

Creating and Maintaining a Successful Practice Group

Leadership Skills for Practice Group Leaders

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Let's Get to Know Each Other!

- Name?
- Where are you from?
- Profession?
- Most interesting/unusual/surprising thing about you?



Objectives for Today

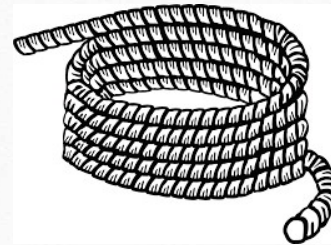
- What are the ideals of a Practice Group?
- What role does the Practice Group serve for its members?
- How do you deal with Group Dynamics and challenges?
- How do you address team building?
- How do you plan for leadership succession?
- How do you keep your members engaged and happy?
- How do you deal with challenging members and practice group dysfunction?
- What technical skills could be helpful?
- What are some effective marketing ideas?



Ice Breaker

“All Tied Up”

- In this activity, you will be lightly tied to your neighbor and table-mate.
- Together, while tied, you will decorate the cookies in front of you with flare and pizzazz!
- After this activity, you will now be “All Tied Up” as new colleagues and friends!



Debrief Question #1

- Why were you successful or unsuccessful at completing the task?



vs.



Debrief Question #2

- How did the time restrictions aid or hinder your group from completing the task?



Debrief Question #3

- Did everyone in the group help to get the task done?



Debrief Question #4

- What happened when someone didn't help?



Debrief Question #5

- Do you ever feel like you are “tied up” with someone else when you are working with them and trying to get a job done. If so, why, and how do you deal with this feeling?



Why Are We Here?

1. Results of the survey
2. Table discussion
3. Report to large group



What are the ideals of a Practice Group?

- Q: Do we need Practice Groups to work Collaboratively?



A: NO! Think about how Collaborative work started. Stu Webb had a simple idea: agree for no Court Intervention and change the dialogue between the parties. All it really took was having a like-minded attorney on the other side that would agree to not litigate if the negotiations were not successful!



...Then Why Collaborative Practice Groups?



- Collaborative Practice Groups Enhance Collaborative Practice
- Collaborative Practice Groups create a Community for Collaborative Professionals
- Support Group
- Creating Community
- Training
- Marketing
- Development for both Professionals and Clients
- Getting Past Fear

And
another
thing...

- Practice Groups develop personal responsibility for how we do Collaborative work:
 - Common Participation Agreement
 - Common explanation of what Collaborative Practice is for Community
 - Clients hearing the same messaging
 - Presenting Collaborative Practice to your Community
 - Training professionals in the community
 - Meeting educational needs for both professionals and public

want more?

- Collaborative Practice Groups allow for brainstorming and case rounds. Help in working through difficult issues.
- Mental Health Professionals and many Financial professionals work in isolation. Collaborative Practice Groups allow for the creation of team work and introduction of the neutral professions.
- Practice groups enhance creativity.



- Practice Groups allow for mediation of “group think” from a small firm of family law practitioners.
- Practice Groups allow for the passing on of the ideals and principles to the next generation of professionals.
- Collaborative Practice Groups facilitate change in society by offering all of the opportunities to develop Collaborative Practice as a better form of resolving disputes.

Can you practice collaboratively
without a Practice Group?

Sure...but should you?

What role does the Practice Group serve for its members?

1. It's family!

- Most collaborative practitioners are solo or in very small firms. In effect, the practice group can function as a law firm bringing all the resources of the law firm which otherwise would not have been available.
- It gives practitioners the opportunity to share common values about how to resolve conflict among family members.

2. It's a support group!

- Collaborative is the new paradigm where we can learn and thrive with other like-minded professionals.

What role does the Practice Group serve for its members?

3. It's educational!

- Education and training are two additional benefits practice groups can provide. It is a benefit for the members/trainer as well as the student. Everyone's skills are enhanced.
- It trains us as a group on how to educate people about their process choices, how to develop a collaborative business and how to manage a collaborative case.
- A practice group allows us to stay authentically present and grounded personally and professionally throughout the process.

4. For marketing purposes!

- The practice group can gather resources and market the collaborative process more effectively than a single person. Also, if the practice group generates some money by holding trainings, the practice group will have financial resources to market the process.

What role does the Practice Group serve for its members?

- **5. It lays out uniform protocols!**
 - The practice group can establish uniform protocols that lay out “how we do it around here”. The process works much smoother when members of the group are working from the same protocols. Everyone knows what to expect from each other.
- **6. Mentoring younger members!**
 - Along with sitting on cases, taking notes, etc., they learn the lingo and the process better

however

The Role of a Practice Group is NOT for sending you cases.

- It is up to each of us to cultivate cases.
- Though, rarely does a solo person collaboratively trained get a lot of collaborative work without being in any active practice group.

Lastly and most importantly...

- Practice groups afford knowledge, sociability, love, support, training, etc., for all of us who participate in them.



How do you plan for leadership succession?

- What is Group's Current Structure?
- Discussion of the Pioneers or Originators vs. New Members
- How do you get New Members to step up?
- Chairperson Roles
- Division of Duties and Obligations
- Large Groups vs. Small Groups?
- Planning for Future Leadership
- Co-Chairs (Does it create issues within the Group?)
- Requiring Service to organization in some capacity
- How far out to plan?
- Identify those that may have interest vs. those that need to be convinced
- Regular change to executive team
- Buy in from whole group.



How do you address team building?

In practice groups **we work and learn together**, we build trust relationships that will be needed in cases, we create the basis for developing CP in our community.

To do this we need to know each other and feel we truly are part of a team.

Some useful **tips**:

- Be mindful of **new entries** (reserve initial part of a meeting to welcome newly-trained professionals and make them feel part of the group)
- Organize **periodical meetings** with a more social focus (Summer drinks – Winter holiday party)
- Organize **activities to be done together** (cooking or tasting experience, sessions dedicated to particular activities– mindfulness or yoga exercises, visual facilitation trainings)

How do you address team building?

Team building while presenting/educating the public on CP

- The “trial” experience in Milano
- Brainstorming a presentation to the public

Who is responsible for team building?

- The role of the Chair
- The role of “old” members and leaders



How do you keep your members engaged and happy?



Paths of Happiness

- Wine and food at meetings
- Lunch roundtables
- Book club discussions.
- Socials
- Parties
- Gatherings with judges
- Gathering with other neutrals
- Escape rooms
- Golf outings
- Picnics
- Winery tours



BOOKCLUB



How do you deal with group dynamics and challenges?

- **Composition of Practice Group**
 - Size of group
 - Closed vs open group
 - Diversity of experience and number of cases and training
- **Waning attendance due to experience or not invested**
 - Concern regarding not getting cases
- **Interpersonal Dynamics**
- **Communication challenges**
 - Feedback – how to give constructive criticism
- **Too much work done by too few**



Developing Functional Collaborative Teams



...Avoid the “Five Dysfunctions”

1st Dysfunction:

Absence of Trust

1st Dysfunction: Absence of Trust

- Vulnerability Based Trust vs. Predictable Trust
- If one member can't be vulnerable, it will spread like a disease
- The team is only as strong as your weakest link
- Leader goes first in being vulnerable
- Giving and receiving feedback inspires trust
- “False Harmony” risks losing clients and putting the process in jeopardy

1st Dysfunction: Absence of Trust

- Can't trust someone if they don't know who they are (EQ)
- Others will trust us when we are vulnerable
- Vulnerability is required to build a foundation of trust.
- Be open with one another, *especially* about, weaknesses, shortcomings, and mistakes.
- Mistakes happen. It is OK to ask for help. We need NOT be protective and careful.
- The intentions of our peers are good.

1st Dysfunction: Absence of Trust

- Bring vulnerability to the table and trust your team.
- Be open. Be proud to be a part of the team you have built. Work together effectively.
- Never succumb to personal fears or team politics.
- Get "it" out on the table. Otherwise, small bumps in the road can become the largest hurdles.

1st Dysfunction: Absence of Trust

- There is no argument from the FP's and MHP's about WHO has the most difficult time with the paradigm shift...
- Let's take a moment to talk about the attorneys, and how to address this issue head-on.
- Attorneys are competitive. We are taught to believe that the "best" always "wins." (A "win" for us, though, is not necessarily a "win" for the client)

1st Dysfunction: Absence of Trust

- We are working together, NOT competing with one another.
- Competition sabotages a team.



How do we move beyond barriers?

AUTHENTIC AWARENESS – Know Thyself!

Who are we? Let's talk!

- Share our personal values...
- What are our triggers? Our shortcomings?
- What are our best attributes? Our worst?
- Can we lay our worry, fear, and resentment aside?
- Can we respect, admire, like, and love our team members after a difficult conversation?

2nd Dysfunction:

Fear of Conflict

2nd Dysfunction: Fear of Conflict

Q: WHO'S AFRAID OF CONFLICT?

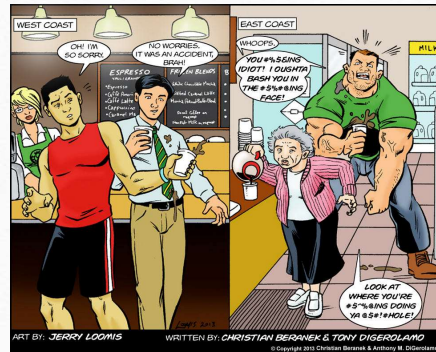
A: WE ALL ARE! (Even Lawyers!)



2nd Dysfunction: Fear of Conflict

- Who encountered a conflict today?
- Who thinks conflict must be negative?
- The legal system is built on conflict, but even lawyers can be ambivalent about conflict.
- Every choice we make involves some degree of conflict, whether it is our clothing, our breakfast, or our case.
- Let's learn to face and manage conflict with grace.

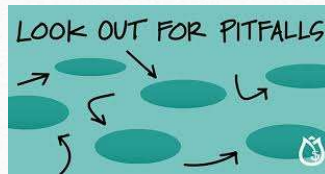
Cultural Differences in Conflict



Healthy Team Culture



- When you know people on your team are not holding back (feedback)
- Not calculating the cost of disagreement or considering political ramifications
- Conflict is necessary – most teams don't have enough – conflict offers opportunity
- Owe it to one another to disagree - healthy



- Feelings get hurt worse when issues are not addressed
- Sidebar conversations doom relationships to fail in a hurtful way
- When we fail to disagree we are selling ourselves and our team short
- When we don't weigh in, we don't buy in

TEAMS **FEARING** CONFLICT

- Boring meetings
- Back channel politics and personal attacks thrive
- Ignore controversial topics
- Don't tap into all opinions and perspectives
- Waste time and energy

TEAMS WITH **HEALTHY** CONFLICT

- Lively meetings
- Minimize politics
- Put critical topics on the table
- Explore ideals of all team members
- Solve real problems quickly

3rd Dysfunction:

Lack of Commitment

3rd Dysfunction: Lack of Commitment

- **Clarity and Buy-In**
 - Good teams make clear and timely decisions.
 - Good teams move forward with complete buy-in, even if some team members disagree.
 - Is consensus required? We don't need to get our way, as long as we've been heard.
 - Is certainty required? Aaaaahhhhhh, don't we all love it? But, it's a cosmic joke! A decision is better than NO decision.

3rd Dysfunction: Lack of Commitment

- Commit to Decisions and Plans of Action

- Constructive Conflict – disagree and commit
- If wait long enough for consensus, it can begin to feel unsafe
- Input into the decision increases commitment
- Passively commit if not heard



TEAMS *FAILING TO COMMIT*

- Creates ambiguity
- Wastes windows of opportunity
- Breeds lack of confidence and fear of failure
- Is there an echo in here???

vs.

TEAMS WITH STRONG COMMITMENT

- Promotes clarity of direction and creates priorities
- Opens the door to options and opportunity
- Builds confidence in the process and the team
- Move forward without hesitation

4th Dysfunction:

Avoidance of Accountability

4th Dysfunction: Avoidance of Accountability

- Are we back to vulnerability AGAIN?
 - Why yes, we are!
 - ALL team members must be willing to call each other when performance or behavior related issues threaten the team.
 - Have those “difficult conversations”
 - It’s OK to enter the danger zone!





Accountability is a GOOD thing!

- Peer pressure is OK too, as long as it is **KIND** and **GENEROUS** and directed toward the problem, not the person. Authentic Awareness.
- Let's not have any back biting or mean spiritedness at the table. Anywhere. Anytime. Anyhow.
- None of us want to let our team members down, and we won't. In fact, we will all rise to the occasion if we are aware of our intentions and our actions

Hold Each Other Accountable for Delivering a Plan of Action

- Peer Accountability motivates a team
- Not from position of authority but as someone who cares
- Accountability for behavior leads to results
- Leader must address difficult issues to create safety



How do we ensure healthy teams?

- Pre-brief. **EVERY TIME.**
- De-brief. **EVERY TIME.**
- Review the actions to make certain that everyone is on the same page.
- **MEET YOUR DEADLINES. EVERY TIME.**



TEAMS THAT **AVOID** ACCOUNTABILITY

- Creates resentment
- Encourages mediocrity
- Miss deadlines
- Places undue burden on team leader

vs.

TEAMS WHO ARE **ACCOUNTABLE**

- Establishes respect
- Ensures improvement of all team members, weak and strong
- Identify potential problems quickly and meet deadlines
- **ALL** team members are held to the same standard

5th Dysfunction:

Inattention to Results



5th Dysfunction: Inattention to Results

- **We have to pay attention!**
 - Focus on the collective goals of the group. Personal goals and advancement have no place at the table.
 - We need specific objectives and clearly defined outcomes. We want happier lives and healthy new family structures for our clients and their children.
 - Let's put aside our ego, worry about loss of control, and lose our professional "attitude." Let's be willing to have our clients take the reins.

Focus on Achievement of Collective Results!

- Hold people accountable to results
- Cohesive teams deliver results
- Conflict is vital to innovation and progress
- Habits form in 21 days



TEAMS *UNFOCUSED* ON RESULTS

- Fail to grow
- Lose achievement-oriented team members
- Encourage focus on individual rather than collective goals
- Easily distracted

vs.

TEAMS *FOCUSED* ON RESULTS

- Strong, trusting growth
- Retain achievement-oriented team members (and rub off on others!)
- Focus on the greater good and big picture
- Avoid distractions and enjoy success



Conclusions

- Our first job and responsibility as a team is to provide the opportunity to our clients to get to their best possible solution for their family.
- Let's transform fear and fracture into a new world of possibility for each of the parties and for their families.
- Together we can transform fearful conflict into peaceful resolution.

What technical skills could be helpful?

- Zoom Video Conference
- FreeConferenceCall.com
- MeetingWizard.com
- Doodle
- ShareFile by Citrix
- Family Law Software
- GoogleDocs
- Box
- DropBox



What are some effective marketing ideas?

- Pro Bono/Low Bono
- Flat Fee
- Client Testimonials
- Elevator/Quick Pitch
- Social Pitch
- Media Pitch
- Word of Mouth Marketing
- Network – attend events, share, listen curiously, follow-up
- Send press releases to the media
- Social Media
- Appear on Radio and TV



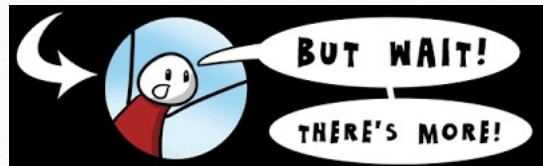
Some Good Ideas?!

- **1. Regional activities:**
 - Protocols committee
 - Multi-jurisdictional marketing
 - Regional conclave with education and coordination of activities
- **2. Education/Training:**
 - Annual institute/symposium/retreat
 - Sponsored trainings to help keep cost low
 - Boot camp – day long intensive training focusing on one case
 - Mentoring program – monthly group with 1 atty, 1 MH, 1 fin meeting with new members
 - 2 day basic interdisciplinary training for allied professionals
 - Staff training



MORE Good Ideas?!

- **3. Governance:**
 - Strategic plan
 - Formation of PODs
- **4. Public Education/Marketing**
 - Sponsor Sandcastles program
 - Outreach to mental health professionals
 - Binder of CP and placards for waiting rooms
 - Special business cards
 - Large size CP diagram
 - Judicial interaction
 - Social event (at wine bar) to invite non-members to discuss CP



Even MORE?!

- **5. Group development/Cohesion**

- Annual retreats
- Social events – BBQs, holiday parties
- Mentor Assignments
- Every meeting includes free lunch



How Wolves Change Rivers...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysa50BhXz-Q>



Closing Ceremony

