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Team Communication Methods

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A lack of clear communication can create obstacles for team success. Open communication and regular avenues for communication lead to long term cohesiveness within the team. Open communication also enables timely problem solving. Implementation of problem resolution strategies is more effective when there is clear communication among team members. Teams can use different methods to communicate.



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Written Communication

Team documents serve as a written record of the different phases of a project. Written communication can be in the form of email, collaborative documents and presentations and status reports. Team leaders should map out a strategy for creating and editing collaborative documents. As an example, the entire team can be given access to a main document for revision and one person can be assigned the duty of merging the revisions into the final document. Team members must be cognizant of how email can be perceived by other people. Individuals should take the time to write clear, concise and factual emails when corresponding about their work.

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication in the form of meetings and everyday interpersonal communication is necessary to keep the team on track. Team leaders should set up a series of goal-oriented team meetings throughout the course of the project. A time schedule and project task list should be created and reviewed in status meetings. Team members should be given the opportunity to talk about any obstacles and issues and their statuses. Team leaders should set up a clear methodology for resolution of issues during the meeting and follow up on the issues with individual team members after the meeting.

Other Communication Methods

Video conferencing, telephone conferences, instant messaging, webinars and webcasts are other communication methods that teams can use to facilitate interaction. Team leaders should assess their team's needs and determine the best methods of communication. Video conferencing and telephone conferences can be useful for

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teams with members in different geographical locations. Webinars and webcasts can be used as a way to disperse knowledge.

Communication for Problem Solving

Problems can occur when members of the team are not clear on what their roles are. The team leader should clearly communicate roles and expectations for team members on a regular basis. Disputes should be resolved as soon as they come up. Team members should be asked to clearly state their perspective on the situation and how it can be improved. They should be encouraged to independently come up with a solution that would resolve the situation for everyone involved.

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References

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Oregon Health and Science University; Verbal Communication Challenges with Offshore Teams; Karla Beck and Jean Richardson

University of Northern Iowa: Plan Your Group's Communication

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