ROLE PLAY

THE PROCESS

In the following scenario each of your team members will assume a role:

- Select someone to assume the role of tutor,
- Select 4 people to assume the role of students: Arthur, Tiffany, Lewis, and Lizzie
- Select an observer/facilitator who will coordinate the process, facilitate the discussion and keep time.

Make sure manage the time so that you achieve all the tasks within the allotted time effectively. Remember to leave enough time for the discussion.

1. Pre-reading of synopsis and respective roles
2. Role plays
3. Discussion of reflective themes by all participants led by the facilitator
4. Presentation of the observer's comments, followed by discussion

SYNOPSIS

All the students below belong to the same team:

Arthur is a 19 year old Australian born full time student, who is currently pursuing his second year in Actuarial Studies as part of the Bachelor of Commerce. Arthur is from a very privileged family, attended private school and sees himself very much as a 'number’s man'. He currently lives at home in a wealthy inner-city suburb of Melbourne with his parents.

Tiffany is a 20 year old exchange student from America, studying English in the Arts Faculty. Tiffany was Dux of her high school, and won pretty much every English prize at her home University. She currently lives at International House, located on campus, where she is plays a lead role in a number of activities, including convening the student-staff relationship committee at International House, running the drama society, etc.

Lewis is a 24 year old Australian-born part time student. Lewis has been juggling part-time studies in a Bachelor of Commerce with an internship at a leading accounting firm, where he is a trainee accountant. Originally from rural Victoria, Lewis lives alone in an outer suburb of Melbourne.

Lizzie is a full time in her second year of a Bachelor of Science degree. She is a very remote part of the country where she lives in a small community. Lizzie’s real passion is water management but has felt family pressure to pursue a more vocationally oriented degree. As a result, she also has been taking a number of commerce subjects. She currently lives with extended family members close to the University.

The team has conducted an initial meeting to discuss their goals and have agreed that they are very keen to get a top grade in their team assignment. This is particularly important to Tiffany who needs a high grade to secure entry into graduate school back in the US. Carried along by Tiffany’s enthusiasm, the rest of the team members agree. It transpires, however, that Tiffany is the only one who has a history of high grades. They divide up the assignment tasks and set deadlines with project timeframes at Tiffany’s insistence. All agree that this is the best way to conduct the assignment.
The deadline arrives and the team members meet. Tiffany has done all the work she was assigned and some more. Arthur shows up on time with his work, and although it is in draft format, he is still clearly on task. Lizzie arrives late also with a draft. Lewis doesn’t show up at all. Tiffany rings Lewis on his mobile – Lewis picks up and says ‘Look sorry, but I can’t talk now, I’m tied up at work and can’t get away’. Tiffany persists and in between various assertions of ‘lack of commitment’ etc, Lewis’s closes the conversation with ‘Well, perhaps its better that you guys go it alone and sort it out. I’m out of it.’

Tiffany’s frustration is palpable. While she recognises that there is still plenty of time to finish the assignment, she is concerned that if they don’t manage individual expectations, they’d won’t be able to do all that’s required and to a high standard. Tiffany decides that she should speak directly to the tutor who had said that they were available if teams had difficulty organising themselves in the early days.

Role-play 1: Meeting between Tiffany and the Tutor

Tiffany has arranged to meet with the tutor to discuss her frustration with Lewis. Tiffany is anxious and is very concerned that Lewis doesn’t understand how important meetings are and in following through on tasks. She doesn’t understand why Lewis doesn’t share her commitment and enthusiasm.

Role-play 2: Meeting between Tutor and the Team

The team is still experiencing problems so another meeting with the tutor and all of the team members is arranged. Prior to this meeting the tutor emailing the team members a copy of the team diagnostic form and asks them each to complete it independently and email it back prior to the team meeting. From this information the tutor can see that the team members seem to disagree about what the team’s goals are and how these goals can best be achieved. All of the team members however seem to agree that miscommunication is one of the main sources of disagreement and conflict in the team.

THEMES FOR REFLECTIVE DISCUSSION BY THE TEAM

Instructions: Team members should discuss the following themes prior to the observer’s debrief. The facilitator should try to ensure that all team members are encouraged to give their views

1. What are the main issues in this situation?
2. What assumptions are being made by each person about the other?
3. Reflect upon the communication & conflict resolution strategies that the tutor used – what strategies would you change?

OBSERVATION DEBRIEF

Instructions: The observer should present his/her observations of the role play. The team members should then reflect on these

1. What did you learn from the observation? Did it confirm or challenge your impressions of the role play?
2. Is there any advice or recommendation that you would change following the observer’s comments?
ROLE PLAY OBSERVATION SHEET

Instructions: Write your observations of the role play. Be as specific as possible. Note actual behaviours and activities, comments, nonverbal expressions etc. After the role play you will meet with the coach and team member to give feedback.

Remember: You, as the observer, must not talk to the role players before or during the role play. Try to record what you actually see and hear. Answer the following questions to the best of your ability. After the discussion, present your observations and allow the team members to comment.

1. How did the coach build rapport?
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2. What questions did the coach ask that focused on specific problems?
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3. How did the coach seek causes of any team problems?
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4. How did the coach listen and respond?

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5. How did the coach seek solution generation from the team members?

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6. How did the coach gain agreement from the team members for behaviour change and/or performance improvement?

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7. How did the coach review and summarise what had been discussed?

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8. Did the team members all agree to follow-up on actions within a short time frame?

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9. When giving feedback make it specific by identifying three things the tutor did well and three things that might be improved.

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10. Did anything surprise you? Why? What does it tell you about coaching a team?

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