HOW TO ORGANIZE EFFECTIVE TEAM PROJECTS

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Benefits of Team Projects

Students develop skills in a variety of areas, including:

- Interpersonal Communication
- Writing
- Leadership
- Planning
- Time Management
- Problem Solving
Problems with Team Projects

- Misunderstood expectations
- Mismatched personalities
- Unclear roles and responsibilities
- Unequal distribution of work
- Disgruntled students
- Grading inequity
- The list goes on....
Team Project Phases

- Phase 1: Initiating the Project
- Phase 2: Applying for a Position
- Phase 3: Forming the Teams
- Phase 4: Planning the Project
- Phase 5: Working on the Project
- Phase 6: Concluding the Project
Phase 1: Initiating the Project

I provide students with the following:

- Project Definition
- Project Goals and Objectives
- Project Scope
- Possible Project Ideas
- Milestones and Due Dates
- Team Member Roles and Responsibilities
Example: Lead Writer Role

Responsible for the organization, style, usability, accessibility, and overall content of the document.

- Develops the document outline for the project plan.
- Works closely with the Technical Expert to learn as much about the project as possible.
- Writes the content using individual research, information from the Technical Expert and the instructor.
- Updates the document based on feedback from team members and the instructor.
- Works closely with the Document Designer to produce the final document.
- Assists in the creation of sample data.
Phase 2: Applying for a Position

Next, each student does the following:

- Reviews the roles and responsibilities
- Selects a role that matches his or her strengths and interests
- Writes a persuasive letter of application
- Specifies an alternative role
Phase 3: Forming the Teams

To form teams, I do the following:

- Review each letter of application
- Select best candidates for each position
- Form teams based on desired role, personality, ability, past class performance, etc.
- Inform students of their team assignments
Phase 4: Planning the Project

Once in teams, the students:

- Brainstorm ideas for their project
- Select a topic that suits all team members
- Submit their proposed topic for approval
- Develop a detailed project plan using a template that I provide
Project Plan Highlights

- Team Communication Strategy
- Roles and Responsibilities
  - Performance appraisal criteria
- Master Milestone Schedule
  - Lists each task to be completed, when it is due, and who is responsible
- Team Member Milestone Schedule
  - Lists tasks by team member and is maintained by the team member
Phase 5: Working on the Project

While working on the project, students:

- Hold regular team meetings
- Provide regular status reports
- Maintain and update the master schedule and individual team member schedules
- Alert the instructor to any major problems within the team
- Meet all deadlines (for the most part!)
Phase 6: Concluding the Project

At the end of the project, students:
- Write a wrap-up report
- Write a formal self appraisal
- Write anonymous peer appraisals

In addition to grading each deliverable, I:
- Write a performance appraisal for each student
- Factor the performance appraisal results into the student’s final grade
In Conclusion

- The benefits of team projects far outweigh the drawbacks.
- Adding structure to the project can alleviate many of the problems students and instructors face.
- You can modify this approach to suit your course and teaching style.
- Good luck with your next team project!
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