



PARTICIPANT'S HANDBOOK

**MODULE: COMMUNICATION AND
CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

TOPIC 3: TEAMWORK

DURATION OF THE SESSION: 120 MINUTES

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I. Theoretical concept

In this module we are going to talk about **communication** within **teamwork**, because communication has an essential role for the good development of teamwork. Therefore, throughout this module we will work on what **teamwork** is, what its **characteristics** are, the **differences between teamwork and group work**, the **components** of teamwork and **communication** within teamwork.

First of all, let's define what teamwork is.

Teamwork is a group of people, 2 or more people, who use their skills, together, to achieve a series of objectives or goals, through a work process in which all members of the group are responsible for their good development.

From this definition, several indispensable elements for good teamwork can be identified:

- Group of people: Obviously, to be able to carry out a teamwork it is essential that at least two people work together, where each one of them has different skills, experiences, personality and training, and, therefore, the union of these different aspects will influence the final result of the team work.
- Establish objectives: In order to be able to form the teamwork, it is essential for all the members of the team to know what the objectives are that are intended to be achieved for two reasons, the first, so that all the members of the team have the necessary skills to carry out the work, and the second, so that all the members of the team work committed and in the same direction.
- Organization: Good teamwork requires good organization, so that all team members work in a coordinated, responsible manner and obtain the most satisfactory results possible. All team members are responsible for the overall result of the work.
 1. Distribute tasks: This is the organizational system most used by companies, since this system allows each member of the team to take charge of the tasks for which they are best prepared. But this does not mean that each one works in isolation, but that, as mentioned above, all the members are responsible for the final result, so each member is responsible for the good development of their tasks and the tasks of the other members.
- Communication: In every interaction between two people, communication has an essential role, so the importance of good communication within the teamwork does not require explanation, just mention that it is necessary to establish clearly what are the channels of communication between different team members.

II. Characteristics of teamwork

As we have seen before, in teamwork it is essential the participation and collaboration of all the members of the team to do a good job, and because each person has a different character, habits and way of being, it is important to create a good working atmosphere among the different members of the team. Therefore, teamwork should have, among others, the following characteristics:

A cooperative atmosphere

A good atmosphere is essential in any type of work, so it is even more important when it is required to work in a team with other people. Therefore, among team members there must be respect, both for other team members and for the work done by others, as well as a willingness to help other team members.

Commitment

In relation to the above, it is vital that the entire team works towards the same goals and with the same level of dedication, in order to achieve the best possible results. This does not mean that the members cannot have different ideas and have to do only what the leader indicates, but that once they have agreed on the actions and tasks to be performed, the whole team works as one person.

Participation

All team members have some tasks to perform individually, but the aim of teamwork is that all members are involved in the overall development of the work, seeking solutions to problems that arise or simply helping those colleagues with heavier or longer tasks. In short, that the members of the team are willing to help and express their opinions to improve the work, so that the responsibility of the work is shared equally among all and the hierarchy is only an organizational aspect.

Diversity and creativity

Because each person is different, with different skills and ways of thinking, creativity and diversity of ideas should be a fundamental element of teamwork. For this, the free expression of ideas and opinions from different points of view must be allowed, as a consequence of the different personalities of the team members, which encourages and favours creativity and the capacity to generate intelligent solutions.

Recognition

All team members are important for the good development of the work and, therefore, require the recognition they deserve, not only from the team leader, who will have that position more for organizational aspects than for feelings of superiority, but from all the members of the team.

This means that it is the team members themselves who must recognize the good work of their colleagues on a regular basis, so that they can feed back and improve the efficiency of the work, which generates a cycle of continuous improvement and inspiration for all team members.

Good leadership

In most teamwork, the existence of a leader is simply due to organizational aspects of the team, as all team members share responsibility for the work. However, the leader must always be an example of conduct and work for his colleagues, so he must always be on time, respect rules, recognize the work of his colleagues, be committed to the work and encourage the participation of the rest of his colleagues. That a teamwork has a good leader, even if only in name, inspires the rest of the team to improve and participate in the work.

Good communication

It has already been mentioned that communication is essential for teamwork, since good communication favours the exchange of ideas within the team, sharing opinions and experiences, seeking help and finding solutions. In addition, open communication favours a good resolution of the conflicts that arise in the team, promoting dialogue and the good disposition of all the members.

a. Teamwork VS Work groups

It is normal to hear people talk about teamwork and work groups as if they were the same thing. However, although they are similar terms, there are many differences between the two terms, more specifically to the results that each one offers. Therefore, below we will see what the differences are between Teamwork and Work Group.

A **working group** consists of a set of people who have come together to achieve particular objectives, so each member works individually to achieve their goals and only interacts with the rest of the group to share information.

On the other hand, a **teamwork**, as mentioned above, brings together a set of people in order to achieve a common goal, for which, although the tasks are divided, all members are committed to the overall outcome of the work.

To better observe the differences between the two terms, the following table is presented:

Working group	Teamwork
Group members work individually to achieve their particular goals.	Team members work individually, but also care about each other's work, so that they

	can jointly achieve their particular objectives and the common goal.
There is a rigid and unalterable hierarchy.	The hierarchy is only by organizational issues, as the responsibility for the work is shared by all members.
The members have similar skills and characteristics, so they all do the same type of work.	Members have different skills that complement each other with the rest of the team, allowing them to work in different types of jobs.
Members focus on their individual tasks.	Members work on their individual tasks and help the rest of their colleagues to improve the overall quality of the result.
The result of the work is the sum of the individual tasks.	The result of the work is a consequence of the collective work of all the members of the team.
The members have no opinion, they just do what they are told to do.	Members give their opinion, offer their point of view and look for solutions to improve the work.
Communication only exists between group members and the leader, but not between group members themselves.	There are open communication channels so that all team members can be in permanent contact.

b. Advantages and disadvantages of teamwork

As we have seen, there are notable differences between the teamwork and the working groups. Consequently, the advantages and disadvantages of work teams will be explained, both at the individual level and for the company.

Advantages of the teamwork

Individual:

- It generates in the person a feeling of belonging to the team and to the company, which favours their commitment and motivation with the work.
- It reduces stress in the person, since the work and responsibility is shared by the whole team.

- Increases individual learning as a consequence of sharing knowledge, experiences and skills with other people.
- Increased creativity, as ideas and opinions are presented from different points of view.
- Greater socialization with their peers, since they have to intervene and participate in the decision making process for the development of the project, which generates relations of equity, friendship and collaboration.
- Develops his communication and negotiation skills as a result of his socialization with peers.
- His work is recognized by his peers and leaders, both morally and economically.

Company:

- Increase in productivity, this is a consequence of consensus decision-making, which favours a greater amount of work and improves its capacity.
- Greater commitment of people to the company as a result of encouraging all team members to give their opinion and contribute to decision making.
- Promotes the spirit of companionship and teamwork through respect for the opinions of others and joint work.
- Greater flexibility of its workers, since they complement each other in various ways and improve their skills by working in teams.
- Development of more complex projects, since teamwork have workers with diverse skills, allowing them to complement their abilities to deal with more complex or difficult situations.
- It favors the flow of information among workers, which promotes originality, improves decision-making, and results in more satisfactory outcomes.

Disadvantages of teamwork

Here the disadvantages affect both the individuals and the company in the same way:

- Lack of preparation, by one or more members of the teamwork, can lead to disagreements within the teamwork, reduced performance at work and a feeling of lack of professionalism in the management of the company.

- Errors in the flow of information as a result of one or more members of the work team not participating in decision making or not expressing their opinions due to fear of criticism, which hinders creativity and the good development of the work.
- Disagreements within the work team due to the presence of opposing personalities or misunderstandings between colleagues.
- Appearance of conflicts between colleagues due to the lower performance of a team member or for having different opinions.
- It is very time consuming, as it requires that adequate time be allocated for decision making, so that everyone can freely express their opinions and points of view.
- Team members may not recognize their individual mistakes and do not take responsibility for the mistake, claiming that team members share responsibility for the work, which can lead to conflict within the team.
- Lack of organization as a result of the lack of a clear hierarchy and the presence of concrete and common objectives.

c) Why use teamwork?

Now that you've seen the benefits and drawbacks of working with teamwork, you may be wondering if it's really advisable to use work equipment despite its disadvantages.

The answer is yes, because the benefits to both the individual and the company of a well-functioning team are far greater than the benefits of individual work, so it's really worth taking risks with teamwork despite the disadvantages.

Even if the disadvantages appear, whether due to conflicts or poor performance, they can be solved by techniques that encourage teamwork and improve communication between team members.

III. Steps to create an efficient team

Now you know what teamwork are and what are the benefits, personal and business, of working together.

Therefore, below you will find the steps to follow to improve the unity and productivity of your team, to make it efficient.

The steps to improve your team are:

- Evaluate integration within the team

For the good development of the teamwork, it is necessary to have a good climate of trust and respect for all colleagues, where each person can express their opinions and experiences freely, without fear of being criticized or discriminated against.

Therefore, it will be necessary to evaluate how the members of the team relate to each other, identifying possible conflicts, misunderstandings or socialization problems among the colleagues, with the aim of identifying the members less integrated in the team, talk to them and look for solutions to increase their integration in the team.

- Participate in group activities

Team cohesion is very important, as we have mentioned before, and the best way to achieve it is through group recreational activities. These group activities make it easier to create good relationships between colleagues, get to know other team members better and improve communication between workers.

However, for these activities to be truly effective, they should be done on a regular basis, not on an occasional or exceptional basis. In addition, the degree of satisfaction of the workers must be evaluated after each activity, so that the following activities are better.

- Rewarding group work

Previously we have talked about the importance of recognizing individual work within the team by the colleagues and the leader. However, to improve team cohesion it is essential to recognize group work and reward it. In this way, it is possible to improve the motivation of the team, both at individual and group level, which promotes the integration and commitment of the team.

- Consider the context of your team

Everyone has situations or problems that concern them, whether on a personal, professional, adaptation, communication or socialization level, among many other concerns, that can cause them to be distracted at work.

For this reason, it is important to know what the situation is of each member of the team, to know what worries them, to see if this situation distracts them from their work and to look for solutions so that they learn to stay focused on their work and, if possible, for their particular situation, which will also foster the relationship and trust between you and your colleagues.

- Listen to

It has been emphasized that in teamwork, team members should work together and express their opinions and views. Therefore, it is essential that group members feel listened to, for which it is very convenient to make use of active listening, otherwise they will stop expressing their opinion because they feel undervalued.

These are the main steps to make your teamwork more united and therefore more efficient and productive, that is, your team will be composed of people committed to the work and the team, so they stay together until the end of the project, its members are motivated and feel important, and there are good channels of communication, usually this is thanks to rules of behavior established by the team itself jointly.

a. Team roles

Within a team there are people with different personalities and skills, which will encourage each member to assume a distinctive role in the team naturally.

According to Stephen P. Robbins, author of the book "Organizational Behavior", within each team there are a number of roles:

- **Integrator or moderator**, is the one who acts as a natural leader, since he is in charge of coordinating the rest of the team members, as well as promoting the integration of each of the team members in the team.
- **Creator**, is the member who proposes the most original and innovative ideas and solutions, as well as the way to carry them out.
- **Advisor**, is the one who offers advice, promotes the search for information and guides his colleagues in the collection of information and how to share it.
- **Guardian**, is the colleague who cares that the team is not threatened by dangers outside the team, while fighting against people outside the team to get the best for the team.
- **Controller**, is the person within the team who looks at the details and cares that the rules are followed.
- **Collaborator**, is the team member who helps the team in general, and especially the leader, by seconding and supporting the work of colleagues, focusing them towards the common goal.

- **Organizer**, is the colleague who distributes and organizes the other team members in order to give a structure to the team and improve its productivity.
- **Promoter**, is the team member who, once the idea to be developed has been chosen, is the one who is most concerned with completing the idea until the end.

b. Qualities a person has to have in order to work in a team

Although teamwork is a great way to work, not everyone is ready to be part of a teamwork. These people can be great individual workers, but when it comes to working as a team with other individuals, these people get lost, isolate themselves and try to do everything on their own, which generates distrust within the team and makes it not work as it should.

For this reason, now we are going to present the qualities that team members must have or that must be worked on in order to be a productive member of teamwork:

- **Flexibility and adaptation.** Work teams are a changing environment, where the organization, and the work method itself, can change at any time, so it is necessary to be a person capable of adapting to new situations and have the flexibility to change their way of working.
- **Communicator.** Throughout the topic it has been mentioned that an essential aspect of teamwork is communication, which is why team members must have communication skills to express their opinions, feelings, ideas and points of view, as well as to socialize with their colleagues.
- **Knowing how to listen.** Listening to team members is one of the keys to achieving a cohesive and efficient team.
- **Accepting criticism.** In teamwork all members express their opinion, which includes team members making constructive criticism of other colleagues, so it is important that team members know how to accept criticism and use it to improve.
- **Collaborative.** Working in a team is not a competition, seeking to be the best of the team, but to seek the success of the team, which works with their colleagues to do the best job.
- **Commitment and responsibility.** The final result is the responsibility of all team members, but in addition, each member must be responsible for his individual work, both successes and failures.

IV. Techniques to improve communication in the teamwork

Communication is one of the pillars of teamwork, so it is very important to work on communication and dialogue between team members.

But first, the basic requirements for facilitating dialogue within the team will be set out:

- **To know our ideas**, to know what you want, but without adopting extremisms or static opinions.
- **To consider colleagues as equals**, people with their own thoughts, which can be as valid as your ideas, which favours a good debate.
- A team member who plays the **role of mediator**, that is, who understands the importance of dialogue, is in charge of inviting and encouraging team members to participate in the decision making process, and avoiding that team members adopt roles ("I can't", "critic", "victim" ...) that make dialogue and communication within the team difficult.

Once the basic requirements for communication have been met, techniques or strategies can be implemented to improve, or simply encourage, communication within the team. Some of the most used or popular techniques are:

Brainstorming

This is one of the best known and most popular techniques, so much so that it has even surpassed the world of work, since it is used in the education sector and even in people's daily lives.

The technique consists of the leader presenting a topic to work on, or a problem, and asking team members to freely present their ideas for carrying out the work or for solving the problem.

Therefore, the team members can express their ideas, both serious and not, that is to say, they express everything they think, since all these ideas favor the creativity of the group, as well as promotes the appearance of innovative and unimaginable ideas at first.

Discussion Group

This technique is carried out in small groups, each coordinated by a member. The group coordinator presents a topic or problem to the group in detail. Once the group has all the necessary information, it can begin discussing the best solution to the problem. During the process, the facilitator can take breaks to recapitulate on the ideas presented and direct them toward solving the problem.

At the end of the discussion, a summary is made of the process, the ideas presented and the conclusions reached, and the decision taken regarding the issue or problem presented is specified.

The six hats

This technique encourages lateral thinking in the team, leading to the emergence of original and innovative ideas.

The technique consists of facing problem solving, or decision making, from different points of view, where each hat is a different point of view.

The hats are organized in colors, so the one with the blue hat will be the moderator of the group, the one who directs and coordinates the rest of the hats.

The white hat will be the person who has a neutral and objective position, the person who will focus on finding and exposing reliable information and facts, as well as detecting the lack of important information.

The red hat is the person who represents the deepest emotions and feelings. This person is responsible for expressing your opinions based on your emotions, as well as your wishes. For these reasons, this person has limited his interventions to a duration of thirty seconds, since his contribution must be more emotional than rational.

The black hat is the member of the group who must focus, through logic, on highlighting the dangers, weaknesses, obstacles and risks that must be taken into account when making decisions. These "negative" contributions do not seek confrontation, but rather these contributions are expressed to improve the ideas put forward, rather than to block them.

The yellow hat is the person with the opposite mission to the black hat, since the yellow hat must look, from the logic, for the real opportunities of the situations raised, that is, it is in charge of giving the positive arguments for an idea, but always from an analytical perspective.

The green hat is the person who makes use of lateral or divergent thinking to offer creative ideas and take risks, proposing alternatives to the difficulties posed by the black hat.