

## THE EFFECTS OF ROLE SELF-AWARENESS EXERCISES ON TEAM SATISFACTION: THE CONTEXT OF MARKETING COURSE PROJECTS

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### ABSTRACT

One of the more valuable experiential learning experiences of the business school curricula is the common requirement that students work in teams to fulfill course or even degree objectives. Such teamwork is required for numerous reasons. First, it is widely believed that students benefit from learning to work with others and from exposure to diverse approaches and ideas. Second, teams are conducive to larger and more complex projects providing an enhanced learning experience for students. Third, the business community uses teams in the workplace and it is beneficial for students to have experience in project teams when preparing for their business careers.

Beyond these direct-application benefits, teamwork helps students to improve motivation, and develop skills in communication, cooperation, and leadership. Finally, teams also provide students opportunities to explore their styles of interaction with others and discover their own strengths and weaknesses when working collaboratively.

In spite of the benefits student teams commonly experience conflict between members due to differences in work habits and ideas about how to approach a task. Students also have trouble with the task of approaching team members about their performance and asking them to modify their behavior, a leadership role that is often absent from student team organization.

The objective of this research was to examine whether and how exercises designed to increase students' self-awareness of their role in teams help improve the team experience and satisfaction. The following hypotheses were tested:

- H1:** Individuals who participate in team-based self-awareness and communication exercises will have higher satisfaction (a) with their team, (b) with team interactions, and (c) with team output than individuals who do not participate in those exercises.

### METHODOLOGY

A 2x2 design was used in which half the student teams participated in group exercises while half were given class time to work in their teams, with each of the two groups monitored by a different professor.

Student project teams were asked to participate in exercises performed in two stages during the semester. Stage one of the exercises was conducted after students had been put into teams and the project had been described in detail. Students were shown a short humorous presentation describing the different personalities that are common in group work. The presentation was intended to encourage students to reflect on how they behave when in a group setting.

At the conclusion of the presentation, students were asked to think further about how they behave in groups. Students were then told to think about how their personality can sometimes inhibit team progress and, if and when that happens, how they would prefer to be dealt with by their teammates. Group members then shared their feelings about how the team can best deal with them when their personality inhibits progress.

Stage two of the exercises was conducted at the project mid-point. After completing significant project tasks students did a self-rating and then shared with the team suggestions for how to best make them more productive in the team.

### RESULTS

The results revealed that participation in self-awareness exercises lead to higher satisfaction with one's team, higher satisfaction with one's interaction with teammates, and to higher satisfaction with the team output (the project itself), than for students who did not participate in the exercises. No effects were found for the students' class or professor, strengthening support for the exercises themselves as the driver of these differences in student satisfaction.