Creating
High Performing Teams

To create a high functioning team, everyone must be clear on what the project requirements are and committed to collaboratively achieving the same goal. The following are tips that can help your team to achieve this.

Project Vision

What is the team's grade expectation on this assignment? Is there consensus? Is everyone committed to putting the effort into achieving this mark?

Group Members' Behavioural Expectations

What do you need from each other to work effectively as a team? Members of the team might have different needs, based on their individual values and strengths. This is where real and honest communication must take place. Individual group members must express what they need from the other members to make this a positive and productive experience for all (e.g. no negativity, being on time, etc.).

Group Member Strengths / Skill development

The reality is that each of us come to the team with different strengths that we can contribute to the project, and different developmental needs. It is important to discuss each other's strengths and the parts of the project that play to these strengths. It is also important for team members to identify areas where they do not feel strong. It is the responsibility of the other team members to coach and assist, instead of judging. Challenge yourself to be a coach, not a critic. This is not constructive and will not produce positive results for the team or the project.

Team Communication

The reason that teams often break down is not because of lack of skill, but by a breakdown in communication between the team members. It is important for teams to establish how they will communicate with each other (email, text, Google Groups, etc.) and that everyone has each other's contact information. It is also important to know when people are available to respond. Not everyone is tuned into their smart devices "24/7".

Remember that body language accounts for approximately 80% of all communication. A lot of miscommunication and misinterpretation are due to technology. Team synergy happens when you actually take the time to get to know your teammates in real time!

Team Members' Schedules / Availability

If your project requires you to meet outside of class time, it is important to determine when everyone is available to meet. This sounds incredibly simplistic, but it is a major reason for conflicts in teams! Everyone has a life outside of the college - many students work part-time jobs, commute long distances and have other obligations and responsibilities in their lives. It is important to sit down as a group and identify a common time that works for everyone.

Team Activity Plan

Developing an activity plan requires all team members to be clear about what the project requirements are and the individual tasks / activities that will need to be completed. It is important to assess your team members' individual strengths so that you can allocate tasks that enable member's to play to their strengths which will improve project outcomes. If a team member does not feel strong in a particular area, there is an opportunity for them to partner with someone who does have this strength so that they can observe and learn. This is referred to as coaching! Once you have identified who will be doing what activities, the next step is to put timelines for completing the activities, so that you meet the submission / due date!

Critical Review Dates

Make sure to set aside times throughout the project where the entire team gets together to do a project "status check". This enables all members to be up-to-date on what is happening and also provides an opportunity to resolve any potential issues or problems, long before the project is due!