

TEAMWORK

Makes the **Dream** Work

J | CONNELLY



COLLABORATING ACROSS DEPARTMENTS AND DISCIPLINES

There's nothing like a creative project to keep a team in top form. Working with colleagues across various disciplines and departments fosters a free exchange of ideas. By sharing different perspectives and experiences, we contribute to something greater than any one single person can achieve on their own. In short, "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts."

But effective collaboration also requires an understanding of the entire team's priorities and responsibilities. When all participants are aligned, there is greater likelihood that projects will be completed on time and to specifications. It's when we operate in a vacuum that mistakes are likely to happen.

Communications projects are especially exciting because they bring together so many diverse professionals—media specialists, designers, writers, video producers and social media experts, to name a few. By gaining a greater appreciation for each person's role and responsibilities, each player will be contributing—and helping to ensure—the overall success of the campaign.

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“Alone we can
do so little;
together we can
do so much.”

Helen Keller

5 PROMPTS TO BREAK THE ICE WITH A COWORKER

- | Tell me more about your role at the company.
- | What's the most exciting project you've ever worked on?
- | Are you involved in any company activities outside of your department?
- | Is there any type of assignment you'd like to become more involved in?
- | How can we work together to achieve mutual goals?

TEAM VISION

Every single person on the team is a valuable resource. When collaborating in a group setting, take every opportunity to share ideas, support colleagues, give guidance and positively contribute to outcomes.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO FOSTER EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK:

- | **SCHEDULE INFORMAL ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS** with your coworkers to get to know them better. A comfortable setting like a coffee break or a walk outside is ideal.
- | **KEEP THE CONVERSATION POSITIVE** and focused on growing the business.
- | **BE YOURSELF AND SHOW INTEREST.** Regardless of industry, the goal should be working together to create integrated solutions.

START THE CONVERSATION BY TALKING ABOUT YOURSELF SO IT FEELS LESS LIKE AN INTERVIEW.

Explain your role, ideas and what kind of support you can provide. It's also a good idea to let your colleagues in on your own personal communications preferences—are you someone who prefers email to phone calls? Do you favor long strategy memos or brief email updates? Setting clear parameters may help to prevent conflict later on.

- | As the conversation evolves, you might want to **SUGGEST NEW AND INNOVATIVE WAYS TO TEAM UP** and support each other.

SHARING NEW IDEAS

There's nothing more exciting when that proverbial lightbulb goes off in your head. But before you send out a company-wide memo, take a minute to gather your thoughts. Does the subject warrant an email or a meeting? Sometimes it's best to get buy-in from colleagues before moving to the next level.

How to determine the best method of communication. **HERE ARE OUR TOP TIPS FOR PRESENTING A WINNING IDEA:**

- | **THINK IT THROUGH BEFORE YOU SHARE.** Research the opportunity and evaluate all the elements that will go into carrying the idea through to fruition. Once you have the logistics in place, you'll be able to answer all the questions likely to arise when you present to the larger team.
- | **DECIDE WHO NEEDS TO BE PART OF THE CONVERSATION.** Perhaps you want to run it by colleagues within your department before bringing the idea to upper management. They may be able to add something you hadn't considered.

BIG IDEAS DESERVE A MEETING.

An email cannot sell itself. If you still think a formal meeting isn't appropriate, another option is to invite key members of the team for a coffee to discuss.

- | **PREPARE YOUR PITCH.** Sell the overarching idea in 5 minutes or less. The rest of the conversation should be a discussion that answers questions and delivers feedback.

- | **REMEMBER, YOU CAN ALWAYS MAKE GOOD IDEAS STRONGER LATER ON.** Use meeting times to brainstorm so everyone feels comfortable and excited to move forward.

THREE STEPS TO KEEP PROBLEMS FROM THROWING YOUR PROJECT OFF TRACK:

STEP 1: Define and analyze the problem.

- What is happening? Why is it happening? What should be happening?

STEP 2: Brainstorm solutions and make a decision.

- Don't waste valuable time listing all the reasons why an idea won't work. Instead, gather a wide range of solutions to sift through. Choose one and run with it.

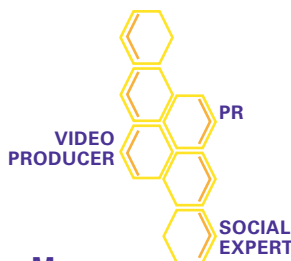
STEP 3: Evaluate.

- What worked well? How can it be improved the next time? Was there anything you did not anticipate?

PRIORITY CHECKLIST

While members on a project team typically work towards the same goal, each person has their own agenda, challenges and priorities.

THE FOLLOWING OFFERS A LOOK AT THE NEEDS AND PRIORITIES OF THE MAIN PLAYERS ON A COMMUNICATIONS TEAM:



The Manager

- For the manager, cost is always top of mind. Is the cost of the project baked into the budget or are additional resources needed?
- The manager needs to know who is on the project team so they can ensure every member has the capacity to participate.
- Top of mind for the manager is how the project fits into—and will help achieve—the company's overall communications goals.
- The manager needs to be realistic about how much time they can devote to the project, which will help smooth out the overall approval process.
- Every project has its tradeoffs. The manager must weigh this project against other priorities.

The PR Professional

- As the account lead, the PR professional communicates directly with the client. They need to determine early on how to measure success so all members of the team, and the client, are on the same page.

- The PR pro will help determine who's in charge of approvals. Is it one person or several people? The answer will likely depend on deliverables.
- Since the PR professional is in charge of promotion, they'll need to play a key role in elements such as platform distribution and readying the client/expert for media interviews.
- The project's messaging should ideally correlate with the campaign as well as the client's overall positioning. The PR team typically sets the tone so every other department can follow suit.
- Ultimately, the PR professional is charged with building an entire campaign around individual pieces.

The Designer

- The designer needs a thorough understanding of the project's purpose, challenges and goals.
- Always include enough time to brainstorm and explore different creative options before diving into the design portion of the project.
- The designer must have all the elements of the brand's identity system—including the proper fonts, colors, logo and any other brand guidelines. This ensures the visual aspect of the project will be consistent with other materials.
- Content comes first. If the project involves content and design, it's beneficial for the writer to provide all the approved content upfront before the visual components are designed.

- In order to avoid endless revisions, design feedback needs to be clear and descriptive. Stay focused on the original intention of the project and avoid diversions.

AVOID ASKING YOUR DESIGNER THESE FOUR QUESTIONS:

“Can you jazz it up?”

- Be detailed. Tell the designer exactly what it is about the visuals that aren't working and describe what you're envisioning.

“I'm not feeling this. Can we try something else?”

- Be clear. What don't you like and what are you looking for in a revised draft?

“I like purple, can we use that color?”

- It's easy to fall into the color trap. The colors in a company's palette are on brand, attractive to your target audience and have a certain meaning that correlates with the desired outcome. They should be used consistently.

“You're just changing one thing; it should take 10 minutes, right?”

- What may seem like a quick edit may end up costing the designer an extra three hours of work. Never assume anything will take 10 minutes unless the designer specifies that it is in fact an easy fix.

PRIORITY CHECKLIST

The Writer

- The writer needs a deep understanding of both the company and the target audience. For example, are you trying to reach millennial moms or high-net-worth professionals?
- What is the best way to convey the message? Is the client conservative or informal and playful? Knowing the brand voice will help the writer adopt the appropriate tone and style.
- Content and design work closely together. The writer and designer will need to collaborate to decide how much copy is needed based on the general design concept (although in some cases, the content drives the design).
- Writers should have milestone due dates before the final delivery deadline. Set up a schedule for when each draft will be shared with the team and how much time is available for edits.
- Getting initial feedback is critical. It guides the writer on the correct path to the final product and cuts down on revisions and rewrites later on.

The Video Producer

- The video producer is charged with turning complex subjects into entertaining concepts. Material needs to attract and hold viewers' attention.
- For the video producer, feedback is critical to ensuring that a video aligns with the client's voice and brand positioning. Allow the videographer access to the client so they can hear exactly what the client is thinking and expecting to see.
- Videos that squeeze in too many topics seldom gain traction. The video should focus on one clear message.

- Deadline and budget are always top of mind. Establishing boundaries up front can actually help get the creative juices flowing.
- Video is a collaborative process, so the more voices that can contribute feedback, the better.

The Social/Digital Expert

- Social media posting should have a purpose. Put a strategy in place so the social team can work towards a goal and determine ROI.
- Involve the social expert early—so they have the appropriate background and context. As an alternative, provide a detailed project brief to help them create posts that are in line with the project's messaging.
- The PR pro knows the client inside and out. If the person posting on social media is not privy to all the details, it may be more effective for someone on the account team to draft the copy and work with the digital team to make it “social” for the applicable channels.
- Having a clear call to action produces best results, whether the post directs people to a video, graphic, landing page or article.

- Assigning a dedicated budget for social media purposes gives them parameters to work within and will potentially allow them to speak to a broader audience.

CONCLUSION

Working together as a cohesive team is not only good for business, it's good for your employees, too. Studies show that engaged employees are happier team members—and one of the best ways to motivate your people is to foster an inclusive environment that encourages team work. Take the time to understand what drives your team and how best to work with them, and you'll become an invaluable employee and a better business leader.

LOOKING FOR MORE GUIDANCE ON INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS PROJECTS?

JConnelly is here to help. Contact **CHRIS CHERRY**,
Chief Engagement Officer, to learn more.

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