How to Avoid Teamwork Disasters: Crash Course Business - Soft Skills #12

Crash Course: Business - Soft Skills
https://youtube.com/watch?v=fRj7Am63wVc
https://nerdfighteria.info/v/fRj7Am63wVc

Group projects have such a bad reputation that there are hundreds of memes about all the things that can go wrong.

Maybe one person does all the work, the brainstorming falls flat, or the team becomes super unorganized because they weren't on the same page from the start. We've all been there.

But we're here to show you how to avoid teamwork disasters, in and out of the workplace. You'll be able to help a team set goals and work better together, use agendas and delegation to avoid meetings that go on forever, and keep that workflow, well, actually flowing. I'm Evelyn From the Internets.

And this is Crash Course Business: Soft Skills. [Intro Music Plays] Before we dive into any advice, we need to talk about what makes a good or bad team! Basically, a good team is like the Avengers before The Winter Soldier. It's a small group of people who motivate each other and have complementary skills.

Everyone is on the same page, pulls their own weight, and has individual goals that line up with the bigger picture. And they hold each other accountable, so no one goes too rogue. A bad team is like the Avengers during Civil War.

The timetable is all over the place. People are hiding things from each other and have personal goals that don't match the group's. Everyone's practically doing their own thing without much accountability, and they're not contributing equally.

Seriously, Thor. Where were you? The first step to turning a bad team into a good team is making sure everyone's on the same page.

Everyone should come together to set SMART goals. Remember those? A SMART goal is Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, and Timely.

Ideally, you'd have some individual SMART goals that match up with one, big team SMART goal. Once you have goals, you should list them out, along with some responsibilities or even rules for the team. Write all those things in a charter before you start working together, to set the tone for your project.

Generally, no one thinks to have a charter until they run into problems. And by then, it's sometimes too difficult to reassign tasks or solve conflict without damaging relationships. Think of a charter like a roommate agreement.

You want to figure out that cleaning schedule and a policy on overnight guests before you passive-aggressively let dishes pile up. Once you've set team responsibilities, it's a safe bet that you're going to need to hold meetings to check in and, you know, work as a team. In a good meeting, everyone is given a chance to speak their minds, you don't hate the meeting or the people in it, and there's a goal that's actually accomplished.

And, just to be clear, good meetings are not unicorns. They do exist! But we've all had our fair share of bad team meetings.

They're kind of like a supervillain's monologue -- they waste enormous amounts of time and should be avoided. In one study involving 182 managers with different careers, 129 of them said meetings were unproductive and inefficient. That's 71 percent.

Not chump change, people. So the first question you should always ask yourself is: "Does everyone need to be in the same room together, and will it accomplish anything I couldn't do remotely?" You should hold a meeting if you need someone else's input, or if you're sharing something seriously important that should be done in person. But if you just need to give a quick update, maybe try an email or a memo instead.

If we have too many unnecessary meetings, not only do we accomplish less, but those meetings will mean less. It's like the organizational equivalent of crying wolf. So if your team is leaving for a conference, don't put everyone in a room for an hour to decide who's bringing what presentation supplies.

Send out a checklist. But if you need to figure out a complex plan to make amends and rebrand your team after a PR nightmare, a meeting is probably the way to go. When you schedule a meeting, only include anyone who's absolutely necessary.

You'll need to determine who that is, but generally, it means people who are directly involved in your project or immediately affected by your decisions. I'm gonna be real here. Some people may be there because of office politics.

Like maybe they're a senior manager who could probably just read meeting notes, but they may feel excluded if they don't have the chance to chime in. But otherwise, most people will appreciate being left off the roster if they're not required to be there. Plus, getting the whole team together for a brainstorming session is... pretty much useless.

I know. Brainstorming sounds catchy. And there's that whole inspirational movie bit with a team of determined young professionals launching ideas at each other in a conference room late at night.

But in real life, it's pretty counterproductive. Getting people together to think spontaneously doesn't lead to better ideas. It just leads to more ideas to talk about in more meetings.

To see what to do instead, let's go to the Thought Bubble. It's college graduation time. You've worked hard for four years, saved up money from part-time jobs, and you're ready for one last hurrah before you join the proverbial rat race.

So you and your two best friends meet up at your favorite coffee shop and spend an hour brainstorming the perfect vacation on a budget. But once you get started, ideas fly, and you're left with a jumbled mess of a Google doc! No one can agree on anything.

You want to go hike in Hawaii, but honestly you're not even sure if all the islands have good trails, or how easy it is to get between them. One of your friends wants to go a on a cross-country road trip, but can't name any places other than the Grand Canyon. The other wants to backpack through Europe to "find yourselves," but doesn't really have a plan besides staying in hostels, maybe.

Since brainstorming wasn't productive, you and your friends agree to do some solid research on your own and meet again in a week to each give a small pitch. You each look through travel blogs and make more detailed itineraries ahead of time, texting each other little questions like what your budgets are or whose car has better gas mileage. So when you meet up again, you can talk about what matters, like overall cost, transportation, and timelines.

You even put together a pros and cons list! After talking over the options, you realize you'll be able to save a few hundred dollars and put that money towards a few more travel days if you drive Route 66 together, with stops for hiking and camping. Plus, you'll be on the beach in Santa Monica for a perfect last day.

Thanks, Thought Bubble! An agenda that's distributed before a meeting helps people walk in knowing exactly what's going on and provides a bit of structure. Assuming they read the agenda.

You can lead a horse to water... and all that. It's important to keep meetings from going overtime, and a 30 minute meeting can easily turn into 3 hours without some guidance. That being said, you don't always have to follow agendas to the letter.

As long as side-conversations aren't super off-topic, you may generate great ideas! Really, a successful, balanced meeting structure depends a lot on the team and company culture. But assigning team roles can also help make sure that everything stays under control.

A task leader can make sure that the agenda is actually getting accomplished and cut off people that are going on tangents. And a relationship leader can make sure that everyone gets a chance to speak, or mediate conflict so everyone doesn't end up grumpy and hating each other. I know it's sometimes hard to make yourself heard, but try not to get down when someone interrupts you or dominates the conversation.

You were hired for your work ethic and your outlook -- never forget that! And if you have a great idea or have worked on a project longer than the person sitting next to you, it doesn't give you have a free pass to talk forever. It's a meeting, not a presentation, Robert.

Don't be that guy. So check yourself, and try to encourage people to speak up that haven't contributed. Plus, teams need a variety of opinions so ideas don't fall flat!

So take steps to avoid conformity. Large teams, and even like-minded people, can run into groupthink. That's when groups make subpar decisions because people value harmony more than making the best decision, so they avoid disagreement.

It's kind of like peer pressure in the office. If you want a fun read, look at the Abilene Paradox, where four people take a miserable trip no one wanted to take, just because they thought everyone else wanted to go. It's hard to completely stop groupthink, but knowing it's there is a first step.

Assigning a devil's advocate to poke holes in ideas during meetings can also help. Since our brains are weird, we're sometimes unconsciously influenced by the first opinion that gets said. So if you're voting on a decision, you should vote blind on slips of paper.

If you've seen 12 Angry Men -- you know. But the the best way to lower conformity is to keep your group size small, roughly between 3-6 people. Follow the pizza rule!

Basically, if you can't feed everyone with one pizza, you should probably have fewer people at the meeting. Larger meetings can lead to social loafing, which is when some people don't contribute because they can fly under the radar or there's too many people with not enough to do. And depending on the situation, if you can, it may be best to exclude the boss to avoid groupthink.

Nobody really wants to challenge the boss. Plus, you could feel like your boss doesn't care or your opinion won't change anything, especially if your company tends to ignore recommendations. But even if meeting situations aren't ideal, remember that you can help stop groupthink, and that whole movements have started because people have spoken up.

Changes for healthier company cultures are so important. But also without Richard Montañez, the Frito-Lay janitor, we wouldn't have flaming hot Cheetos. The world would be a darker place.

And if you think your team may be making a bad decision that's unethical or offensive, the repercussions for staying silent may be greater than for speaking up. Even if you feel outvoted. We've all seen insensitive ad campaigns that should have gotten stopped in production. ...

Pepsi... And if you're afraid of speaking up because public speaking is tough, it's gonna be okay. People are self-centered, and they are probably way more concerned with themselves than what you're saying.

Plus, most people are more forgiving of spoken mistakes than written ones. Nerves are real! So cut yourself some slack, because no one is perfect.

But if we help each other learn, we'll all get a little bit better. So go take on the world with an awesome team, and remember: Only plan team meetings when absolutely necessary. Making agendas, delegating responsibilities, and managing work effectively will keep your meeting time low.

Don't brainstorm as a team. It's not necessarily productive. Come up with ideas on your own and then get together to discuss them.

Your opinion matters, and don't be afraid to speak up to fight groupthink. Next week, we'll tackle difficult workplace conversations you don't really want to have, in a way that's productive and respectful. Thanks for watching Crash Course Business.

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