

TOOL

ASSESSING YOUR TEAM'S COMMUNICATION: AN EXAMINATION OF BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS

Four major communication sets are critical for conflict competent teams. This tool enables you to assess your team's current effectiveness in these areas. Use the following scale as you analyze each question. Give each item a rating or numerical score. Next, add the items to arrive at a total score for each category. This tool is from Craig E. Runde and Tim A. Flanagan, *Building Conflict Competent Teams* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008) 200–208.

Scale:

4=Excellent or almost always; we perform very well.

3=Good or usually; but we could improve.

2=Average or sometimes; we could definitely benefit by improvement here.

1=Below average or seldom; this is cause for real concern.

Reflective Thinking and Delay Responding

_____ My teammates call for time-outs when discussions become too heated.

_____ Our team leader senses when we need a break.

_____ Our team temporarily tables decisions when we have significant disagreements.

_____ Team members coach each other to cool down, slow down, and reengage.

_____ We give each other opportunities to think things over.

_____ **Reflective Thinking and Delay Responding Total**

Perspective Taking and Empathy

_____ During important discussions, we ask many questions.

_____ When differences arise, we explore them fully.

_____ My teammates go out of their way to check for understanding.

_____ Teammates are good at acknowledging and describing each other's feelings.

_____ Our team leader effectively summarizes key points made during meetings.

_____ **Perspective Taking and Empathy Total**

Expressing Emotions

_____ Team members are honest about their feelings and emotions.

_____ My teammates seldom raise their voices, swear, or use accusatory language.

_____ When asked by others, teammates admit feelings such as frustration or concern.

_____ We routinely engage in straight talk with each other.

_____ My teammates share good news and accomplishments freely.

_____ **Expressing Emotions Total**

Listening for Understanding

- _____ Team members leave team meetings with a good sense of where everybody stands.
- _____ We seldom interrupt or cut one another off.
- _____ My teammates ask lots of questions when trying to understand other points of view.
- _____ Team members encourage the use of examples, analogies, and metaphors.
- _____ On the whole, we are a team of very good listeners.

Listening for Understanding Total

Individual Summary

- _____ Reflective Thinking and Delay Responding
- _____ Perspective Taking and Empathy
- _____ Expressing Emotions
- _____ Listening for Understanding

Team Total Summary

- _____ Reflective Thinking and Delay Responding
- _____ Perspective Taking and Empathy
- _____ Expressing Emotions
- _____ Listening for Understanding

Team Averages

- _____ Reflective Thinking and Delay Responding
- _____ Perspective Taking and Empathy
- _____ Expressing Emotions
- _____ Listening for Understanding

Analysis and Suggestions [for Assessing Your Team's Communication]

Adding all team members' total component scores together gives a team total for each component. Divide each team total by the number of team members who completed the exercise to get a team average score for each component. The components with the lowest relative averages are most in need of attention for establishing the right team climate. Use the following guidelines as you consider your team's results and action steps:

3.5 and higher: This is a team strength.

- Actively reinforce teammates who demonstrate effectiveness.
- Consider how this strength can be leveraged in other areas for improvement.
- Celebrate!

2.9 to 3.4: This area is solid but could be improved.

- Schedule time during a team meeting for discussion of this area.
- Use team-building activities and exercises to enhance development in areas for improvement.

2.0 to 2.8: This area is in definite need of improvement.

- Schedule a single topic team meeting to address this area.
- [Consult mission center president to consider the use of a facilitator for assistance.]

1.9 and lower: This is cause for real concern.

- Ask all team members to commit to improving their skills in this area.
- [Contact mission center president to request facilitator for assistance.]

