

## Network to Work Meeting – September 2019

### RESOURCE DOCUMENT – Teamwork

#### *Teamwork Skills*

No matter your job nor where you work, teamwork skills are essential for success. The ability to work well with clients, colleagues, managers and other people in your workplace can help you complete tasks efficiently while creating an enjoyable environment both for yourself and others. An organization that emphasizes good teamwork skills is typically a healthy, high-functioning workplace.

#### **What are teamwork skills?**

Teamwork skills are the qualities and abilities that allow you to work well with others during conversations, projects, meetings or other collaborations. **Having teamwork skills means you are able to communicate well, actively listen and be responsible and honest.** There are many other additional soft skills that can help you be an exceptional teammate at work.

#### **Why are teamwork skills important?**

Rare is the employee who is not required to work alongside others. Doing so in an empathetic, efficient and responsible manner can help you build rapport with others and contribute positively to your organization. Building rapport can lead to deeper working relationships, new connections and possibly new opportunities.

#### **Examples of teamwork skills**

Teamwork skills are made up of many other soft skills you can work to develop over time. Here are just a few examples of qualities that can help you improve your teamwork skills:

1. **Communication.** The ability to communicate in a clear, efficient way is crucial to having good teamwork skills. When working with others, it is important that you share relevant thoughts, ideas and key information, keeping your teammates informed. There are many different types of communication skills including both verbal and nonverbal.
2. **Responsibility.** Within the dynamic of teamwork, it is important that every party involved both understands the work they are responsible for and makes the effort to complete said tasks on time and up to the expected standard. With the entire team functioning properly by taking responsibility for their own work, they can work together towards a common goal.
3. **Reliability.** An excellent team player will be reliable and will complete tasks in order of priority, not necessarily in order that they're given. When you're not sure of what should take priority, ask your manager.
4. **Honesty.** It is important to be honest with your team. This might mean sharing a disagreement, explaining that you were not able to complete a certain task on time, or sharing a new development. Without transparency, it can be difficult for a team to develop trust and therefore work together efficiently.
5. **Active listening.** Much like communication, active listening skills can help a team to understand and trust each other. Active listening is the act of making an effort to focus intently on one person as they share their ideas, thoughts or feelings. You might also ask follow-up questions to dig deeper into what they are communicating.
  - a. You are only a team player if you respectfully consider the viewpoints and ideas of other people as well. This is why diverse teams have the potential to so effective, and it all depends on active listening. Active listening is harder than you think. When you hear someone saying something you don't initially agree with, keep from interrupting and don't let your mind prepare any counter remarks. Just listen, and consider what they're saying and more importantly, *why* they believe that.
6. **Empathy.** Having empathy for your teammates can allow you to better understand their motives and feelings. Deeply understanding how others think and work can help you to communicate with them in a way they will respond to positively.
7. **Collaboration.** Teamwork exists so that a group of individuals with a diverse set of skills and talents can work together to create something better than one could create on their own. It is crucial to work with other teammates to share ideas, improve each other's work and help one another to form a good team.

8. **Awareness.** In teamwork, it is important that you fine tune your ability to be aware of the team dynamic at all times. For example, if one person is dominating the conversation or does not allow others to share ideas, it is important that balance is restored for each teammate to contribute evenly. Alternatively, if one person tends to be more shy and hesitant to share ideas, it is important to create space so that all teammates feel comfortable to contribute their unique skills and abilities.
9. **Flexibility.** An outstanding team player is flexible to situations that are thrown their way, and they participate and tackle challenges without showing too many signs of stress or pressure.
10. **Always be ready to help.** Even if it is not in your job description, be generous with pointers or tips to help your team members. For example, if a member of your team is having trouble with a technology tool that is easy for you, offer to sit down with him or her and show what you know.
11. **Support and respect others.** It seems obvious that you wouldn't want to shut someone from your team out, or laugh at other people's ideas, but we do these things in a subtle way, without realizing it, all the time. It is important to become more self-aware of how you treat others. Remember, you'll receive respect when you give it to others. An ideal team player knows how to have fun, but he would never do it at someone else's expense.
12. **Be a problem-solver.** Your team leader may be working on solving problems, but there is no reason why you can't offer solutions yourself. Your teammates will appreciate your skills, and this may pay off later when you are being considered for other projects or opportunities.

## ***Tips for Improving your Teamwork Skills and being a Better Team Player at Work***

Developing teamwork skills can help you both in your career and when seeking new opportunities. While it can take time and work to improve a soft skill such as teamwork, it is certainly possible to build these qualities. Take time to evaluate your current skill set and identify areas for improvement. With time and practice, you can begin building a strong set of teamwork skills.

### **Here are ways to become a better co-worker and team player:**

1. **Let Others Help You.** One of the biggest pitfalls for many individuals in the workplace is a need to have all of the answers. Helping others is great. However, allowing others to help you is just as important. By opening up to your colleagues, you can be more authentic, more approachable and benefit from their wisdom.
2. **Focus On Shared Interests.** We rely heavily on relationships to get things done. Focusing on shared interests rather than individual positions harnesses our personal power to retain focus on the goal.
3. **Listen Well.** Sometimes we focus too much on what actions we should take rather than how we make people feel. One of the most powerful gifts we can give to another human being is to truly see them and listen to them. If you listen well, the path to becoming a better co-worker and team player reveals itself.
4. **Cultivate The Genius in Others.** Most of us have been trained to focus on our success rather than to help others succeed. Yet if you spend your time cultivating the genius in others rather than needing to be the genius, people will naturally gravitate toward you because you will inspire and empower them to realize their potential.
5. **Hold the Best Intentions when Engaging with Others.** Regardless of your role in the workplace, one thing that helps to enhance camaraderie, communication and collaboration is engaging with best intentions and giving others the benefit of the doubt. This means looking at others and seeing all the things they are bringing to the team.
6. **Share Your Gifts.** You have strengths and skills that come naturally. Share those gifts freely; what will take you five minutes to complete may save a fellow team member a whole day's worth of work and frustration. Nothing builds trust and connection like

helping someone out of a challenging situation, especially when it is done freely and without expectation of repayment or owing anyone a favor.

7. **Spread Positivity.** Positivity allows for creativity and innovation. Give energy rather than draining people's energy. See the opportunity, not the problem. Look for what's right, not what's wrong. Acknowledge people rather than gossiping. Stay away from judging things as good or bad, right or wrong -- simply acknowledge they are different and move forward. Smile and watch the smiles multiply.
8. **Flex To Others' Work Styles.** Don't assume that others work and interact the way you do. Rather, start by observing others. Do they prefer emails to calls? Do they want to chit-chat before meetings? Do they need to discuss something before making a decision? If your answers are different, consider flexing to their preferred work style. You will get more done, and people will be more drawn to work with you.
9. **Find The Human Inside.** Pay attention to what your colleagues tell you about their lives; these details are important to them and give you an insight into the human behind the job. You can then build conversations out of these snippets that show you really listen to them, which builds rapport and possibly even friendship. Colleagues who like each other will help and support each other rather than just tolerating each other.
10. **Never Play The Blame Game.** Games are fun, but the blame game never has a winner. No good comes from throwing another co-worker under the bus. In a team environment, some people will fail to live up to commitments, but being a contributing and positive member of a team means finding productive ways to handle those interactions.

#### **Here are other ways you can improve your teamwork skills:**

- **Get honest feedback.** It can be difficult to identify your own areas for improvement. Ask a trusted friend, colleague or mentor to offer you honest feedback about your teamwork strengths and weaknesses.
- **Set personal goals.** Use your own observations as well as feedback from others to set some achievable goals that can help you improve – focusing on one teamwork skill at a time.
- **Practice.** It takes time and practice to see improvements in your skillset. Pay close attention to your teamwork interactions throughout the day both in and out of work. Take mindful steps to practice the specific qualities you are trying to build.

- **Mimic others with strong teamwork skills.** When you see examples of great teamwork, take note and identify why the interaction stood out to you. Apply those qualities in your own interactions when working with others.

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**Adapted from:**

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*“15 Top Tips To Become A Better Team Player At Work”*, Forbes Coaches Council Expert Panel,  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2018/12/18/15-top-tips-to-become-a-better-team-player-at-work/#1c4abb2d3f6e>

<https://www.trainingcoursematerial.com/free-games-activities/communication-skills-activities/back-to-back-communication>