

MISSION POSSIBLE  
TEAM BUILDING

WHITE PAPER

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BASED ON RESEARCH INTO THE  
METHODOLOGY OF  
TEAM BUILDING

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## **Mission Possible Team Building White Paper 1.**

### **This Paper is an outline of the research used to develop the program.**

**“A good sense of humor and laughter can be a wonderful tool in leadership!”** <sup>(1)</sup>

**Credibility:** from Edward R. Murrow: “To be persuasive, we must be believable; To be believable, we must be credible; To be credible, we must be truthful.”

All relationships, in any environment, share some common values if they are to succeed. These values are “trust” and “respect”. These values only work if they are shared and the **Mission Possible** objective is to create an experience where these values can be enhanced or developed.

#### **Description:**

**Mission Possible** is designed as a cost effective Team Building program, either stand alone or to be integrated into an overall training program.

**Mission Possible** takes you out of your usual corporate world and into a tropical environment that will enable you to bring out the best of yourself and your team's abilities. A challenge for you and your team that demands:

- ◇ Planning and carrying out a complex and difficult task involving underwater salvage.
- ◇ Pursuing objectives that require both intellectual and physical competence in a jungle setting.

With the advances in modern communications over the last decades, taking people out of their work environment has been more and more of a challenge. In order for Team Building and similar programs to be effective it is highly important to get a full share of mind from the team members, with no distractions. A cell phone ringing during an exercise or perhaps working on a laptop disrupts everyone in the team making the chances of achieving the course objectives much harder.

The **Mission Possible** program is held initially in Puerto Galera in the Philippines where the only distractions from focusing on the program will be the beautiful scenery, the sunsets and the lapping of the crystal clear sea on the shore.

Studies show that when people get together in an environment that is pleasant and different from their norm, where they are faced with a series of challenges that test them, they tend to more readily bond together with other members to work together to achieve a successful outcome.

It is also our experience that when the process is experiential and challenging, whilst being enjoyable, it is remembered and discussed for a longer time. Research also shows that the average person only retains ~20 per cent of what they hear in a seminar. In contrast, people who are actively involved in their training remember ~90 per cent. The numbers speak for themselves.

Furthermore, when the program is followed by some free time for relaxed interaction between the team members, the shared experiences reinforce the team bonds and relationships that have been formed.

(1) Rex Campbell, Professor of Rural Sociology, University of Missouri

**Objective:** To develop team skills by helping the members learn how they, as a team:

- ◇ Accept, interpret and process information.
- ◇ Create a plan of action.
- ◇ Implement the plan to achieve their objectives.

Learn team leadership skills and have fun whilst learning.

The **Mission Possible** program was created and developed by the founders following decades of practical experience based around British Army combat training, coaching sports teams of all ages and building sales teams in the worldwide international arena, which includes Asia, Europe and the USA.

The following research and studies (Page 5) into what is important and effective in Team Building has been carried out to tie together the practical with the research in order to make the **Mission Possible** program as complete and effective as possible.

The **Mission Possible** program is in four parts to ensure that all members will be able to use their varied and different skill sets to add value to the team. Prior to the formal planning stage a series of informal team building exercises will be carried out to break the ice and start the team building process.

**Planning** – Create a plan of action. Following the team briefing and training, the team will generate a plan. This is the first stage in any project and will give the team members an opportunity to share in the process of choosing leaders for the different stages and the roles for all the team members for each stage.

**Water** – Salvage operation. Designing a method to raise an object from the seabed using the tools available. Success in achieving the retrieval of the object gets them an encrypted message that must then be deciphered at the next stage. This stage is designed so the team has to define a solution, design the equipment, build it and fulfill the different roles required to implement the operation.

**Intellectual** – Deciphering Code. Decipher the message and plan the task that the message describes using materials at hand. This will test the different intellectual skills of the members and is in two stages so all members have a role.

**Physical** – Awareness and use of wits. The task will be to find several objects at three locations in the jungle whilst avoiding traps and defending themselves. The physical challenge will be moderate but the team will have to work together to avoid both traps and defenders. Both the team and the defenders will be equipped with completely safe infra red pulsed weapons to ensure a measurable result. The team will have all the necessary equipment required to navigate and communicate in order to achieve their objectives.

#### **Measurement and Reporting:**

Prior to the start of the program, all members will carry out a self-assessment exercise on how they see their behavior as a team member. The same exercise will be done at the end of the program and the differences noted.

After each stage of the program the facilitator and the team members will run an **After Action Review (AAR)** which was developed initially by the Military.

At the end of the course the **Mission Possible** staff will get feedback from the team members on their own and the team performance. The course facilitators will also generate an objective assessment of the team members and the team performance, for both the individuals and the client. This will be based on consultation with the client, the AAR results, and the **Mission Possible** measurement criteria.

**Safety:** The safety of all participants will be paramount, and a guide will be with the teams at all times, however, the safety crew will not help the teams in any way that is not associated with their safety. Each team will have a radio to call assistance if needed.

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## 1.0 Team Building

Any team whether in sport, in business or even in dangerous situations, needs to develop trust between all the members of that team. Trust is associated with enhanced cooperation, information sharing, and problem solving. Trust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another. Trust is necessary when any group become interdependent on each other, the essence of a team.

From trust flows respect, another key element that creates harmony and the ability to disagree without becoming defensive or challenging and to focus on the "why" of a disagreement and not on the "who". Trust encourages the effective use of feedback and reaching a consensus.

### 1.1 Chartering

The first step towards a successful team is "Chartering" which is the process of how the team is formed, it's mission or task described, it's resources allocated, it's goals set, it's members committed.

This includes identifying the following:

- ◇ Skills required to do the job.
- ◇ How team members will allocate themselves to what functions.
- ◇ Resources required to achieve their objectives.
- ◇ What the boundaries are.
- ◇ How much time will be allocated for each stage.
- ◇ How do we secure equal commitment.
- ◇ How we plan for conflict.
- ◇ How will they prepare the project plan.
- ◇ How will their success and lesson learnt be evaluated.

There is a direct relationship between the amount of time and intellectual effort spent chartering the team and the likelihood they will achieve their goals.

**Note:** The team briefing and project planning process that will be carried out as the first phase of the **Mission Possible** program will in effect be the equivalent of the "Chartering" process. There will also be some training required to ensure that the team has the necessary skill sets.

### 1.2 Characteristics of Team Members

Studies conducted by the American Management Association have found that an effective team member has:

- ◇ A positive, encouraging attitude
- ◇ Is above average on the achievement scale
- ◇ Has the necessary skills to make a contribution.
- ◇ Is friendly and flexible
- ◇ Is seen as a giver, and is not jealous of other team members and their accomplishments.
- ◇ Is tolerant of others
- ◇ Does not intimidate
- ◇ Will not be intimidated by others

People who are seen as superstars or overachievers by other team members usually do not fit into a team environment very well because they are used to doing things by and for themselves. Underachievers who may be seen as unmotivated and habitually negative are frequently rejected by the team.

**Mission Possible** is designed to help integrate different personalities, with different skill sets and create an opportunity to lead a team, bond with other team members and add value to the team.

### 1.3 The requirements for building effective teams are: <sup>(1)</sup>

- ◇ Teams must be small enough in the number of members.
- ◇ Members must have adequate levels of complementary skills.
- ◇ The team must have a truly meaningful purpose.
- ◇ The team must have a specific goal or goals.
- ◇ The team and its members must establish a clear approach to the team's work.
- ◇ Members must have a sense of mutual accountability.

**Mission Possible** limits the team size to 5 members so they can all get a taste of the team leadership experience. We also give the team a very clear set of objectives and goals to work towards. **Note:** This number is open to discussion with the client if necessary.

Although the some of the skills needed to succeed in achieving the objectives in the **Mission Possible** program may be different from those required in the corporate world, all the other characteristics of team building are common to both environments. The variety of the challenges offers an opportunity for many different skills sets and personalities to be used to help the team achieve it's objectives.

The necessary training required for the teams to acquire the skills that the team does not have will be carried out, however, most teams will be able to acquire these skills very easily and quickly, and in an enjoyable way.

## 2.0 Team Leadership <sup>(2)</sup>

Without team leadership (as opposed to traditional top-down leadership), teams will be unproductive. Team leadership differs from traditional top-down leadership in the following ways

- ◇ Responsibility for group effectiveness is not on the leader's shoulders but is shared by the group.
- ◇ Control over the final decision is not held by the leader but is best left to the group.
- ◇ The importance of one's position and power are de-emphasized in team leadership.
- ◇ The leader perceives the group not as a set of individuals but as an "interacting and collective team."
- ◇ The task-oriented functions of the team are not performed only by the leader but are shared by the entire group through its new roles.
- ◇ Group maintenance functions are not performed systematically but are emphasized and shared by the group as a whole.
- ◇ Socio-emotional processes and interactions, while mostly ignored by leaders in top-down settings, are observed closely by team leaders.
- ◇ Expressions of members' needs and feelings are not discouraged but are encouraged by team leaders and are dealt with openly in meetings.

**Mission Possible** rotates the team leadership so all team members have an opportunity to be the team leader. This will enable all team members to understand and experience the role along with the challenges and opportunities the leadership role offers.

(1) Katzenbach and Smith (1993)

(2) , 1976, as adapted by Yukl, 1989

## 2.1 Characteristics of Leaders <sup>(1)</sup>

We have all met successful leaders and wondered what enabled them to be effective. Some are smooth and some are rough. Some are charming and some.... It is impossible to find any one characteristic that all of them have and that many non-leaders do not have. The main ones however are:

**2.10 Motivation** is the most important characteristic of any leader. Even the shyest person may become a hard charger if something near and dear to them is threatened.

**2.11 Communications skills** are the second most important. If you cannot communicate effectively, you cannot be an effective leader. Communication is much more than being a good speaker.

Despite the great diversity among leaders, there are some characteristics or traits which most successful leaders have. These are the 14 "Traits" listed here. Very few leaders have all of them to the limit, but the most effective leaders will have most of them well developed. A few leaders will have only a few of these traits such as persistence or the ability to get people to work together, but they are likely to have those few very well developed. These traits are the 14 "P's" and are listed below:

- ◇ Personality: An outgoing style - the ability and enjoyment of "working the crowd"
- ◇ Persuasive: Communications skills - you must be able to speak and write effectively.
- ◇ Persistence: Keep trying - most social change, large and small, is and should be slow.
- ◇ Patience: There are times when you will need to relax and wait for events or time to pass.
- ◇ Perceptive: You must be sensitive to other people's wants and needs, and if they change.
- ◇ Probity: Honest and trustworthy, you need to be honest both now and in the future.
- ◇ Praise Giving: "Strokes" - almost all people like praise and compliments.
- ◇ Positive Orientation: The future should always be seen as bright and optimistic.
- ◇ People Based: Leadership must be of, by and for the people.
- ◇ Possible: A leader must be realistic to determine the art of the possible.
- ◇ Practical: A leader cannot please all of the people, all of the time, it is not possible.
- ◇ Progressive: An effective leader will move the group forward.
- ◇ Prepared: Leaders must be knowledgeable about their goals and how they can be reached.
- ◇ Power-Building: Even the best leaders can not tackle most leadership jobs alone.

## 3.0 Productive Group Characteristics

As highlighted previously, there are two core values that are vital for any team to be effective, **"Trust"** and **"Respect"** between all the team members. These values only work if they are adopted by both parties as when one person does not respect or trust the other, then the other party is sure to feel the same.

### 3.1 Additional characteristics are:

- ◇ Team members listen and pay attention to one another.
- ◇ People discuss the subject at hand and are willing to work through conflict as opposed to avoidance of conflict.
- ◇ Everyone has a chance to state his or her views.
- ◇ Members use problem-solving steps.
- ◇ Members are clear about group decisions and are committed to them.
- ◇ Frequent feedback is given to help members stay focused on team goals.

(1) Rex Campbell, Professor of Rural Sociology, University of Missouri

When people working together as a team share those values and follow these next steps, communication, trust, and productivity will greatly increase among team members.

**Mission Possible** staff will encourage all team members to consider and adhere to these core values.

Teams often face issues that can decrease the effectiveness of the team and specifically its ability to make decisions: <sup>(1)</sup>

- ◇ Time trade-offs in decision making
- ◇ Problems of "groupthink" and pressure to conform
- ◇ The potential for increased conflict over decision making

**Note:** In our program all team members will be given a set of rules and expectations before they start and be encouraged to follow them. This will include the core values shown above. Our staff will monitor the team activities and coach them in maintaining the integrity of these rules and values as closely as possible whilst taking an active role in watching out for and modifying negative behavior traits.

### **3.2 Some Essential, additional Team Roles**

#### **3.21 Involving role.**

- ◇ One member can initiate an action. A team member may motivate others by getting them involved in an idea or problem. The involving role consists of asking questions of other members to "bring out" or stimulate each team member.

#### **3.22 Listening role.**

- ◇ Team members listen actively (nodding, leaning forward), expressing that he/she is really hearing what is being said. Active listeners encourage group members to express themselves.

#### **3.23 Supporting role.**

- ◇ Team members give an added dimension to good ideas by their support. By supporting and encouraging others, the team member strengthens confidence and trust.

#### **3.24 Compromising role.**

- ◇ One member gives up something to enable problem solving to take place. Compromising can lead to team productivity. It is a role that is necessary for cooperation and collaboration.

**Mission Possible** will run some individual team building exercises prior to the start of the main program to encourage and promote the behavior inherent in fulfilling these roles. These will also act as icebreakers for people who do not know each other.

### **4.0 For the Manager Who Must Build a Team** <sup>(2)</sup>

There are commonly understood four phases of team development, as follows:

1. Forming
2. Storming
3. Norming
4. Performing

In addition there is another phase added called "Adjourning" particularly used in temporary teams.

#### **4.01 Forming**

Forming is the orientation period. The team is not sure what its task is and members are not well acquainted with each other, nor have they learned what sort of a team leader they have. Team members want to be told what to do. They tend to respond to the leader's requests and express negative feelings either very politely or privately.

(1) Hargreaves, Fullan

(2) Judith D. Palmer

During this first phase, the team leader needs to empower the members and assist them in establishing guidelines for accomplishing the task. One way to help do this is by soliciting team members' ideas by asking open-ended questions and complimenting them when appropriate.

**Note:** Mission Possible facilitators will act as overall team leaders in this stage as the team will not yet have made their choices for leaders. We will use the icebreakers and introductory team building exercises, passing the team leader role to different members for the different exercises, to help in this process, so the team can become comfortable with each other.

#### **4.02 Storming**

Storming is the phase when team members feel more comfortable expressing their opinions. They may challenge the team leader's authority and recommendations. Some members may become dissatisfied and challenge not only what the team is to do and how it is doing it, but also the leader's role and style of leadership. During the team building training one must not try to avoid this phase, in fact should encourage it. A team that does not go through the storming phase will not learn how to deal with conflict, teams that never storm are passive, fragmented, and significantly less creative.

However, it should be noted that team members can and will change roles according to personal interests and team needs as circumstances change.

**Note:** The team briefing will initiate this stage. The planning process and salvage operation, which has multiple different roles, will help this process by the team selecting members to carry out the different roles.

#### **4.03 Norming**

Norming is the third phase and builds on what was learned in phase two. Team members begin drawing upon their cumulative experiences for working out their problems and pulling together as a cohesive group. This process should result in the team establishing procedures for handling conflicts, decisions, and methods to accomplish the team projects.

During this process the team leader needs to continue with activities that empower team members, create trust, provide a vision of what the team can become, and teach decision-making and conflict management skills.

**Note:** The deciphering stage is in a relaxed environment but requires teamwork and communication as it is in two phases that will work in parallel. The team will select a team leader and agree on who does what part.

#### **4.04 Performing**

Performing is phase four and is where the payoff should come. In this phase the team has achieved some harmony, defined its tasks, worked out its relationships, and begins to produce results. Leadership is provided by the team members best suited for the task at hand. Members have learned how to work together, manage conflict, and contribute their resources to accomplishing the team's purposes.

After reaching phase four the team leader needs to remain alert to the team's needs in skill development, conflict management, trust building, and improvement of attitudes. When changes occur that affect the team's task, membership, or other areas of concern, it is not uncommon for the team to repeat the four-phase cycle. However, the process should be much smoother after the first time around.

**Note:** The team will have to act together to achieve their objectives and this is the most physically challenging stage. There will also be a different team leader for all three stages requiring switching of responsibilities but the activity will be basically the same.

#### 4.05 Adjourning

This is a stage suitable for task oriented teams as the team prepares for its disbandment. High performance tasks are no longer the groups priority instead the group prepares to wrap up its activities. This is the stage where we will carry out an assessment of the teams activities and the team does a self assessment of their achievements and experiences.

**Note:** This will be associated with an award system that reinforces the sense of achievement of the individuals and the team. There will be 4 types of award. 1. A team award, probably Platinum, Gold and Silver but is open to inputs from the clients. 2. An award for the individual who contributed most selected by the team members themselves. 3. An award selected by the team for the funniest blunder by the team or an individual, this will be a fun award. 4. An award decided by the facilitators which can be for anything outstanding either by the team or an individual. This could be for many reasons and will be different for each individual team.

This will also be the stage where the **Mission Possible** staff will get feedback from the team members on their performance and generate an objective assessment of the team members performance, for the individuals and the client, based on the **Mission Possible** measurement criteria and in consultation with the client.

Although the **Mission Possible** program is short, all of these stages will be experienced as the tasks are intense and varied enough to encourage cooperation and team effort.

#### 4.1 The Punctuated-Equilibrium Model <sup>(1)</sup>

Many interpreters of the 4 phase model assumed that a group becomes more effective when passing through these stages, however, what makes a group effective is much more complex. Groups do not always proceed clearly from one phase to the next, in fact sometimes several phases go on simultaneously, as when groups are storming and performing at the same time. Groups can even occasionally regress to previous phases. Studies have confirmed that groups do not develop in a universal sequence of phases but the *timing* of when groups form and change the way they work is highly consistent.

Specifically, it has been found that (1) the first meeting sets the groups direction, once set the group's direction is written in stone; (2) the first phase of group activity is one of inertia where the group tends to stand still or becomes locked into a fixed course of action; (3) a transition takes place at the end of the first phase, which occurs exactly when the group has used up half of its allotted time whether it is one hour or six months, as if an alarm goes off; (4) the transition ends phase 1 and initiates a concentrated burst of major changes; (5) a second phase of inertia follows the transition where the group executes plans created in the transition, and; (6) the groups last meeting is characterized by markedly accelerated activity to finish its work. These findings are shown in the Punctuated-Equilibrium Model below:

#### 4.11

(1) Gersick 1988 and 1989

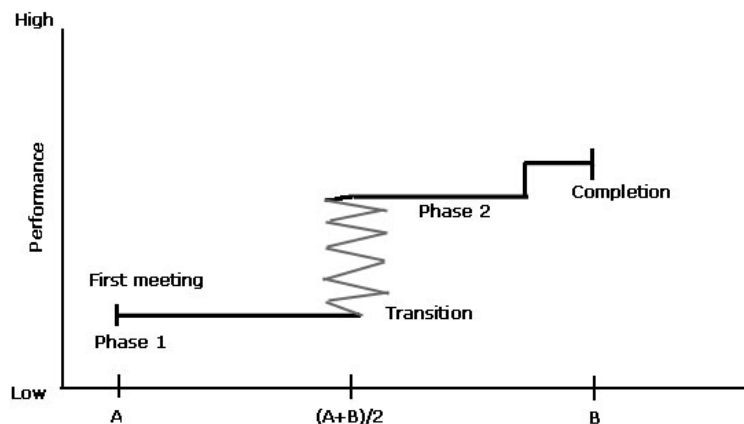


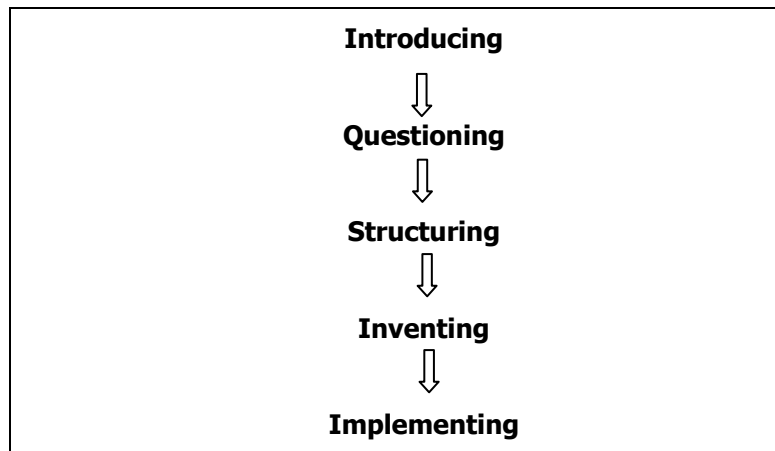
Figure: 4.11 The Punctuated-Equilibrium Model

**4.12** To summarize, the Punctuated-Equilibrium model characterizes groups as exhibiting long periods of inertia interspersed with brief revolutionary changes triggered primarily by the groups awareness of time and deadlines.

**Note:** The **Mission Possible** program will establish timetables and deadlines to encourage the transition stage to happen in a way that will enable the team to succeed in their objectives.

#### **4.2 A different five-stage model**

This is probably the model that will be most suitable for the Mission Possible program to use to measure the different stages that the team are going through, whilst maintaining an understanding of all the elements described.



**4.21 Introducing,** team members get to know each other, discuss and set expectations of all team members. This will include personal needs concerning the team, ground rules are defined to gain consensus on prescribed behavior. Ice breakers and team building exercises can help during the stage.

**4.22 Questioning,** The team defines current problems that have to be resolved using questioning to clarify the problems.

**4.23 Structuring,** this stage is used to define the way forward to resolve the problems that have been identified. A flow chart or some other method could be used here.

**4.24 Inventing,** this is where the team determines how to solve the problem they have identified by looking at the alternatives and agreeing a specific course of action from these alternatives.

**4.25 Implementing,** this is the completion of the action plan where specific actions steps, individual responsibilities, time frames, resources needed, and tracking mechanisms are identified and applied. At this point planning becomes reality and the desired outcome can be achieved.

#### **5.0 Giving and Receiving Feedback:** <sup>(1)</sup>

*"It Will Never Be Easy, But it Can Be Better."* Feedback is information that flows between people that has to do with their interaction in the here and now.

Feedback does not assume that the giver is totally right and the receiver wrong; instead, it is an invitation to interact.

<sup>(1)</sup> Larry Porter

Telling someone the time or that you'd rather go to a movie than to a baseball game is not feedback in the sense that I'm using the term. It's just information. Effective feedback is considered as information that:

- ◇ Can be heard by the receiver (as evidenced by the fact that she or he does not get defensive, etc.)
- ◇ Keeps the relationship intact, open, and healthy (though not devoid of conflict or pain)
- ◇ Validates the feedback process in future interactions (rather than avoiding it because "last time it hurt so much")

Further, feedback does not assume that the giver is totally right and the receiver wrong; instead, it is an invitation to interaction, has some give-and-take to it.

## **6.0 Managing Conflicts or Processing Disputes.**

The ways people or groups process or resolve disputes – or attempt to make decisions – are, generally speaking, either consensual, adjudicative or legislative in nature, although some so-called "hybrid" processes combine features of these approaches.

**6.01 Consensual** dispute resolution means that the disputants themselves decide the process and the outcome. Consensual dispute resolution processes include negotiation, facilitation, mediation.

**6.02 Adjudicative** dispute resolution means that a third-party makes a binding decision for the parties. Adjudicative approaches include arbitration and court adjudication.

**6.03 Legislative** approaches to dispute resolution focus on rule-making by a group, organization, formal legislative body, or ruler. Disputes over the interpretation or application of rules may be resolved through consensual or adjudicative means, and in some cases through coercion or force.

**Note: Mission Possible** will focus on developing a consensual decision making process within the team, however, if necessary, in a situation where this process is bogged down, Mission Possible facilitators will help manage the process or take the adjudicative approach and make a decision to help the team move forward.

## **6.2 Conflict Management**

**Conflict happens:** Conflict, like power, is neither good nor bad, it is what we do with it that makes the difference.

It is important to establish ground rules to minimize conflict by having a frank discussion at the beginning on how the team will handle it. The most common examples of conflict is when members are not pulling their weight or when one or more members try to dominate and over-control the group. By making the team aware of these issues in advance the team can give each other permission to speak up when they identify one of these examples and so minimize any disruption. Once permission has been given then the facilitator can reinforce the adherence to that process.

**Note:** Furthermore, as a rule, where there are conflicting positions, the team will be encouraged to limit the time spent in discussion to one minute, where all members get a say and then decide and move on.

We often are too quick to assume that a disagreement has no possible mutually acceptable solution. Talking about disagreements may result in opportunities to strengthen relationships and improve productivity. Obviously, talking problems through is not so easy. Confronting an issue may require:

- ◇ Exposing oneself to ridicule or rejection,
- ◇ Recognizing we may have contributed to the problem, and
- ◇ Willingness to change.

We can reduce stress, resolve challenges and increase productivity through effective dialogue. Such a conversation entails as much *listening* as talking. While effective two-way exchanges will happen naturally some of the time, for the most part they need to be carefully planned. There may be some

pain--or at least moving us out of our comfort zones--involved in discussing challenging issues, but the rewards are satisfaction and improved long-term relationships.

When faced with challenges, we tend to review possible alternatives and come up with the best solution given the data at hand. Unwanted options are discarded. While some decisions may take careful consideration, analysis, and even agony, we solve others almost instinctively. Our best solution becomes our *position* or *stance* in the matter. Our *needs*, *concerns* and *fears* all play a part in coming up with such a position. Misunderstanding and dissent can rear their ugly heads when our solution is not the same as those of others.

Several foes often combine to create contention:

- ◇ Our first enemy is the natural need to want to explain our side first. After all, we reason, if they understand our perspective, they will come to the same conclusions we did.
- ◇ Our second enemy is our ineffectiveness as listeners. Listening is much more than being quiet so we can have our turn. It involves a real effort to understand another person's perspective.
- ◇ Our third enemy is fear. Fear that we will not get our way. Fear of losing something we cherish. Fear we will be made to look foolish or lose face. Fear of the truth ... that we may be wrong.
- ◇ Our fourth enemy is the assumption that one of us has to lose if the other is going to win: that differences can only be solved competitively.

There are, however, simple and effective tools to spin positive solutions and strengthen relationships out of disagreements. But the simplicity of the concepts must not obscure the challenge of carrying them out consistently. Certainly life gives us plenty of opportunities to practice and attempt to improve. However, the foes outlined above take effort to overcome.

Wherever choices exist there is potential for disagreement. Such differences, when handled properly, can result in richer, more effective, creative solutions and interaction. But unfortunately, it is difficult to consistently turn differences into opportunities.

When disagreement is poorly dealt with, the outcome can be *contention*. Contention creates a sense of psychological distance between people, such as feelings of dislike, bitter antagonism, competition, alienation, and disregard.

People in management positions have said that when they get angry and lose control they may say some things they don't mean, and that by the next day will have forgotten all about it. But the targets of these comments explain that they can hurt for a long time. <sup>(1)</sup>

## 6.2

### Verbal Behavior

In order to take advantage of dialogue and make it a productive process, our verbal behavior can have a significant impact. The language the team uses greatly influences the quality of ideas and the willingness of team members to share those ideas. The following are 5 interactive behaviors that impact the way discussions and conflicts are managed:

#### Positive Behavior

- ◇ Proposing:
- ◇ Building
- ◇ Clarification

#### Negative Behavior

- ◇ Ridicule
- ◇ Arguing

(1) Richard Bruce, Consultant

**6.21 Proposing** is a suggestion for a course of action and can be in the form of a question or a statement. Both suggest action but the question format is softer and encourages further discussion.

**6.22 Building** is expanding and developing the proposal of another team member. A powerful dimension of this most important verbal behavior is that it allows for a change in direction without rejecting the ideas of others. Building provides for well thought out proposals, a feeling that every team member has been involved and a way to disagree without being disagreeable. However, it is not easy to do as it requires listening carefully to all team members inputs and to focus on each speaker in turn.

**6.23 Clarification** means constantly asking questions to ensure that the idea is clearly understood by all the team. Clarifying questions could be:

“Tell me again how this will work”

“Can you give me an example so I can understand”

“Did you say we will be ready by this time”

Disagreements are as often based on more on misunderstanding than in true differences of opinion.

**6.24 Ridicule** is criticism focused on the presenter. Teams often tie the value of an idea to the person who presents it. Support or criticism of the idea then becomes personal rather than based on the idea. Ridicule focuses criticism on the proposer rather than the idea which can make the proposer either defensive or indebted and can split the team. When the word “you” is the used that is a sign that the idea has lost focus to the personal and it can be very difficult to bring it back.

**Note:** Ground rules will be established as part of the “Chartering” to emphasize in the team how to *make things work* rather than *what is wrong with an idea*.

**6.25 Arguing**, challenging a team members position by cutting off the ideas and suggestions of another or lecturing them. In order to realize the value of a team, the team must listen to and accept the differing ideas of team members. Arguing can undermine any ground rules set up to encourage dialogue and disrupt the decision making process of the team. Arguing creates a “right or wrong” approach which limits the team’s ability to consider multiple options. A helpful approach to this problem is to separate the “options generating” part of the process from the “deciding part”. This separation encourages non-judgment and allows the team to enforce brainstorming rules etc. When deciding the team needs to encourage clarifying options and questioning behavior rather than arguing and cutting off disclosure.

## **7.0 Consensus Building in a Team Environment**

In order to explain what has been learned about consensus building over the past several decades, certain terms are important. Indeed, they are central to the effectiveness of the consensual decision making process. The key terms are:

- ◇ *Consensus*
- ◇ *Facilitation*
- ◇ *Mediation*
- ◇ *Recording*
- ◇ *Convening*
- ◇ *Conflict assessment*
- ◇ *Single text procedure*
- ◇ *Creating and claiming value*
- ◇ *Maximizing joint gains*
- ◇ *Circles of stakeholder involvement*

**Note:** In the **Mission Possible** program we will address only the first two approaches as they will be the most relevant and effective in terms of time and the structure of the program.

## 7.01 Consensus (which does not mean unanimity)

Consensus means overwhelming agreement. And, it is important that consensus be the product of a good-faith effort to meet the interests of all team members. The key indicator of whether or not a consensus has been reached is that: Everyone agrees they can live with the final proposal; that is, after every effort has been made to meet any outstanding interests.

Thus, consensus requires that someone frame a proposal after listening carefully to everyone's interests. Interests, in these cases, are not the same as positions or demands. Demands and positions are what people say they must have, but interests are the underlying needs or reasons that explain why they take the positions that they do.

Most consensus building efforts set out to achieve unanimity. Along the way, however, it often becomes clear that there are holdouts, people who believe that their interests will be better served by remaining outside the emerging agreement. Should the rest of the group throw in the towel? No, this would invite blackmail (i.e. outrageous demands that have nothing to do with the issues under discussion). Most dispute resolution professionals believe that groups or assemblies should seek unanimity, but settle for overwhelming agreement that goes as far as possible toward meeting the interests of all stakeholders. It is absolutely crucial that this definition of success be clear at the outset.

## 7.02 Facilitation (a way of helping groups work together in meetings)

Facilitation is a management skill. When people are face-to-face, they need to talk and to listen. When there are several people involved, especially if they don't know each other or they disagree sharply, getting the talking, listening, deciding sequence right is hard. Often, it is helpful to have someone who has no stake in the outcome assist in managing the conversation. Of course, a skilled group member can, with the concurrence of the participants, play this role, too. As the parties try to collect information, formulate proposals, defend their views, and take account of what others are saying, a facilitator reminds them of the ground rules they have adopted and, much like a referee, intervenes when someone violates the ground rules. The facilitator is supposed to be nonpartisan or neutral. **Note:** This will be a key role of the Mission Possible facilitators.

## 8.0 "Face" in Conflict Situations <sup>(1)</sup>

Face is an important concept particularly within Asian Cultures. In team building it is vital that "face" is understood and acted upon to maintain harmony within the team.

### 8.1 Face concerns relate to a person's:

- ◇ Public image
- ◇ Reputation
- ◇ Self-image
- ◇ Sense of character and integrity
- ◇ Identity
- ◇ Status

### 8.2 Four Dimensions of Face.

- ◇ Face Maintenance
- ◇ Face Saving
- ◇ Face Restoration
- ◇ Face Giving or Supporting

### 8.21 Face Maintenance:

This is the desire to project an image of capability, confidence, strength, self-assuredness; conversely to avoid appearing weak, foolish, or incapable.

(1) Donohue, W., & Lot, R. (1992). *Managing Interpersonal Conflict*.

### **8.22 Face Saving:**

This refers to anticipatory and preventative tactics in order to avoid loss of face. Face-saving involves parties' efforts to protect or repair their relational images, in response to face threats real or imagined, potential or actual.

### **8.23 Face Restoration:**

This includes tactics employed to repair loss of face or seek redress from the party who caused the loss of face.

### **8.24 Face Giving/Supporting:**

This consists of intentional actions by one party that support another party's image and identity claims. Such actions may be taken by the party whose earlier actions have threatened face, or by a third party.

### **8.3 Face Concerns (FC) and Conflict Management: Personal Identity**

- ◇ Face concerns relate to a party's personal and public identities.
- ◇ An FC introduces an emotional, personal issue to the conflict. It becomes, for at least one person, the principal issue.

### **8.4 Face Concerns (FC) and Conflict Management: Flexibility**

- ◇ An FC may halt the parties' momentum for change.
- ◇ An FC can limit parties' flexibility in taking new approaches to the conflict or problem.

### **8.5 Face Concerns (FC) and Conflict Management: Escalation**

- ◇ An FC can, because of its emotional "charge," accelerate destructive escalation or avoidance.
- ◇ An FC can lead to defensive behavior, "counter-attacks," and impasse.

### **8.6 Face Concerns (FC) and Conflict Management: Intractability**

- ◇ An FC may shift the issue focus from substance to relationship. Relationship conflicts may be more difficult to manage than substance.
- ◇ If not handled well, an FC can lead to intractable conflict.

### **8.7 Face Concerns (FC) and Conflict Management: Culture and Complexity**

- ◇ Face becomes more complex in cross-cultural or intercultural situations.
- ◇ All cultures are concerned with face, although to varied degrees and in varied forms.

### **8.8 Face Concerns (FC) and Conflict Management: Collaborative Potential**

An FC can turn "group-centeredness" and mutual interest into "individual-centeredness" and self-interest. It can damage trust and the potential for a collaborative relationship.

### **8.9 Ways to Avoid Loss of Face**

- ◇ Qualify one's remarks
- ◇ Reduce others' expectations
- ◇ Deny expertise
- ◇ Note limited preparation time
- ◇ Delay
- ◇ Issue avoidance, such as topic shift

### 8.10 Means of Saving Face

- ◇ Resist unjust intimidation
- ◇ \* Denying accusations
- ◇ \* Adamant resistance
- ◇ Step back from a position
- ◇ Suppress conflict issues
- ◇ Admit mistakes, apologize

### 8.11 Dealing with "Face" Constructively

- ◇ Explicit admission of face concerns
- ◇ Awareness and explicit recognition of nonverbal and verbal cues
- ◇ Ongoing, periodic evaluation . . . focus on process
- ◇ Respect "channels" and status
- ◇ Use of a third party

### 8.12 Dealing with Face Counterproductively

- ◇ Ignore other's face concerns
- ◇ Retribution, such as counter-threats and public accusations
- ◇ Lying and deception
- ◇ Covert contentious "guerilla" tactics (e.g., rumor)
- ◇ Rescind or revoking agreements
- ◇ Deny any agreement exists
- ◇ Find allies, building coalitions
- ◇ Withdraw support

## 9.0 Tools for Improved Communication

Two principles have contributed greatly to the productive handling of disagreements.

**9.01 The first principle, "Seek first to understand, then to be understood,"** If we encourage others to explain their side first, they will be more apt to listen to ours. <sup>(1)</sup>

**9.02 The second principle, "Getting to Yes",** Is where people in disagreement should *focus on their needs* rather than on their positions. By concentrating on positions, we tend to underscore our disagreements. When we concentrate on needs, we find we have more in common than what we had assumed. We should always attempt to: <sup>(2)</sup>

- ◇ Satisfy the sum of both their needs and our needs.

When the light goes on the team will realize that it is not a *zero sum game* (where one person has to lose for the other to win). Nor is it necessary to solve disagreements with a lame compromise. Instead, often both parties can be winners. Individuals can learn how to keep communication lines open and solve challenges when things go wrong. Learning to disagree amicably and work through problems is perhaps one of the most important interpersonal skills we can develop.

(1) Steven Covey, in *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*.

(2) Roger Fisher and William Ury

## 9.1 Putting it all together

If we come right out and tell someone, "I disagree," we are apt to alienate that person. Successful negotiators are more likely to label their intentions, such as a desire to ask a difficult question or provide a suggestion, and are less prone to label disagreement. Problems are likely, however, to increase if we put all our needs aside to focus on another person's perspective. The other party may think we have no needs and be quite taken back when we introduce them all of a sudden, almost as an afterthought.

In order to avoid such unproductive shock, the best idea is to briefly say something along these lines. "It appears that we look at this issue from different perspectives. While I have needs and views that I would like to share with you later, *let us first focus on your thoughts, needs, and observations.*"

At this point, we can now put our needs aside, attempt to truly listen, and say: "So, help me understand what your concerns are...."

That is the easy part. The difficulty comes in fulfilling such a resolution is to really listen and to resist the tendency to interrupt with objections no matter how unfounded some of the comments may be. Instead of telling someone that we *understand* (just so we can get our turn to present our perspective), we can be much more effective by revealing exactly *what it is that we understand, and asking for clarification of their views until we do understand.*

All along we must resist, as we listen, the temptation to bring up our viewpoints and concerns. In trying to comprehend, we may need to put our understanding in terms of a question, or a tentative statement finishing with a summary of what we understand. This way we can show true awareness.

We may have to continually refine our statement until the other stakeholder approves it as a correct understanding of his position or need. It is necessary not only to understand, but for the other person to *feel understood.*

Now can we begin to explain our perspective and expect to be fully listened to. Once we have laid out our concerns, we can focus on a creative solution. If we have had no history with someone, or a negative one, we need to use more caution when disagreeing. The potential for a disagreement to be side-railed into contention is always there. It helps if we have made goodwill deposits over time.

**Note:** The Mission Possible facilitators will use ice breakers and methods to create a sense of goodwill before the program starts and use these techniques to manage the decision making process by guiding the team members to adopt and maintain these principles in an on-going process.

## 10.0 Measurement and Reporting:

**10.1** Prior to the start of the program, all members will carry out a self-assessment exercise on how they see their behavior as a team member. The same exercise will be done at the end of the program and the differences noted.

**10.2** After each stage of the program the facilitator and the team members will run an **After Action Review (AAR)** which was developed initially by the Military. The AAR is an assessment conducted after a project or major activity that allows team members and leaders to discover (learn) what happened and why. It may be thought of as a professional discussion of an event that enables team members to understand why things happened during the progression of the process and to learn from that experience. The main objective is to identify the "*why*" and avoid addressing the "*who*".

The AAR, when done properly is, arguably, considered one of the most successful organizational learning methods yet devised.

The format is as follows:

1. What was planned? What were the goals/objectives?
2. What really happened? "Discover" the events of the day through your team member's eyes.
3. WHY did it happen? Find the root causes behind identified performance successes and failures using the "Five why's" approach.
4. What can we do? Once we have identified the root causes, develop remedies that concentrate on improvement strategies.

The AAR will be run at the end of the program, and will be run after each of the stages thus becoming a live learning process.

**10.3** At the end of the course the **Mission Possible** staff will get feedback from the team members on their own and the team performance. The course facilitators will also generate an objective assessment of the team members and the team performance, for the individuals and the client, based on the AAR results, the **Mission Possible** measurement criteria and in consultation with the client.

**10.31 Planning Stage:** This part of the process will be objectively and subjectively measured by the following:

- ◇ How long it takes to prepare the plan, and how complete it is.
- ◇ The number of revisions required before being approved.
- ◇ How the plan uses the strengths of team members best and why.
- ◇ How the team members roles are defined and justified.
- ◇ How the team interacts in a consensus decision making mode (all decisions should be by consensus, majority voting etc. will not be encouraged)

**10.32 The team will in addition be measured in the following ways:**

- ◇ The number of deviations from the original plan and how they affect the outcome.
- ◇ The timing for the stages and how they differ from the original plan.
- ◇ How consensus is achieved, by agreement, by peer pressure by persuasion etc.
- ◇ How many objectives are achieved and in what time.
- ◇ How many hits against the team and how well they defended themselves.
- ◇ How well they worked together as a team.
- ◇ How they managed their leadership roles.
- ◇ Each team member will be given an additional self assessment form that they will use to describe:
  - How they think they performed.
  - How the other team members performed.
  - The overall team performance.
  - Any other comments.

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