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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
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>
<th>Styles, Strengths, 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>
</tr>
<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>
</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>
</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>
</tr>
</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
Acceptance
Embracing Reality and Letting Go of What We Can't Control
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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