

16

Learning objectives: Unit 16

People skills Working in a team; Fluency: Problem-solving team meetings

Reading Creating team spirit

Listening A project problem

Collaboration

1 How much of your job involves teamwork?

0% ←————→ 100%

2 Have you ever been teamed up with anyone like either of the people in the cartoon? What happened?

What's the most productive team you've ever worked with?

3 Imagine you're putting together a project team.

All the people on your shortlist have the right expertise and skills. So what personal qualities are you looking for? Compare ideas with your group.

4 Now complete the sentences (a–g) with the words in the box. Did you have similar ideas about the ideal team-player in 3? Do you know anyone with all these qualities?

committed constructive co-operative engaged flexible reliable supportive

The ideal team-player is:

- a _____ – they get the job done to a consistent standard.
- b _____ – they have a positive attitude and look for solutions.
- c _____ – they really care about the success of the project.
- d _____ – they treat everyone with respect and are willing to help.
- e _____ – they can adapt to changing needs and circumstances.
- f _____ – they take an active role in meetings and discussions.
- g _____ – they work well with others and do what's asked of them.



“This collaboration would work better if you kept your ideas to yourself.”



Playing as a team

They say T.E.A.M. stands for ‘together everyone achieves more’, but we’ve all worked in teams where the reality was very different! Certainly, when ‘the whole is greater than the sum of the parts’, synergy is created which can produce terrific results. But teams that lack collaborative skills are likely to disintegrate into a battle of egos and conflicting priorities. And it’s hard to reach your goals when everyone has their own agenda and is fighting over who gets the credit!

To avoid the typical arguments and points-scoring of many project meetings, executive coach Carol Kinsey Goman suggests using what she calls the P.P.R. technique. Here’s how it works. Whenever someone shares an idea, the first thing you do is mention the ‘positives’ or what you like about it. This creates a climate of collaboration. Next come ‘possibilities’ – here you talk about how their idea could be applied, extended or perhaps combined with someone else’s idea. Finally, if you have any ‘reservations’, make sure you leave these till last and focus less on the reservations themselves than how they might be overcome. Don’t say: ‘This won’t work.’ Ask instead: ‘How could we make this work?’ Remember, a team is a group of people who work hard to make each other look good!

5 How do you create team spirit in a meeting? Read the article and answer the questions.

- a Without looking back at the article, can you remember what T.E.A.M. and P.P.R. stand for?
- b How far do you agree with T.E.A.M.? What are the pros and cons of working in teams?
- c What does *synergy* mean?
- d What kind of ego battles and ‘points-scoring’ can go on in team meetings?
- e Which cultures (or types of business culture) do you think are best at promoting teamwork?
- f What do you think of the P.P.R. approach to creating a collaborative atmosphere in meetings?

6  **2.42** Listen to a project team discussing a problem with a project they are running with a client, KNP. Choose the option (a–d) which best summarizes the problem.

KNP ...

- a** wants to have more involvement in decision-making so they don't lose control of the project.
- b** is changing decisions agreed in meetings and so the project is falling behind schedule.
- c** is taking too long to respond to proposals with the result that the project is no longer on schedule.
- d** wants to set up a website so that everyone involved in the project can keep track of progress.

7  **2.42** Listen again and note down the following:

- a** Elaine's idea: _____
- b** Rolf's 'positives': _____
- c** Rolf's 'possibilities': _____
- d** Rolf's 'reservations': _____

8 Form teams to brainstorm solutions to the business problems below. Take turns to be the facilitator – one for each problem. Use the draft agenda to structure your meetings.

Step 1 The facilitator should open and close the meeting, encourage full participation, write down all the ideas generated on a flipchart or whiteboard, and discourage evaluation or criticism of the ideas at this stage.

Step 2 The facilitator should now lead the discussion-and-evaluation stage. Team members give their reactions to each other's ideas in a constructive and supportive way using the P.P.R. technique. Some of the expressions you heard in 6 may help.

- a** You own a chain of supermarkets. Every week, hundreds of shopping carts are stolen.
- b** You sell jewellery online. But customers typically like to try on items before they buy.
- c** You manage a customer helpline. Staff turnover is high, so you keep losing good people.

Positives	Possibilities	Reservations
I really like your idea of ... -ing ...	And if we did that, we could also ...	The only thing is, I'm not sure if we could ...
What I especially like about it is ...	Perhaps another thing we could do is ...	And I'm also a bit worried about ...
And it would certainly solve the problem of ...	If we combined your idea with X's idea ...	How do you think we could manage that?



Agenda

- 1** Welcome the group.
- 2** Outline the purpose of the meeting and get the team to define the problem.
- 3** Invite team members to take a few minutes to note down their ideas individually. Make sure they take the logistical and budgetary constraints into account.
- 4** Throw the meeting open for discussion by getting the team to share their ideas. Emphasize that they should use the P.P.R. technique.
- 5** Take a vote on the best idea or combination of ideas.
- 6** Discuss how your solution will be implemented and who will be responsible for what.

D

Learning objectives:
Management Scenario D

Business communication skills

Handling tricky conversations;
Roleplay: Difficult conversations

Reading Handling difficult conversations in the workplace

In company in action

D1: Failed conversations;

D2: Constructive conversations

Tricky conversations



1 Heather Sherwood is a sales representative for Flow Information Systems (FIS). Read some of her recent emails and answer the questions.

- a** What do you think Heather agreed with Alan before the meeting they just had?
- b** Why is she angry with him now?
- c** The subject title of Anton's email is 'Thanks!' But why might Heather not be so happy to receive it?
- d** Do you think Anton mentioned to Gabrielle that it was Heather who originally produced the figures?
- e** Why is Heather annoyed that Tony hasn't finished the budget report?
- f** How do you think Tony will react to having Kelly help him finish it?

What were you DOING?

To: a.sugarman@fis.com

Alan

I've just got back to my office and I'm still furious. You made me look like a complete IDIOT in that meeting with Gabrielle. You were supposed to back me up! You know we can't work within our present budget. So what happened? I notice you left for lunch very quickly afterwards and your mobile's off. We need to talk this afternoon, so call me the minute you read this email.

Heather

Thanks!

To: h.sherwood@fis.com

Hi Heather

I passed on that idea we were discussing the other day to Gabrielle – about setting up a dedicated FIS website for each of our major clients. She LOVED it – especially when I showed her those figures you'd put together. I had to revise them a bit, but they were really useful. Anyway, I'll take it from here. No need for you to be involved. Just wanted to thank you for your input.

Anton

Budget report?

To: a.kennedy@fis.com

Hi Tony

I'm concerned that the budget report I asked you to complete by last week still isn't ready yet. I've just come out of a meeting with Gabrielle and if I'd had that report, it would have made my life a lot easier! Anyway, Gabrielle has asked to see a copy by Friday, so if you can't get it done, I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to bring in Kelly to help you finish it. I know you've put a lot of work into it, but it can't be helped. Meet me in my office at 3.30 and we'll go through it.

Heather

2 How would you advise Heather to deal with Alan, Anton and Tony when she meets them face to face?



3 Now watch video D1 to see the three conversations between Heather and her colleagues and match them to what she's doing wrong (a–c).

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Conversation 1 | a She lets her personal involvement with the issue take over. |
| Conversation 2 | b She doesn't try to understand the situation from the other person's point of view and forces them to accept hers. |
| Conversation 3 | c Instead of discussing the problem, she spends too much time blaming the other person for what went wrong. |

4 Read the article on handling difficult conversations and decide which tips might have helped Heather in each situation.

Handling Difficult Conversations in the Workplace

If you work in an office environment, you know difficult conversations are a fact of life. Breaking bad news, getting people to keep their promises, complaining about a colleague's behaviour or disagreeing with the boss – most of us would rather avoid conversations like these. But, according to Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton and Sheila Heen of the Harvard Negotiation Project, avoidance is never the answer. Delivering a difficult message, they say, is like 'throwing a hand grenade'. Whatever you do, it's going to cause damage. And not having the conversation is like 'hanging on to a hand grenade once you've pulled the pin'. Typically, say the Harvard team, three things happen in a difficult conversation and you must be sure to guard against them.

1. A lot of time and energy can be wasted arguing about who did what, who should have done what, who didn't do what they said they'd do and who's to blame. But this simply puts everyone on the defensive and guarantees that the problem will not be resolved. So try not to get into the 'blame game'. Focus on the solution.
2. Inside our heads we have an internal voice which expresses our feelings. Sometimes this voice is so loud; we can't hear what's being said. Of course, our feelings shouldn't be silenced, but they must be kept under control. And if you're thinking 'what rubbish, I don't have an internal voice', that's your internal voice speaking!
3. Many of us identify personally with our position in a disagreement. To accept that the other person could be right may affect our self-image in ways they cannot imagine. So be sure to find out what really matters to them. And don't confuse intention with effect – they may not have meant to make you feel the way you do.

5 What do you think Heather should do next time she discusses the situations with Alan, Anton and Tony? How could she have been more diplomatic in her earlier conversations?



6 The following day Heather catches up with Alan, Anton and Tony again. This time their conversations are more constructive. Watch video D2 and compare the solutions they come up with to the ones you thought of in 5.

7 You're about to have two difficult conversations with your partner!

Speaker A: Turn to page 133.

Speaker B: Turn to page 141.

8 Now evaluate your performance using the feedback form on page 128.

