Practitioner information

Introduction

This resource helps learners understand the importance of teamwork in enterprise and innovation, and some of the key roles or activities that take place within a high-performing team. Learners contrast the benefits of functional and cross-functional teams, and are introduced to the benefits of diversity. They explore the benefits of building a personal network, who their network might include as they progress in their career, and how to grow and maintain their network.

Why this topic is relevant for engineers

Engineers work in teams, whether this is in a small shift on a factory floor or as cofounders of an innovative startup enterprise. Learners need to understand that their personal or business success depends on the teams they are in and which surround them or work for them. A successful team is the foundation for each member's personal success and each member, even the leader, needs to fully contribute to the team as well as benefit from it.

Topic links

- Enterprise

- Skills for employability, teamworking, and project management

- Teamwork

- Networking

Delivering the theory: Teamwork in engineering

- Ask learners to share examples of teams from their learning and hobbies, and examples they can think of from engineering and business. Build on this by asking them to suggest features or behaviours of an effective team compared to an ineffective team – what indicators or factors are they applying to judge this?

- Highlight that an effective team includes roles to complete the team's tasks (the 'doing') as well as the process of being a team (the 'being'). These roles may be fluid between people and over time, or members with certain personalities may prefer and perform better in some roles over others.

- Explore the importance of emotional intelligence, or 'people skills', and problems caused when it is lacking or absent.

Suggested learning outcomes

Learners will be able to:

- explain the importance of teamwork in enterprise and the key role played by emotional intelligence

- list some benefits of diverse, cross-functional teams for enterprise

- define a personal network and describe how a strong personal network can support enterprise.

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Delivering the theory: Teams, diversity, and enterprise

- Ask learners to identify key tasks that have been required in their employer-led or tutor-set projects and how these roles were shared.

- Discuss how the team would have worked if members completed these tasks individually rather than together. Did the team leadership change with task?

- To help learners, discuss some examples of specialisms within sporting teams such as defence. Explore how the specialisms are needed but work within the wider team. What might happen if each part of a team played with their own strategy?

- Learners can discuss what enterprise and employability skills support diversity within a team or workplace, including emotional intelligence, communication, negotiation, and leadership. They can then identify examples of what can happen when each skill is present or absent.

Delivering the theory: Building your personal network

- Learners can draw concept maps of the people they know and identify connections and overlaps with other people's networks. Begin by modelling your own.

- Discuss how each person might help with technical, personal, or strategic support, and how the learner could in turn help some of their network.

- Identify similarities and differences between friendships and personal networks.

- Discuss what enterprise and employability skills help to build and maintain a personal network.

- Provide links to your local enterprise hub(s) and, based on learners' occupational specialisms, suitable professional bodies to join as students.

Delivering the case study: Teamwork for innovation

- Personalise to make the specific area of innovation relevant and interesting to learners.

- Possible functions include technology development or R&D, product design, supplier management, marketing, sales, and finance.

- Bring the issue to life: ask some learners to work in teams of four but first draft individual responses, which they must combine. Other teams work together right from the start. Compare learners' experiences and outcomes.

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