IMI Life skills – Pit crew: Team working and effective communication.

Leader’s guide

**Overview**

Nearly everyone works as part of a team so it’s not surprising that employer’s rate good team working very highly. But what skills do you need to be good at team working and do you have them? This is a skill area which most people can talk about as most people have been part of a team.

* What teams have you been in or are part of at the moment?
* Are they sports teams or quiz teams, possibly you’re already working or doing voluntary work as part of a team?
* Who are your team mates?
* When you think about who is in the team do you include your boss or team manager?

What makes a team successful? Obviously being good at

what you’re doing whether it’s a sport or working together

is important but employers are looking for more than that.

Talk to your friends and family and put together a list of what

skills each member of a team needs to help the team achieve

more than if the members all did their own thing separately.

You’ve probably thought of skills like helping and supporting each other, knowing each other’s strengths (what they are good at) and weaknesses (what they are still developing and may need help with), or getting on well together.

* Did you list good communications amongst team members?
* Employers rate being good at communicating very highly - so if good communication is important, how good are you at communicating?
* What do you think is meant by communication skills?

Write a list of the different ways in which you are likely to be

required to communicate in a job. Remember to include the many

different ways we all now use technology to communicate. Do you use the same sort of language when talking within a team and when talking to a customer? Would you use the same language when sending an email and when you’re writing a report for your manager to read?

How many of the team working skills or different ways of communicating you’ve listed do you have experience in?

If you’ve only listed a few then working through the MOT in the portfolio and Module 4: Pit Crew, will help you get a better understanding of what employers are looking for.

IMI Life skills: Pit crew – Teamwork and effective commination

Young person resource.

**What teams are you in?**

You may play football, cricket or another sort of sport. Possibly you’re in your school quiz team or dance crew. These are the usual type of teams that come to mind when we’re asked this question. If you have, or have had, a part-time job or voluntary work, did you think about your colleagues and work mates? Even if you’re hoping to be self-employed once you’re working, it would be unusual if you’re not part of some sort of work-related team in the future.

**Are you a team player?**

This module will help you to understand team working and your own role within any teams you may join. It looks at the different methods of communication needed for effective team working and will help you to get the most out of your learning and work-based team relationships.

By the end of the module you will be able to:

* understand the characteristics of a successful team
* recognise your own team style and that of others
* identify and use the most appropriate communication method for effective team working
* build and develop your communication and team working skills

**What is a team?**



Think about a team you’re a member of. What sort of team is it? The first thing which usually comes to mind is what the team members actually spend their time doing or aiming for, e.g. playing football for the local community team, trying to win the annual local league championship. But who do you think of as team members? What about the coach or whoever sorts out the booking of playing fields or transport? Who cleans the team strip? Are they members of your ‘team’? If there are several levels in your club and you’re in the 2nd team, what about other teams? What about the full sports club membership?

It’s perhaps not as obvious as you first thought. There may be several ‘teams’ within a larger organisation and sometimes even the various ‘teams’ may come together to create a bigger team. Teams are therefore changeable given the immediate task in hand and possible wider objectives.

Another way to look at teams is to think about who has the ‘power’? Who makes the decisions? Is everyone equal? Sometimes, especially in a work situation, there may be a team of people all with the same job such as a Telesales/Customer Adviser in a motor parts factor business supplying parts to trade customers, local repair garages etc and individual retail customers. There may be four or five in the team and each has an individual target for taking telephone enquiries, making sales calls and a sales target All the team members are paid in the same way depending on reaching their targets.

Take a look at the Parts Factor section on [www.autocity.org.uk](http://www.autocity.org.uk) Is this a team or will everyone be working individually to reach their own target? Are there any benefits of working together more co-operatively?

In this situation the team members may choose to simply work as individuals but there are problems with this. What happens when you want to take a week off? You’ll probably not reach your sales target that month and could miss out on a bonus. But if your team members work extra hard then the overall sales may hit everyone’s collective target and perhaps you could negotiate with the manager that you get your bonus after all. Why would the other team members do this for you? Well, they too will want holidays and an individual bonus so if everyone does this then everyone benefits – you, team members and the business.

Even if everyone has the same job some members will be more experienced than others, perhaps they’ve done the job longer or are particularly good at researching specialised or obscure parts. If you work as a team, knowing who is good at what, who has any problems etc can assist in helping to develop individuals’ skills and sort out issues. The overall team efficiency will improve and a positive and supportive atmosphere within the team is likely to develop. Everyone benefits.

Not all teams are made up of equals with every member doing the same job. Most companies have a number of different teams and these will often contain a number of different jobs. Most will have a team leader or manager who is responsible for ensuring objectives are met and they may be the one who allocates work out to individual team members. These teams may be fixed with clear roles within the company which don’t change very often but some teams come together for a short time, possibly to undertake a specific project or major piece of work. Members of such a project team may be drawn from other teams and will return to their original teams once the project is completed.

Many businesses will have a chart to show how different staff members fit together and the business is organised. Here’s one for a Motor Parts Factor business similar to the earlier example.

CREATE AND ADD IMAGE FROM PAGE 35

**As a telesales advisor which team(s) are you in?**

Hopefully you’ve thought of three:

* the Telesales Team led by the Telesales Team Leader
* the Sales team led by the Sales Manager
* the whole business

**Why are you part of more than just the small telesales team?**

Ask other students, your friends or relatives about their experiences as members of teams. List a few different types of teams. Drawing organisation charts like the one on the previous page may help you get the feel for how simple teams often fit together to form larger ones.

**What makes a group of people a team?**

Some teams you join voluntarily because you want to take part in something specific or to be part of a group of like-minded people who enjoy the same things you do. When undertaking formal training or in employment, you’re likely to be placed in a specific team with people you will not previously have known, may be of very different ages and backgrounds, and who you would not previously have chosen to spend time with. What will make you a team and, more importantly, what would make you a great team?



Think about why a group of people in a work situation could be labelled a team and write a list.

Here are some suggestions ...

* All team members report to the same manager
* All team members have the same job
* Team members have different roles but are jointly responsible for achieving something

You will probably have thought of other ideas. Clearly, as some statements contradict other statements then not all characteristics apply to every team. The basic characteristic is that they share something in common and, in a work environment, it’s probably going to be about producing or delivering something a customer wants. And that achieves your targets. However, just because you’re in a team it doesn’t mean you’re a team player. For that you need to contribute to what the team is to achieve collectively and, if everyone does this, the team will probably achieve much more than they would as a number of individuals working independently – this is called synergy - achieving more or maximising output by all working together as a team.

**What makes a team a great team?**

Any good manager will be looking to develop his or her team to best advantage and, with a bit of thought, you can often understand how they go about this. Obviously it is the responsibility of the team leader or manager to make sure the team has all the skills and resources required to do the job needed, but once the principles of good teamwork are understood then you can make sure you can identify your best role in any team you are allocated to.

Once again, ask other students, your friends or relatives about their experiences as members of teams or think about your own past activity. List skills and behaviour you think will help a team become a great team. You could try splitting your list into two headings: task related and interpersonal or ‘people’ related.

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| TASK RELATED | PEOPLE RELATED |
| * Team members have all the skills needed
* Team members have all the resources needed
* Full understanding of outcome and timescale
* Full understanding of quality, legal and ethical standards expected
* Recognise individual strengths
 | * Motivated and enthusiastic
* All willing to contribute
* Well-organised
* Flexible and adaptable
* Aware of any weaknesses
* Mutual respect and trust
* Confident and creative
* Willing to listen to each other
* Agreed understanding of decision making process – will abide by any decision of senior team member or agreed group decision
* Enjoy working together and achieving the required outcomes
 |

This list is not exhaustive but, as you can see, there are more points on the ‘people’ side than the ‘task’ side – did your own list look like this?**What’s your usual role in a team?**

Not everyone is good at everything, especially when it comes to personal skills. Some people are more confident and outspoken than others, some are shy at speaking out in a group, and some people always come up with lots of ideas really quickly. This is where team working can really pay off. If your team can work together, helping every team member to contribute and take on those activities they are best at, both task and people related, then the team will be a great one.

Managers will often try and match employees to make up a well-balanced team but as an individual you too can develop your team skills by understanding the strengths and weaknesses of your team. Even if your team isn’t very big or you are all very similar in how you behave in team situations you can still be a great team. You just need to recognise those strengths which may be missing and make sure you all, as a team, make an extra effort to take on the missing roles, e.g. if you don’t have any one who likes to check every detail is completed you can always draw up a checklist or go back and double check work done to make sure every last detail has been attended to.

To do this effectively, you need to know what your own, and your team mates’ skills are when working in a team. Once you think about how everyone has something to offer, then you and your team can work out how to get on with whatever it is you need to do, discuss and agree the best way forward, and to make sure everything is done, on time, to the best possible standard, and get satisfaction from achieving it.

**Communications**

All this sounds very easy but what helps all of this is good communication skills.



Have another look at the ‘people related’ team skills you listed earlier. You will already have spotted that having respect for each other, listening well, being willing to contribute to discussions and activities yourself, and showing support for team members are all important team working skills. There will also be times when you disagree on a work-related issue, you may receive or want to give criticism or challenge a suggestion.

So how do you communicate all this? Think about how you like people to communicate with you. Here’s a list of things to consider:

* Who do you want to communicate with? Colleague, team leader, senior manager etc?
* What situation are you communicating in? One to one, face to face, as part of a team meeting or in an open space with other people around?
* Is the communication formal or informal? Verbal or in writing? If written, who will see it? Could it be kept and read again in the future?
* What is the key point you are trying to communicate? Criticism, complimentary, trying to persuade or change their opinion, seeking agreement or giving instruction etc?
* What is the likely response? Can you guess their likely response? Will they be pleased? Could they be upset etc?

Not all communications are face to face. Think about the different types of employers and workplace situations.



Have a look at the World of Work pages on www.autocity.org.uk

Which different methods of communication are there?

You’ll probably identify the following methods:

* Direct face to face with one other person
* Direct face to face in a group setting
* Telephone
* Email
* Electronic – social networking, texting etc
* Written – reports, notes to managers or colleagues
* Written – informal notes
* Written - formal documents which may be recorded and available to others, the public etc

In Module 3 Sales Pitch, we look at communicating with customers in detail but some of the basic rules are just the same. Here are a few questions to think about:

* If you are working as an apprentice technician in a small local garage workshop which is a branch of a large company, would you use the same sort of language style and words for members of your workshop team as you would for the regional manager who’s just dropped in on a visit?
* Would you use the same language and style for a formal report to the team leader on a vehicle you’ve just checked over as you would when sat in a team meeting discussing work allocation and staff rotas?
* If your employer is a large company or part of a national or even multi-national group of companies they may have protocols; rules and guides setting standards about how to communicate. They may want you to answer the telephone in a particular way such as “Good morning, ABC Servicing and Repairs, how can I help you?” It’s very different to how you answer your own telephone at home or your mobile phone. Similarly, if you’re sending an email to a friend, you’ll probably use ‘text speak’ or shortened words, even slang. You may be asked to email a colleague in a different department to pass on a piece of information. What would they think if you used ‘text speak’ for this message?
* What about if your employer rings you? Do you have a polite answer phone message or is it a bit funny, or even slightly rude? Remember not everyone who rings you will share your sense of humour. Similarly, if someone rings your mobile phone whilst you’re at work (if it’s OK to take calls whilst working), what sort of ring tone does it have? It could grab your attention but actually be really annoying to others.
* For any written communication, what does it say about you? Is the style of language used appropriate? Is the grammar and spelling correct? If you’re not sure, check. Always use an electronic ‘spell checker’ or a

dictionary if available, not just to get it right this time but to make sure you get it right when you use the word again.

What other differences could there be when communicating with your close team members or senior management?

You’ve thought through the way in which you’re going to communicate, so now you’re ready. But how best to do it?



Think about how you like other people to communicate with you and list the words which come to mind.

Here’s a checklist to help:

* Use the most appropriate method of communication - formal/informal, spoken/written.
* Be clear about what you’re going to say – explain yourself accurately and concisely.
* Show respect for the person/group – listen and acknowledge what and how they respond to you.
* Keep calm and reasonable – don’t show any frustration or annoyance, keep the discussion professional and avoid an emotional response.
* If complaining or criticising, be positive.
* Remember to give credit when due and tell people if you think they have done well or you’re grateful for any assistance offered.
* Remember to offer support and assistance.
* Be willing to take on board any feedback, be flexible and willing to move your position if persuaded to change your mind.
* Finally, check any written work again before submitting it or check the other person has understood what you have been saying if face to face.

This all sounds very complicated but it’s not really. You’ve probably got quite a few of these skills already.



Ask some your friends or members of any teams which you’re currently in how good a communicator you are. What do they think?

Employers always value good team players – people they know will contribute and support team activities as well as do their own job well. Think about what you have done in the past and list those activities where you have demonstrated good team working. Have you mentioned these in your CV? Review your CV and add examples.

**Portfolio Activity**

In this module you’ve considered team working and your own role within any teams you may join. Also you’ve looked at the different methods of communication needed for effective team working and how this can help you to get the most out of your learning and work-based team relationships.

You will now be able to:

* understand the characteristics of a successful team
* recognise your own team style and that of others
* identify and use the most appropriate communication method for effective team working
* build and develop your communication and team working skills

Let’s have a go at using what you’ve learned.

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| **CASE STUDY** |
| You’ve successfully applied for an Apprenticeship and are working four days each week at a local service garage which is part of a chain of similar workshops in the region. Today is your first day at college where you’re studying one day each week to be a Vehicle Service Technician. You haven’t met any of the other students before.Your tutor has told you that in four weeks’ time you’ll be given a project to undertake in groups and that you should consider which four students you’d like to work with, and, if possible, organise your own teams. The project will take three months to complete fully and the teams will be expected to work together in class and in your own time. There will be the need to undertake independent research, to design a questionnaire, and seek information from each team member’s line manager. At the end of the project, each team will submit a single written report and will be required to deliver a presentation to the full class. 20% of your individual marks for the year will come from this group project. |

**What teams are you in?**

There will be your team of workmates at the service garage where you are employed, your class at college and now the smaller project group. There could be others as well. As the garage you work at is part of a chain, you may get to meet staff from other workshops or the apprentices from each workshop may be asked to meet together occasionally. Can you think of any others?

**NOTES**

**NOTES (Cont’d)**

For the college project to work it will be important to pick, and be picked by, the best individuals for the group project.... but you don’t know anyone yet!

Think about what will be important if you are to work well together. What skills will be needed?

Did you think about the task that is likely to be required? What about the ‘people’ skills and if you will be able to get on well together? Did you include these?

Which of the skills you have listed are you good at? Which are you not so good at?

**NOTES**

How could you find out more about the other students before the team has to be formed? It will be important to get on with this quickly as other students are likely to be thinking the same thing.

**NOTES**

Remember you need to be able to work out what skills the other potential group members have and if, as a team, you will have all the skills needed as well as enjoy working together.

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| **CASE STUDY (Continued)** |
| You’ve now agreed a team of five, including yourself. Everyone seemed to get on well at first and seemed to be enthusiastic and well-motivated to do a good job. At the first couple of meetings when the group had to discuss the project, each team member agreed their role and it was agreed that the group would meet every two weeks in the local café after college to review progress.One team member has missed two meetings and it’s not clear if their share of the project has been done. As a result, one of the others, who tends to take the lead role in each meeting, wants to throw them out of the team. |

Should you go ahead with this suggestion? After all, it would be wrong for everyone to get the same mark if not everyone has contributed the same amount of effort. What do you think? What might your tutor think about kicking someone out of the team at this stage? Can you think of any alternative actions? Do you have enough information to make a decision? What are you going to suggest to the group as a way forward?

**NOTES**

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| **CASE STUDY (Continued)** |
| Everyone is now contributing to the project and have each written a section. You’ve read through it all and think that, although all the content is good, the report doesn’t read very well due to the very different styles used by the different team members. You want to suggest that it is now re-written by a single member of the group. Also, you think one particular member should do the re-writing as he seems very good at it. |

What do you think the team members might think of your suggestions, especially as you’re not volunteering to do the work yourself? Some members may take this as a criticism. The one you think would be best at it may feel they have already done their ‘share’ of the work.

How will you explain your suggestion?

**NOTES**

Which ‘task’ and which ‘people’ team skills will be important when making your suggestion?

**NOTES**

Discuss your answers for the case study so far with other students and your tutor. Think about how you could develop your own team working skills for the future – how to develop your own team strengths and any areas of weakness so you can adapt and contribute effectively to different teams. Can you think of anything to add to your notes?

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| **CASE STUDY (Continued)** |
| Back at your place of work, you’re starting to know your way around the workshop and, in addition to helping to keep the place clean and tidy, the other technicians are beginning to get you involved with their jobs. The Service Manager has told everyone that your college activity schedule will be detailed on the team notice board and all staff should make sure that you are given every opportunity to be shown related jobs as appropriate vehicles come in for service. The Service Manager has told you that he will be required to review your progress each month and report back to your college tutor.He has asked you to come up with suggestions how this could be done. |

Think about the team(s) you are in. The information from one team (at work) is likely to be shared with other teams (college / head office).

Who will you recommend you communicate with? Why? What do they need, or you would like them to know? What format would be most appropriate for each person or team?

**NOTES**

Now you’ve thought about this for a while, write some notes below about what you’re likely to recommend to

your manager.

**WHO? WHY? WHAT INFORMATION? WHICH METHOD OR FORMAT?**

Now, finally, write yourself a checklist to remind yourself how best to communicate. Remember to include both formal and informal communication and also verbal and written.

**NOTES**

Discuss your answers for the case study so far with other students and your tutor. You may want to check back in the content area of the module to see if you missed anything before having a go at the MOT.

MOT – self refection

**Question 1**

List five different teams which you are a member of. Include both teams you have voluntarily joined and those which you are required to take part in.

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

**Questions 2**

Think of the different teams you have listed in Q1. Are any part of larger organisations? Select one of these and list the different teams this makes you a part of.

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**Question 3**

Think about the teams you are in. Why are you a team? List the possible characteristics of a team.

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**Question 4**

What are the two areas of skills needed for a team to be successful?

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**Question 5**

List what task-related issues need to be met for a team to be successful.

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**Question 6**

List what people-related skills and behaviour will be needed for a team to be successful.

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**Question 7**

List five methods of communication likely to be used at work.

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**Question 8**

List eight things to consider before any communication.

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Think about what you have done in the past. It could be part-time work, school, college, voluntary work, sports etc. Give examples of the positive team working and good communication you have demonstrated in the past explaining the situation.

**NOTES**

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Which types of positive behaviour do you already demonstrate?

**NOTES**

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Have you mentioned these in your CV? Review your CV and add examples.

Which types of behaviour will you work to improve?

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Now check your answers with your tutor and put a tick in the boxes if correct. How did you do? Check the module again for any area where you could improve your score.