Lecture Overheads: Teamwork

Communication for Managers

15.279

Fall 2012

Here's what you said . . .

I did all the work on my teams

If I didn't do the work, it didn't get done

I never trusted anyone else to do the work

No one did work as well as I wanted it done

Everyone looked to me to do the work

Here's the good news: You're at MIT

But you need to follow 3 simple rules

Sample WBS—Planning a Vacation

Trip to Florida
Christmas Break
12/26-1/2

Research and buy tickets
Chien Chi--11/1

Research places to stay and make reservations
Sheryl--11/5

Find out about things to do

Water related
Selina--12/1

Restaurants
Vikram--12/1

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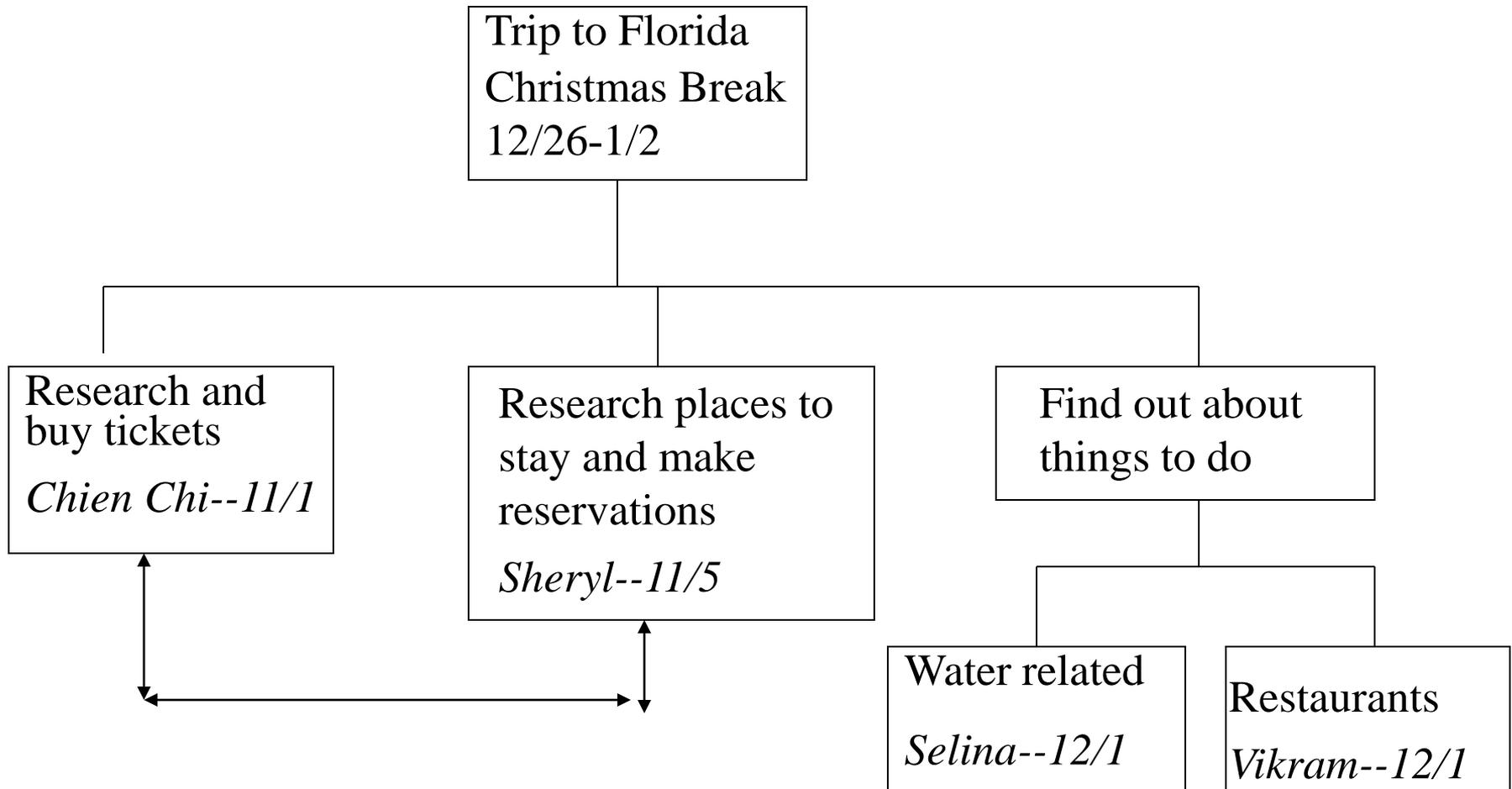
Facilitator/Coordinator

- **Why?**

  If everyone is responsible, no one is

- The coordinator/facilitator should
  – Focus the team toward the task
  – Get all team members to participate
  – Keep the team on deadline
  – Suggest alternatives
  – Help team members confront problems
  – Summarize team decisions

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Setting Ground Rules

- Goals and expectations

- Work norms

- Facilitator norms

- Communication norms

- Meeting norms

- Consideration norms

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High Performing Teams*

- Definition of team
  - Deliverables include both individual results and "collective work products"
  - Complementary skills and mutual accountability
  - More than the sum of its parts
- Common commitment
- Shared leadership

Jon R. Katzenbach and Douglas K. Smith, "The Discipline of Teams," *Harvard Business Review*, March-April 1993.

Meeting Guidelines

- Use an agenda! If you don't have one at the beginning of the meeting, make one

- Small talk is O.K. at the beginning of the meeting, then get down to business

- Do mid-meeting check in

- End with next steps clearly articulated

- See Project Team Productivity Tools

Communication Behaviors to Observe

- Who participates
- Who doesn't
- How do people take turns?
- Who talks to whom?
- Who responds to whom?
- How are interruptions handled?

- Is silence O.K.?
- Is anyone dominating the conversation?
- How are decisions made?
  - By consensus?
  - By voting?
  - By one person?

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And be sure to observe your own feelings, reactions, and behaviors.

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It's All About Communication

Practicing good communication skills

+

Refraining from communication roadblocks

Engaging in dialogue

Building trust

Being productive

Four Principles of Communication

- All communication takes place on the content and relationship level

- We cannot not communication

- Often the problem with communication is the assumption of it

- Metacommunication is very useful

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What Makes Teams Troublesome*

- Individual behaviors

- Group social psychology

* Even people with good intentions can get into trouble

Individual Behaviors

- "Ego integrity"
- Self-interest versus group interest
- Inability to observe self and/or use feedback
- Different styles of
  - Learning
  - Interaction
  - Expression

Group Behaviors

- "Defensive routines"
- Us versus them
- Reluctance to test assumptions publicly
- Getting "off task"
- Lack of boundaries
  - Ill defined roles
  - Unclear objectives and/or expectations

Common Problems in Teams

Photograph courtesy of Ro Irving on Flickr.

Hogging—talking too much
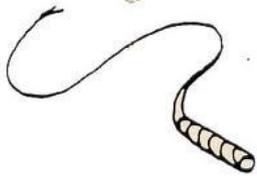
Flogging—beating an issue to death

Frogging—jumping from topic to topic
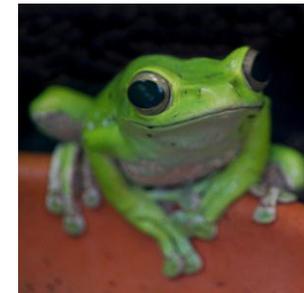
Photograph courtesy of @Doug88888 on Flickr.

Bogging—getting stuck on an issue

Dead buffaloes—tiptoeing around a contentious issue

Handling Difficult Behavior

- If a team member is
  - Talkative

  - Quiet

  - Argumentative or complains a lot

  - A free rider

- Try the following

  - Using the two-minute rule

  - Asking the person a question

  - Being explicit about your responses and reactions

  - Talking through norms at the beginning

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Handling Group Problems

- If the group is

  – Foundering

  – Digressing

  – Deciding too quickly

  – Being indecisive

  – Feuding

- Try the following

  – Use an agenda

  – Use the "parking lot"

  – Use a facilitator

  – Use a voting plan

  – Address the problem or go to a third party

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