

HRM EXPERIENCE

Establishing Ground Rules for a Team's Success



Professional trainers understand that setting ground rules for teams helps them operate successfully. Ground rules—or team norms—are agreed-on formal rules that guide the behavior of a group's member. Ground rules simply state how members want to be treated and how members agree to treat others. Ground rules help teams maintain order, promote positive behavior, and can be used to correct undesirable actions.

Assignment

1. Divide your class into teams. Working within your team, select what you believe are the ten most important norms for team behavior.
2. From the following Behavior List, have each team member *silently* select two lists of ten items each of the behaviors they believe most critical for a team success. The first list of ten items (your A list) is considered the most important for group conduct. The second list (the B list) consists of behaviors that are desirable.
3. Have the members of your team select a final list of ten items from both lists. These will become your team's final norms. During your discussion, items can be modified or combined to meet your team's specific needs.

Behavior List

While working in our team, individuals should:

1. Do their fair share of the work.
2. Check to ensure that everyone clearly understands what is to be done.
3. Encourage planning, including short-range agendas as well as long-range goals.
4. Encourage open and candid opinions about issues.
5. Listen willingly and carefully to other people's ideas, even if those people have a different viewpoint.
6. Prepare thoroughly before meetings.
7. Make team members feel at ease during discussions.
8. Encourage members to ask questions when they do not clearly understand tasks or procedures.
9. Outline the pros and cons of decisions faced by the team.
10. Follow through on task assignments.

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8. Encourage members to ask questions when they do not clearly understand tasks or procedures.
9. Outline the pros and cons of decisions faced by the team.
10. Follow through on task assignments.
11. Help other members when they need assistance.
12. Treat all team members as equals.
13. Paraphrase or restate what someone else says in order to check its meaning.
14. Openly voice opinions and share ideas.
15. Be flexible in arranging meeting schedules.
16. Compliment others for things they have said or done.
17. Be willing to meet whenever it is necessary to discuss a problem.
18. Bring conflicts to the attention of the team and deal with them directly.
19. Express enthusiasm about what the team is doing.
20. Encourage budgeting of the team's time.
21. At the end of a meeting, have members restate their own responsibilities to check for agreement.
22. Be serious about the team's work.
23. Arrive on time for regularly scheduled meetings.
24. Be willing to listen to other team members' ideas.
25. Get the team's approval on important matters before proceeding.

Case Study

1

Companies Learning to Be Flexible

After Bangalore-based Chitra Iyengar decided to adopt a child, she became serious about adopting a flexible work schedule after an encounter with her manager at IBM India who said: "I do not care whether you sit in the park or at home. I am concerned with your deliverables." For Iyengar, it was eye-opening to realize that work did not mean a place she went to, but something that she did.

In recent years, many firms like IBM India have taken to offering a flexible work schedule alternative to many of their employees, a benefit that offers positive outcomes to employees and employers alike. Flex-time allows workers to choose their own start and end times, as long as they put in the required number of hours following any limits placed by the employer. Susan M. Heathfield, a human resources and management development consultant, writes that flex-time enables employees to achieve a better work-life balance and to work when they're at their optimal best, which reduces stress and burnout. For employers, flex-time typically reduces absenteeism and turnover, and helps employers attract the best candidates for job openings.

Of course, individual managers may struggle with the logistics of flex-time, which is why Dawn Rosenberg McKay, a career planning expert, says that managers and employees must work together to devise a realistic plan that balances the company's objectives with individuals' needs. Done well, flex-time can ensure that all employees are available at peak times and that the office is manned during all operating hours and days of the week. Thus, it is probably useful to document the details of a flex-time program and to evaluate how well the program is working from time to time.

For Iyengar, a career-oriented person who loves to work, it took a lot of effort initially to adjust to the program, but now she is quite happy with the benefits, noting, "Flexi-work is a definite enabler in my life."

Questions

1. What are the pros and cons of flexible schedules from an employee's perspective?
2. What considerations should an employer take into account when designing a flex-time work schedule?

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Questions

1. What are the pros and cons of flexible schedules from an employee's perspective?
2. What considerations should an employer take into account when designing a flex-time work schedule?
3. What can HR managers do to help facilitate flexible work schedules in their organizations?

Source: Saumya Bhattacharya, "Look Ma, No Clock," *Business Today*, (February 24, 2011), <http://businesstoday.in>; Susan M. Heathfield, Advantages and Disadvantages of Flexible Work Schedules, <http://humanresources.about.com>; Dawn Rosenberg McKay, "Flextime: An Alternative Work Arrangement," <http://careerplanning.about.com>.

Case Study

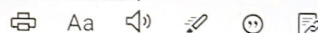
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Virtual Teams in Action: Building the F-35 Fighter

The F-35 Lightning II Program, also known as the Joint Fighter Program, is the U.S. Department of Defense's next generation stealth fighter aircraft. The Department of Defense named Lockheed Martin Aeronautics of Fort Worth, Texas, to design and build the fighter with Northrop Grumman and BAE Systems as major partners.

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Countries, including Italy, Australia, Canada, Turkey, India, and Israel, have contributed toward development costs of the program.

The success of the mega project hinges greatly on intricate teamwork and the cooperation of countless individuals. For example, more than 80 suppliers worked at 187 locations worldwide to build components for the fighter. A seventy-five member technology group at Lockheed's aeronautics division linked the suppliers along with the U.S. Air Force, Navy, and Marines to Britain's Defense Ministry to track progress and make midstream design and production changes. Individuals working at more than 40,000 computer stations collaborated to get the first plane airborne in just four years. Speaking of the teamwork involved, Mark Peden, vice president for information systems at Lockheed Aeronautics, said, "It's the true virtual connection."

Teams working both nationally and internationally were connected as if team members were working in the same room. Teams communicated via their computers while looking at shared documents, carried on e-mail chats, and used electronic whiteboards on which geographically separated team members could draw pictures or charts, in real time, as others watched and responded. The Internet was designed to allow people from different companies with incompatible computing systems to interface on websites that speak a common language.

Questions

1. What advantages did Lockheed Martin gain by using virtual teams? Explain.
2. Identify and discuss potential problems with using virtual teams—for example, interpersonal, technical, or geographical concerns.
3. Discuss the characteristics that virtual team members should possess.
4. What specific training should virtual teams receive?

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Notes and References



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