

Scenario

This team is part of a technical communication class in electrical engineering. They are about 2/3 into the semester. The assignment for the class is to create a working circuit for a specific project. Last week the team gave a presentation and turned in a report on their circuit diagram. After their presentation last week, they were told they needed to revise their written document and rethink their presentation style. When they did their presentation they were cut off because it was too long, and they did not incorporate any visual aids. The team turned in a written report on time, but it had syntax errors and missed a key section. It is one week later and the team is meeting for a review session with the communication instructors. The students were instructed to arrive 10 minutes early to strategize the revision process.

Alex and Tom were largely responsible for the actual circuit. Andy and Pat were mostly responsible for the slides and giving the presentation. Tom did most of the work on the written report.

The following information is the basis for the dialogue that ensues.

Andy

Outgoing, interrupts, competitive, talks over other people in the team, confident, single, full-time student. Has issues with Aaron, who leaves early and comes late and always uses family as an excuse. Worked with Pat on preparing slides for team presentation. Dismisses Pat's suggestion to add Alex's pictures to the slides. Was responsible for presenting a large part of the presentation. Feels good about the presentation.

Conflict style: Forceful

Pat

Withdrawn, quiet. Goes along with what strong people in the team say. Worked with Andy on presentation, but had little influence on style/content. Was responsible for presenting a large part. Tried to include Alex's pictures, but Andy dismissed them because he did not see them as relevant. Feels bad about the presentation.

Conflict style: Withdrawal

Tom

Competitive, focused on the task, works hard, feels like no one else does anything. Really feels like engineering is what he wants to do. Works a lot with Alex in the lab. Wrote a large portion of the written report. Feels like no one else is serious enough. Gets defensive when he is accused of not e-mailing out a summary of last week's meeting. Is frustrated with Aaron for not following through on his tasks.

Conflict style: Confrontation

Alex

Accommodating, keeps the peace and is supportive of everyone and everything, takes notes, presents ideas, but they are never heard. He often shifts the topic of conversation to something non-task related (i.e. asking Aaron about his kids etc). He is not taken seriously by other members of the team. Works outside of class with Tom, but usually does what he tells him to do. Not sure if he wants to study electrical engineering.

Conflict style: Smoothing

Aaron

Aaron juggles family, work, and school commitments and feels his multiple responsibilities provide a valid reason for why he sometimes misses meetings, shows up late, leaves early, fails to fully complete assigned tasks, etc. Aaron is a nontraditional student with work experience in the engineering field. He thinks communication instruction detracts from engineering education. He views his contributions to team projects as more valuable because of all his work experience. Helps a little bit with everything when he is at meetings. Did not bring slides to review session, because he did not know/did not remember that this was assigned to him.

Conflict style: Forceful