Cheat Sheet: Teamwork and Communication

Essential Concepts

Teams

Teams are groups of individuals with complementary skills who come together to achieve a specific goal. Teams can be manager-led, self-directed, cross-functional, or even virtual. Companies use teams because they are an effective means of achieving objectives, and they bring increased efficiency to operations.

When teams are formed they evolve from individuals into a cohesive unit. The stages of team development are forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.

What differentiates a successful team from an unsuccessful one? Some of the hallmarks of successful teams are the following: the members trust one another, common goals, defined team roles and responsibilities, good communication, and group cohesion.

Communication

Effective communications are thoughtful, clear, specific, brief, and timely. “Getting one’s message across” can be tricky and challenging due to barriers that impede communication. Among the barriers to effective communication are filtering, bias, jargon, language and cultural differences, the chain of command, physical disabilities, and lack of trust.

Communication involves a sender, a message, and a receiver. The form a message takes is called a channel. Communication can occur between different kinds of senders and receivers within (and outside of) an organization. Communication can flow upward, downward, horizontally, diagonally, and externally. It can also flow through different networks, both informal and formal.

Electronic Communication

The rise of information technology that makes business communication faster and more efficient, but brings unique ethical challenges and risks.

Electronic communication can bring risks, including identity theft, unauthorized use of financial information, and data breaches. Illicit methods such as viruses, phishing, and denial-of-service

attacks pose threats, and there are hidden hazards like the permanence of electronic messages, potential surveillance, misinterpretation, and information overload.

There are also ethical challenges that come from electronic communication, including concerns regarding privacy in the workplace, the use of social media as a screening tool by employers, and the ethical implications of data collection and selling by businesses.

Businesses must take steps to keep employee and customer data safe; they must also establish security measures to protect against cyber threats such as malware, hacking, and theft.

Career Connection: Reverse Chronological Résumé

A résumé is a comprehensive document that showcases your education, work experience, skills, accomplishments, and other relevant information to present yourself as an ideal candidate for a job, even if you have limited work experience as a college student or recent graduate.

A reverse chronological résumé lists job experiences in reverse order, starting with the most recent job, and includes work duties, education, and contact information. Personal details should be omitted, and the résumé should be visually appealing, proofread carefully, and highlight qualifications to attract employers.

Glossary

adjourning

: what happens when a team has completed their tasks and break up

cross-functional team

: a team that pulls its members from across the different functional areas of an organization

denial-of-service attack

: a cyber attack in which the perpetrator seeks to make a machine or network resource unavailable to its intended users by temporarily or indefinitely disrupting the services of a host connected to the Internet

diagonal communication

: the sharing of information among different structural levels within a business and between different functional areas

downward communication

communication from superiors to subordinates in a chain of command

external communication

when an organization communicates with people or organizations outside the business

flows

patterns of communication within a business

formal communication network

all the communication that runs along its official lines of authority, matching the organizational structure of the business

forming

first step in team development that includes defining and assigning tasks, establishing a schedule, organizing the team's work, and other start-up matters but also gathering information and forming impressions about each other

group

two or more individuals who share common interests or characteristics, and its members identify with one another due to similar traits

horizontal communication

the flow of messages between individuals and groups on the same level of an organization

informal communication network

does not follow the hierarchy of the organization but is established around the social affiliation of members of an organization

lean

a way to describe a communication channel that conveys information without immediate interaction

manager-led team

team members complete the required tasks, but someone outside the team (i.e., a manager) performs the executive functions

norming

after a team has clarified its purpose and its strategy for achieving its goals, it transitions to a period focused on developing shared values about how team members will work together

performing

stage of team development when team members work together easily on interdependent tasks and are able to communicate and coordinate effectively

project team

a team whose members are assembled for a specific project or business objective

résumé

a written inventory of your education, work experience, job-related skills, accomplishments, volunteer history, internships, residencies, and more

reverse chronological résumé

a common format that lists your experiences with the most recent appearing first and then going backwards in time

rich

a way to describe a communication channel that allows for more interactivity, two-way communication, and observing nonverbal cues

self-managed team

a group of employees working together who decide between themselves how they will be accountable for most or all aspects of their task

spoofing or phishing

ways scammers use to fool people into transmitting sensitive, personal information

storming

team members begin to share ideas about what to do and how to do it that compete for consideration

team

a group of people with different skills and different tasks, who work together on a common project, service, or goal, combining their functions and providing mutual support along the way

upward communication

the transmission of information from lower levels of an organization to higher ones

virtual team

a group of individuals in different geographic locations who use technology to collaborate on work tasks and activities

viruses, worms, and Trojan horses

types of malicious software used by hackers to steal or disrupt the flow of information