BUILDING BLOCKS FOR TEAMS

Roles in General

What roles are available will depend much on the project and the wishes of your instructor. For instance, if the project is to create a Web site, your instructor may ask your team to have a leader/editor, a writer, a graphic artist and a Webmaster/HTML specialist.

If your instructor does not give any guidance, the team is free to organize itself as it chooses, but it is important that:

1.   **Everyone agrees on appropriate roles** - This may take some negotiation to decide.

2.   **Everyone is satisfied in their roles** - Individuals must feel a sense of satisfaction in order for the team to function. Fortunately, teams will typically have people with different temperaments and skills who will want different roles. In addition, your team may want to **rotate roles** throughout the semester.

Flexibility

Whatever role you may have, it is still important that the **entire team** provide input **on every facet** of the project. For instance, if you were a "writer", it is perfectly acceptable for a "graphic artist" to evaluate and comment on your work. He or she may provide a unique perspective that will enhance your work. The same would be true for the "graphic artist" or any other member of the team.

The Leader

Most teams will have a leader, and this is a very important position because he or she is responsible for the management of the entire project. However, it is important **not to have too "heavy" a hand**, or team morale may be lowered.

A leader is typically responsible for setting a base agenda, facilitating meetings, and monitoring progress with communicating with members as needed. But all actions must be agreed to by the team. Although you may suggest a course of action, you must be sure the team agrees to it. If the team wants to go in another direction, you should be willing to compromise.

Other Roles

If your team is looking for a way to organize, these are some other roles that can be used, especially when formulating and testing ideas. Again, it suggested that you be flexible with these roles. Teams can rotate them or combine them in one person, for instance, a recorder/summarizer.

Initiator - Someone who suggests new ideas. One or more people can have this role at a time.

Recorder - This person records whatever ideas a team member may have. It is important that this person quote a team member accurately and not "edit" or evaluate them.

Devil's Advocate/Skeptic - This is someone whose responsibility is to look for potential flaws in an idea.

Optimist - This is someone who tries to maintain a positive frame of mind and facilitates the search for solutions.

Timekeeper - Someone who tracks time spent on each portion of the meeting.

Gate Keeper - This person works to ensure that each member gives input on an issue. One strategy to do this is to ask everyone to voice their opinion one at a time. Another is to cast votes.

Summarizer - Someone who summarizes a list of options.