

# TEAMS - HANDOUT 3

## LIVING TEAMS

Based on the article *Ignatian Teamwork: An emergent Framework from the Instructions for the Team at Trent* by David Coghlan

### A framework for working with others

In his article on “Ignatian Teamwork”, David Coghlan analyses Ignatius’ letter to his companions at Trent and finds in his instructions a framework to guide them as a team. According to Coghlan, the basic elements of this emergent framework are in the following order:

1. **Setting the goal** (*Why* are we here? What do we want? What is our purpose? For what end?)

*Our main aim (to God’s greater glory) during this undertaking a Trent is (...). All this is undertaken so that they and we may implore God Our Lord that His Divine Majesty kindly infuse His divine spirit into all those due to discuss the questions proper to such a lofty gathering, in order that the Holy Spirit may descend with greater abundance of gifts and graces on this Council. [2.1]*

2. **Identifying processes to reach the goal** (*How* do we achieve our goal?)

Ignatius was very clear about the distinction between purpose and means. In addition to highlighting the ultimate goal, his letter provided instructions as to how the Jesuit group would have good social relations with those they interact with as well as guidelines on means (preaching, confessions and readings,...) and more specific instructions.

3. **Agreeing on group processes to maintain the team** (*How* do we go about our collective task? )

Ignatius was also aware that in any collaborative setting, focus is also to be put on the maintenance of the team and its cohesiveness in order for them to perform their work.

- *How will we manage ourselves and our work? Who does what? By when?*
- *How will we structure listening to each other and to the Holy Spirit?*

His letter shared a clear process to preserve the group life, including tasks such as:

- **meeting and communicating to foster alignment** “*We should set an hour aside every evening for all us to inform one another what has been done during the day and what should be done on the following day. [3.1]*”,
- **clarifying how decisions are to be made** “*We will take votes or use some other way to get agreement on what is past and what is still to come [3.2]*,”
- **planning the day ahead and reviewing** “*Each morning we should look to what we intend for that day, then make an examen of conscience twice during the day” [3.5]*
- **setting deadlines and frames** “*This timetable is to be put into effect five days after our arrival in Trent. Amen. [3.6]*

**4. Highlighting how one should contribute to the team and grow within it** (members' participation) - *How do we cater for the needs of individual members and build on their gifts so that all can grow?*

Ignatius was keen on prescribing tasks and activities to foster growth and development through feedback sharing and mutual support. *"One night one can ask the others to point out any faults they may have noticed (...) [3.3]. "another night another will do the same,...so that all can help one another grow in charity and good influence all around. [3.4]*

Failing to clarify the purpose of the team may lead to confusion and frustration. When team members contribute out of their own sense of what the team's purpose is, without aligning on a common and clear purpose, conflicts become frequent and are often interpreted as personal. Alternatively, frustration and disagreement may also be a symptom of a process failure (meetings are not well organized or facilitated, decision-making is not clear...). In this sense, whenever a conflict arise, it helps to "diagnose" it while reviewing the four hierarchically arranged elements of the above framework.

### EXERCISE

Based on the above framework, consider the below questions:

#### As team leader:

- How do I define the purpose of the team? How often do I invite team-members to contribute in setting the ultimate vision and goal of our teamwork?
- In my team, how are priorities set? Are they a given or decided by the group?
- What are my hoped-for outcomes for this teamwork? To which extent do these outcomes align with the ultimate purpose?
- How are all the necessary tasks allocated? What roles are required?
- How aware am I of how the group is working? How effective is our way of proceeding?
- How aware am I of the individual needs of team-members? How much time and energy do I invest in assessing how each is contributing and how they can be helped to grow?

#### As a team member:

- How well do I understand what I am here for?
- How aware am I of what is expected of me on this team?
- How can I describe the team's atmosphere and way of working? How satisfied and proud am I of being a member of this team?
- How aware am I of the challenges of my own way of thinking and working in this team? How much efforts and time am I investing to develop my contribution?

#### Looking at the outcomes of our teamwork:

- To which extent are the results significant and in line with what weintended?
- To which extent did the means and processes we selected enable our purpose to be achieved?
- What was the effect of our group's way of being and proceeding on overall results?
- How do you describe the individual contribution of each member in the overall picture?