

Team Coordination Training: 7 Skills for Successful Collaboration

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In the U.S. Coast Guard, there's a program called Team Coordination Training (TCT), which focuses on reducing the probability for shipwrecks by increasing individual and team effectiveness.

USCG mishap data suggests that while technical skills are an essential component of any job, they alone will not ensure safety and the success of any mission.

Imagine your workplace as a ship, and the staff is the crew. The pastor or boss or supervisor is the captain. The same skills that keep our Coast Guard crews safe and empower them to serve our country are equally important for the success of any workplace team, empowering us to serve God's kingdom as we fulfill our duties in the mission of Christ.

MISSION SKILLS

Using the principles of TCT, here are the seven skills needed for a successful mission in any church or community workplace.

1. Leadership

- An effective leader is mission-oriented.
- A mission-oriented leader directs and guides the activities on the boat (parish or community workplace).
- A successful director stimulates the crew (staff and volunteers) to work together as a team.
- The leader provides feedback to the crew regarding their performance, giving affirmation as well as correction, in a spirit of mutual respect.

2. Mission Analysis

- The captain learns everything possible about the mission and makes plans on how to accomplish it.
- The captain assesses risks and strategizes how the crew can manage those risks.
- The captain briefs the crew on the mission plan.
- The captain assigns tasks based on each crew-member's actual abilities.
- The captain continually monitors mission effectiveness and periodically debriefs the crew to learn from their observations and insights.

3. Adaptability and Flexibility

- The captain alters a course or action to meet changing demands, never clinging to "This is how we've always done it."
- The captain observes and manages stress, workload and fatigue to maintain optimal performance level from the crew.
- The captain is part of the crew, superior only in authority, not attitude, and works collaborative with the crew.

4. Situation Awareness

- Everyone – captain and crew – remain observant and aware at all times of what is happening during the mission to:
 - the boat (the parish or workplace)
 - the captain and crew
 - the mission.
- The crew keeps the captain informed.

5. Decision-Making

- The captain listens to the crew and adapts plans accordingly.
- The captain applies logical and sound judgment based on the available information.
- The crew continues Situation Awareness and gives the captain feedback.

6. Communication

- The captain clearly provides information, instructions and commands.
- The crew clearly acknowledges receiving this communication and asks for clarification if necessary.
- The captain and crew keep each other updated on the progress of the mission.
- Both captain and crew provide each other with useful feedback.

7. Assertiveness

- If crew members observe a problem or potential problem, they communicate it clearly and rationally.
- The captain involves the crew in problem-solving to the extent of each member's abilities.
- If a problem continues, crew members state and maintain their position on it until convinced by facts that the position is wrong or is no longer necessary.
- If the captain does not respond to an ongoing problem, crew members speak up and/or take action for the sake of the mission.

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Boat Crew's Responsibilities:

- ✓ The captain and each member of the crew respect each other.
- ✓ The climate is an open one, where the crew is free to talk and ask questions about the mission.
- ✓ Regardless of assigned duties, those with the most information about the situation-at-hand are allowed to participate in mission analysis and decision-making.
- ✓ When disagreements arise, the captain and crew directly confront the issues over which the disagreements began.
- ✓ The primary focus is on solutions to problems. Discussions end on a positive note with very little grumbling among the captain and crew.

Captain's Responsibilities:

- ✓ The captain is in charge and gives clear and understandable direction.
- ✓ The captain monitors crew satisfaction and progress.
- ✓ The captain balances and monitors crew workload and manage crew stress.
- ✓ The captain remains approachable and open to ideas and suggestions.
- ✓ The captain updates the crew on significant mission changes.
- ✓ The captain provides to the crew timely, constructive feedback on performance.

ASSERTIVENESS SKILLS

Assertiveness skills are necessary for a collaborative boat crew team:

- ✓ The captain and/or crew raise questions about mission plans or actions when they are in doubt or when they believe the mission is in danger. These questions focus on risks that affect decision-making.
- ✓ The captain alerts gives the crew opportunity for input when making decisions that affect the mission.
- ✓ The crew responds to the captain's request with pertinent, brief, and timely information.
- ✓ Everyone remains open to questions and new ideas about the mission.
- ✓ Suggestions are listened to without criticism or prejudice.
- ✓ Requests for task assistance are made when feeling overloaded.

Captain's Responsibilities:

- ✓ Speak up when an error or poor judgment is perceived.
- ✓ Adjust the mission plans when:
 - The level of mission success has changed.
 - The crew has become overloaded or overly fatigued.
- ✓ Encourage input and feedback.
- ✓ Treat questions and concerns of the crew with respect.

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