

Team Termination Exercise

Regardless of how well a team has performed, it often is difficult for members to focus on the lessons to be learned from their group experience once the work itself has been wrapped up. Yet there are many learnings to be captured at the end of your team's life, and you might find it valuable to have a final meeting to reflect back on your time together as a team. Here is one way you might do that.

Each group member should take two copies of this page, one to be completed and turned into the person who will compile members' responses, and the other to be kept (you can refer to it during the discussion and use it to record anything that you want to be sure to remember).

Step 1. Each member answers the following questions privately (no name on this sheet).

a. What did we do especially well as a team? (Respond briefly below)

b. What did we do poorly as a team? (Respond briefly below)

c. To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements (enter a number in the blank, where 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=uncertain, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree)

- _____ 1. This team has been a burden that I'm happy to be done with.
- _____ 2. I'm feeling sad that that our team is ending.
- _____ 3. We really should have a reunion of this team some time in the near future.
- _____ 4. This team will never really end.

--continue on the reverse of this page--

Step 2. Select one member to collect and shuffle these sheets, and then to record on a blackboard or large piece of paper the main points listed for items (a) and (b) above, and the numbers entered for each of the four items under (c).

Step 3. First discuss what members thought the team did well and poorly. Are there any items that were on the "well" list for some members but on the "poorly" list for others? If so, how do we make sense of those differences in perception?

If the group were to write a one sentence summary of what was best about this team, what would that sentence say? If the group were to write a one sentence summary of where this group most seriously tripped up, what would that sentence say? What are the implications of what this group did well and poorly for your own behavior in the next work team of which you are a member?

Step 4. Now look at the array of numbers for questions 1-4 under item (c). As you will see in the LaFarge article (cited below), members almost always experience some significant ambivalence when a group is about to terminate. A sense of relief frequently is mixed in with a feeling of grief about the ending, for example. Different people deal with this ambivalence in different ways.

- For some, the main sentiment may be relief (item c-1).
- For some, the main sentiment may be grief or sadness (item c-2).
- Some may hope to make plans, such as for a reunion, that make it unnecessary to deal with the fact that the group is ending (item c-3)
- And some may choose not to believe that the group actually is ending (item c-4).

Which was the dominant response of members of your group? How much variation is there in how members are dealing with the group's termination? What might be learned from the pattern of results about individuals' personal strategies for dealing with endings, and about how members collectively are dealing with the ending of this particular group?

Here is an insightful article about team termination processes:

LaFarge, V. Termination in groups. (1990). In J. McCollom & M. Gillette (Eds.), *Groups in context* (pp. 172-185). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.