

Electronic Teaming--Learning Together apart:
Moving From Face-to-Face To Electronic Teaming©

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Electronic teaming is one of the most difficult learning methodologies that is being used in teaching and learning (Bailey, Ross, Bailey, and Lumley, 1997). The process of “working together apart” is getting more and more prevalent in business, military, and medicine (Johansen, et al., 1991). Education has been slow to respond to electronic teaming even though online courses are beginning to flourish in many institutions. Teaming as well as electronic teaming is an easy concept for educators to understand, but difficult to “put into practice” since individual learning and teacher-talk and text have dominated teaching and learning for more than a century.

With the advent of personal computer and the WWW (e.g., e-mail, list-servs), “learning together apart” has become a reality. Linking people together electronically, however, does not guarantee that people know how to team electronically. For the most part, electronic teaming has prerequisites of knowing how to team. **If you don’t know how to team face-to-face, the chances are slim that electronic teaming will be feasible and/or well done.**

As we have reached the electronic age, other theorists and practitioners have been advocating the use of learning organizations (Senge, 1990)--organizations that share information for the purpose of learning together. The sheer fact of sharing information is critical to the success of any organization. Electronic forms of communication in teams have made that easier and easier with mobile technology (e.g., mobile phones, pagers, hand-held computers). As fast as technology is advancing, communication skills with technology have not kept pace. Electronic teaming requires a set of communication skills that is equally important in face-to-face teaming.

Face-to-Face Teaming

Unfortunately, many educators have not been taught face-to-face teaming which makes electronic teaming problematic. A common problem in face-to-face teaming is that many people confuse groups, teams, and committees. They tend to see them as the same process when they are not. One of the many steps required to teach electronic teaming is get people to recognize the difference between committees, groups, teams, high performance teams, and electronic teams (technology-based teams). See Figure 1.

Committees are characterized by:

- Convened and led by chairperson
- Follows precise, printed agenda
- Uses Roberts' Rules of Order to conduct business
- Votes Yea, Nay, or Abstain to make decisions

Groups are characterized by:

- Members who share some information
- Minimum common purpose
- No common performance
- No joint product (frequently operates on divided tasks)
- No mutual accountability (dependent)
- Directed by supervisor or outside leader to achieve specific tasks

Teams are characterized by:

- Members who share considerable information and are committed to sharing
- Usually have more clarity of purpose, goals, etc.
- Leadership roles shared by members and receptive to coaching
- Prepares and operates from informal or formal agenda
- Commitment to operate as a team over a long time period
- Commitment to consensus building rather than voting or compromise

High Performance Teams are characterized by:

- People with complementary skills thriving on synergy
- Common purpose, clear goals, and common working approach
- Members who are mutually accountable (interdependent)
- Self-directed but always receptive to coaching
- Highly skilled at assuming different team roles depending on need/situation
- Committed to incremental improvement by team self-improvement strategies
- Highly skilled at and passionate about consensus building

Technology-based Teams are characterized by:

- Abundance of high performance team skills
- Deeply committed to one another's success--interdependent via technology
- Uses technology both as communication, product, and creativity/creation tool
- Works/learns anything, anytime, anywhere--together and apart
- Uses technology in innovative, creative ways to enhance teaming process
- Moves to face-to-face teaming to enhance electronic teaming and back again

Groups, Teams, High Performance
Teams and Technology-based Teams

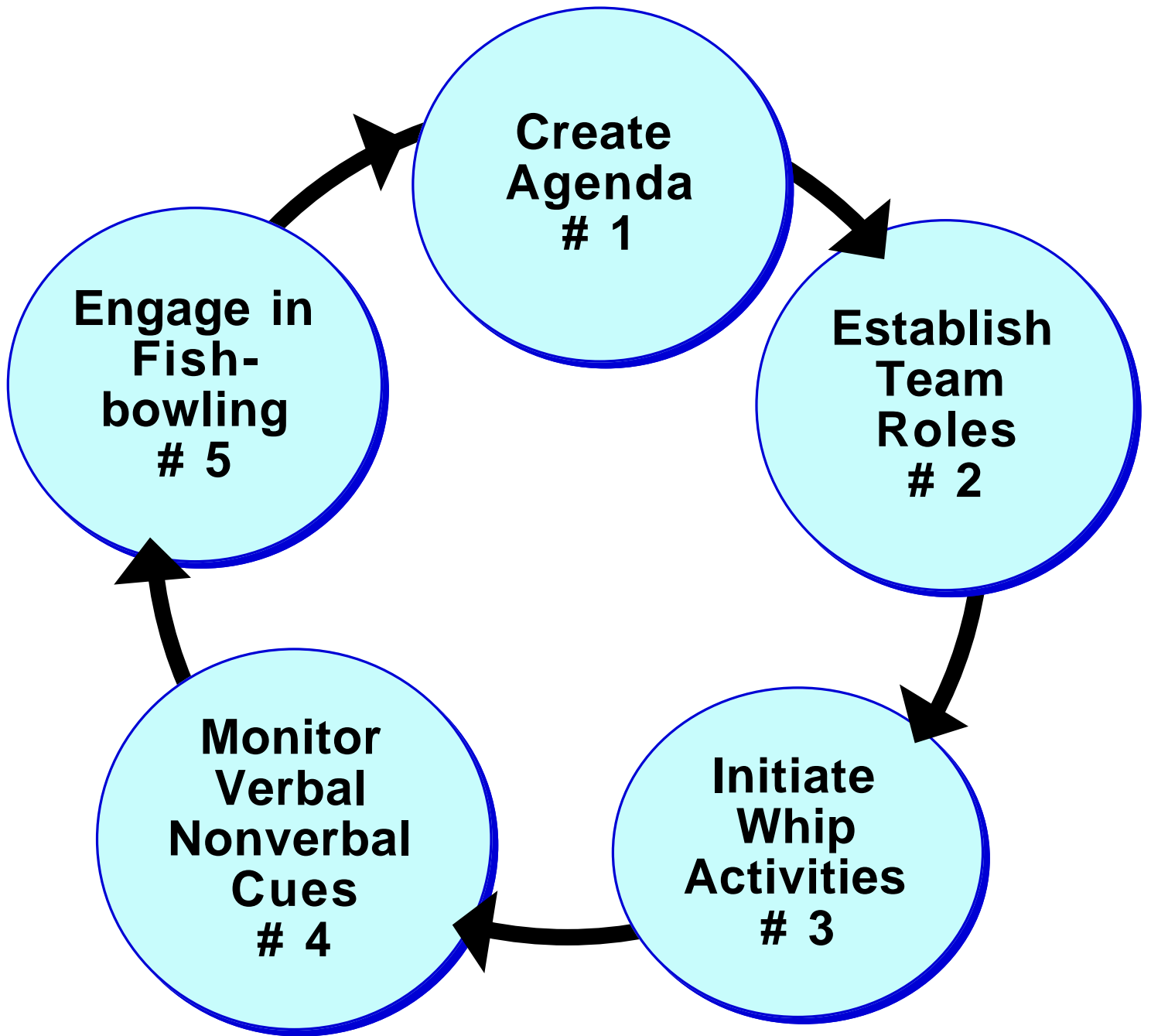
Figure 1

The essential point of the information in Figure 1 is that educators can not become effective electronic team members if they do not possess the skills of effective teaming and recognize the different purposes of committees, groups, teams, and technology-based teams.

For the purpose of discussing electronic teaming, the aspiring team or team member must recognize that many of the skills of face-to-face teaming must be transferred to electronic teaming.

Face-to-face teams thrive on several basic skills. Three essential skills include: (1) listening skills (i.e., hearing and comprehending what is said as opposed to waiting for one team member to stop talking so they can begin to talk), (2) dialoguing skills (i.e., interacting for the purpose of increasing mutual understanding as opposed to merely “turn talking” which is often called discussion, (3) consensus building (i.e., synergizing, building new understandings as opposed to compromise which is “both team members giving something up” to arrive at a solution (making concessions).

A set of teaming activities which provide a context for these three basic skills include: (1) agenda setting, (2) team roles identification, (3) whip activity engagement, (4) verbal and nonverbal cues monitoring, and (5) fishbowling. This model was developed by the authors, over a period years, while working with effective teams (See Figure 2).



**Bailey-Lumley Five Step
Team Building Model**

Figure 1

Each step is defined:

1. **Agenda Setting**--making a plan; establishing goals; discussion and activities.
2. **Team Roles Identification**--assuming a distinct role or reviewing roles necessary in effective teaming.
3. **Whip Activity Engagement**--setting the stage for team productivity.
4. **Verbal and Nonverbal Cue Monitoring**--identifying, controlling, and modifying verbal and nonverbal cues which contribute to the team communication process.
5. **Fishbowling**--establishing closure by analyzing performance, behavior, roles, etc. of the current meeting and setting the stage for the next team meeting.

Essential Assumptions of Face-To-Face Teaming Which Impact Electronic Teaming

1. Utilization of the five steps are characteristic of people who aspire to create an effective team.
2. Teams are able to create a rhythm of gradual, continuous improvement by following the five step model--face-to-face and electronically.
3. Each step is equal in importance and has a definite purpose in creating the rhythm of continuous team improvement.
4. The five step model provides the foundation for allowing teams to move from group to team, team to high-performance team, and high-performance team to technology-based team.
5. Effective teams make a conscious effort to include all five steps in each meeting period. In other words, effective teams don't skip or minimize one step to get to the next step.
6. While the five steps are not necessarily sequential in every meeting, they tend to be cyclical over a period of time.

Step # 1: Agenda Setting

The Agenda identifies what is to be discussed by the team. It provides a flexible road map to be used during the team meeting.

Definition: Items for discussion and dialogue; time allotment for each agenda item; team plan; organizer.

Characteristics of the Agenda:

- a. The purpose of of the Agenda is to guide the team in a particular direction.
- b. After each agenda items is identified, a tentative amount of time allotted to that agenda item is established. Without the time allotment, teams have a tendency to spend “more time” or some items and “less time” on others. This is not desirable unless it is planned in the agenda.
- c. The team leader guides the team through the Agenda, but all team members assist the team leader in getting through the Agenda.
- d. The Agenda serves as the outline for the notes taken at the meeting.
- e. The written Agenda serves more than identifying items of discussion. Team agendas plan for whip activities, team actions, closure/fishbowling and the creation of tentative agenda items for the next meeting.

Implications of the Agenda for Electronic Teaming:

- a. Setting the agenda electronically is just as important as in face-to-face teaming.
- b. The leader must assume the responsibility of setting the agenda or getting the team to identify the agenda including items to be discussed as well as the depth of the discussion (parallel to amount of time spent when in face-to-face meetings).

Step # 2: Assume Team Roles

Identifying and assuming a team role is essential. Each team member needs to recognize that the role played is crucial to the success of the team.

Definition: Specific individuals who have distinct team responsibilities; cohorts who are learning together leading to a particular outcome or product.

Characteristics of Team Roles:

- a. Generally, there are five roles played irrespective of the number of team members. They include: (1) leader, (2) process observer, (3) recorder/time keeper, (4) contributor, and (5) coach or teacher.
- b. The team leader schedules, arranges and conducts meetings. The team process observer keeps track of team behavior and interaction. The team recorder/time keeper takes minutes, notes. The team contributor assumes responsibility for seeing that the team remains engaged. The coach or teacher facilitates, champions, and motivates the team--both in process and product outcomes.

c. Beginning teams pay close attention to demonstrating each of the team roles by one or more individuals. As people move into high-performance teaming, team roles become more natural and fluid. In other words, team roles are assumed as needed, and sharing of different roles becomes quite natural.

d. The process observer assists in “fishbowling” toward the end of the team meeting to allow the team to discuss the effectiveness of teaming.

e. In many instances team dysfunction or breakdown occurs when team roles are not assumed.

f. For groups learning to be a team, assigning team roles may seem artificial; however, team roles must be understood and shared by all team members in the early stages of teaming.

g. Assuming a team role does not mean that another team member completes the work for other team members (i.e., each team member should have equal amount of work). **Dividing up work without accompanying dialogue, consensus-building, collaborative decision-making is not a characteristic of effective teams in a learning organization.** Each team member must develop a minimum level of competence (i.e., roles, work) to guarantee that teaming process will be successful in another teaming situation.

Implications of the Team Roles for Electronic Teaming:

a. Roles are important in electronic teaming. Whether the roles are assigned or assumed, each team member must assume responsibility for moving the agenda discussion forward. “Dividing up work” is not a synonym for assuming team roles.

b. Consensus-building, dialogue, and collaborative decision-making are hallmarks of electronic teams as well as face-to-face teams.

Step # 3: Whip Activity Engagement

Whip Activities are designed to motivate teams and get them to focus on each other and upcoming activities. The Whip Activity is the “set” or beginning of the teaming session.

Definition: A activity that allows teams to share ideas, communicate opinions, and focus on common themes which allows sharing, caring, and honesty in the teaming process. The purpose of a Whip Activity is to create a “bonding” and generate chemistry among team members. “Whip Activities” are intended to build trust and

generate interest in the teaming process.

Characteristics of Whip Activities:

a. Generally, Whip Activities have a purpose of motivating or exciting team members. Often, they are linked to upcoming agenda items. In this way, they help structure team thinking and time to the task at hand.

b. Whip Activities tend to be short in duration or at least proportional to the time allotted to all other team agenda items.

c. The selection or creation of a Whip Activity is the team's responsibility--not necessarily the team leader's or coach's responsibility. In short, whip activities are identified and initiated by the team.

d. On occasion, when the team is functioning at a "high performance level," the whip activity may be delayed to the next team session or used as the sole team agenda item when it is appropriate to the team's goals.

e. Whip activities provide the "glue" for building trust among team members. Whip activities should be motivational, fun, serious, and/or emotional (e.g., self-disclosure).

Implications of the whip activities for Electronic Teaming:

a. Electronic whip activities may be more cumbersome than in face-to-face teaming. However, whip activities are intended to build trust among team members. Electronic whip activities may take time and are more difficult when team members are not meeting synchronously. (See Bailey, Ross, Bailey, and Lumley, 1998 or <http://www2.educ.ksu.edu/Faculty/BaileyG/html/teambk.pdf>)

Step # 4: Verbal and Nonverbal Cue Monitoring

The ability of a team to communicate is dependent on their understanding various communication skills. Identifying, studying, and improving verbal and nonverbal cues is a prerequisite to teams dialoguing with each other as opposed to talking at each other.

Definition: Verbal and nonverbal behaviors are specific cues used by team members which influence other team member behavior; words that are spoken as well as unspoken physical behavior which impacts other team members' behavior.

Verbal cues categories defined:

1. Questions--soliciting information. Subsets of questioning include: (a) content, (b) analysis, (c) decision, (d) feeling question, (e) process question, (f) throwback, (g)

nonverbal, and (h) wait-time.

2. Reinforcement--constructive feedback intended to confirm opinion or behavior.
3. Building--elaborating or buttressing idea of another person.
4. Direction Giving--information which directs behavior.
5. Emotion--Expressing or accepting emotion of another person.
6. Criticism--negative feedback.

Nonverbal cues categories defined:

1. Eye Contact--looking into another person's eyes.
Purposes: approval, interest, disapproval, control, listening.
2. Gestures--acting out physically using legs, feet, head, shoulders, trunk, or hands.
Purposes: emphasis, order, directions; buttress of verbal message.
3. Mannerisms--mindless or unconscientious movement of head, hands, shoulders, trunk, legs, or feet; idiosyncratic movement.
Purpose: positive--endearing; negative--annoying, distracting.
4. Travel--physical movement from one area to another.
Purposes: reinforcement, availability, control, etc.
5. Touching--physical contact.
Purposes: reinforcement, control, reassurance, anger.
6. Facial Expressions--head movement using forehead, eyebrow, cheek, nose, ears, lips, tongue, chin, etc.
Purposes: anger, love, disapproval, approval, confusion, disinterest, etc.
7. Posture--body position using torso, arms, legs, etc.
Purposes: expression of warmth, sincerity, interest, expectations, etc.
8. Energy Level--movement of body and speed of movement using body parts.
Purpose: excitement, boredom, attitude, etc.
9. Use of Space--arrangement of environment which facilitates or impedes movement.
Purpose: denotes what will happen in environment; facilitates or impedes interaction, etc.
10. Silence--absence of sound.
Purpose: overstatement, understatement, suspense, humor, thought, etc.
11. Use of Time--what occurs between a beginning and an end; organization of events within space of time, etc.

Purpose: denotes interests, expertise, preferences, dislikes, lack of knowledge, etc.

Characteristics of Verbal and Nonverbal Teaming Behaviors:

a. Verbal and nonverbal behaviors impact team productivity in highly significant ways.

b. Verbal and nonverbal behaviors can be identified, analyzed, and modified to move groups to teams, teams to high-performance teams, and high-performance teams to technology-based teams.

c. Verbal and nonverbal behaviors can also be effectively maintained through videotape playback and analysis.

d. There are a myriad of verbal and nonverbal behaviors; the study of verbal and nonverbal cues can be exceedingly complex.

e. Effective teams spend team time analyzing (discussing) verbal and nonverbal cues in order to sharpen team performance. This discussion usually occurs in a fishbowling activity or whip activity.

Implications of Verbal and Nonverbal Behaviors for Electronic Teaming:

a. Obviously, all verbal and nonverbal behaviors are shifted to the printed word in electronic teaming (unless video conferencing is used in electronic teaming). With written communication, team members look for meaning in the words--how they are stated, tone, and innuendo. Shifting to the written word also places attention to spelling, grammar, sentence construction, etc. Overfocusing on the "correctness" can hamper team communication.

b. When electronic teams are not functioning effectively, reverting back to face-teaming may be necessary. If that is not possible, more emphasis should be placed on whip activities and fishbowling activities to build trust and understanding among electronic team members.

Step # 5: Fishbowling

Fishbowling occurs at the end of the teaming session and is intended as a debriefing activity. The "fishbowl" is a metaphor for the "fish" (team) to get outside of the fishbowl and look inward to determine where the fish (team) have been swimming (i.e., determining how to "swim" better; identifying areas of improvement).

Definition: determining progress; summary or closure; act of debriefing for the purpose of team improvement; performance improvement through reflection;

incremental improvement of teaming.

Characteristics of fishbowling:

a. Most often, fishbowling occurs at the end of the teaming session; however, fishbowling can occur anytime the team deems necessary (beginning, middle, or end) depending on the need to deal with a problem or issue which is impeding team progress.

b. Fishbowling is the responsibility of all team members--not just the team leader or coach.

c. Often, the coach facilitates or leads the team in fishbowling until the team establishes a "comfort level" of team self-analysis and self-improvement.

d. Fishbowling should be nonthreatening; harsh criticism or attacks on other individuals should be avoided.

e. The focus of fishbowling (improvement) should be interdependence rather than dependence or independence.

Implications of Fishbowling for Electronic Teaming:

a. Fishbowling is no less important in electronic teaming than in face-to-face teaming. Synchronous feedback versus asynchronous feedback is always a concern in teaming. In other words, we have become accustomed to having feedback in real time, and we need to learn how to adjust to asynchronous feedback.

b. Sincerity, frankness, and harsh feelings are sometime easier to put in print about than speak them, but this varies from one individual to another. The purpose of electronic fishbowling is to answer these questions: (1) How are we feeling? (2) How can we get better at the teaming process? and (3) How do we improve?

Face-to-Face Versus Electronic Teams

What is perfectly obvious in electronic teams is that many face-to-face guidelines for teaming are difficult to achieve in the electronic teaming process. What are some of the differences:

	Face-to-Face Teams	Electronic Teams
Verbal & Nonverbal Cues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Cues readily visible, even though interpretations vary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Reading cues switch to reading intent of words. Interpretation can be more difficult.
Social Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Group/Team norms are always problematic. “Getting along” is difficult and can be a major stumbling block unless teams agree to a code of conduct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Netiquette must be learned and practiced at the onset of teaming. The dialogue must continue until all team members have a code of conduct to live by when teaming.
Teaming Roles/ Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Relatively easy to grasp but difficult to “put into practice.” Teams tend to “divide tasks” which thwarts consensus building and dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Difficult to grasp because of no verbal/nonverbal cues. Gravitation to “division of labor” equally debilitating to teaming.
Real Time vs. Asynchronous Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •People have had past experiences with bulletin boards but can not always translate this to the virtual world. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Options of real time or asynchronous. Freedom and discipline are major issues to overcome. People are not used to same place/different time two-way communication.
Familiarity (Comfort with Teaming)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Comfort level varies depending on past experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Difficult without concurrent or previous knowledge of team members. Becomes important for “get to know activities” (whip activities) and use of photos to identify people.

Group Behavior vs. Team Behavior Communication

•Likelihood for “group” behavior is high. Verbal and nonverbal cues analyzed poorly by untrained team members

•Likelihood is equally high for “group” behavior. Written word typically analyzed for meaning, but subject to varied interpretation without training.

Technical Difficulties

•Likelihood for technological obstacles are limited.

•There are stumbling blocks with people trying to use technology and until these become easier, this will continue to be an obstacle. Most people can use a browser, but when it comes to video and audio plugins, PDF, or “odd” file formats, people don’t know how to deal with them, thus, communication loses it’s progress (i.e., like a river with many brush piles which impede the flow of water).

Effective Tools and Strategies for Facilitating Electronic Teaming

There are many tools and strategies that facilitate electronic teaming. These include: E-mail, Listservs, and special Software (e.g., Discussion Boards, Webcrossing™, Chat Rooms). However, since we are in the infancy of electronic teaming, all of these tools and strategies of communication may seem foreign to those people who want to team.

One of the most promising tools is Webcrossing™ which is a variation of email, and chat room. Software like Webcrossing™ has both strengths and limitations.

Strengths and Limitations of Webcrossing™

1. Access

Strength: You log on to Webcrossing™ (i.e., you pick up mail) as opposed to having e-mail come directly to you (i.e., mail comes to you). All information and dialogue is organized in one place.

Limitation: It takes organization and discipline to pick up mail when there is no

notification. If you don't log on to Webcrossing™, you aren't going to be able to function as a team.

2. Information Organization

Strength: You can create folders and discussions which allow team members to direct or guide the interaction in Webcrossing™.

Limitation: Initiating and guiding discussions is cumbersome at first because you need to create folder and discussion headings, etc.

3. Discussion and Dialogue

Strength: Webcrossing™, offers great opportunity for continuous ongoing dialogue. However, people must learn the difference between talking (writing) and dialoguing.

Limitation: Face-to-face teaming as well as electronic teaming can promote "turn talking" if team members are not taught how to listen (read) and engage in dialogue. "Rambling" narrative can be disconcerting (as opposed to writing in a concise, informative manner). Most people resist reading long, fragmented involved thoughts.

4. Thinking and Speaking.

Strength: Some people fear putting thoughts down on paper as opposed to vocalizing their ideas. However, other people find it more comfortable to write what they are thinking as opposed verbalizing their ideas. The adjustment period to reading and reacting electronically is not always predictable among team members.

Limitation: For some people, the strength of electronic teaming becomes a limitation. In other words, people react differently to speaking and writing. Some feel comfortable in one style of communication while others feel uncomfortable. For the most part, people's minds work faster than they can type.

5. Sharing Information

Strength: You can share hotlinks found on the Internet. Depending on the various versions of Webcrossing™, it is not always easy to enter information.

Limitation: Sharing information in teaming (i.e., consensus building, decision-making, interdependence) can be very difficult, if you cannot engage in face-to-face interaction. Electronic teaming has all the liabilities of face-to-face teaming plus

additional liabilities brought about by the existing nature of electronic communication.

6. Personal Identification.

Strength: Electronic teaming has the potential for people to tell much more about themselves than is usually revealed in face-to-face teaming.

Limitation: However, emotional trust of other team members has normally been accomplished in face-to-face situations. Trust can be a major obstacle if electronic teams don't do "trust building activities," use photos and/or specific whip activities, for "getting to know each other."

7. Academic Standards (Team and Individual Expectations):

Strength: Teaming is a powerful way to engage in learning. Each individual should be an equally contributing team member. Dialogue, synergy, and collaborative decision-making are the heart of teaming in face-to-face and electronic teaming (learning together apart).

Limitation: However, in no instance should one team member complete the work for other team members (i.e., each team member should contribute an equal amount of work within a framework of consensus building, dialogue, and decision-making). Many skill areas require a minimum level of competence for team members to be successful and when some team members do not achieve a certain level of competence, they cannot be successful at higher level tasks in either independent or interdependent learning situations.

Suggestions for Successful Electronic Teaming

1. Social Interactions. If possible, face-face meetings are helpful so people can know who is in their team. Talking to them outside the meeting (social interaction) is often an indirect way of building team rapport. In electronic teaming, additional time must be spent in getting to know team members before, during, and after formal electronic teaming activities.

2. Attendance and Participation (Team Member Absence). Developing a routine (discipline) to log into your Webcrossing™ (postings) is necessary to build team rapport. If some team members do not check in on a regular basis, it can be very frustrating to other team members. This constitutes virtual

absenteeism.

3. Timeliness. Electronic interaction has to be timely. Responding to questions or comments builds rapport with other team members. Waiting to the last minute to talk (procrastinating) limits the potential for team trust and does little to promote team rapport.

4. Security. Security is always a issue. In Webcrossing™, other people can be blocked out of conversations. If privacy is an issue, team members must be assured that their interactions will not be copied and passed on to someone else.

5. Teaming Model. Knowing the steps of teaming is extremely helpful to electronic team members (See Figure 2). Teaming steps build rhythm of interaction patterns. The Five-Step Teaming Model provides direction for consensus and collaborative decision making.

6. Record Keeping. The threading of ideas provides a permanent record for teams to reread and think. The downside is that interaction sequences can be quite long and the reader has to synthesize the information. In regular face-face team meetings, notes are taken which synthesize decisions and ideas.

7. Digital Citizenship (Netiquette). Electronic teaming does not guarantee that team members know how to behavior online. Flaming (shouting by typing in all capital letters) is a common problem. Electronic teams need to abide by a basic code of conduct (netiquette) which dictates team social behavior.

8. Legal Implications. Some agencies (i.e., school board) will be thwarted by current laws which restrict the kinds of electronic teaming that can be done. Other organizations will be freed from the tethers of having to be at the same place and the same time to team. Only time will tell whether laws catch up with new strategies of electronic teaming.

9. Independence vs. Interdependence. American education has been deeply rooted in independent learning. Teacher-talk and text, norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessment, etc. have had their impact on people being able to make decisions on their own. Teaming requires consensus building, conflict resolution, and working together to come up with better ideas. Interdependence (mutually dependent) is a difficult concept for many people to master. The advance of the Internet and the communication process allows people to understand that expertise resides in more than one place, person, or source. Interdependence is a

critical skill that must be emphasized in teaching and learning.

Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) When Moving From Face-to-Face Team Meetings to Electronic Team Meetings and Back Again

1. How many face-to-face sessions should be balanced with electronic sessions?

This is dependent on the learning situation which exists. In some situations, face-to-face meetings will be impossible. Electronic teaming is very difficult to achieve if there is not at least one or two face-to-face meetings to sort through the various issues. As we become more familiar and comfortable with the technology, electronic teaming should become more familiar and less frustrating which in turn may have a bearing on the number of face-to-face meetings for teaming.

2. How do I keep my fellow team members from flaming me and other team members?

A code of conduct (digital citizenship) must be followed by team members. Many institutions have netiquette polices that must be followed, but are not always read and understood by people in the organization. Rules that are enacted does not mean that people understand them or agree to comply with them. Members of team should never assume that netiquette is understood by their fellow team members. Electronic teaming requires the study of acceptable behavior when using technology. Study, dialogue, and agreement on an electronic code of conduct is imperative to effective electronic teaming.

3. How does a team create an agenda online as well as the other steps of teaming include role identification, whip activities, Fishbowling?

Creating agenda, whip activities, and fishbowling take practice and time. At first agenda construction seem awkward and time consuming, but they become the “glue” that holds the team together when other issues complicate the teaming process.

4. What are the best activities to do online that foster trust and bonding?

There are numerous “whip and fishbowling” activities. See Bailey, Ross, Bailey, and Lumley, 1998 or <http://www2.educ.ksu.edu/Faculty/BaileyG/html/teambk.pdf>

5. How do I overcome the natural tendency to “dividing up tasks” when teaming online?

There is a natural tendency for all people to revert back to group behavior. The differences between groups and teams, and teams and high performance teams and technology-based teams is found in Figure 1. “Dividing up” tasks is what groups to

satisfy the teacher or administrator. It is quick and efficient, but teaming has dialoguing, consensus-building, and decision-making embedded in the process. If you are only producing a product, division of task is normal. However, it does not lead to learning how to learn with others and synergy of ideas.

6. How do we adjust/adapt for lack of nonverbal cues?

This is the biggest problem for many teams who move from face-to-face to electronic teaming and vice versa. The shift comes from knowing how to interpret what people are writing as opposed to what they are saying verbally. We have social clues in face-to-face teaming, but social clues are often lost in the written word. How the word is said and with what intent is often impossible to determine in electronic teaming. The social clues are hidden within the written message. Emoticons are often a way to provide written clues as to the intent of your written message. See: <http://www.odintech.com/beginners/smiley.html> or <http://www.windweaver.com/emoticon.htm> Obviously, more research and experimentation needs to be done with emoticons to determine their value when trying to enhance the communication process.

7. How long does it take to become proficient in electronic teaming?

Teams can not get proficient at electronic teaming unless there is continuous staff development provided over an extended period of time.

This includes: (1) information--that is, there is sufficient information offered to teams to understand the teaming concept, (2) demonstration--that is, there is modeling by the trainer or trainers to exhibit the characteristics of teaming, (3) practice--that is, there is opportunity for the team to practice teaming, (4) feedback--that is, there is an opportunity for the trainer to provide feedback (suggestions) to the team members about appropriate and inappropriate teaming behaviors, and (5) coaching--that is, there is an opportunity for the trainer to provide continuous suggestions to get better as the team engages in incremental improvement. Essential ingredients of effective staff development emphasize that electronic teaming concepts must be spaced over time. In most instances, this takes much practice, time, coaching, and commitment to teaming as a "life-long" learning strategy.

Summary

Electronic teaming is an evolutionary concept that educators are just beginning to exploit for its maximum potential. Electronic teams are both helped and hindered by the experiences of face-to-face teaming. New ways of behaving in electronic teaming will emerge over time. Understanding any emerging concept is difficult when the rules are being written as we practice the new medium. For the foreseeable short future, there will be a place for face-to-face teaming as well as electronic teaming. Electronic teaming will change with the refinement and breakthroughs of emerging technologies. With voice recognition, picture, graphics, virtual reality, etc., electronic teaming will improve as the technology evolves. At the present time, electronic teaming presents a tremendous way of enhancing the organization effectiveness by working together apart. As one excited electronic team member said recently, "we can only hope that we will have the ability not to mistake the edge of the rut for the horizon" which means we must not simply "electrify the past." The challenge is to experiment with new ways of electronic teaming to maximize the true potential of technology. The future holds great things for electronic teams who are willing to blaze the a new trail in the 21st century by learning together apart.

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