Team Competency #2

Critical evaluation and negotiation goals and strategies guide

Goal: Consider All Points of View

Problem: There's only one idea for a project and the team needs more.

    Strategy: Encourage everyone to express their point of view.
        "So what do you think Pat?"

    Strategy: Have the team look at past projects to see what others have already done
        and how you could improve or build on it.
        "They tried to do ... but were not able to get it to work. I think we could do
        it better by..."

Problem: Everyone agrees too soon, without considering alternatives

    Strategy: Encourage the team to be creative and think of alternatives.
        "Is that the only possibility? Perhaps we can think of some more."
        "Here's another way to look at it."

    Strategy: Encourage people to play devils advocate; point out possible flaws or other
        alternatives.
        "That could work, but it might also be to difficult to do in the amount of
        time we have."

Goal: Evaluate and critique ideas respectfully

Problem: The critiques are too negative

    Strategy: Remind the team not to distort other people's ideas; represent ideas fairly
        "I'm not sure that's what Chris meant."

    Strategy: Have team members give suggestions for how to improve something
        "You could make that better by … ."

    Strategy: Remind people to give reasons for why things need modifying.
        "That needs more work because … ."

    Strategy: Point out positives as well as negatives
        "I like the basic idea, but _____ seems problematic."

Problem: The critiques are too personal and hurt people's feelings

Strategy: Criticize ideas not people.
    "The idea about … doesn't make sense."

Strategy: Interrupt negative interactions by asking for more information
    "Why do you think that is problematic? What could we do about that?"

Strategy: Keep criticisms respectful and useful.
    "There is no need to berate Rod's work. It would be more helpful if you
    could help him understand it and fix it.

Problem: People are critiquing past performance not related to present tasks.

Strategy: Distinguish between constructive criticism and unproductive complaints
    and push the team forward.
    "Whether or not Frank performed well during the last phase is irrelevant
    now. Hopefully as a team we can take steps to prevent these problems from
    repeating themselves and Frank can prove to the team that he is a valuable
    member by what he does this time around. So lets put this behind us and
    work on our current tasks. Jill, what is our agenda for this meeting?"

Goal: Evaluate trade-offs

Problem: People accept things without thinking about them

Strategy: Ensure that people are listening for understanding and building on the ideas
    of others.
    "It doesn't seem as though we are really thinking about... Kelly could you
    help to make sure we are really listening to each other and replying and
    adding to the ideas that are presented?"

Strategy: Ask, "Does the argument make sense?". If not explain why.
    "That doesn't make sense because … ."

Strategy: Help the team talk about problems and difficulties
    "I'm not so sure that's a good idea because… ."

Strategy: Help the team discuss the feasibility of options
    "I think that's a good idea, but do we really have enough time to do it?"

Problem: The team is not discussing pros and cons of suggested actions

Strategy: Have the team engage in a cost benefit analysis
    "Why don't we think about whether it makes sense for us to spend the extra
    effort on "X" given that "Y" is a likely outcome and I really want us to
    consider both sides."

Strategy: Assign a member to be in charge of presenting trade-offs.
"Annie, I need you to focus on trade-offs this meeting and direct the team to relevant ones we should consider."

Goal: Reach an agreement

Problem: Whoever talks loudest or last gets their way.

Strategy: Look for the best ideas.
"I think the best idea we have come up with is … ."

Strategy: Consider the pros and cons of each option.
"Can anyone think what's good or bad about that idea?"

Strategy: Try to persuade each other.
"That's a good idea because … ."

Strategy: Alternate between members in order to keep it equitable.
"Okay, well last time we went with Maria, so maybe this time we should try someone else."

Problem: No attempt to fit the different ideas together

Strategy: Try to put good ideas together.
"Both ideas fit together if you think about it this way … ."

Problem: People feel they weren't treated fairly

Strategy: Find a solution that gives everyone some of what they want.
"Since we can't do both, we could do part of each."

Strategy: Validate their feelings and assure them that next time it will be different.
"I know you really wanted to do that and I'm sorry you didn't get the chance, but next time we decide on something you can have…"