Manage Your Team

It’s impossible to do a project entirely by yourself, especially if it’s a big project! You need a team, but working in a team can be hard because for a team to be successful, everyone needs to be working toward a common vision, you must to be able to delegate tasks among team members, and team members must reliably fulfill their individual responsibilities.

Step 1: Set an audience and scope of impact

It is very important to be intentional about how you are designing your group or organization when working on projects. You will need to make sure tasks are getting done, but you will also want to build knowledge within your overall group by teaching others how to complete certain tasks. Additionally, you need to make sure that you are building something that can realistically be maintained by people who join the group after you leave.

First, think about these questions:
- What impact do you want to have on the campus or community?
- What projects do you want to implement to have that impact?
- What will need to be done to make your project successful?

Example:

We want to build on-campus gardens so students have access to sustainable, healthy and local foods.

In order to accomplish this goal we should build 3 gardens:
- Community Garden- A garden that allows students, faculty, staff and the surrounding community to garden on campus.
- Restaurant Garden- A garden used by the Student Unions to grow herbs, tomatoes and other produce that will be used in foods sold on campus.
• Educational Garden- A garden managed by a department on campus as a teaching garden. Traditional local foods will be grown to educate students about foods from this region. Additionally, crops can be grown to teach students in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences how to apply what they learn in the classroom to managing a small plot of land.

Step 2: Create a Structure

Some projects within an organization will require multiple people to be involved in order to accomplish your goals. Consider your goals and the projects required to accomplish them in order to figure out what sort of team you need to assemble. What different positions will there be? How many projects will be underway at one time? Will you have multiple project managers or is the project small enough that you can manage the entire thing through delegation?

Keep in mind that creating a structure like this does not mean you should silo work, in which individuals or subgroups work only on one specific aspect and are not involved in any other parts of the organization. Group members should be given the opportunity to be innovative and have a say in the overall vision of the projects. This keeps people invested in the project in the long run. Decisions on major design changes or group efforts for fundraising need to come back to the main group for discussion. It is important to assign clear roles and responsibilities, but you do not want to make people feel as if they do not have input on the overall construction of the project.

Be realistic with your group size, the projects you all want to take on, and how many leadership roles you create. It is easy to let things grow, but a large group can be difficult for you and others to manage. It is hard to be a student, go to a lot of meetings for your project, and manage a social life, yet all of these things are important. Ensure that you are not taking on everything individually by establishing roles and delegating tasks within your team.
Step 3: Assemble a Team

A team should be strategically built. Even though your best friend might be a great person, s/he might not be the best fit for your team. Knowing what skills, work styles, and personality types you need is an essential part of assembling a team. Generally a good team is assembled with both big picture and detail oriented people. You also need to know what you bring to the table. What is your working style? What kind of personality do you work well with? Asking these types of questions will give you an idea of how you work with other people and how you would like other people to work with you.

If you want to reach beyond your own circle of acquaintances to find the most suitable team members, implement an application process. Send out this application through campus listservs to different academic departments or organizations whose goals align with those of your project. Besides finding new and potentially highly qualified people, usually only people who have serious interest in the project will take the time to apply. If you are just starting a project, an application process may not be appropriate until your vision and goals are further developed.

Step 4: Assessing Strengths and Weaknesses

If you do not know your team members well in the beginning, it might be beneficial to ask them what their strengths and weaknesses are. Just because someone is weak in a particular area does not mean you won’t want them on your team, he or she just might not be right for certain aspects of the project. You’ll want a diversity of members. For example, if you are building a 15,000-gallon cistern to collect water from Highland Garage, you will want to have people who know about engineering and construction design to build the cistern. You will also want people who are good at communication and partnerships to make partnering with on-campus entities easier. Effective writers are essential to projects when you need to write grants. If you need to do community outreach, you’ll want someone who is good at social media, web design, and/or marketing to help out. By having team with diverse skills, your entire effort will be more effective.

Step 5: Developing the Tasks

Projects can seem daunting at the outset, however, if you break up the work into smaller
pieces, you can slowly get to your end goal.

1. Break up the project. For example, for the cistern project, you might have the following tasks:
   - Determine where the cistern should be placed, how you will install it, and where the water will go.
   - Inform Planning, Design and Construction (PD&C), Facilities Management, the Surface Water Working Group, and other relevant departments of the project and ask for their feedback and collaboration.
   - Get funding for the project.
   - Install the cistern.

2. Then, determine the subtasks necessary to complete each task.
   - Survey the site, research cisterns, identify potential areas of difficulty with installation, draw out the construction plans, write out how you will do all of this work.
   - Meet with all the aforementioned entities, ask them to review and comment on your plan, work to build the relationships you need to get the project approved.
   - Research potential funding sources, write grants, hold fundraising events, prepare marketing materials about your project so people can understand the importance of it.
   - Install the cistern, monitor water flow and the impacts it has on water use.

3. Next, have team members discuss needs for the subtasks. For example, when surveying the site, what needs to be considered to determine whether or not this is a good site? Make sure you are thinking through everything you need to in order to ensure the subtasks, tasks and overall project are completed correctly.

Step 6: Delegating Tasks

Once you have decided how your team will be assembled and what tasks you want to complete, you can begin delegating tasks based on people’s strengths. For example, if someone is not very sociable but great at construction, put him/her on the planning/design part of the team, not in communications.

Assign “bottom-line” responsibilities—make individuals fully responsible for completing a set of subtasks, thereby giving
them ownership of a part of the project. For example, one person could bottom-line marketing, someone else could bottom-line building relationships with campus entities, and a third person could bottom-line making sure that all the design elements for a cistern are in order. These people may work with others to complete their tasks but ultimately the bottom line of getting it done rests with them.

Set a timeline for when you expect tasks to be completed. If there are no due dates, it is unlikely that things will get done.

Set up an accountability system for task completion. Have team members email everyone when they are doing something, so the team knows what’s being worked on; at weekly meetings, check in with everyone for progress reports; and have a group checklist so people can see the progress being made—and know if they are holding anything up!

Above all, make sure the tasks people are doing are things people want to do. There will be some tasks that must be done regardless of whether anyone wants to do them, but try to make sure people are getting assignments they generally enjoy doing. You will likely be working primarily with volunteers. If they do not like the work they do, they may not stick with the project or the group for the long run.