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15.281 Advanced Managerial Communication

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Effective Teams

15.281

Characteristics of an Effective Team

- Common and clear objectives
 - Explicit strategies and project plans
 - Clear, complementary roles and responsibilities
 - Necessary capabilities
 - Clear, transparent and timely decision making processes
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Characteristics continued

- Clear, open and rapid communication
 - Constructive attitudes and behaviors
 - Constructive and timely conflict resolution
 - Proportionate participation
 - Focus on content and process
 - Explicit agreement on communication norms
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Stages of Team Development

- Forming
 - Storming
 - Norming
 - Performing
 - Adjourning
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Effective Team Process

- A group of people working together does not automatically equal a team.
 - Most teams convene to solve problems or capitalize on opportunities – this involves making decisions.
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A Purposeful and Rigorous Decision-Making Process

- Identify and explore the problem.
 - Generate possible solutions – brainstorm.
 - Refine and critique possible solutions.
 - Implement the solution.
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Participation Is Critical

- Some disparity in levels of participation is normal; watch for large disparities.
 - People with higher status, greater knowledge of the issues, or simply more talkative by nature tend to participate more actively.
 - Cultural and gender differences can also affect participation.
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Helping Others Participate

- Clarify a point.
 - Reinforce a point – ask for elaboration.
 - Direct query – “Tom, you haven’t said a word during this discussion; what are your ideas?”
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Influence vs. Participation

- Influence and participation are not the same thing.
 - Some people may speak very little, yet capture the attention of the whole group when they do speak.
 - Others may talk frequently, but go unheard.
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Assessing Influence

- Which members are listened to when they speak?
 - Which members are ignored? Why?
 - Are there any shifts in influence? If so, whose? Why?
 - Is there any rivalry within the group? Any struggles for leadership?
 - Who interrupts whom?
 - Are minority views consistently ignored regardless of possible merit?
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Constructive Conflict

- If a team is to become highly productive, their ability to have constructive conflict and creative abrasion is vital.
 - Discuss team members' different points of view and question underlying assumptions – task conflict – healthy and essential to a high-producing team.
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Other Conflicts

- Escalating task conflict can create stress, strained emotions, and tense relationships – affective or interpersonal conflict – can undermine the effectiveness of teams.
 - Groupthink – members voluntarily restrict voicing criticisms and concerns about other members' ideas.
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Assessing Conflict Patterns

- Does the team tend to consider only a few alternatives when problem-solving?
 - What is done if people disagree?
 - What criteria are used to establish agreement (majority vote, consensus)?
 - Do team members advocate more than they inquire?
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Conflict Interventions

- Be clear in the beginning about appropriate behavior for team members.
 - Make sure team goals are commonly held.
 - Suspend task discussion and examine team processes.
 - To combat groupthink, assign a team member to play devil's advocate for important deliberations
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Team Development

- Early meetings are critical – patterns and norms are established.
 - Ideal size for problem-solving team seems to be between five and ten.
 - Recognize cognitive diversity and build commitment.
 - Consider leadership issues.
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Starting to Work

- Set goals.
 - Establish a working approach – basic logistics: attendance, participation, confidentiality, and preparation expectations.
 - Review and monitor the work.
 - Evaluate the team's effectiveness
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