Team Behavior Guidelines: Green and Red Card System

This document outlines the Green Card and Red Card system, a framework designed to encourage positive team behaviors and discourage counterproductive ones, fostering a more cooperative and productive work environment. This tool can help the team create an atmosphere of openness by focusing on the issue, not the person.

Green Card Behaviors

These are behaviors the team wants to encourage and see more frequently. They are positive commendations that drive change and enhance team cooperation.

- Listening more
- Asking a question instead of making a statement
- Openly expressing views on a subject
- Acknowledging and appreciating positive actions from colleagues

Red Card Behaviors

These are behaviors the team wants to discourage or no longer wants to see. They are meant to call a behavior into question and provide an opportunity for correction.

- Arriving late
- Coming unprepared

- Interrupting
- Being dismissive
- Use of sarcasm
- Behaviors that contradict an agreement the team has made

How To Use and Important Framing

Initial Discussion

Sometimes, simply having a conversation about these behaviors is enough to signal a shift in team dynamics. It's important that all team members contribute to the discussion and development of the bespoke framework vs. one/a few creating behind closed doors.

Prompts and Reminders

Often, teams accustomed to certain behaviors need prompts or reminders to facilitate change.

In-Meeting Usage

Team members can call out a "green card" or "red card" in a meeting when they observe the behavior. This provides immediate, real-time feedback.

Physical Card Distribution

For deeper work, each team member can be given a set number of physical cards (e.g., two green cards and two red cards) to distribute to colleagues within a set timeframe (e.g., 30 days). The observed behavior should be written on the card.

Crucial Framing

It is crucial to understand that green and red cards are **not** rewards or punishments. Instead, they are seen as learning opportunities to refocus on behaviors that generate team cooperation. They provide valuable feedback and grant a "license to give one another feedback."

Ratio Recommendation

A higher ratio of green cards to red cards (e.g., five green cards for every one red card) is recommended. Positive commendation is often a quicker driver of change than criticism, helping to shift the focus from what is wrong to what is working and what can be changed.

Team-Driven Definition

The team collectively decides on these behaviors, often based on current team dynamics and areas for improvement.

Reflection and Conversation

The discussion around why a card was given and the individual's lesson from it can be powerful. If a team member fails to give out their allotted cards, it can also lead to a powerful conversation about what work needs to be done within the team.

Empowering Feedback

This method can help teams challenge each other in ways they might not typically, even extending to addressing senior leadership constructively.