Assignment 1 Collaboration

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Current Collaboration

Recently I became involved in a non profit organization: Compassion Games International. This organization provides a mechanism for compassion action through cooperative competitions among groups. I am part of the Silicon Valley Organizational team and we are coming together to plan and execute a project called the Global Unity Games, which will take place in Silicon Valley from 9/11-9/21 2016. We have had weekly video meetings since June. Prior to that, we had never met one another.

Although our situation is not unique, it is not ideal due to the fact that we do not have relationships, which means we have not yet built trust and respect for each other. We have not met in person. The internet is such an easy way for people to connect, however it does not transmit personal warmth and kindness like a handshake or a hug can. It has taken some time for us all to learn enough about each other to be comfortable enough to begin collaboration. We are all leaders by nature and one leader has not yet emerged as I begin this assignment. Our roles are not clear as our strengths and weaknesses are not yet understood among the team. One of the main difficulties is not being able to anticipate likely responses or reactions from team members. As a team that has been playing together for a long period of time can attest, each knows one another's manner and position and can likely anticipate where one will be and how one will behave under common game circumstances. Our team is disjointed and is not ready to collaborate effectively.

Stakeholders and Roles

Below are the team members whose roles are yet to be defined. I can only discuss who I hope the leader will be, as the team starts to get to know each other. Names are changed for privacy purposes.

Lucy- Double Ph.D who is dedicated, positive and open to others' perspectives. I hope she becomes the lead of the team, as she is clearly experienced with collaboration and seems to have a strong knowledge about the Compassion Games organization.

Gerald- Highly educated former engineer who volunteers on various non profit boards and is committed to accomplishing his goals. He is emerging as a leader, but as one who directs others to do tasks.

Ella Joy- Self proclaimed person of faith that serves on various non profit boards. To date she is not a very dedicated or hard working member. She has not been very active in contributing as of yet, and she likes to point out problems without offering a solution.

Keith- A young, Ph.D who happens to be a new father, full of loving kindness, and an intellectual "rock star". His talent is matched only by his smile and intoxicating accent from a far off land. His role is as a media consultant; he is taking photos and video of our events and posting them on-line for our marketing purposes. He is extremely humble and likeable and he has shown to be a worthy contributor.

Jip- A member of city government, he has the connections our team needs for gaining support for our compassion campaign, however, he is busy with his own interests and has not made the team a priority. Only time will tell if he comes through for the team. His role is not defined as he has not participated much in any of our meetings and only came to our first event

to make a brief appearance. I have asked for his assistance in contacting government officials and I wrote some communication which he thought were quality pieces; however he did not send the communication out to his contacts.

Ferar- An absent member of the team, he sends Keith as a representative in his place and doesn't participate in meetings or action items. He is a brain surgeon at Stanford and leads an extremely busy life. He is also the founder of the Center for Compassion and Altruism at Stanford. His time is valuable and I wonder if he will ever participate in the program. Hopefully he will use his clout to onboard some top members of Silicon Valley. I am also hopeful he will make appearances at important events.

<div align="center">Issues and Challenges</div>

In describing the situation and stakeholders, issues and challenges were touched upon; I will use this opportunity to elaborate. The team is new and therefore does not have the trust or the knowledge of one another to collaborate effectively. Additionally, the team does not have defined roles. According to Mattessich, et al (2001), we are lacking 1) a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility, and 2) mutual authority and accountability for success. Of the necessary factors required for effective collaboration, we are weak on environment (we are all remote), process and structure (we do not have a strategic plan with defined goals and objectives), communication (again we are remote so we rely heavily on email and video conferencing versus face to face contact) and purpose (goals of projects are not defined). Our challenges are many but I believe they can be addressed and remedied, especially with the help of this course.

Personal Bias or Self-Concept

I had no assumptions or biases towards other entering this collaborative effort. I am realizing based on the behavior and the contribution efforts of the members that some are more dedicated contributors and some are not as committed to the success of the team. I am uncertain of my role but am willing to step into and own some projects and duties in order for the team to succeed. As we start to create together, our roles, based on our self-perceived strengths and weaknesses are starting to emerge. As I stated earlier, this is difficult since we are all strong leaders and I have not noticed any clear followers among the group. Although, in the last two days, I see that two of the members are starting to lead. One is very good at dialogue and collaboration where another is not. I do notice that they compliment each other and this can be a positive partnership.

My self-concept, as I become more aware of my intrapersonal communication, may be holding me back from leading in this group, yet I see it more as a protection mechanism. I tend to take on more than I can handle because I have a strong desire to help. I am not being quite as vocal, I am taking more of an active listening role, and am taking on tasks and duties I think would benefit the project, but those that I can manage for the most part. As I reflect upon my self-concept and my intrapersonal communication, I also notice that I may feel that I am not as accomplished as my counterparts; they all hold multiple Masters' and Ph.Ds so perhaps I am standing back and taking the opportunity to learn from them before I feel safe stepping in and revealing my strengths as well as my weaknesses. To phrase it more simplistically, I am most likely "playing it safe" until I feel more comfortable with this group of people. Revealing my

strengths and weaknesses makes me vulnerable to criticism, and I am not certain I am ready to process criticism from the team at this point.

In terms of Gestalt Psychology (Intrapersonal Communication Handout pp.4) and Kohler's three laws, I am filling in the gaps with this group of collaborators; trying to make sense of disconnects or project pieces that I don't quite understand yet. This, according to Kohler (1947) is the Principle of Closure. I know my team is made up of quality people with compassionate hearts, and I know this because there is no other reason they would have been recruited to be on this team. The fact that I don't have relationships built with these people yet, means I am struggling to make sense of the gaps to give myself some type of explanation or closure so I can tell myself I understand even though I know I do not fully understand yet. This phenomenon is causing me to form attitudes and assumptions, as one can clearly see in my definitions of my team members above.

Wilder's Collaboration Factors Inventory

According to Wilder's Collaboration Factors Inventory (WCFI) our group score is low. In most areas we are below three and over all we are below three. This means there is a viable concern that needs to be addressed. Our success, at this point is questionable and not at all likely. On page 43 of our text, the WCFI advises to have a group discussion as soon as possible and to develop a plan to remedy the problems that exist if we wish to proceed with collaboration.

There are a number of things I can do to affect a positive change in my collaboration situation. At the end of each meeting, I can ask for clarification of goals while stating what I have perceived to be the overarching goals and the week's action items. I can send out a summary of each meeting to each team member, which gives a brief overview of the meeting

and the action items, who is to complete the items and the given deadline. If I do this, I will be setting a precedent; I will be expected to do this after each meeting and I do not have the bandwidth to commit to this at this time. I will have to put some careful thought into which actions I execute and how I execute them. I can also discuss boundaries that relate to any one person being given too much of the workload. I can use the WCFI as a springboard for discussion about the team's strengths and weaknesses. In addition, I can voice my concern about the lack of defined roles and a strategic plan and ask that we create a team document that states our roles, and our strategic plan, our mission, vision and purpose as well as goals and objectives.

Conclusion

Our struggle is collaboration in absence of relationship. Building relationships takes time and in our team situation, time is a luxury we do not have. However, as time passes, I do see certain members starting to emerge as leaders. Self-concept is a factor in which I need to be aware because it does affect how I handle myself with the collaboration effort; I am holding back. The reality is that if I find myself holding back, chances are that others on the team are doing the same. The best way to address the issues are to follow the WCFI and review the factors with the group. If we can define a solid mission, some overall goals and objectives and clarify each member's role, I believe we will have a fighting chance to pull this campaign together and have a great group of sponsors and participants for our Global Unity Games on 9/11.

References

Mattessich, P. W., Murray-Close, M., & Monsey, B. R. (2004). Collaboration: What Makes It

    Work (2nd ed.). St Paul, MN: Wilder Publishing Center, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

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