

02

Effective management of hybrid teams

- 2.1 Understanding Your Team Better
- 2.2 The Best Workload Management Tool
- 2.3 Communicating Needs
- 2.4 Find Your Freedom of Action

Exercise 2.1

Understanding Your Team Better

Activity Type: Group

DESCRIPTION

This activity explores the ways in which the management of a company can best understand its employees, clients and partners.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this activity, learners will be able to:

- Better understand the dynamics and challenges of managing hybrid teams
- Apply customer-centric approaches to managing hybrid teams,
- Implement techniques to foster team cohesion and trust in a hybrid work environment.
- Foster a culture of inclusivity and equity within hybrid teams
- Address potential challenges and conflicts that may arise within hybrid teams and apply strategies for resolution.

MATERIALS NEEDED FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- PROSPER online course
- Attached PPT - Understanding your team better
- projector
- flipchart
- post-its
- paper
- pens

TIME REQUIRED

65 min.

Understanding Your Team Better

Theoretical background

It is recommended that the trainer reviews the following parts of the PROSPER online course:

- Module 1. Digital Productivity. Unit 4 Effective management of hybrid teams: <https://course.prosper-project.eu/module-1-unit-4-effective-management-of-hybrid-teams/>
- Module 2. Digital Wellbeing. Unit 2 Assessing & Monitoring well-being in hybrid settings: <https://course.prosper-project.eu/module-2-unit-2-assessing-monitoring-well-being-in-hybrid-settingsmodule-2-unit-2/>

In addition, the following resource might provide useful:

- Steve Todd. The Importance of Understanding Employee Needs: How it Impacts Your Business: <https://opensourceworkplace.com/news/the-importance-of-understanding-employee-needs-how-it-impacts-your-business>

The topics of digital productivity and digital wellbeing are interconnected. Finding out what the employees' needs are is key not only to their satisfaction with being part of the team, but also to ensuring effective cooperation within the team. This is why the trainer must be aware of the ways the two topic interplay with each other.

Preparation

This activity explores the ways in which the management of a company can best understand its employees. The learners should review the Module 1 / Unit 4 Effective management of hybrid teams/ Topic 1 Training the managers. This can be done either as a homework assignment prior to the start of the training, or via projecting the PPT for 10 min. in the beginning of the activity: <https://course.prosper-project.eu/module-1-unit-4-effective-management-of-hybrid-teams/>

Introduction

Participants brainstorm on the role of middle management (e.g. team leaders) in ensuring the productivity of their teams. Every participant writes their suggestions on post-its and briefly presents what they consider important. The trainer groups the

answers in categories based on what learners share. At least one category should be focused on communication and understanding employee needs better. **10 min.**

Activity description

The trainer presents the different methods for understanding employee needs, using the PPT provided. Participants are welcome to suggest further methods, if such come to mind. **5 min.**

In pairs, participants review the different methods. Each pair concentrates on one method - online quiz, structured and unstructured interview, focus group, role play, and other methods suggested by the group. Participants have to review:

- the strengths of the method;
- its limitations;
- the situations where it is best applicable;
- how they would carry it out in the context of a hybrid team - from communicating the idea to possible follow-ups. 20 min.

Each pair presents the results of their discussion. Other participants can ask questions and comment. On the flipchart, the trainer summarises the results in a table with 4 columns: method, strengths, limitations, where to use it? 20 min.

Debriefing

Participants reflect on which of the methods reviewed worked best for them in the past and give examples why. Then they consider what they might change in the future, based on the discussions in this activity. 10 min.

Adaptation to online mode

The activity can be carried-out online with minor modifications:

- For brainstorming, a Miro-board would work well. Alternatively, a Mentimeter can be used.
- Pairs should work in breakout rooms.
- The trainer should prepare a document for writing the summary - once again, Miro can be effective, or, alternatively, a simple table in PowerPoint.

Understanding Your Team Better

ONLINE QUIZ

If you want to find out details about a large number of participants, an online quiz is the default option. It does not require a significant time investment to be completed, and provides structured answers which can be easily compiled into a database. It also works reasonably well when the same data needs to be compiled over a larger timespan.

The closed structure of the questions limits the quality of the results. Open questions are often ignored, answered superficially, or lead to a non-submission if made mandatory. While fast and affordable, the quiz should not be considered a universal solution to all problems.

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

An interview is a discussion or conversation with an employee or client. A structured interview follows a set of questions that guide the conversation. This allows for more consistent results when more than one person is interviewed. It also provides the opportunity to focus on several key aspects and not to get lost in the one which appears to be most pressing.

A structured interview is a great conversation prompt for the more shy ones, as it provides a clear direction of the discussion. This pre-set direction, however, can also be limiting, in a way already suggesting some of the answers. More open formats allow for more spontaneity.



UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW

If you want to get more than the standard answers and reveal previously unseen aspects of a problem, an unstructured interview can be a way to go. In unstructured interviews, a conversation occurs conversationally and spontaneously. This requires a greater effort on the side both of the interviewee and interviewer. The interviewer must ensure a welcoming, open atmosphere is created, and encourage the expression of any unorthodox viewpoints. However, he/she also needs to keep the conversation focused and keep it from getting lost in small talk. An unstructured interview is great for the ones who love to express themselves, but can put some people off, who would prefer a more structure approach.

FOCUS GROUP

A focus group is a research technique used to collect data through group interaction. The participants need to be carefully selected, so that everyone is in the position to discuss the topic in question, while adding a different perspective to it. Focus groups are heavily dependant on active facilitation. While the equal participation of all people present is seldom achieved, there must be a balance between more and less active participants. Another point of balance is the one between a pre-set line of questioning and new aspects spontaneously revealed in the conversation. It is highly recommended that a designated note-taker is employed, or the whole interaction recorded and analysed at a later stage.

ROLE-PLAY

Role-plays have a valuable part to play in revealing previously unanticipated aspects of an interaction. Since they engage participants not only on a cognitive level, but on an emotional and actionable as well, they can provide a fresh perspective on a problem and acts as vessels for creative ideating. Role-plays excel when they help the interaction of participants that know relatively little of each other and would be challenged to interact in a classical discussions. Role-plays can be very demanding on the participants, are not immediately suited for everyone, and require professional facilitation. If taken too lightly, they might lead to a feeling of insecurity and create tension between the participants.



Exercise 2.2

The Best Workload Management Tool

Activity Type: Group

DESCRIPTION

This is a group activity where participants define together the do's and don'ts of workload management, and review different digital tools.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this activity, learners will achieve the following learning outcomes:

- being able to adapt management practices to effectively lead and motivate hybrid teams;
- being able to leverage technology platforms to support collaborative work, including supporting remote; collaboration and team management;
- being motivated to explore different tools to better suit the company's needs.

MATERIALS NEEDED FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- PROSPER online course.
- Flipcharts
- Post-its
- Markers and pens
- Laptops / Smartphones for the participants

TIME REQUIRED

60 min. + 20 min for intro/debriefing.

The Best Workload Management Tool

Theoretical background

It is advisable that the trainer familiarise themselves with the subject of workload management. The following resources can be used:

Runn, 2022 “Everything You Need to Know About Workload Management”:

<https://www.runn.io/blog/workload-management>

Epilogue Systems, 2022 “How Can You Choose Your Best Workload Management Tools?”:

<https://www.epiloguesystems.com/blog/how-can-you-choose-your-best-workload-management-tools/>

Preparation

It is recommended that participants are familiar with the concept of DIGITAL PRODUCTIVITY prior to engaging in this activity. Also, since it involves a group cooperation, it must be preceded by an introduction of participants and an ice-breaker activity.

Introduction

The learners should review the Module 1 / Unit 4 Effective management of hybrid teams/ Topic 2 Digital tools for workload management:

<https://course.prosper-project.eu/module-1-unit-4-effective-management-of-hybrid-teams/>

This can be done either as a homework assignment prior to the start of the training, or via projecting the PPT for 10 min. in the beginning of the activity.

Activity description

1. The do's and don'ts of workload management. On separate post-it, each participant writes down what they consider as a must when it comes to workload management, and what is to be avoided. The post-its are then grouped on two flipcharts - one for the do's and one for the don'ts. The group discusses what has been proposed and has to agree on the top 5 do's and don'ts, which are written on a separate flipchart. **15 min.**
2. The group is divided into pairs. Each pair receives as a task to review a workload management tool. They have to prepare a short presentation for the group, trying to 'sell' the merits of the tool, while also presenting its limitations. Pairs are allowed to make use of existing online reviews, videos, and any

personal experience they have with the tools, but they need to deliver the presentation themselves.

3. The presentations should follow the same structure:

1. Brief presentation of the tool
2. Who are the target users
3. Main functions
4. Strengths
5. Limitations
6. Possible alternatives
7. Why chose this tool over the alternatives?

The tools to be reviewed may include (in addition to any other the trainer and participants might want to include): Asana, ClickUp, Jira, Monday, Open Project, Teamwork, Zoho Projects, Wrike. **30 min.**

Each pair presents the tool they reviewed. On a flipchart, they write down the main pluses and minuses of their tool. The group then discusses the different proposals and tries to come up with a common favourite. **15 min.**

Debriefing

Participants share what their prior experience with workload management tools was - when they are introduced to one, why it was chosen, and how they perceived it. Then they deliberate whether they have a better understanding now that they have compared different tools, and whether they are considering adapting/changing to one. **10 min.**

Adaptation to online mode

If the training is delivered online, provide the participants with the PPT, as well as the additional reading resources provided for the trainers prior to beginning the activity. **For step 1**, please use a collaborative board, such as Miro.com. Please make sure to prepare the sections of the board prior to beginning the activity. **For step 2**, pairs need to split in breakout rooms in Zoom, or a similar setting, while continuing to work on the Miro board. Preparing dedicated presentations, such as on Canva or PPT, is also admissible, but in that case, additional time must be allocated - at least 15 min. **For step 3** and the debriefing, all participants return to the common session.

Exercise 2.3

Communicating Needs

Activity Type: Group

DESCRIPTION

This is a group activity where participants practice communicating their needs to other departments in a clear and unambiguous way.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this activity, learners will achieve the following learning outcomes:

- Understand the dynamics and challenges of managing hybrid teams.
- Be able to clearly formulate and communicate work needs.
- Develop strategies for effective communication and collaboration within hybrid teams.
- Implement techniques to foster team cohesion and trust in a hybrid work environment.
- Be able to overcome departmental boundaries and understand the needs of other Departments.
- Address potential challenges and conflicts that may arise within hybrid teams and apply strategies for resolution.
- Build trust and reduce frustration levels as prejudices and rumours are eliminated.

MATERIALS NEEDED FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- PROSPER online course
- post-its
- paper
- pens

TIME REQUIRED

65 min.

Communicating Needs

Theoretical background

Communication is the key to effective teamwork. However, it is also a source of misunderstandings, frustration, and wasted efforts. One way to tackle this issue is to enable employees on different positions (and from different departments) to communicate clearly what they need from each other in order to fulfill their role effectively. By clearly articulating what is needed to achieve common goals, misunderstandings and prejudices that have developed over time can be resolved. Employees need to learn how to articulate their basic needs and how to respond to the needs of others. In this way, clarity, integrity, and transparency are created while fostering cohesion and coordination across disciplinary boundaries.

The activity is based on the 'What I Need From You' activity from the Liberating Structures website (in German):

<https://liberatingstructures.de/liberating-structures-menue/what-i-need-from-you-winfy/>

The trainer could also benefit from familiarity with the principles of Nonviolent Communication:

- Basics of Nonviolent Communication:

<https://baynvc.org/basics-of-nonviolent-communication/>

- Videos on non-violent communication:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6wEzJfZzqvrcPoOqs0uNdx8dG-L0ORJo>

Preparation

The learners should review the Module 1 / Unit 4 Effective management of hybrid teams/ Topic 3 Communication and feedback: : <https://course.prosper-project.eu/module-1-unit-4-effective-management-of-hybrid-teams/>

This can be done either as a homework assignment prior to the start of the training, or via projecting the PPT for 10 min. in the beginning of the activity.

Introduction

Explain the purpose of the activity. In this activity, learners will work with real life examples taken from

their actual work experience. If the group consists of participants from different companies, they must be assigned roles, ideally close to their real ones. Sample roles might include (for each small group/department):

- Human resources
- IT
- Procurement and Logistics
- Marketing
- Finance and Accounting
- Administration

Ask learners to share their needs clearly and concretely with what they need from others. In their answers, they must also be honest and unambiguous (so if they are unable to fulfil a request, it is better to do so openly, than say 'We will do our best' and fail to deliver')

Activity description

1. If there are participants from the same departments (with similar roles), they form small groups. A small group can have 3 or more members. All the groups (departments) and their responsibilities must be clear to all participants - in case newer employees are present, it may be useful for everyone to present themselves briefly.

With fewer participants, this step can be skipped, and the next one done individually. **5 min.**

2. In the small groups, participants discuss what they need from each group. All ideas are collected on post-its and gathered. Then the group attempts to organise them in areas, as they relate to other groups/departments. After the ideas are organised, they must be evaluated on a desirability/time scale:

- how important is the point in question for the team to fulfil its role;
- how urgent is the need.

Communicating Needs

Once the ideas are evaluated, the ones who are deemed vital need to be formulated clearly in the form: 'What I need from you is...'. The formulation should contain:

- what is being requested (A)
- who should do it (B)
- when it should be ready (C)
- why it is needed (D)

The final suggestion should have the form: 'What I need from you (B) is (A). I need to by (C), because of (D). Can you do it?'. The form invites a clear yes or no answer.

The group selects a speaker to address the other groups. **20 min.**

3. The speakers gather in a small circle. Each speaker addresses the others in turn. While he-she speaks, the others can't ask clarifying questions or respond in any way. They are allowed to keep notes. **10 min.**

4. The speakers of each group respond to the requests they received by:

- Yes, I (B) will do (A) by (C).
- No, I cannot do (A) by (C), because.
- I didn't understand the request.

10 min.

5. If there were any 'I didn't understand' answers, the small groups debate and reformulate the request again, the speaker repeats it, and the other side responds again. **10 min.**

Debriefing

Participants share:

- How difficult was it to prioritise requests?
- What helped make the requests clear and concrete?
- Was it difficult to listen without being able to ask questions?
- Do you feel that your requests were heard?

10 min

Adaptation to online mode

The activity can be delivered in an online mode without major modifications. Small groups work in breakout rooms. During the speaker discussion, it is recommended that non-speakers turn off their cameras.

Exercise 2.4

Find Your Freedom of Action

Activity Type: Group

DESCRIPTION

In this activity, participants identify simple, concrete actions they can undertake immediately to improve the work of their team.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this activity, learners will achieve the following learning outcomes:

- Understand the dynamics and challenges of managing hybrid teams.
- Develop strategies for effective communication and collaboration within hybrid teams.
- Implement techniques to foster team cohesion and trust in a hybrid work environment.
- Foster a culture of inclusivity and equity within hybrid teams, ensuring equal opportunities and support for both in-person and remote team members.
- Feel empowered to act upon identified issues creating inefficiencies within the team.
- Adopt a proactive attitude towards discovering and solving problems.

MATERIALS NEEDED FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- post-its
- pens

TIME REQUIRED

65 min.

Find Your Freedom of Action

Theoretical background

It is often assumed that truly meeting employee needs requires a drastic restructuring of an organisation, making significant changes to the team composition, activities, processes etc. Because more often than not this is not possible, teams stagnate. There is an alternative, however - not all changes need to be major ones.

There are certain actions that can be carried out immediately by anyone. They might not solve all problems, but they are a way to tackle them. Small changes, carried out systematically, might improve the situation considerably, and are much preferable to doing nothing.

The goal of this activity is to demonstrate that all problems have a solution, and one does not have to wait powerlessly for the change to happen - one can bring it about. It helps determine what an individual can control and what they cannot. When concentrating on what is actually feasible to do, team members can discover simple solutions to complicated problems, and bring together several small steps into a major improvement. Thus, progress happens

The activity is based on the Liberating structure called 15% Solutions:

<https://liberatingstructures.de/liberating-structures-menue/15-solutions/>

Preparation

The trainer should be familiar with Module 1 / Unit 4 Effective management of hybrid teams of the PROSPER online course: <https://course.prosper-project.eu/module-1-unit-4-effective-management-of-hybrid-teams/>

Learners do not require any preparation, apart from a general awareness of work challenges they face.

Introduction

The trainer introduces the principle behind the activity. Then participants are asked to identify one initiative they have undertaken within the last months that has led to an improvement of their work. This does not have

to be a significant action, but in all cases - something that originated in them, like suggesting to go for lunch together, keep the records better, divide tasks more efficiently etc. **10 min.**

Activity description

Step 1. Participants write on post-its to define several causes of frustration in their work life. These causes do not have to apply to the whole team, just to them personally. At that stage, any ideas are welcome, no matter how grand or small. **10 min.**

Step 2. Participants are divided into small groups (of 3-4). There, they need to select a few challenges from the ones the already listed, and address them through the question:

Where is your freedom of action? Where are the areas where you do as you decide? What can you do without having to ask for additional resources or permission? Participants have a few minutes to think for themselves, then they discuss in the small group. Other participants can ask questions and provide suggestions. **30 min.**

In the large group, every participant briefly shares one action they have identified they can undertake immediately. **10 min.**

Debriefing

Participants discuss the following questions:

- Did you identify a meaningful solution to a problem you had?
- What is different now? Why didn't you do something earlier to address the issue?
- How can you make proactivity a habit within your team? **5 min.**

Adaptation to online mode

In principle, the activity does not require significant adaptation for an online delivery, besides working in breakout rooms for the small groups. However, because this activity focuses so much on empowering participants to be proactive, it works much better in a live setting. Sharing of experiences is vital for its effectiveness, and participants are less likely to share personal stories when they work online.