



## Creating an Effective Team Identity

### Description:

This tool provides guidelines and steps to help a group bond to become a more productive and effective team.

### How it can be used:

An organization involved in accreditation is an organization that requires effective teamwork. Teams become more productive if they have a clear identity and a sense of connection. Use this tool to help build strong team identities which can produce more effective teams.

#### 1. Create a team list.

This communicates that everyone is needed in order to accomplish the group's tasks. It underscores that recommendations, decisions and accountability lie with the team.

- Print a list of all team members, using their full names (spelled correctly!).
- Make sure everyone on the team receives a copy of the list.
- Make sure the list is posted in a central area for everyone to see.
- Keep the list updated and use the list to take attendance during the meeting.

#### 2. Identity a team name.

Choosing a name is a good way to encourage team identity. It helps the group assume ownership of the team and acknowledges that each person is part of a group that is accountable for tasks. The name may be related to the task (which can solidify the team focus) or it can represent a characteristic that the members want their team to symbolize.

- After the teams have done some work together, have each team come up with a name.
- Suggest that the name may be based on their assigned responsibility (based on their tasks) or on characteristics or personalities or skills they'd like to represent.
- Bring the teams together to hear the team names. Acknowledge each team name.
- Help the group process the activity by asking:
  - How did your team work together to choose your name?
  - As the other names were announced, what did you notice or think about?
  - What has happened to us through this team naming process?

#### 3. Create a team symbol.

The naming of the group encouraged the verbal intelligence of the group, whereas identifying a symbol draws in the visual intelligence of the group. It can also be a tool to remind team members of the big picture, the reason that they are part of the work.

- Ahead of time, gather materials (posterboard, markers, tape, etc.)
- Give each team fifteen minutes to create its visual symbol.
- Tell them ahead of time to choose someone who will present it to the group.
- When the groups are finished, have each group first say their group name and then present their symbol. Acknowledge every group with clapping.
- Help the group process the experience by asking one or two of these questions:



- What was easy about this? What was difficult about this?
- Which symbols caught your attention?
- What messages do the symbols communicate?
- What did you learn about your group as you did this?

#### 4. Choose a team motto.

A motto is a short upbeat phrase that affirms your team's spirit. In a few words, it describes what your team is about. It can also be helpful to bring members back when things are difficult.

- Provide examples so teams can get an idea of a motto.
- Give each team five or ten minutes to come up with their motto.
- Have each team present their motto to the group. Acknowledge every group.
- Ask one or two questions to help the group process the experience:
  - Which words or phrase do you remember?
  - Which one(s) do you like?
  - What are some of the important themes in the mottos?

#### 5. Create a Team Story

This is an effective way of getting the whole team on board and reminding team members of successes and future hopes, especially during challenging times. A team's story can have a direct impact on its performance.

- Provide materials (poster paper, markers, masking tape, pen, paper, etc.)
- Explain to the teams about winning stories. Ask them to describe successful teams in which they have been a part.
- As a whole team, brainstorm ideas in these three categories:  
*The Past – what has happened, what are our past accomplishments.*  
*The Present – what is going on now, what are our current challenges.*  
*The Future – where do we want to be, what will be our future victories.*
- As a team, or divide into smaller groups, work on the three areas above. Plan for ten minutes per category and prepare a small paragraph to share with the team.
- Read out the paragraphs and link together as a story. Acknowledge all the contributions.
- Help the team process the experience with the following questions:
  - What words or phrases do you remember from our story?
  - What parts of the story did you like best?
  - What does our story communicate about the kind of team we are?
  - What should we do with our story?
- Consider having the story printed and distributed to the team or keep it in a shared location. It can be helpful to remind people in a positive way of the value of the team.

#### 6. Rotate the leadership.

This is a great way to train everyone to assume responsibility for the different aspects of working in a team. It gently helps team members move out of their comfort zones while honouring the qualities and gifts that each member brings to the team. Furthermore, rotating the team leadership communicates that the group trusts each member and keeps the team energy refreshed.

Create a leadership rotation chart as a team:

- Remind the team that each member can do each role.
- Brainstorm the various roles and tasks necessary for your meetings and to accomplish tasks (e.g., room setup, leading the discussions, recording, writing the report, cleaning up the room, coordinating refreshments, working with the accreditation coordinator, etc.)



- Create a matrix with the tasks listed down the side and the meeting dates across the top.
- Decide as a group how the table will be filled in (e.g., volunteer, random draw, rotation, etc.)
- Print the chart and distribute to the team.
- Agree that it is the individual's responsibility to arrange for a replacement if required.
- Provide helpers/mentors if anyone has any questions on how to complete their roles.

## 7. Work through differences.

It is important to acknowledge differences and find ways to bridge them, otherwise the effectiveness of the team can be compromised. One valuable approach is to explore perspectives, recognizing that all perspectives are important and add value. In order to work through differences, it is necessary to make the differences visible, rather than burying them.

- If there has been conflict, ask the team “How does conflict emerge in our team? How do we usually deal with it? What happens to our ability to get our work done if we are in conflict?”
- If the conflict is due to varying views, consider using a Venn diagram approach.
- On a large paper or whiteboard, draw three or four large interlocking circles, each one representing a perspective. In the largest part of each circle, write elements of the perspective that it represents. Name the elements objectively without judgement. Also name the gifts of each perspective (what is positive about each perspective?)
- Have the team name the ways that any two perspectives are connected. Write these in the overlapping sections (the dotted section on the diagram).
- At the centre of all the circles, identify the points of connection between all perspectives (solid centre section on the diagram). Ask what that means about the strengths of your team.
- Help the team process the experience with one or more of the following questions:
  - What observations did you make as we went through this process?
  - What went smoothly? What was difficult?
  - What happened to our team as we went through this process?
  - How does this help us work together with our differences?
- This can be used to help bridge cultural differences and it uncovers perspectives and customs.

