

# Effective Team Time

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This lesson is adapted from the original lesson “Effective Team Time: *Creating a Collaborative Environment*” by Margaret Searle and Marilyn Swartz. Packed with strategies, tips, and activities you can quickly put into practice, this lesson shows how you can build productive teams and intentionally create an environment of engagement in your club or organization. Four main concepts that this lesson will cover include: (1) establishing guidelines and protocols, including drafting agendas and timelines; (2) managing and resolving conflicts, including giving honest feedback and building team morale; (3) improve decision-making skills, including creating win-win situations and improving flexibility and efficiency; and (4) building team capability, including evaluating and sustaining teamwork.

## **Barrier #1: Inconsistent routines and procedures**

Have you ever attended a meeting and thought why is this meeting taking place and what exactly is my role within the team? When someone has a designated role they may be more likely to feel that they serve a purpose on the team and are more likely to be engaged in projects and discussion. Research has shown that assigning roles to individuals in groups can reduce the amount of time individuals might get off task and increase the amount of participation within the groups. Here are five roles and responsibilities to take into consideration when working within a group:

1. Coordinator: leads decision-making discussions and makes certain conversations are balanced
2. Time Keeper: helps establish timetables for work and tries to anticipate and prevent delays and off-task conversations
3. Analyzer: calls attention to potential weaknesses in plans and insists that potential problems be addressed
4. Recorder: keeps detailed notes using a consistent format and distributes minutes within 24 hours
5. Summarizer: listens for opportunities to recap to facilitate and clarify by reviewing goals, points of agreement, and what still needs to be accomplished



**Activity: Great Experiences On a Team: Think-Pair-Share**

Break into smaller groups to complete the following activity (If group size allows, assign the following roles)

Coordinator: Lead the discussion

Recorder: capture the information on the t-chart below

Summarizer: be ready to report

Time Keeper: 3 minutes

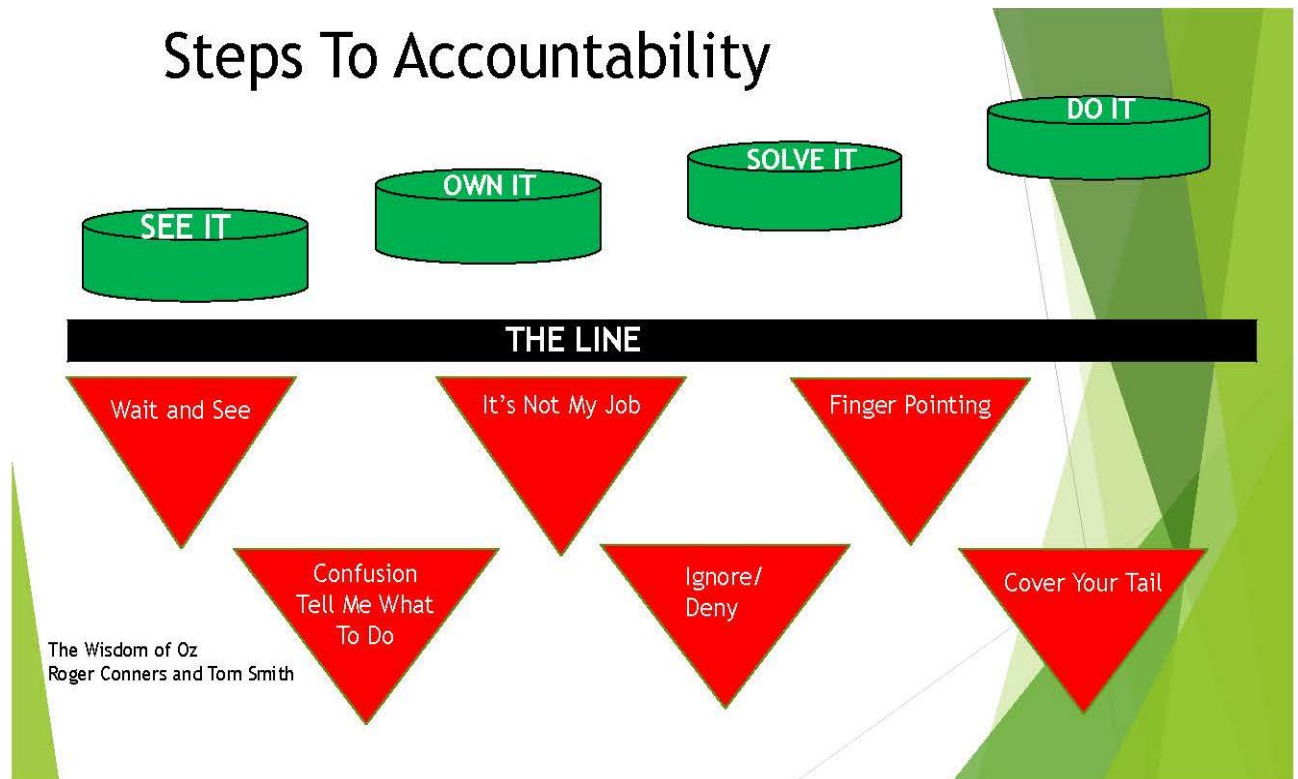
- Write down two specific things that made your best team experience rewarding.
- Write down two specific things that caused problems when you worked on an ineffective team.

<u>Qualities of a Good Team</u>	<u>Qualities of a Poor Team</u>

**Barrier #2: Negative Thinking and Excessive Complaining**

Occasionally when working in groups or focused on a specific project, thoughts/ideas/discussions can quickly progress towards negative thinking and become reactive to the issue at hand. However, when the focus is shifted to a more positive discussion, there is a potential for more success towards having a proactive solution and increasing the ability to move forward.

**Steps To Accountability**



### **Below the Line**

- Am I closed, defensive and committed to being right?
- Am I more concerned about winning than understanding?
- Do I believe there is a threat to their control or security?
- Am I clinging to an opinion?
- Am I finding fault?
- Am I blaming or gossiping?
- Am I rationalizing and justifying?
- Am I overwhelmed or avoiding or pursuing conflict?

### **Above the Line**

- Do I believe learning and growing are more important than being right?
- Do I believe people and circumstances are my allies, here for my growth?
- Do I believe that from a distance this is humorous?
- Am I curious?
- Am I listening deeply?
- Am I willing to question my beliefs?
- Am I living a life of play?

Have your experiences with teams been mostly above or below the line? One idea to start all meetings off in the positive direction is to consider the “Bitters and Sweets” strategy. The team is to begin with each team member sharing one bitter and one sweet for a total of a 2 minute activity (note: 2 minutes is for the entire team activity, not per individual)

**Bitters (1 minute):** complaining about anything is fair game as long as it is not an attack on any person. Confessing the sins of bosses and others is not allowed! Once you've stated your issue, you have to let it go and get to the real work of the team.

**Sweets (1 minute):** Members share something about themselves (feelings, values, accomplishments, and interests) without any fear of judgement.

## **Barrier #3: Inefficient Use of Time**

When you are leading a meeting, it is your responsibility to plan the agenda. Whoever is involved, the key step to designing an effective meeting is to be very clear about its purpose. Once the purpose is clear, communicate it to those involved, and plan meeting strategies that support the thoughtful involvement of those attending.

Here's the sequence of steps to plan an effective meeting agenda\*:

1. **Define results first:** what are the results your group needs to achieve by the end of the meeting? Write them down. If there is not a defined purpose, consider whether there really is a reason to meet.
2. **Identify the meeting's time frame:** what kind of meeting time is needed for the meeting's purpose? Different time frames fit different purposes—from the five-minute daily check-in to the two-day retreat. Match the amount of time to the needs and frequency of the group's gathering.
3. **List the meeting's topics:** identify the topics that need to be covered to accomplish the results. Think through what has to be done, consider a logical order for discussing the topics or making decisions. Consider the information that the group needs in order to discuss a topic or make a decision knowledgeably.

4. **Allot time frames by topics:** considering the total time available, assign realistic time slots for each item. During the meeting, if the group hasn't reached a decision within the time provided, suggest next steps or refer the item to a next meeting or committee.
5. **Plan participation strategies to address each topic:** different methods of discussion can be used to make the best of the group for each topic. Be clear about expectations for involving participants to assure that involvement builds trust and gets authentic action.
6. **Do a sanity check:** after you review your agenda, consider whether what you want to do is really "doable" in the amount of time you've got? If not, scale back expectations or schedule another meeting to address some of the topics.

Work together to create team norms or expectations from team members at each meeting. Have these either posted at your meeting, or written somewhere for all members to see! Here are some examples:

- We trust and respect each other
- We keep our commitments
- We speak with honesty and candor
- We support team decisions as our own
- We actively recognize and celebrate successes
- We address conflict with an individual directly, constructively, and confidentially
- We plan before we act
- We call each other on any violations of these team rules

### **Barrier #4: Disrespectful Relationships**

When working as a team, it is important to recognize and understand each team member's characteristics. What works for one team member may not work for another.

## Know Your Team Members *Characteristics*

<p><b>Squares</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Most task-oriented person</li> <li>◆ Likes to Keep Things Stable</li> <li>◆ Organizer</li> <li>◆ Planner</li> </ul>	<p><b>Triangles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ "What's the bottom line?"</li> <li>◆ Proceeds With Caution</li> <li>◆ Quality Results</li> <li>◆ Director of People</li> </ul>
	
<p><b>Circles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Talker and Socializer</li> <li>◆ Motivator</li> <li>◆ Sensitive to Other's Feelings</li> <li>◆ Supporter</li> </ul>	<p><b>Squiggles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Idea Person</li> <li>◆ Likes Change and Action</li> <li>◆ A Doer</li> <li>◆ Wants Results</li> </ul>

**Activity: Choose which shape is most like your personality on a team** (if possible, designate four areas of a room for each shape and have individuals go to their shape)

- **Square** “If you want it done right.....”
- **Triangle** “Bossy”
- **Circle** “Just can’t say NO”
- **Squiggle** “If you don’t touch it, I can find it”

After identifying the four barriers and solutions to create a more effective team, how do you evaluate if it’s working? In order to check for relevance, ask yourself the following seven questions:

1. Is this team’s work something that is personally important to me?
2. Could I accomplish this just as effectively by myself?
3. Will this work have a positive impact on my personal growth and that of my community?
4. Are the results worth the time and effort?
5. Will my contributions be valued by this team?
6. Do I have or can I develop the skills needed?
7. Is this challenge big enough and important enough to keep us excited about working and growing together?

**"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."**--

*Henry Ford*

**"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much."** --*Helen Keller*

**"Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results."** --*Andrew Carnegie*

Resources:

Searle, M., & Swartz, M. (n.d.). *Effective Team Time: Creating a Collaborative Environment*.

Presented on 12/9/15

Kerpen, D. (n.d.). *15 Quotes to Inspire Great Teamwork*. Retrieved June 28, 2016, from <http://www.inc.com/dave-kerpen/15-quotes-to-inspire-great-team-work.html>

*How do we plan for an effective meeting?* (n.d.). Retrieved June 28, 2016, from

<http://www.extension.umn.edu/community/civic-engagement/tip-sheets/plan-for-effective-meeting/>

Fisher Digital Publications. (n.d.). Retrieved June 28, 2016, from [http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/mathcs\\_etd\\_masters/99/](http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/mathcs_etd_masters/99/)

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