

Chapter 6

Maximizing Collaborative Creativity: Learning and Practices for Instilling an Intentional Team Culture

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ABSTRACT

Maximizing creativity in virtual teams requires the intentional integration of key elements. This chapter guides teams in cultivating a collaborative culture by increasing awareness of how members listen and respond to one another. The instructional strategies presented can be incorporated into course curricula, fostering lifelong habits for effectively participating in or leading teams. Through simulations, the chapter provides opportunities for immediate practice in building a team environment rooted in trust, psychological safety, and open communication. It emphasizes active listening across differences and the development of structured agreements that balance flexibility and creativity. Additionally, it highlights the critical role of a collaborative team mindset in sustaining effective teamwork.

INTRODUCTION

The opportunities and challenges of virtual teams in education are numerous and diverse, making them difficult to encapsulate succinctly. Even if they could be enumerated, each team operates within its unique context and dynamic. However, many

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challenges recur across teams and can be anticipated, allowing for early intervention (Gray, 2008). Teams that are introduced to and practice fundamental collaborative skills from the outset are more likely to integrate them into their collective work. When embedded in the curriculum to develop collaboration skills for team projects, students gain competencies that extend throughout their education and careers. To foster creativity in virtual settings, teams can be equipped with targeted skills explicitly designed to enhance collaboration. This knowledge also aids in recognizing potentially problematic team environments—an invaluable lifelong skill.

A team requires several foundational elements to foster creativity. First, it must have an environment built on trust. Trust is an individual perception, with each member determining whether they can rely on teammates, the team as a whole, or the larger organization. Trust can grow, remain static, or decline over time (Cloud, 2023). Second, effective teams need psychological safety, a group-level phenomenon in which individuals assess their ability to take risks within the team or organization (Edmondson, 1999; A. C. Edmondson, 2019). Psychological safety, like trust, can increase, remain stable, or deteriorate. Third, team members must be willing to voice their thoughts, concerns, and ideas. This aspect is particularly crucial when challenging the status quo, identifying problems, or recognizing opportunities that others may overlook (Morrison et al., 2011; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). A lack of trust, psychological safety, or voice can negatively impact team dynamics (Argyris, 1991; Cloud, 2023; Edmondson, 2019).

With trust, psychological safety, and voice in place, teams can unite individuals across diverse perspectives, fostering creativity and innovation. Maximizing differences for creativity requires acknowledging, embracing, and treating divergent views as opportunities. Achieving this with mutual respect necessitates a learning environment where team members remain open to new perspectives, embrace vulnerability, and extend the benefit of the doubt—facilitated through advocacy and inquiry (Bennett, 2024; Michalko, 2011). This chapter focuses on guiding teams in intentionally cultivating cultures that support creativity.

USING SIMULATIONS TO TEACH EFFECTIVE TEAM ENGAGEMENT SKILLS

This chapter utilizes simulations and guides teams through practices designed to intentionally cultivate a culture that nurtures both work and relationships. The term cultivate is used deliberately, as fostering relationships differs from completing a checklist of items. It requires ongoing attention, commitment, and adaptation. Like

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