



Instructor Guide to “Team Action Plan” Activity

The “Team Action Plan” activity is a tool to help team members voice their concerns about group project work and give the team a chance to pre-establish a plan for addressing these concerns. As an instructor you have two objectives:

1. Make sure participants are identifying the right problem to address.
2. Focus the teams on creating specific, actionable tasks they will use to combat the concerns.

To start the activity, each team member will come up with a few statements starting with “I resent...” After sharing their statements, it is the responsibility of the rest of the team members to ask questions so that everyone understands what that statement means to the person who voiced the concern. Finally, once everyone understands the concern, it’s the entire team’s job to identify action items which will help prevent this problem from occurring and/or steps to take if the problem does occur.

As an instructor, you want to lead the team away from making assumptions about each other’s needs so that the accurate concerns may be addressed. To do this, encourage team members to really listen and empathize with their teammates and ask good clarifying questions.

For example, Sally may say, “I resent when meetings feel unproductive.” Based on this statement, another team member may assume that Sally would find a meeting to be unproductive if she sees other members on their phones; therefore, they might suggest an action item be for everyone to put their phones away during team meetings. This is a fair way to interpret the “I resent” statement and a reasonable action item, but it might not be the right problem specific to Sally’s needs.

What if Sally doesn’t care if people go on their phones during meetings, so long as she feels something was accomplished at the end of the meeting. In this case, a better action item for Sally might be to have an agenda set before each meeting which includes deliverables for the meeting and time at the end of the meeting to look at how many deliverables were met. The only way for the team to know which concern is correct is to avoid making assumptions and instead ask questions to figure out what an “unproductive meeting” looks like to Sally.

These questions could be as simple as, “Sally, what does an unproductive meeting look like to you? Can you tell a brief story about a meeting you had recently that you found to be really unproductive? What are some habits teammates may exhibit that bother you and make you feel unproductive?”

Once the true underlying issue is identified, the next step is to create good action items. A good action item is one that is really specific, outlining who, what, how, and when. Taking the example from above, if a team decides to create a meeting agenda, then follow up questions may be: “Who is going to create the agenda? What needs to be included in the agenda/how much time should be left for debriefing at the end? What platform (how) will be used to share the agenda? When will the agenda be sent out to other team members?” As an instructor, the best way to assist the teams with their action items is to continue to prompt these kinds of questions that require teams to get super specific with their action plan. The more that is considered upfront, the easier it will be to address member’s needs later on.