setting, I tend to take over the conversation because it is how I control my social anxiety and awkwardness. But with this specific group of people, I knew them all fairly well and was comfortable, so I decided to employ a new strategy. Plus, a few of them were talkers, which was helpful. (For context, one of my team members was Skyler.)

I made a conscious effort from the first team meeting to work on my active listening skills with this group. Instead of taking over the conversation and trying to run the project, I gave all of my attention to listening to my team members' ideas, what they thought would work best, and how they wanted to proceed. I repeated information that was unclear to me, asked for clarification, and ensured that all team members' perspectives were brought to the table. The open dialogue within our group allowed our project to come together seamlessly. I believe our team was successful because we each took the time to create an environment where everyone felt heard. Simon Sinek (2019) refers to this type of communication as “The Art of Dialogue.”

During our “storming” stage, we had a few disagreements, but we were all aware of the stages groups go through and made an effort to utilize the new techniques we had learned in the OLTM Program to achieve our shared common goal. Patrick Lencioni (2019) discusses The Five Dysfunctions of a Team, which include the absence of trust, fear of conflict, lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability, and inattention to results. The absence of trust in a team refers to being vulnerable and making the team comfortable, which our group managed extremely well. The fear of conflict was something I had to address head-on, as I have always been someone who tends to avoid conflict, but I had decided early on in this project to take a new stance and develop my skills. When one of my group members and I disagreed on a portion of our project, I asked him if we could discuss the issue with the rest of the group. We took turns explaining why we felt the way we did and listened to each other’s opinions with an open mind. Through this discussion, we were able to see that we both had valid points and great ideas that could be applied to the project, and we both wanted to achieve the same outcome. Because we had trust amongst our team and were able to be vulnerable with each other, we were able to have a productive debate that resolved the issue. By fostering an environment where active listening was applied, our team was able to build deeper trust, manage our conflicts constructively, and create a shared sense of ownership in the final outcome.

This team experience reinforced for me that active listening is not just about hearing others, but, as Simon Sinek (2019) says, it is about creating a space where everyone feels valued and understood. I plan to continue developing my active listening skills in future team collaborations by taking with me what I learned from working with this group, as well as learning to listen with empathy and intent. Active listening has not only improved my communication but also strengthened my confidence in working collaboratively with teams.

M5 Journal: Diversity and Potential Challenges

According to cognitive resource diversity theory, diversity should enhance performance by bringing more perspectives and a wider range of knowledge to bear on problems, increasing creativity and decision-making effectiveness (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2015). When we are exposed to diverse ways of thinking, it enables us to view things from a new perspective, which aids in creativity and innovation. Simon Sinek (2020) discusses his preference for hiring individuals with diverse job experiences, including those with no prior knowledge of the job, as they bring a fresh perspective. While working in a diverse team may present challenges, it also gives us the opportunity to explore new approaches to solving issues. The following journal entry will discuss the communication process and interactions from my COIL team, challenges we have encountered, and how I manage and facilitate diversity within my group.

The diversity within my group extends beyond culture to include age as well. My LCC teammate and I are in our 40s, while the UAE students are all around 20 years old. While we were discussing our project in our meeting, we all quickly became aware that our differences were not so much about our cultures, but more about our age gap. By creating an environment where all team members felt comfortable voicing their opinions without judgment, we were able to openly discuss these differences. We asked each other questions about our different cultures and upbringings. We also discussed how each of us uses social media and then discussed the differences between the older and younger generations, as well as how we utilize social media differently. The whole team was engaged in the conversation, which helped to build trust amongst the group and create an inclusive environment.

The only challenge my team has faced centered around the time difference. Initially, when I first attempted to make contact with the UAE students via email, I did not receive any

response from them. Once I created a WhatsApp group chat and messaged them through there, we were able to connect. Scheduling our first team meeting was a bit challenging, primarily due to the time difference and finding a time that worked for everyone. My LCC team member and I arrived at the scheduled Google Meet at the designated time, only to learn after 45 minutes that we were actually two hours early. Thankfully, we were able to work it out and meet with everyone at the right time. Our meeting went really well, and we accomplished the goals we had set. And, I learned that I need to work on being more patient, as this is one of my biggest weaknesses. Although I am committed to learning and growing the skills needed to become a more patient individual. As Tyler Waye (2020) notes, “Great teammates, they don’t lose themselves in their fears (or in my case, weaknesses), they don’t give up, they stay and choose to play their unique part in the team.”

In conclusion, before meeting with the UAE students, I must admit that I was extremely nervous about how this project would go; I think we all were. The initial discomfort felt by diverse teams serves as a crucible for creativity, as it pushes teams to develop trust, empathy, and a deeper understanding, ultimately leading to better performance outcomes (Rock et al., 2016).

M4 Journal: Building Trust

One of the most important pieces to building an effective team is trust. Having trust within a team provides a foundation for effective team collaboration, as it is the cornerstone of creating an environment that for open communication and mutual respect. A foundation of trust serves multiple roles, including influencing desired behaviors, reducing transaction costs, fostering spontaneous sociability, and influencing how team members respond to actions of their leaders and others (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2015, p. 69). True leadership is not about having power, but about empowering others. People want leaders who listen to and understand their needs and who can relate to their circumstances (Sinek, 2023). In this journal entry, I will explain how, as a leader, I plan to build a trusting team, the specific components I will incorporate to establish trust, and actions I may take to foster trust among my team.

For me, it is essential that my team members know I genuinely care about them, that they can rely on me, and that they can trust me. Little things like asking them how they are doing with their workload and if there is anything they need from me to help them meet their goal will show them I am reliable, as well as provide them with a sense of security. Trust is the willingness to put oneself in a position of vulnerability, but with confidence that others will not take advantage of that vulnerability (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2015, p. 69). This simply means that, as a leader, I will be vulnerable and believe that those around me will respect that openness rather than exploit it, which will form a strong and resilient relationship. As Simon Sinek (2023) states, “Leaders who foster trust create workplaces where people are not afraid to be vulnerable or ask for help, enabling teams to thrive and avoid dysfunction caused by fear and distrust. By showing vulnerability to my team, I will inspire them to be comfortable and confident enough to share

their vulnerabilities, both their achievements and mistakes. Which brings me to the next layer of how I plan to build trust within my team: accountability.

Accountability plays a crucial role in building trust. As a leader, I plan to own my mistakes to show my team how we can grow from them. I want to create an environment where team members feel comfortable taking responsibility for their work, knowing that mistakes will be met with understanding and solutions, rather than punishment. Openly acknowledging mistakes and focusing on growing from them builds trust more quickly, as it shows integrity under pressure. When a team feels comfortable enough to own their mistakes and learn from them, it also provides them with motivation to achieve their goals. Motivation is another key component in building trust among team members.

Motivation through rewards is a means for sustaining trust. I strongly believe that involving my team in the design of the reward system ensures enhanced acceptance and understanding (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2015), which aligns with the Equity Theory principles that employees compare input-to-outcome ratios and react strongly to perceived inequities (Baran, 2012). A combination of individual and team-based rewards reinforces cooperation and aligns incentives with collective goals (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2015). Setting goals provides team members with clear expectations and direction, which ensures the team understands their roles and responsibilities. Reaching goals and receiving positive feedback leads to increased liking for the task and satisfaction with job performance. Attaining goals leads to recognition from team members and supervisors, providing team members with a sense of increased self-confidence, pride in their achievements, and a willingness to accept future challenges (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2015). By focusing on positive reinforcement of desired behaviors, I will not only motivate team members but also sustain a trusting relationship among them.

Being an inspirational leader, one who gives my team hope, encouragement, and motivates them to achieve their goals, will provide team members with greater confidence in their abilities and build a trusting relationship. Leaders must communicate their values, inspire others, be intellectually stimulating, and demonstrate confidence in the face of crisis (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2015, p. 91).

Sinek (2023) advises that building trust is a continuous process, similar to maintaining physical fitness, as both require regular, intentional effort. As a leader, it is of utmost importance to always prioritize clear, transparent, and consistent communication among team members to sustain ongoing trust. By providing my team with predictable communication patterns that include regular check-ins and transparency regarding decisions, I will help to reduce any uncertainty and provide a sense of psychological safety among team members. Also important is sharing the “why” behind decisions to ensure that team members feel included and valued.

Without trust, team members may become disengaged and consider the group; therefore, it is essential to foster an environment of psychological safety and mutual respect, which can create a thriving team where everyone is empowered to contribute authentically (Sinek, 2023). Not everyone may always agree, and that is actually a good thing when working in groups. It is through the differences that we learn, grow, and collectively achieve common goals. Having diversity within a team, whether through ideas, cultures, genders, or age, is beneficial because it introduces different perspectives and experiences.

In closing, my approach to building a trusting team is centered around being a leader who is empathetic, reliable, and accountable, while inspiring, motivating, and providing an environment where everyone feels included and valued. Through my approach, I will not only build a trusting team but also be able to sustain that trust within the team.

M3 Journal: Communication with International/Global Teams

In today's global business world, cross-cultural communication plays a crucial role in facilitating collaboration and understanding. Therefore, it is essential to understand communication across cultural boundaries in order to collaborate, communicate, and negotiate effectively (Pop & Sim, 2025). Working in teams can present challenges, but working in culturally diverse teams can present even more challenges unless everyone involved makes a conscious effort to understand and respect each other's backgrounds. The following journal entry will discuss communication styles in international teams, specifically focusing on the communication skills, patterns, and abilities that will facilitate a cohesive, productive, and welcoming environment where teams can build trust, overcome cultural barriers, and share their diverse perspectives to enhance collaboration to achieve common goals.

When the COIL Project was introduced to Cohort 4 this term, I initially felt anxious about the idea of working on a project with a group of students whose first language is not English and who come from a completely different cultural background. School group projects are challenging enough as it is, but adding these other components immediately had me wondering how we would overcome potential barriers, such as miscommunication, unfamiliar collaboration styles, and differing time zones. However, I chose to look at working with a diverse group of students from a different perspective, and I soon realized what a beneficial opportunity this collaboration could be. Not only will I have the opportunity to collaborate with a unique set of individuals, but I will also gain new skills and perspectives that I can apply throughout my career.

When building culturally diverse teams, several factors should be considered to ensure a cohesive team environment where all members feel included and valued. It is essential to help

team members better understand one another's attitudes, information, and beliefs (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2015, p. 113). Aside from being culturally sensitive and flexible, recognizing local norms, respecting linguistic differences, and adapting formality levels are all things that require attention (Pop & Sim, 2025). We must focus on connecting on a deeper human level with each other through our natural motivations and by leveraging our instincts to be vulnerable and build skills (Eng, 2018). We should highlight common goals and emphasize similarities among team members, rather than focusing on what is different, to build unity and respect among team members (Merschdorf, 2022). Understanding the unique strengths and weaknesses of each team member is crucial when building any team, especially when building a diverse team (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2015, p. 112). Taking the time in the early stages to learn about each other's strengths and weaknesses is important for developing trust, assigning effective roles, and leveraging everyone's abilities to achieve collective success.

We also need to consider our nonverbal communication, as most miscommunication falls into this category (Merschdorf, 2022). Nonverbal cues such as posture, eye contact, body language, and hand gestures all require special consideration when working in culturally diverse teams. What may be perceived as normal in one culture can easily be perceived as rude or disrespectful in another culture. Being aware of what is appropriate in your team members' cultures will help to prevent misunderstandings and promote more effective communication within the team. We should recognize our own subconscious cultural norms and biases, acknowledge that we all possess them, and understand how they influence our preconceptions and communication (Merschdorf, 2022). By approaching these situations with an open mind, we can create an environment of respect and inclusivity, where differences are viewed as opportunities for growth and development, rather than potential barriers.

Misunderstandings, tensions, conflict, and mistrust are just a few of the challenges diverse teams may face. Cultural differences can lead to huge misunderstandings, even when everyone is speaking the same language; interpretations may differ (Fernandez, 2017). To avoid miscommunications, using simple language, paraphrasing, telling a story, and asking clarifying questions can all be effective strategies for ensuring clear communication (Merschdorf, 2022). If we all choose to make better use of our communication toolkits, we can avoid misunderstandings and prevent people from feeling left out or offended by our unintentional ignorance (Merschdorf, 2022). More effective communication leads to more effective collaboration. If we can all see the world through each other's eyes, we will be less likely to discriminate and marginalize, less likely to focus on what sets us apart, and more interested in what we can learn from each other (Merschdorf, 2022).

In conclusion, working in diverse teams opens doors to new perspectives, encourages creative problem-solving, and fosters a sense of cultural understanding that individuals would not typically experience in a traditional team environment. Demonstrating cultural awareness by fostering open communication and mutual respect among team members will help bridge differences and find common ground, while also aiding teams in reducing misunderstandings, collaborating more effectively, and creating an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued. Different perspectives often lead to better outcomes, especially when a diverse group of individuals chooses to work together in a cohesive manner.

M2 Progressive Journal: Team Design

The success of a team is built through many components. It starts with a strong structural foundation in terms of having clearly defined objectives and scope for its task, a systematic process and timeline for achieving its objectives, clearly defined roles for each team member, and a formal measurement system that is used to evaluate and to improve performance (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2015, p. 26). With these elements in place, a team demonstrates a strong commitment to how its members will successfully work towards accomplishing common goals. In this journal entry, I will discuss a team I was part of that functioned well, the team systems we had in place to support us, Tuckman's Stages of Group Development, the key components of this framework, and how it promotes trust, accountability, and adaptability.

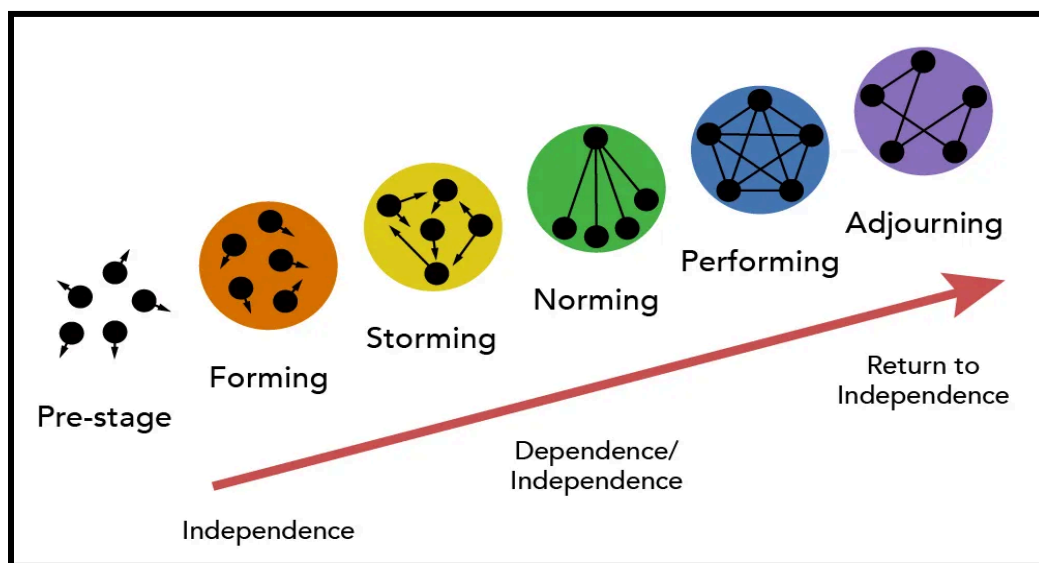
I had the opportunity to work on a team project last spring with a group of people who functioned extremely well together, and ultimately, our project had a successful outcome. What made this project successful was our effective communication from the beginning. Once we realized we were all in the same group, we scheduled our first meeting and established the meeting schedule, communication methods, task responsibilities, and agreed upon a timeline for our project. We made a point to discuss how we would address any disagreements, so that when faced with challenges, we could tackle them in a timely manner. At one point in the project, we had to make a pivotal decision about the direction of the project, and we did not all agree on how to move forward. However, because we had established strong communication methods from the beginning, we each listened respectfully to one another's viewpoints, and it was through this discussion that we were able to reach a consensus on how to proceed. Each individual in this group had qualities and skills that contributed to the team dynamic and made it successful.

However, I believe the key was maintaining open and honest communication and utilizing active listening.

Another key ingredient to the successful group project was that we were all aware of Tuckman's Five Stages of Group Development, and even pointed out when we were reaching the different stages. Tuckman's Stages of Group Development outlines five phases teams typically go through to work effectively together (Keene, 2024). The five stages include: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. In Figure 1, shown below, the five stages are shown, along with the independence and dependence of group members during each stage.

Figure 1.

Tuckman's Stages of Group Development.



Note. From "Understanding the Five Stages of Group Development," by Audrey Ingram, 2025.

The forming stage occurs when team members first come together as a team for the first time. It is characterized by feelings of excitement and positivity, but usually also includes some anxiety among individual members about their acceptance in the group and their ability to complete the work required (Keene, 2024). The storming stage is typically marked by the group's

first disagreement, and the team may struggle to work cohesively together. This stage also represents an opportunity for the team to learn to manage conflict. If the group successfully navigates this stage, greater clarification of goals and the specific tasks required to achieve those goals are often promoted (Keene, 2024). The norming stage is where team members have resolved any conflicts and now feel accepted in the group, as expectations are clear and team members have a clear understanding of their tasks and are comfortable within the group (Keene, 2024). At the performing stage, team members can recognize and appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of all group members and feel satisfied with the group's accomplishments (Keene, 2024). The adjournment stage is reached when the team has completed their project or no longer works together. Individuals may feel a sense of accomplishment while at the same time they may feel sad that their time together has come to an end (Keene, 2024).

Tuckman's Five Stages of Group Development promote trust, accountability, and adaptability by guiding teams through each stage and building on them as the team develops. The Forming stage lays the groundwork for trust and open communication (Teamazing, 2024). In the Forming stage, as team members get to know each other, the focus is on establishing trust and building a foundation for effective communication (Komar, 2024). As conflict and resolution arise in the Storming stage, trust is further strengthened through open communication and team members' reliance on one another. During the Norming stage, establishing clear norms helps to improve accountability among team members. The Performing stage is when team members hold themselves and teammates accountable for achieving their shared goals. Moving through all five stages ensures that teams are prepared to manage challenges, adapt to change, and consistently achieve strong outcomes (Teamazing, 2024).

M1 Progressive Journal: What is Your Purpose?

As a leader, understanding your purpose in leadership is crucial for inspiring and engaging others to reach their full potential. A leader who is clear about their own purpose has the ability to create an inclusive environment where all team members feel valued and are able to recognize their own sense of purpose. A team with purpose is more innovative, diverse in thought, and agile in adapting to organizational needs (Sillitoe, 2015). The following personal reflection will explain what my purpose is, how leadership plays a role in my purpose, and provide insight into leading high performing teams.

To explain how leadership plays a role in my purpose, I must first identify what my purpose is. My purpose is to support and empower others to reach their full potential through guiding and encouraging their learning, development, and achievement of meaningful goals. Leadership plays a role in my purpose by providing the framework and environment needed for others to grow and succeed. As a leader, I thrive on guiding team members through the process of learning and development, as well as providing continuous support and encouragement to help them overcome obstacles and build their confidence. My leadership creates a space where people feel empowered to set and achieve goals, helping them to reach their full potential and develop their personal growth. Through motivation and guidance, leadership enables me to turn my purpose into visible achievements by inspiring others to reach their maximum full potential.

To understand how I can be an effective leader of high performing teams aligned with my purpose, utilizing the Scholtes Team Model is valuable because it identifies traits that contribute to team success by addressing both structural elements and interpersonal processes (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2015). The Scholtes Team Model identifies ten traits associated with effective teams that address structural factors, such as clear goals, ground rules, and roles, as well as process and

people factors, such as communication, positive team behaviors, and awareness of the team's process (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2015, pp. 12-13). These traits are:

1. Clarity in team goals
2. Improvement plan
3. Clearly defined roles
4. Clear communication
5. Beneficial team behaviors
6. Well-defined decisions about procedures
7. Balanced participation
8. Established ground rules
9. Awareness of group process
10. Use of the scientific approach

As the Scholtes Team Model suggests, clear communication, well-defined roles, and shared goals help to create focus and accountability (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2015). By encouraging balanced participation and positive team behaviors, I can support a collaborative environment that welcomes improvement. Being aware of the team process and using a scientific approach for decision-making ensures adaptability and enhances effectiveness. The traits identified in the Scholtes Team Model closely align with my purpose of empowering others to develop and achieve goals while building confidence and resilience.

When leading high performing teams, it is important to intentionally create a culture where each member's unique strengths and goals are respected. What works for one group may not be successful for another, because every team has its own mix of personalities and skills. Team culture grows not only from these differences but also from the leader's efforts to invest in

team-building activities to establish a foundation of trust within the team. Patrick Lencioni's Five Dysfunctions of a Team Model, shown below in Figure 1, emphasizes the importance of team-building activities in building trust among team members, encourages open and constructive conflict when making important decisions, and stresses the need for all team members to provide input on objectives and strategies (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2015).

Figure 1.

Patrick Lencioni's Five Dysfunctions of a Team Model.



Note. From “Creating High Performance Teams,” by Ray Aldag and Loren Kuzuhara, 2015.

In Andrew Sillitoe's TEDx Talk, *How to Create a High Performance Culture*, he provides five keys to creating an environment where everyone can thrive: 1. Shape the story, 2. Ask, don't tell them, 3. Create leaders who can influence change, 4. Embrace failure, and 5. Hold each other accountable (Sillitoe, 2015). These five keys closely align with my purpose in leadership by emphasizing engagement, shared responsibility, growth through learning, and empowerment. Encouraging collaboration and ownership by shaping the narrative and involving team members in the decision-making process helps members feel responsible for the team's

success, which leads to stronger commitment and better results. Creating leaders and embracing failure creates a culture of continuous development and resilience. Holding each other accountable ensures commitment to both individual and team goals (Sillitoe, 2015).

Ultimately, my leadership purpose is not only about supporting team members' potential but also about modeling values and behaviors that are consistent with my purpose. Our decisions and behavior as leaders must be consistent with our values and shaped by our sense of mission and purpose (Huckaby, 1980). This view reminds us that effective leadership depends a lot on being purposeful and honest in all that we do. By embracing this alignment, I strive to lead with authenticity and inspire high performing teams to achieve meaningful and lasting success.

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