

Traits of Effective Academic Competition Teams¹

Collective Decision-Making. In effective teams, decisions are discussed and agreed to by all. In less effective teams, one person strongly asserts a position and others do not object verbally, even though their opinions differ.

Collaboration. Inter/changeability. On effective teams, members do whatever is needed to get the job done. They are not afraid to tackle unfamiliar tasks in areas outside their expertise. On less effective teams, members work independently and do not do work outside their area.

Appreciation of Conflicts/Differences. Productive teams expect conflict and disagreement. They openly discuss their differences and see them as means to improved decision making. Less productive teams work to avoid conflict, preferring instead a superficial kind of agreement that results when issues haven't been tackled substantively.

Balance of Participation. Effective teams recognize that people do have other demands on their time, and as a group they are willing to help a member who may for time need to decrease the amount of effort devoted to the team. This is different than what happens on ineffective teams, in which one or two members do more than their fair share of the work, resent it, but never confront members who do not contribute what they should to the group.

Focus. Good teams keep their ultimate goals and objectives in mind. If they fall behind, everyone pitches in to help the group get back on schedule. Teams run into trouble when they do not partition their time well and, having spent way too much time on early tasks, have no time left for the final push. In those teams, everyone notices the group's error, but no one is willing to raise the issue or offer helpful solutions.

Open Communication. Members on effective teams keep each other informed. They discuss individual work in progress. They let others know when they may be late or missing. Lack of communication hampers the effectiveness of other teams. They work too much on their own and do not share progress or collaborate on how their individual work relates to and fits with what others are doing.

Mutual Support. On good teams, members support each other and verbally let that support be shown. They compliment one another on work well done and publicly thank others who have contributed to the group's success. On poor teams, the focus is on individual work, with little awareness, interest, or appreciation of what others in the group are doing.

¹ Modified by Russ Sackreiter from original created by Beth Ratway.

Team Spirit. Effective teams develop pride and loyalty in their group. They stand up for the group and speak positively about it. When teams aren't working well, members feel no commitment to the team and may even see the group as an impediment to accomplishment of individual goals