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*Ver. 1.1, updated 6 October 2008*

## Contents

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These are **teaching notes**. They are written from the program leader's perspective, as if the program leader is speaking. They are detailed but not comprehensive. My goal is to give you all the concepts and tools of the program, along with a flavor of my teaching style. You should find here enough information to evaluate whether the program is useful for you, or enough detail to develop it for your own organization.

You'll also find teaching tips or clarifications shaded in gray.

These teaching notes make more sense if you've already read the **Program Overview and Setup** document. It's also best to read the session documents in order, because later sessions build on the work of earlier sessions.

## Session 5 Topics

- Observations
- What makes an effective team?
- I love being on my team
- Team agreements overview
- Team structure
- Team culture
- Creating team agreements

### **Session 5 Key Concepts**

- In an effective team, everyone knows what the team is accountable for, what their particular job is, how they will be evaluated, and what authority they have. Everyone is competent. Everyone feels valued.
- An effective team operates on a series of agreements about roles and responsibilities, expectations, team behavior, etc. Facilitating these agreements will take care of 90% of the everyday frictions that arise through misunderstandings, lack of clarity, or fear of speaking up about mistakes or concerns.

These concepts are essential underpinnings of the Humans At Work<sup>SM</sup> program. Do not substitute other concepts unless you are prepared to reconfigure the entire program accordingly. If you are not familiar with these concepts, don't lead this session. These skills should be introduced and demonstrated by expert practitioners who can model the behavior as well as describe it.

You'll find basic handouts for all sessions in the Tools and Materials document.

### **Homework assignments due for this session**

1. Paper on your 5 or 6 driving values as a manager.
2. Draft team accountabilities and review with your manager
3. Begin implementing effective meeting techniques.
4. Read **The New Compleat Facilitator** (pp 34-65), **Becoming a Manager** (pp. 87-145 and pp. 283-302), and **Difficult Conversations** (pp.58-82).
5. Observe decision-making behavior and record observations.

### Session 5 Agenda

9:00	<b>5.1</b>	<b>Open session (<a href="#">see notes</a>)</b>
9:05		
9:10	<b>5.2</b>	<b>Observations (<a href="#">see notes</a>)</b>
9:15		
9:20		
9:25	<b>5.3</b>	<b>What makes an effective team? (<a href="#">see notes</a>)</b>
9:30		
9:35		
9:40		
9:45		
9:50		
9:55		
10:00		
10:05		
10:10		
10:15	<b>5.4</b>	<b>Session manifesto: I love being on my team (<a href="#">see notes</a>)</b>
10:20		
10:25		
10:30		<b><i>BREAK (10 minutes)</i></b>
10:35		
10:40	<b>5.5</b>	<b>Team agreements overview (<a href="#">see notes</a>)</b>
10:45	<b>5.6</b>	<b>Team structure (<a href="#">see notes</a>)</b>
10:50		
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11:45		
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11:55		
12:00		<b><i>LUNCH (1 hour)</i></b>
1:00		
1:05		
1:10		
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1:25		
1:30		
1:35		
1:40		
1:45	<b>5.7</b>	<b>Team culture (see notes)</b>
1:50		
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2:00		
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2:15		
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2:45		
2:50		<b>BREAK (10 minutes)</b>
2:55		
3:00		
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3:45		
3:50	<b>5.8</b>	<b>Creating team agreements (see notes)</b>
3:55		
4:00		
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4:25		
4:30	<b>5.9</b>	<b>Summary remarks, final questions and comments (see notes)</b>
4:35		
4:40		
4:45		
4:50	<b>5.10</b>	<b>Wrap up (see notes)</b>
4:55		
5:00		<b>Session ends</b>

## **Session 5 teaching notes**

### **1.1 Open Session**

- A. Brief review of Session 4 outcomes
- B. Session 5 goals

#### **5.1 A -- Review Session 4**

We're going to bring all the work of our first four sessions together today as we look at the basics of building a good team.

We started with the values of an effective manager. We looked at how those values shape the way effective managers communicate and build relationships. And in Session 4, we applied those values and communication tools to important activities that managers routinely engage in with people all over the company: managing priorities, giving information and direction, making decisions, and doing work in meetings.

We covered a lot in that session. The key points that I want to remind you of today are:

- Your priorities are driven by what your team is accountable for, and what helps your team function most effectively.
- People need to be involved as much as possible in decisions that affect them.
- Your communication and relationships skills are a fundamental part of these activities. Being clear, transparent and authentic about priorities, decisions, and the work you expect people to do in meetings is key to making these activities successful even when they are difficult.

#### **5.1 B -- Session 5 goals**

Today we'll apply all the skills from the first four sessions to the basics of building an effective team, including attention to:

- Team structure: organization and reporting relationships, roles and responsibilities, key team processes and team meetings.
  - Team culture: management style, ground rules, and handling mistakes, concerns, disagreement and secrets.
  - Creating team agreements
- 

## 5.2 Observations

Select a participant to facilitate the following group discussion. Coach them as they work. The goal is to make sure that responses are specific, and to record key concepts on the flip chart.

**Group discussion of homework assignment:** What did you observe about decision-making behavior? What did you take away that will benefit you as a manager?

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## 5.3 What makes an effective team?

**Group discussion:** Based on your own experience, and the reading you did in **Becoming A Manager**, what do you think characterizes a good or a bad team? How do people behave and how do they feel when they are on a good or bad team?

Make sure to dig deep in this discussion -- ask for personal stories or examples, and ask lots of "why" questions to get beyond symptoms to the underlying behavior (e.g. "Why do people on a bad team feel demoralized? What happens to make them feel that way?")

Also keep the discussion connected to the reading from **Becoming A Manager** (Chapter 11).

As the discussion proceeds, begin to focus on a summary list of "good" team

characteristics. Make sure the items below are reflected on the list – introduce them if necessary.

Key points from the reading:

- An effective team performs (does what it is accountable for)
- Team members feel satisfied
- The team adapts and learns

Also refer participants to the diagram on p. 285 of **Becoming A Manager**

There are many things we can say about what makes a good team, but here's the list of **basic characteristics** that we'll focus on today. These are the starting point for a successful team.

**On an effective team:**

- We all know what our job is.
- We all know what each other's job is.
- We all know what our team goals are
- We communicate clearly about commitments, requests, and problems.
- We respect each other's abilities and allow each other to make mistakes.
- We don't have to love each other in order to work well together. We just have to work well together--communicate, clarify requests and assumptions, and deliver on commitments or give advance notice of changes.

*This is an excerpt from notes for an orientation session for a new team that I formed and managed. I delivered this information face-to-face in a team meeting, and then followed up with it in email to every team member. You'll find my complete notes in Tools and Materials.*

Here's a more formal way to look at it, for purposes of our work in this session:

**Basic elements of an effective team**

- The team has a clear structure
  - Everyone knows what the team is accountable for
  - Everyone knows their role and responsibilities
  - Everyone knows how their work will be evaluated
  - Everyone knows what authority they have and how decisions are made
  - Everyone is competent in their job
  - The team has a clear culture
  - Everyone knows how they are expected to behave on the team
  - The team is a safe environment for people to make mistakes, express concerns, or work through disagreements
  - Everyone feels valued and generally satisfied.
- 

**5.4 Session manifesto: I love being on my team**

Please read the Manifesto section in the Program Overview and Setup for more guidance about the session manifestos.

Put the manifesto in your own words. Testify. And remember that your purpose is to show participants how today's concepts and ideas are related to each other, to the work of previous sessions, and to good management in general. This is where you bring it all together.

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Start every manifesto with a personal story.

Today's story should be your best story of how it feels to be on the best team ever.

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Imagine someone asking a member of your team what you're like as a manager.

Imagine your team member breaking into a huge grin and say, "She's terrific!" or "He's the best manager I've ever had."

That's about the individual relationship. That's about you treating each person who works for you as a human being. It's about you being clear, transparent and authentic.

Now imagine someone asking that team member about what it's like to be on your team. Imagine your team member saying, "My team is amazing. I love being on my team."

It's a totally different statement, and equally important. It's about the group relationship. It's about the everyday working experience for people whether you as manager are in the room or not. It means that you have created a framework within which individual people can accomplish work together. You have built a team.

It's your responsibility to create a structure and a culture that make individual people feel excited, satisfied, valued and incredibly productive in their work.

We start with structure. All teams have an organizational chart, but not all teams have a clear, defined structure. They don't have a shared understanding of what they are responsible for and what others are responsible for. They don't know what they are allowed to decide and what they aren't. They don't know who to talk to when they need information.

People need this framework within which to work. Lack of structure makes work hideously difficult for people. And it is your responsibility to provide this structure.

Culture is our shared understanding of how we are expected to behave and interact. Every team has a culture, somewhere on the spectrum from dysfunctional to fantastic. Good team culture doesn't happen by accident, and it doesn't happen in a vacuum. It is your responsibility to clearly define the culture you want to create and to manage to that definition.

How do you do this? How do you define and manage structure and culture? They don't happen at random. They happen because you facilitate clear team agreements about what work people will do, and how they will behave with each other while they do it.

Remember, management is behavior. Communication is behavior. And teamwork is behavior too – behavior that contributes to accomplishing the work that you are all there to do. That's key – teamwork isn't just about *team*, it's about *work*. It's your job as a manager to help your team define the behavior that will make their work together most effective and most productive.

And finally, it's your job to model that behavior. To facilitate the agreements, to live up to them, and to make sure that other people live up to them too. Without your willingness to create clear agreements and then enforce them, everything falls apart. And if you don't walk the talk, your credibility is dead.

Today's session only scratches the surface. Effective team-building isn't a one-time task, it's an ongoing process. You'll be doing it every day you are a manager. Your skills and understanding will deepen with practice, and so will the skills of your team.

The day you know you're really successful as a manager is when your team can function without you. Everyone knows what to do. Everyone knows how to get it done. Everyone makes decisions effectively, individually and together. Everyone has a sense of what values and priorities should drive those decisions, because they know how you think and feel – you've made it transparent. Everyone communicates clearly, authentically, transparently -- because that's what you expect of them, and it's become what they expect of each other, too.

That day is a very good day. That's the day you realize that the dry "agreements" you have facilitated have come alive inside people. They own it now. They'll take it with them wherever they go.

The best thing you can ever do as a manager is give people the experience of working on a great team. Show them how it's done and then make it possible for them to do it every single day. That everyday experience – simply coming to work as part of an effective, well-managed team – is an experience that changes attitudes, careers and lives for the better.

It'll change yours too.

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## **5.5 Team agreements overview**

The key to an effective team is clearly-defined team agreements. Team agreements are documents that spell out important aspects of team structure and team culture.

They are the rules.

Team agreements mean that everyone has the same understanding of what it means to be on the team. They are how you set everyone's expectations of what their job is, and how they should behave while doing it. They also help you measure performance.

Agreements make your job as manager much easier. You're not perceived as "playing favorites" or being inconsistent – you're following the agreements just like everyone else.

We're first going to go through all of the team agreements for defining team structure and team culture. Later this afternoon, we'll talk through the entire process of creating those agreements. The goal is to first give you the big picture of what agreements can do for you, and then talk through the details of making that happen.

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## **5.6 Team structure**

- A. How the team is organized
- B. Roles and responsibilities
- C. How people are evaluated
- D. How the team makes decisions
- E. Key processes
- F. How information flows
- G. Regular team meetings

### **5.6 A -- How the team is organized**

Your team should be organized to:

- Meet your accountabilities
- Balance between generalists and specialists
- Regulate the number of direct reports that anyone has

Look again at your team accountabilities – does your org chart clearly map to what you're accountable for? This may seem obvious, but is worth revisiting, especially if your team is projected to grow. Start learning to look at the organization of the team in terms of what you have to accomplish, not just how many people you have.

Remember that work isn't just the number of tasks a person has – it's also the number of relationships they have to maintain in order to get those tasks done effectively. That's an important part of anyone's workload, and you should take it into account when planning your team's structure.

This is where you can look at whether your team is composed of generalists, specialists, or a mix. For example: a small business HR team may want most team members to be HR generalists, where a large business may have so many employees that specialists (compensation, policy, employee support, etc.) are necessary.

Finally, if your team becomes big enough that you have too many direct reports, think about putting in a management or supervisory layer. Be sure you think this through: changing someone's manager is a huge change for a team member.

### **5.6 B -- Roles and responsibilities**

You should have clearly documented roles and responsibilities for everyone on your team, including you.

Many companies include detailed roles and responsibilities in their job description. Some companies don't put much effort into these descriptions, and that's a mistake: how can you hold people accountable if they don't know what they are accountable for?

Regardless of how your company formats job descriptions, I recommend a detailed roles and responsibilities document that you give to the team member

and put in their personnel file.

Roles and responsibilities should always be written in "I" language, describing the person's role in terms of "I am responsible for X, Y, etc." This makes it a direct and personal document for each team member.

Make sure the document includes:

- A high-level description of the team's accountabilities and the individual's role
- A detailed description of responsibilities
- What the team member is accountable for
- What authority the team member has.

### **5.6 C -- How people are evaluated**

Once your team members know what their job is, and what they are accountable for, they also need to know how you will evaluate their performance in general terms. What do you expect of people on your team?

This is not a detailed list of individual performance review criteria -- it's a general statement about what is important to you in the performance of a team member. They should apply equally to all members of the team.

You have to decide what's important to you, but here are my suggestions. They are, as far as I can tell, appropriate to evaluate anyone in any role, and they clearly reflect both the individual job and your overall values as a manager.

You can include this on the roles and responsibilities agreement, or publish it as part of an overall team document.

#### General evaluation criteria:

- How well has the person performed based on the roles and responsibilities agreement?
- What feedback about their skills and performance do you get from the people they work most closely with (inside or outside the team)?
- Do they function effectively within the team?

### **5.6 D -- How the team makes decisions**

You should give your team a clear understanding of how decisions that affect the team will be made. Remember, good managers involve people as much as possible in decisions that affect them.

- Tell your team that your management philosophy is that people should be involved as much as possible in decisions that affect them. Tell them you will try to make decisions using consultation or collaboration whenever possible.
- Tell them you hope in this way to achieve consensus on most decisions.
- Explain to them your definition of consensus (including the 70% consensus rule, if you think it is valuable) so that everyone is operating from the same base of information.
- Explain that when you have to make decisions with no input, or limited input, that you will always explain the context and circumstances. Remind them that there will be decisions that you as manager must make yourself.
- Explain to them what decisions they can make on their own without your input.

I highly recommend that you specifically tell people they are free to make decisions about how their work gets done. Unless there are specific corporate, legal or regulatory procedures associated with their work, people should be free to do their jobs the way that is best for them. They should be free to schedule their time in the way that works best for them. They should have as much power as possible over their own work lives. Do not force people to use "your system" of doing things just because it works for you.

Again, please don't get too detailed with this. It is pointless and silly to try to build a matrix of all possible decisions according to the process you will use. The point is that your team is clear on your general approach to making decisions, and the team understands that you respect and expect their input on decisions

that affect them.

### **5.6 E -- Key processes**

If there are any processes you will require your team to know and use, tell them. Be clear and specific. Make sure you offer training opportunities if necessary.

Do not make every process a "key process." Only mandate what is absolutely necessary to standardize. If you require everyone to use the same process, have a good reason that you can explain clearly.

Examples of key processes might include: how payroll is distributed; how the mail room handles packages for shipping; how to create new records in the information system; etc.

### **5.6 F -- How information flows**

No one can work in a vacuum. People need information to do their specific jobs and to understand what's happening in the wider world of the team or the company.

As a manager, one important way you support the people on your team is by making sure they get information that affects them or their work. So an important part of team structure is to define the key general information your team needs and how they will get it.

Don't get too detailed on this. Don't overwhelm your team with unnecessary information. People who need customized information on an individual level can develop systems to get it, with your help if necessary. But at this stage, focus on information necessary to your team as a whole (or large parts of it).

#### Process suggestion:

If it's possible, set up a private "team folder" on your company's email system, accessed only by team members. Such a folder becomes a virtual bulletin board for information, updates, reminders and general messages to the team. It's each team member's responsibility to stay current with the mail in the folder.

The team email folder is also a good place to publish your team agreements, and to post ideas, issues etc. that you want team feedback on during a decision-making process (as well as giving people the choice to deliver their input privately to you instead).

It is your job to manage this folder.

Information your team needs may include:

- Reports on team performance (weekly or monthly sales figures, inventory levels, customer complaints, safety record, etc.)
- Reports from other teams if the information is applicable to your team's work (inventory levels, project plans, release schedules, etc.)
- The general state of the department, division and company. Many managers attend meetings with their managers or executives in which general information on the state of the business is presented. Share this information with your team in a regular email briefing.
- Articles or "how to" information that might benefit your team members, especially if the team has identified areas of special interest.

### **5.6 G -- Regular team meetings**

You should have regular team meetings. They should be mandatory, with a pre-published agenda. Any team member should be able to add items to the agenda.

Make sure to ask your team what things they want as a regular part of these meetings. Are there certain kinds of information, reports or discussions that they want to have every week?

You can use team meetings to:

- Share company or team information
- Make or announce decisions
- Raise team issues or concerns
- Identify, plan and report on team projects

- Talk about process breakdowns and share "lessons learned"
- Share successes
- Solve problems
- Plan team events
- Share rumors (don't discount this, it's amazing how much you can learn...)
- Find out what your team wants to know about the company, another team or a business issue
- Conduct training
- Have fun – share food, tell jokes, watch an episode of *The Office*...

Regular meetings are an important way to maintain the forward motion of the team (both in terms of the team's work, and team culture). They help the team bond, expose people to information they might not otherwise know, spark ideas, and are an essential way for the team to participate in developing its own shape and culture. Regular meetings are one of the most important ways you have to keep your team connected, to notice that someone seems disengaged or unhappy, or to hear about problems before they become overwhelming.

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## 5.7 Team culture

- A. What is team culture?
- B. Management style
- C. Keep clear boundaries
- D. General team ground rules
- E. Manager ground rules
- F. How the team handles mistakes, disagreements, concerns and secrets

### 5.7 A -- What is team culture?

**Group discussion:** what do we mean by "team culture"?

Select a participant to facilitate this discussion. Coach them as they work. The goal is to make sure that responses are specific, and to record key concepts on the flip chart.

Keep this fairly brief – you just need to make sure that the participants all understand what a team culture is and how it affects the work experience of people on the tea.

Team culture is the shared values and behavior patterns of the team. It's how team members interact, and what they consider to be the "norms" of the team. Things like, "I can always get help from someone on my team if I need it," or "My boss expects me to solve my own problems" or "If I don't work late, everyone will think I'm slacking," are statements of team or company culture.

If you as a manager create the framework for a team culture that reflects the values of clarity, transparency, and authenticity, and a culture that recognizes the humanity of people at work, your team will be able to weather almost any storm. It will be able to survive the loss of individual members (including you). It will be adaptable, mutually supportive, fun, and productive.

If you as a manager, through ignorance or insecurity, create the framework for a team culture of competition, micromanagement, inconsistent standards and mistrust, your team will suffer – and so will you. You'll feel the bad vibe around you every day – the fear, the contempt, the disregard.

Teamwork is behavior. Just as we have behavior rules in our social culture, we need behavior rules in our work culture as well. So this section of today's session is all about how to build the framework for a positive team culture.

### **5.7 B -- Management style**

The most important and visible statement of team culture is you, the manager. Your management style directly creates the culture of your team.

Your management style is your personal expression of your management values. It's how you do it. You can practice the same values as a manager (clarity, transparency, authenticity or whatever other values you choose) in a variety of styles. For example, you can be clear and warm, or clear and somewhat reserved.

**Group discussion:** Think about an effective manager you've known. How would you describe their management style?

**Individual exercise:** In your vision of yourself as the best possible manager, how do others describe your management style?

Offer your own example to get things started. Then ask participants to take a few minutes and make notes. They'll tackle this more fully as a homework assignment.

### **5.7 C -- Keep clear boundaries**

One common mistake that new managers make in their style is to confuse warmth or accessibility with wanting everyone to like you, or with "being friends."

It's very difficult to maintain an intimate friendship with someone whom you can hire and fire, and whose promotions and salary are dependent on your evaluation. Even if you can maintain that friendship, it's very difficult to do so in a team environment, where other team members may become jealous, suspicious and mistrustful of your fairness.

**Keep the boundaries clear.** If you believe that you can socialize regularly (be friends) with team members outside of work and still be clear and consistent as their manager, well, good luck with that – but I have never seen it work well in a corporate environment.

And don't have a romantic or sexual relationship with someone who works for you. If you find yourself getting involved, take steps immediately to put some "corporate distance" between you. You risk losing your job or causing the other person to lose theirs. You risk undermining your credibility and the trust your team has in you, either immediately (because the relationship is obvious) or later (because the team finds out you were keeping a secret, and begins to wonder what other lies you are telling).

You should also make sure your team members understand that they are allowed to have clear boundaries, too. Please do not force your team to act "like a family." Team events can be a great bonding or reward experience, but don't force people to spend large chunks of their social time with each other.

And don't require them to like each other or understand each other. Require

them to behave effectively and keep their agreements. 95% of the time, people who aren't personally compatible can work very well together if the agreements, and the boundaries, are clear.

### **5.7 D -- General team ground rules**

Team culture evolves over time. You can't mandate every detail of it. But you can set general expectations for basic behavior that supports team members in doing their work. That's the foundation of team culture, and it's your job to build that foundation. The most basic tool for this is ground rules.

This first set of rules you need are for general team interaction. These can be anything you and the team agree on – and the key here is that although you can mandate certain ground rules, the complete set of ground rules cannot be a dictate from on high. You have to get the team involved in creating their own culture. Your job is to set some parameters and then guide the team to a set of rules that they create collectively.

General team ground rules can cover a number of areas:

- sharing information
- communication
- areas of authority or responsibility
- commitments to training and development
- handling mistakes
- raising concerns
- how to address interpersonal conflicts

The above are only suggestions to get you started: your ground rules will be determined by your team's function and processes, individual team member responsibilities, and the characteristics of your physical space (does noise carry, do people need quiet for their work, etc.).

The point is that together the team creates a set of behavior guidelines that they believe will:

- Make it easier for them to do their individual jobs
- Make it easier for them to do work together as a team.

### **5.7 E -- Manager ground rules**

Once you've created general team ground rules, it's equally important that you create manager ground rules (whether you have multiple levels of management on your team, or you are the only manager).

This is often a difficult concept for new managers to buy into – the idea that people who report to you have a right to tell you how to manage them.

Management is a relationship between adults. Your corporate authority does not give you the right to treat the people who work for you like children. You need to hear what they need, and then decide whether or not you can provide it. If you can't meet their requests, then that's an important piece of information that they need to know – because they need to either revise their expectations, or find another team to work with whose culture is more of a fit for them.

Your job is not to make everyone happy – it is to give everyone the chance to participate in forming the team culture.

But that doesn't mean it's a democracy, either. If you become the manager of an existing team whose culture is divisive, chaotic and disrespectful, you have the responsibility to institute changes. To set some parameters for respectful treatment.

The thing is, it's very unusual for a team of people to prefer to have a terrible team culture. Most folks would rather play nicely. Most folks would rather have a work environment in which they can count on people to treat them with respect. So lead them to it.

Manager ground rules can cover a number of areas:

- sharing information
- giving direction
- communication
- making decisions
- helping team members manage workload
- handling mistakes
- micromanaging

- performance issues
- how team members can raise concerns

All managers on a team should be expected to play by the same rules. Team members should be able to expect that any manager on the team will treat them the same way. It's vital to ensure that "being managed" is a consistent experience, no matter what part of your team someone works on.

### **5.7 F -- How the team handles mistakes, disagreements, concerns and secrets**

Some of the greatest areas of tension and fear on teams happens in the areas of mistakes, disagreements, concerns and secrets – places where people feel vulnerable and often defensive.

#### **Mistakes**

Mistakes happen. **Do not freak out about mistakes**, even the really bad ones.

The best way to handle a mistake:

- Create a culture in which people are willing taking responsibility for mistakes.
- Create a culture in which people are willing to let you know right away that they've made a mistake. The sooner you know, the easier it is to fix.
- Stay calm and help the other person be calm.
- Get all the details. If you have to ask questions, make sure your tone is neutral and the questions focus on the situation, not the person who made the mistake.
- Ask if the person already has a solution. If not, help them identify what steps need to be taken to arrive at a solution.
- Thank them for letting you know promptly.

- Focus on resolving the issue. If the mistake is serious enough that you need further discussion or action with the person who made it, that conversation should happen later.
- Make sure everyone affected by the mistake is aware of the issue and the steps that are being taken to address it. If the issue is serious, communicate about it in person. You can delegate this to the team member who made the mistake, if appropriate and if the person has the skills to manage the communication. Never delegate this kind of communication as a "punishment."
- Ask the team member if they need any help to prevent this mistake in the future: process change, further training, better tools, etc.
- If it's not a serious mistake, let it go.
- If it's a serious mistake, develop a system with the person to check in with you next time they are in a similar situation.

Do not take away a responsibility from someone in response to a mistake without careful consideration. If someone is messing up enough that you consider relieving them of responsibility, then you have a performance issue, not a mistake. Don't confuse the two. Even good performers make mistakes.

### **Disagreements**

We'll address conflict management in Session 7. But most disagreements between team members are small and specific – someone's music is too loud, someone eats more than their share of the free peanuts, someone interrupts her team members constantly to chat when they are working.

There's no reason for you to handle minor disagreements between team members. Rather, create a culture in which they know how to handle these conversations themselves, using good communication skills.

The most important cultural element (that you may wish to introduce into ground

rules) is that team members should assume good intention from each other. They should not go up the ladder of assumption. They should focus on the disagreement or annoyance, not on each other personally.

Even people with vastly different personal styles can co-exist peacefully, and work through disagreements, if there are clear guidelines for communication and if they both come into the interaction assuming good intention on the other's part.

Suggested process (coach your team as necessary).

- Open the conversation on a human level ("Hey, do you have a minute?")
- State the headline ("I have a concern I'd like to bring up," or "I have a request for you.")
- Use clear, plain English. "When I'm working on a project, it's hard for me to get my focus back when I'm interrupted. I'm going to have a signal to let people know I don't want to be disturbed. I hope you'll understand if I'm not open to chatting during those times."
- Make sure there is shared understanding.
- Thank the team member for their cooperation.

As a note, I highly recommend having a team signal for "Do Not Disturb" – it saves a huge amount of aggravation. One team I worked with used folding screens from Ikea across the opening of their cubicle when they didn't want to be interrupted – the person was still available for emergencies, but the signal was very clear and the person had visual privacy.

And finally – make it safe for people to disagree with you. Be alert for the non-verbal cues that people give (even when they don't speak up). Invite their input.

## Concerns

It's very important that people feel safe expressing concerns or telling you bad news.

Make it clear to your team that you want to hear concerns about their jobs, the team, the company, a decision, whatever. Let them know that they may feel awkward about this, but that it's part of their responsibility to do it and part of your responsibility to receive the information without freaking out or "punishing" them.

You may want to offer your team a "stock phrase" with which to start a conversation about concerns. You can promise them that when you hear that phrase, you will give them full attention with an open mind. It can be something as simple as, "I have a concern to express."

Don't dismiss this as contrived or artificial. Conversational signals like this can be highly effective in making it easier for people to come to you. Agreeing in advance on signals like this (for concerns, or anything else) is a part of transparency.

When someone expresses a concern, stay neutral, engaged, and open. If you feel defensive and start shutting down, ask for a minute of time out, or ask to resume the conversation in a few minutes.

It's fine to ask the other person to behave equally calmly, and to coach them in that if necessary.

### **Secrets**

It is often necessary for managers to keep secrets -- confidential or private information about employees or the business. And sometimes team members will ask you about rumors they've heard (especially if you've created a team culture that includes sharing information).

It's important to establish with your team that there will be times that you cannot share information because of legal or strategic considerations, but that you will always share completely whatever you can.

Do not reveal confidential information. But be open that there is specific information that you are withholding. "I've heard the rumor about possible layoffs too. Right now there's no specific information, and I've been asked not to respond to rumors. If and when there is any specific information I can share with you, I will."

Yes, people will worry. They have a right to their feelings, and you cannot control how they feel.

Yes, people will push for more information. Your response should be to acknowledge the human desire to know, as well as the fact that right now you cannot tell them. "I know it's hard to be in limbo about something like this. I promise I will let you know as soon as I have public information."

A strategy in the case of someone asking for information about another employee is, "I don't talk about people's private issues. If you'd like to know whether this is true, ask the person directly."

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## **5.8 Creating team agreements**

- A. The basic agreements you need
- B. Build your team with agreements
- C. General notes on facilitating agreements

### **5.8 A -- The basic agreements you need**

- Organization chart
- Team accountabilities
- Roles and responsibilities for all members, including you
- A general statement that describes your management style, how you will evaluate team members (including yourself), and the culture you envision for the team
- Team member ground rules
- Manager ground rules
- Key process descriptions
- Information flow

You can find samples of most of these in Tools and Materials.

### **5.8 B -- Build your team with agreements**

Whether you are coming into an existing team or forming a new team, you should build the team using these agreements. You can do this whether you are brand-new as the manager, or whether you have been in the role for a while.

Here's the overall process:

1. Begin with an "orientation."
2. Meet individually with all team members.
3. Formalize team accountabilities.
4. Begin working on roles and responsibilities. This is a lengthy process, so it will continue while you're also handling the steps below.
5. Work with team to create team ground rules.
6. Work with team to create manager ground rules.
7. Work with managers and team to identify key team processes.
8. Identify what information the team needs and how to provide it.

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### **Begin with an orientation**

#### If you're new to the team

1. Spend your first morning setting up your space, and walking around your area to meet team members individually and informally.
2. Schedule a team meeting as soon as possible (Day 1 afternoon or Day 2 is great if you can do it). The purpose of the meeting is for you to talk about how you will all work together and what they can expect from you as a manager.
3. At this meeting, give a speech about who you are and what people can expect from you. At a minimum, this should include:
  - The experience and skills you bring to the team.

- Your general values as a manager. You don't have to phrase it as "my values" – just say something simple like, "Here's what's important to me as a manager," and then go on to talk about what those things are.
  - The top-line view of how you will evaluate team members, including yourself.
  - An overview of the decision-making process, including your commitment to including people in decisions that affect them as much as possible, and your definition of consensus.
  - Your general expectations of team culture ("Here's how I want us to work together"). This may include general communication principles, sharing information and supporting one another, dealing with mistakes, disagreements, and concerns, etc.
4. Introduce the idea of team agreements and explain their purpose. Let the team know that over the next several weeks, you'll be working with them to set up agreements about how you'll all work together.
  5. Give people a chance to ask questions or respond to what they've heard.
  6. Publish all your speech notes after the meeting, in your own words, so people will have a record.

If you're already the manager:

1. Set aside a portion of a regular team meeting to communicate this information. But don't rush through it! If you don't think you'll have enough time, schedule a separate mandatory meeting instead.
2. Let the team know that you have been learning more about teamwork in this program, and that you're ready to begin bringing some of that knowledge back into the team.

3. Introduce the idea of team agreements and explain their purpose. Let the team know that over the next several weeks, you'll be working with them to set up agreements about how you'll all work together.
4. Tell your team you want to talk a little bit about the kind of manager you want to be. Then give your speech as outlined in #3 above.
5. Give people a chance to ask questions or respond to what they've heard.
6. Publish your notes after the meeting, in your own words, so your team has a record.

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### **Formalize team accountabilities**

1. If you haven't already, meet with your manager to formalize your team accountabilities.
2. Review these with your team verbally at your next team meeting.

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### **Meet individually with all team members**

The purpose of this meeting is both to gather input and information, and to begin building individual relationships with team members.

Set aside at least an hour for each meeting. Ask the team member to tell you about their work history, their current job on the team, what they do and don't like about it, and any concerns. Answer any questions they may have from your orientation talk.

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### **Begin working on roles and responsibilities**

1. Work up drafts of roles and responsibilities for the various positions on your team. Start with team members first, then managers (including you).
2. If you have middle managers on your team, meet with them to get their input on your descriptions. Or, give them the format you wish to use and ask them to prepare the first draft.
3. Meet with the individual(s) whose role is being described. It's fine to meet with these folks as a group if their descriptions are the same (for example, all accounts payable clerks). Make sure they understand that this document will be the basis for their performance review.
4. Address any comments or concerns and finalize the documents.
5. Provide a copy to the person, their manager and one for their personnel file.

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### **Create team ground rules**

1. Set up a mandatory team meeting of an hour to brainstorm ground rules.
2. At the meeting, explain the concept of ground rules. Let the team know that they need to agree on rules for how team members should interact, and what kind of atmosphere the team wants to create. Make it clear that any team member can call out anyone – including you – who doesn't follow the rules.
3. Have a couple of suggested ground rules to get started, but make clear to the team that the end result will be their rules. If you have any rules that are non-negotiable, introduce those right away.
4. Lead the group in brainstorming. Don't worry about working by category – just let people talk about what they want.
5. Use multi-voting if necessary to identify the group's key ground rules.

6. Type up the draft and publish to the team. Set a deadline for comments and concerns.
7. At the next regular team meeting after the deadline, present the ground rules and ask the team to approve them.
8. Let the team know that any team member can request changes or additions to the rules at any future team meeting.

Sometimes a team established ground rules and never again refers to them. They turn into empty words, rather than a living document that reflects the foundation of team culture. Do not let this happen. Make sure that you do a periodic "check-in" at future team meetings to see if the ground rules are working well for people. Reinforce that you expect everyone to hold themselves and each other accountable for following these rules

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### **Create manager ground rules**

1. I suggest waiting until the team member ground rules are finalized before starting on manager rules, so that the two sets of rules are clearly defined. Also, the team will have been through the entire process before, and will hopefully have trust in it. But it's fine to let the team know that manager ground rules will be a step – in fact, I encourage you to make the entire team-building process as transparent as possible.
2. Have a separate mandatory one-hour team meeting to brainstorm manager ground rules. Let the team know that they should expect all managers on the team to play by these rules.
3. Follow the same process for brainstorming, publishing, comment and review as for team ground rules (steps 3-8 above).
4. Make it clear that any team member can call out any manager – including you – who doesn't follow the rules.

Managers (including you) have input into these rules too, but don't steamroller the team into anything. You need genuine consensus to make these agreements work. However, you do not have to accept anything that contradicts your notions of good management. You do, however, have to work through the issues with the team so they understand why a particular rule is unacceptable to you.

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### **Key processes**

1. Work with managers on the team and/or with the team directly to start a list of processes that most or all of the team must use.
2. It's up to you whether this needs a separate meeting or part of a team meeting – but a short list is the goal. Do not include basic HR or company-wide processes. Only processes that are essential to the team's overall work should be included.
3. Delegate (through volunteers or assignment) the responsibility for writing up the process steps, publishing the draft to the team for comments, and finalizing the process information.
4. Don't get lost in the weeds on this. You don't necessarily need a complex process map that covers every decision tree. You do need agreement on the essential processes the team uses, and a good enough description of how they work to be used as an aid by a new team member, or for cross-training.

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### **Information**

1. In a regular team meeting, ask what information the team needs in general to meet its accountabilities (as opposed to specific information needed for individual jobs). This may be company information (such as financial or inventory data); information from other teams; or information flowing between team members.

2. Identify who is responsible for making sure each piece of information is flowing to the team.
3. If appropriate, also identify resources outside the team or within it who have expertise the team may need to call on.

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### **5.8 A -- General notes on facilitating team agreements**

Make sure you organize your key talking points before these meetings. Write out your orientation speech and practice it. Don't be afraid to use notes in your meetings. These meetings are important, and it's particularly important that you are clear, transparent and authentic.

Make sure everyone gives input. If you believe that someone is withholding a concern or disagreement, circle around with them privately.

Make sure you get clear verbal agreement from each person on the team at the meetings where you approve the final versions of these documents.

Publish all final documents in your team email folder, or give hard copies to everyone.

Revisit these agreements periodically – just do a reality check with the team to make sure the agreements still reflect what they want. If changes are needed, make them using the same group process.

Be patient. It may take a while for the team to trust that you are serious about this.

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### **5.9 Summary remarks, final questions and comments**

Today we've talked about team structure and culture, and the essential team agreements you should put in place to build an effective team:

- Your team should be organized to do the work it's accountable for. Make sure the team is set up to do this work as effectively as possible, taking into account the amount of work to do and the number of people team members must interact with.
- Remember, every interaction your team member has is a relationship they have to maintain – so more relationships really does mean more work.
- Everyone on the team should know their roles and responsibilities
- Everyone on the team should know how your general approach to evaluating their performance.
- Everyone should know what key processes you expect them to follow.
- Everyone should know where their critical information is coming from and who is responsible to provide it.
- Everyone should know what kind of manager you intend to be -- your style, what's important to you, and how to best work with you.
- Everyone should understand how decisions will be made on the team.
- Work with the team to develop team ground rules and manager ground rules.
- You should have regular team meetings. They're an important tool for getting work done and building the team.
- Remember to be clear, transparent and authentic in this work. Remember that it may take time for your team to fully invest their trust in the process. Don't get defensive about that, and don't take it personally – building trust is part of building the team.
- Keep modeling the behavior that you want from the team. Show them how it's done.
- Remember to listen.

Questions or comments about what we've covered today?

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### **5.10 Wrap up**

- A. Preview Session 6
- B. Review homework assignments for Session 6

#### **5.10 A -- Preview Session 6**

In our next session, we'll be digging into some key activities of team administration: effective interviewing and onboarding, cross-training, performance reviews, salary discussions, and discipline. These are all important and potentially stressful management responsibilities, and as with everything else, they are most effective when they are handled with clarity, transparency and authenticity.

#### **5.10 B -- Homework for Session 6**

Refer participants to homework sheet in their notebook. See Tools and Materials section for homework sheet and handouts.

1. Conduct the interview with the company manager that you selected and scheduled at the start of the program.

Make sure you are prepared to introduce the purpose of the interview, to give the manager a brief overview of your program experience so far, and that you have questions ready.

I strongly suggest using a voice recorder to capture the interview so that you can pay complete attention without having to take notes, and so you can revisit portions of the conversation as many times as you wish. It's also helpful to hear how you are communicating – can you hear yourself being clear, transparent and authentic?

Let the manager know that you are prepared to listen to any stories, advice,

feedback, suggestions for tools, etc. that they might wish to offer.

Begin with the following questions:

- What are the important things a really good manager does or doesn't do? (Encourage the manager to give examples from her own experience)
- What do you like best about managing? (Ask for stories and examples)
- What do you find challenging about managing? How do you deal with those things? (Ask for stories and examples)

It's entirely possible these questions will fill the 90-minute interview time. But please be prepared with additional questions in case you need them – do not cut the interview short just because you've run out of questions.

At the end of the meeting, ask the manager the best way for you to observe them in action sometime between Session 6 and Session 7. Decide on an activity or time period during which you will "shadow" the manager.

Be sure to thank the manager for their help.

Write up the most important learning points that you've taken from the conversation, as well as any thoughts about managing, team building, team culture, communication, management style, etc. Please post this to the group in email before the next session.

2. Draft your "orientation speech" for your team. If you are not currently a manager, then your draft will be somewhat more generic, but should still reflect your management values and style (if it helps, invent a team for yourself and address it to them).

You can write this out in full, or make detailed talking notes, whatever is best. Remember that when you give the speech, you will also be publishing your notes – so please be sure that whatever form you use is clear enough for your team to understand when they read it.

You are free to exchange drafts and ask for each other's help and input – remember, this group is a safe zone for you to try out new skills and ways of

expressing ideas.

I encourage you to practice with someone. It helps. You can also practice with an audio or video recorder. Or practice alone. The point is to say it out loud several times before you deliver it: this will make a real difference, I promise.

Please note: you do not need to give the speech to your team before the next session (although you certainly may, if you choose to). See Assignment #3 below, and work your orientation speech into that schedule as you think appropriate.

3. Develop a schedule to begin your team-building process with your team. It's up to you whether or not you begin the team-building before Session 6, but I encourage you to make a start before the program is done, so that you can get support in upcoming sessions if needed.

If you have any concerns, get advice or help from another program participant or from the program leader.

4. In Session 7, you'll be talking about a project you'd like to accomplish at work – something related to your role as a manager. You'll be helping each other clarify, brainstorm and plan your projects.

**Begin thinking now** about the project you'd like to accomplish. It should be an issue or challenge that is pressing, or that is longer-term but intimidates you or makes you feel overwhelmed (or all of the above!). It should be something that you feel you need to tackle in your role as a new manager – not busywork or something superficial, but also not something more suited to your VP or CEO.

If you need help brainstorming about what project to select, seek input from someone else in the program, your manager, the manager you shadowed, or the program leader.

Please select your project and begin drafting a project statement. Please note, **this is due before Session 7** – you are being given a lot of notice

because this assignment requires a lot of thought, and you will have a lot of homework after Session 6. If you wait until then to begin this project statement, you'll be squeezed.

Your Draft Project Statement should include:

- Description of your project
- The goal – what do you want to accomplish? Be specific.
- How will you measure success? How do you know you are "done"? Be specific.
- Why is this a priority? Be specific – it may be necessary to support your team members, streamline process, accomplish a team goal, strengthen a key relationship, or further your development as a manager in an important area.
- What are the benefits you expect? Be specific.
- What concerns do you have about undertaking this project? What are your obstacles? Be specific. Concerns or obstacles could include the impact on others, resistance from others, the skills you need to accomplish the project, etc.
- What kinds of help or support do you need to address these concerns or obstacles? This may be company-level support such as training, policies, etc. or individual support from key players.
- What are the key action steps to accomplish the goal?

If you get stuck at any point, write "I am stuck here" and, if possible, a brief description of why you are stuck (lack of information, lack of ideas, etc.).

E-mail your draft statement to the program list before Session 7. Read the other statements as they are published. Feel free to respond with comments, especially to give help in "stuck" areas.

**NOTE:** You will not be completing these projects as part of the program. You can start them when you're ready, and they'll take as long as they take. So it's important to get your plan done and start getting feedback/help as soon as possible if you want to take advantage of program time to help you shape your project.

5. Readings:

- **Difficult Conversations**, pp.85-108
- "Behavioral interviewing Strategies for Job-Seekers" by Katharine Hansen at [http://www.quintcareers.com/behavioral\\_interviewing.html](http://www.quintcareers.com/behavioral_interviewing.html)
- "[Why Your Employees Are Losing Motivation](#)" by David Sirota, Louis A. Mischkind, and Michael Irwin Meltzer (online at Harvard Business School Working Knowledge website, <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/5289.html>)

You read this article before Session 1. Read it again and see if it resonates differently with you now.