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VOCAB for collaboration:
How “work language” can help you win at teamwork

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Clair Canfield’s VOCAB Model

V = vulnerability

O = ownership

C = communication

A = acceptance

B = boundaries
VOCAB
Vulnerability
Willingness to Let Myself Be Seen

• Check ego at door
• Time to get to know one another
• Trust foundational to vulnerability
• Vulnerability allowed us to be powerful
• United in face of challenges

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c5/Peacock_Plumage.jpg
Vulnerability TIPS
Willingness to Let Myself Be Seen

- Recognize there will be many unknowns
- Sense of humor a must
- Build in time for group processing: get to know before you get to go!
- Safety bonds are applied to other work
Boundaries
Ground Rules for Acceptable Behavior

Create group agreements

1. Discussion:
   • How do I do creative thinking?
   • How do I best express my thoughts?
   • How do I deal with disagreement?
   • How do I like communicate?
   • What skills could I contribute?
   • What ground rules are important to me?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Styles and Preferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrea</td>
<td>Organization and Visualization, Scheduling work time to focus on specific tasks, Brainstorming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bianca</td>
<td>Good Listener, Strategic, Fair, organization, Reflection, need details, emailing, “what if” thinking,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darcy</td>
<td>Organization, attention to detail, editing, Visual learner and thinker, appreciates defined tasks or objectives with my work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz</td>
<td>Ideas, Easy going, Organization, Documentation of decisions, lots of discussion and brainstorming, visualizing discussion, setting aside individual work time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Attention to detail, writing, Working meetings, lots of email, both quiet thinking time and discussion time, changing the scenery (e.g., walking meetings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randy</td>
<td>Idea person, ethics, committed, good at presentations, flexible (comfortable with change), Discussion time, directed research, team work, change of scenery for meetings, trusted group conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Time management, easy going, gets stuff done and does it well!, Visual learner, feeds off of others energy and ideas (RW)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Boundaries

Ground Rules for Acceptable Behavior

Create group agreements
1. Discussion
2. Set ground rules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Agreements</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Be direct and respectful (open and honest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Communicate any interactions concerning this project to the group</td>
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<td>3. Come prepared to meetings</td>
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<td>4. Be accountable for assigned tasks</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Ask for help</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Give help when needed</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Be cognizant of time constraints</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Stick to the agenda</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Boundaries TIPS
Ground Rules for Acceptable Behavior

• Take time for reflection at the beginning of a project
• Use group agreements to be explicit about how you will work together
VOCAB
Communication
Ask, Listen, and Express

• Openness
  • Sharing ideas and thoughts
  • Openminded - Listening and hearing

• Recognizing our goal
  • Canfield's definition

• Multiple communication tools
  • Everyone's voice should be heard

• Communicating together as a group
  • Internally and externally
  • Debrief and process
  • Stay on the same page

• Sharing responsibilities
  • Kept people from getting stuck
  • Not necessarily equal
  • No one had more power
Communication TIPS
Ask, Listen, and Express

• Try to tone down authoritative communication and make things more discussion based
• Use a variety of communication tools and technologies
• Keep documentation throughout
VOCAB
Ownership
Taking Accountability for My Own Needs, Emotions, and Choices

• Accountability for self in the context of the team
  • Practicing ownership early on

• Investment in a common goal
  • Avoiding competing agendas
  • Being deliberately hierarchy-less

• Reflection as a tool for accountability
  • Making time
  • Not conflating accountability with perfection

• Trust as enabler of agility
  • Arriving at consensus
  • Not second-guessing others’ work
  • Stepping up
Ownership TIPS
Taking Accountability for My Own Needs, Emotions, and Choices

- Take ownership of your contributions to the team
- Keep an eye on the big picture to keep group investment in common goal
- Use reflection as a tool for accountability and trust
VOCAB
Acceptance
Embracing Reality and Letting Go of What We Can't Control
Acceptance
Embracing Reality and Letting Go of What We Can't Control

• Accept yourself and others as part of the team
  • Utilize individual strengths and skillsets
  • Team “role” requirements
Acceptance
Embracing Reality and Letting Go of What We Can't Control

- Accept that the process should be fluid and adapt with change
  - Learn together
  - Take advice
  - Trial and error – change methods
  - Prioritize – it’s ok to let go
Acceptance

Embracing Reality and Letting Go of What We Can't Control

- Accept that you can’t please everyone
  - Re-evaluate, discuss, reach agreement, and move on
Acceptance TIPS
Embracing Reality and Letting Go of What We Can't Control

• Bridge the Gap
• All parties should use the same model = VOCAB
• Ask for help but be aware of agreements made with consultants and mentors
Breakout Discussion
Vulnerability / Ownership / Communication / Acceptance / Boundaries

• Select element from Canfield’s model
• Join group
• Introductions
• Discuss why your selected concept resonates with each of you
  • How might it help address challenges in collaboration you’ve encountered in the workplace?
  • How might it help you approach new group work contexts?
  • What questions or ideas does the VOCAB model spark for you?

Re-Convene