

Collaboration



Winsor Jenkins

This material introduced in this excerpt comes from Chapter 3 – Collaboration, in the book, *Focus On Them* (ATD Press, 2018). Winsor Jenkins is the contributing author of Chapter 3.

The ACCEL Model

In 2015 ATD Research conducted a poll of learning executives, asking them to identify their top skills related to managerial success. Using that research, ATD developed the ACCEL skills model, which outlines the five key skills managers need: accountability, communication, collaboration, engagement, and listening (and assessing).

Shortly after its creation, ATD Research used the model in its report *ACCEL: The Skills That Make a Winning Manager* to examine which skills were necessary to successfully develop a manager's direct reports. This was a natural extension of the model, because developing direct reports is a critical responsibility of the manager role.

The study found that just 46 percent of organizations had identified skills related to managerial success in developing direct reports. Further, a majority of participants indicated that each of the five ACCEL skills contributed to managerial success in developing direct reports, ranging from 75 to 86 percent. Perhaps most surprising was that fewer than a third of respondents indicated that managers at their organization exhibited each of the ACCEL skills when working with their direct reports.

Even though participants believed these five ACCEL skills contributed to managerial success in developing direct reports, they reported that opportunities to cultivate them were relatively rare. Communication was the skill with the largest opportunity for development; 38 percent of respondents said managers were given opportunities to develop communication proficiency to a high or very high extent. Managers were least likely to have the opportunity to develop collaboration skills (30 percent). While these numbers may seem low, consider that manager development isn't a priority for 43 percent of organizations.

Until organizations and talent development departments fill the void of absent or neglected management development programs, managers and their direct reports will be at a disadvantage. Fortunately, you can take steps to improve your ACCEL skills on their own.

The Book

We've assembled some of the best minds in management and talent development to share their knowledge on the skills you need to excel as a manager. Throughout this book, we and our contributors will illustrate how to implement these skills in your life, while offering actionable tips and best practices.

Collaboration

Why, with the ever-increasing means to communicate and connect with one another, does effective collaboration appear to be out of reach for most managers. For starters, a manager needs to create an environment of teamwork before collaboration is even possible. This is a daunting task for new and even seasoned managers when the demand for short-term wins often triumphs over longer-term culture building. Managers who excel in collaboration nurture relationships between all team members, clarify team roles and encourage cooperation toward achieving a common goal. By encouraging trust and relationship building between team members, managers position direct reports to share knowledge with and learn from one another.

In this chapter, Winsor Jenkins, founder and president of **Winsor Jenkins & Associates**, provides a clear path to practicing genuine team collaboration. It all begins with shifting your mindset from lecturing to listening, from controlling to influencing, and from valuing likeness to valuing differences. You also need to assess your self-awareness and check your underlying assumptions to determine how you and your team can best collaborate given the available resources, nature of work, and external demands. By assuming the dual roles of manager and coach, you can create a culture of collaboration that allows your direct reports to grow themselves and produce sustainable results: a win-win.

Excerpt from Chapter 3 - Collaboration

Apply Collaboration's Operating Platform

Let's explore how the collaboration operating platform might play out in a hypothetical case.

Say you are a manager of a team working on a project and are asked to resolve issues brought up by a key stakeholder who also happens to be a long-term client. Your client has proposed a change to a project that is already a third complete. While the proposed change has merit, it would also expand the project's scope beyond the original parameters, which could delay the project's completion date and exceed budget projection. As a result, you're faced with the question: How can you integrate the client's proposed change in the project?

Your decision will reveal two important things: your assumptions or beliefs about the situation (your mindset) and your competence or ability to act in the situation (your skill set).

If you work with any kind of customer – internal or external - on a project basis you'll recognize the key phrase, "wouldn't it be great if ...". This is a sure sign that the project scope is going to be challenged – a change introduced at this point is going to delay the project.

So, you're faced with two options: Hold a team meeting to decide how to proceed or simply tell the client that the team will deliver on their request. On the one hand, this is a more inclusive choice, inviting the team's input for solving the problem, but it may be riskier if time is a concern. On the other hand, the second option puts the client first, at the risk of upsetting the team, and it puts the project's key performance indicators at risk: schedule, budget and quality.

If you made the first choice, you promoted the Operating Principle, coach teams to respond to changing conditions on their own, demonstrating a collaborative mindset. Note, that while there are other operating principles in play in this scenario, this was the key or leading principle. However, if you made the second choice, you did *not* demonstrate a collaborative mindset.

In this hypothetical case, the aforementioned collaboration operating principle helped shape or frame the team's decision to hold a team meeting, applying four collaboration competencies aligned with this principle. The first is team management, which aligns strictly to your role as the manager. The other three related to shared competencies applied within the team: change agility, problem solving and decision making, and communicativeness.

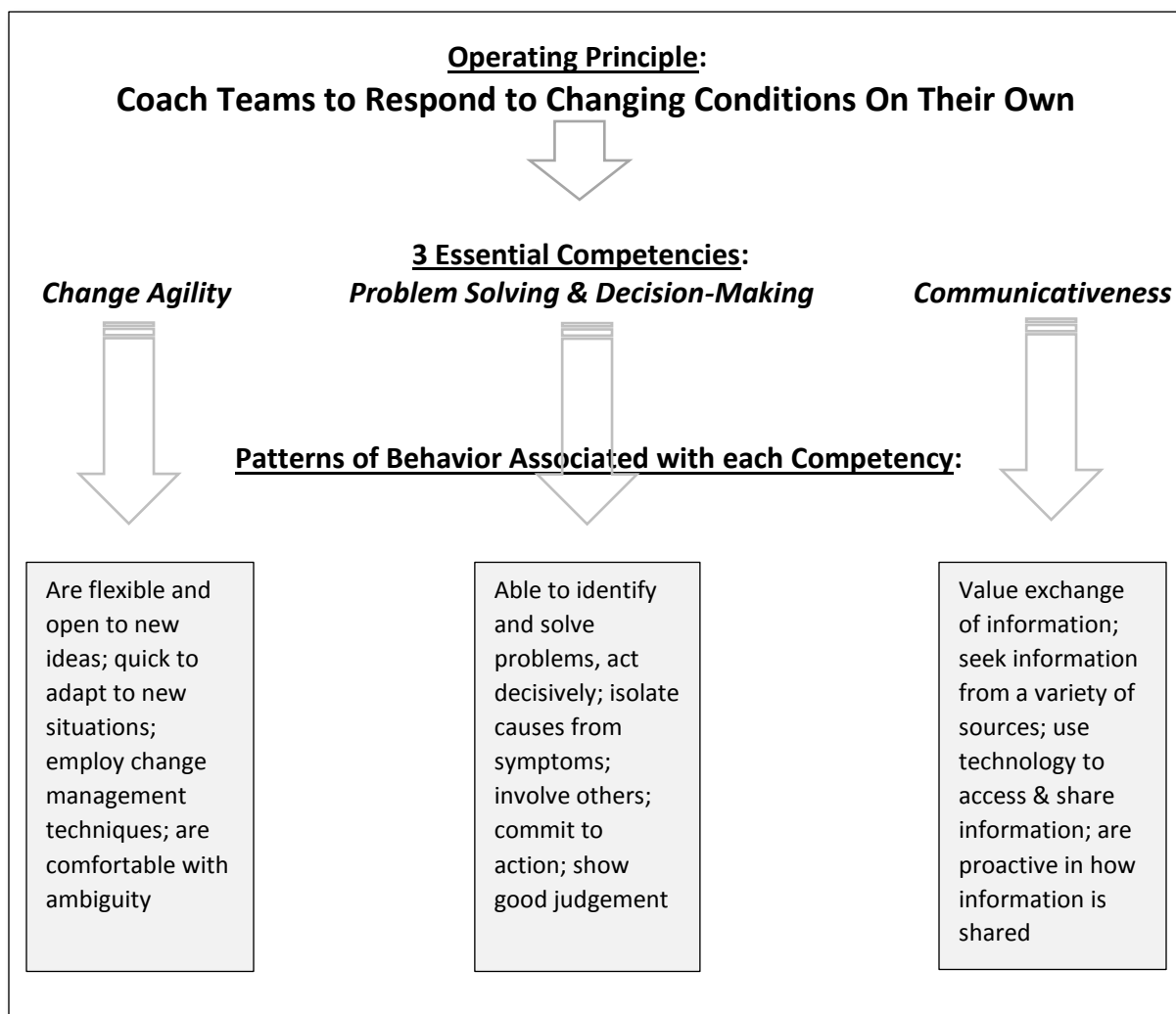
The team's purpose for collaborating is to drive creative, real-time problem solving and entertain the possibility of changing direction. This also requires communication. The team's ability to be successful is directly related to both their commitment to develop competence in the competencies used herein and their commitment to apply these competencies. At the end of the day, each team member should ask if their effort contributes to the team's work, and if they were consistent with the team's norms.

Figure 3-6 lists the key behaviors for each of the three shared team competencies, described as patterns of behavior associated with each competency. Again, each team member's competence determines how successful the team performs in managing its customer's request. Is the team able to act in a way

that is consistent with the essential operating principles identified in this case for practicing team collaboration?

A question that often comes up in debriefing this case deals with managing team conflict: Would the team be successful if conflict surfaced in their decision-making process? The answer deals with understanding that these three essential competencies may not be the only ones that come into play in this or any other case. For example, the conflict management competency could be applied, if needed. Although it's not described as an essential competency, it would become valuable if conflict surfaced as part of the team's decision-making process.

Figure 3-6. Mapping Example: Operating Principles, Essential Competencies, and Patterns of Behaviors



This example shows how competencies may overlap and build on one another depending on the situation. It reinforces the need to have multiple competencies available (and developed) in the team's inventory for the team to be effective. When combined, the three essential competencies applied in

this case provide the best opportunity for the team to target behaviors for solving the client’s request, which demonstrates genuine team collaboration.

Figure 3-7 gives a quick snapshot of how you combine underlying assumptions, operating principles, and competencies to achieve an outstanding team.

Figure 3-7. Collaboration Operating Platform

