Ask the Expert: Diversity in Teams

“How do you manage the dynamics of a team that is comprised of an equal mix of more tenured people and newly hired individuals?”

Overcoming Faultlines in Teams

What the Research Says...

- Teams can become divided into subgroups based on differences in backgrounds, experiences, and values (Thatcher & Patel, 2012).
- Faultlines become even more powerful if characteristics are “layered” on top of each other (Meyer & Glenz, 2013). For example, if all new hires are also remote employees, while more tenured colleagues work in the office, this would be a stronger faultline.
- Faultlines often become “activated” depending on the tasks a team is completing (Ellis, et al., 2013).

Fracturing Your Team’s Faultlines

De-Activating Faultlines

Team leaders may be able to anticipate when faultlines become activated.

For example, ask yourself:
- Do groups of team members have different backgrounds and experiences?
- Could these groups disagree when discussing an upcoming task or decision?

Answering these questions in advance may allow you to acknowledge and then overcome these divides.

Emphasize the Collective

Team leaders and their members can also re-orient themselves to the team’s Core.

Ask yourselves:
- What is most important for achieving our goals and objectives?
- How does this task or decision relate to our team’s purpose?

Answers to these questions can help each side of the divide come back together as a team.

Next Steps

- Faultlines are a natural consequence of creating a diverse team. When putting a team together, or adding new members, you might think about how certain backgrounds and expertise could fit together to create a potential faultline.

Additional Resources

- CCL has developed the REAL framework to help leaders maximize the benefits of diversity in their teams.
- Learn more [here](#)!