

# TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN TEAM WORK SETTINGS

## The Miracle on Techwood Drive



Photo Caption: Lance Austin returns a blocked field goal 78 yards on the final play of the game on October 24, 2015. Georgia Tech won the game 22-16.

Football is a sport with clearly defined tasks and roles. Quarterbacks throw. Running backs run. Offensive linemen block. Much like any group of people working in a team, these fundamental tasks can be clearly aligned with different players' skills and abilities. If tasks name the specific actions that each player takes, the term responsibilities names a more fundamental goal. Quarterbacks do not just throw; it is their responsibility to throw to the player with the best opportunity to gain the most yards for the offense. Responsibilities require members of the team to enlist others to reach a commonly held goal.

In a play remembered fondly by Georgia Tech fans, Lance Austin helped the Yellow Jackets beat the Florida State Seminoles on the play memorialized as "The Miracle on Techwood Drive" from the 2015 season. The task that Austin had before Florida State attempted a field goal was less important than the responsibility that he and his teammates took up after Austin, normally a defensive player who does not carry the ball, picked it up after a blocked field goal. He needed his teammates adapted to a new situation as he marshalled teammates to block for him as he returned a blocked field goal attempt for a touchdown as time expired. Austin and his teammates succeeded because they enlisted help from one another working toward an overarching responsibility to win the game.

When working in a team, you must understand the difference between tasks and broader responsibilities. While tasks are usually small-scale actions that important in the short term, responsibilities are essential to your team's overall success in the project. Each team member's responsibilities require that they enlist the help of their teammates, delegate tasks, and discuss the process of the team's work. This broader understanding of responsibility that builds from agreed upon expectations about the quality of the team's work will ensure that everyone succeeds in the team's long-term goals.

# Activity: Making a Responsibility-Oriented Work

Your group is faced with a project that will require each group member to carry out both small tasks and long-term responsibilities. To arrive at a place where you are prepared to accomplish work at both of these levels, you will need to achieve clarity at the individual and group levels about how to determine your roles and communicate about your responsibilities.

## »» Step 1: Starting with Your Strengths

1. Have each person in the group write down their skills based on their CliftonStrengths results.
2. After each of you has a list of your skills, organize your results as a team. Look for areas where you overlap as well as areas of uniqueness and difference. (3-5 minutes)

## »» Step 2: Claiming Responsibility

3. As a group, make an outline of the major steps in your project.
4. Return to your CliftonStrengths results. Rank each major step that your group defined based on which would make the most sense for you to be responsible for, keeping in mind your strengths. Make notes to yourself for 2 to 3 minutes.
5. Discuss as a group each member's rankings. Based on each group member's strengths and ideas, decide which major steps of the project each group member will be responsible for.

## »» Step 3: Updating the Contract

6. If your group has a contract, update it to include the plan you have established with this activity. If you do not have a contract, now is an opportunity to establish a plan that all group members can agree about.

## »» Step 4: Asking for Help

7. Ahead of your next meeting, outline the tasks that seem essential to completing the major step you are responsible for overseeing. Consider your teammates' strengths, and come to your next meeting with a proposed work plan that enlists your teammates' help in completing your major step. Start your next meeting by discussing each group member's proposed work plan and updating your group contract after agreeing about a path forward for each major step.

## Expanded Discussion:

After completing the previous activity, discuss the following questions, either with your team or with the class.

1. Which of your CliftonStrengths correspond to responsibilities you enjoy? Do any correspond to responsibilities you are well-suited to complete but do not enjoy?
2. Were there major steps in the project that multiple group members wanted to be responsible for? How did you compromise to make your path forward equitable and acceptable to all parties?
3. What strategies can your group employ to remain flexible and adapt to emerging responsibilities and tasks in ways that follow from each member's strengths?

