
Bianca Biesinger

Andrea Payant
Utah State University

Darcy Pumphrey
Utah State University

Sara Skindelien
Utah State University

Randy Williams
Utah State University

Kimberly A. Sullivan
Utah State University

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

Bianca Biesinger
Library Assistant Sr., Resource Sharing and Document Delivery

Andrea Payant
Metadata Librarian

Darcy Pumphrey
Digital Library Coordinator

Sara Skindelien
Library Assistant, Special Collections and Archives

Randy Williams
Fife Folklore Archives Curator

Rachel Wishkoski
Reference and Instruction Librarian

Liz Woolcott
Head of Cataloging and Metadata Services
Clair Canfield’s VOCAB Model

V = vulnerability
O = ownership
C = communication
A = acceptance
B = boundaries

Clair Canfield: 2016 TEDxUSU
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
VOCA B
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>Strengths</th>
<th>Styles and Preferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrea</td>
<td>Organization and Visualization</td>
<td>Scheduling work time to focus on specific tasks, Brainstorming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bianca</td>
<td>Good Listener, Strategic, Fair, organization</td>
<td>Reflection, need details, emailing, “what if” thinking,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darcy</td>
<td>Organization, attention to detail, editing</td>
<td>Visual learner and thinker, appreciates defined tasks or objectives with my work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz</td>
<td>Ideas, Easy going, Organization</td>
<td>Documentation of decisions, lots of discussion and brainstorming, visualizing discussion, setting aside individual work time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Attention to detail, writing</td>
<td>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)</td>
<td>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!</td>
<td>Visual learner, feeds off of others energy and ideas (RW)</td>
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</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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Come prepared to meetings</td>
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<tr>
<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
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