

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Learning and Knowledge Development for a Globally Sophisticated Workforce (5)

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THE IDEAL PROJECT TEAM: A DUAL PERSPECTIVE ON UNIVERSITY LEARNING
OBJECTIVES AND EMPLOYEE REQUIREMENTS IN THE SPACE SECTOR

Abstract

After graduating from university fresh engineers often discover that their education did not prepare them for all aspects of their job. For the most successful entry in project teams, both employer and employee have accepted that extra training and learning on the job is necessary. In this paper the origin of these perceived gaps is investigated on the basis of the authors' observations; Bas Theelen as a project manager with 20 years of experience, and Jon Reijneveld as a recently graduated engineer. Both studied aerospace engineering at the Delft University of Technology and work together on the European Data Relay System (EDRS) at Astrium Services. They identify what are the characteristics of successful project teams and how such teams can be created. These are then linked to the roles university and employers have in the creation of such teams, how this can be strengthened, and how they can learn from each other.

The main observation is that beyond the technical know-how, the team members' personality, interpersonal skills and work attitude have a considerable impact on the success of the team. Working in teams is often stimulated at university by implementing project based education. This hands-on experience is obviously valuable in the student's future career. One early and interesting observation is that the ability of a person to work well in teams can be highly dependent on the group: a person can be a great contributor to one team, while in another team the same person's added value is lost. This may be perceived as a "given" rather than as something that can be actively managed, if it is noticed at all. The authors are convinced that with education, training and practice a person's ability to work in groups can be strengthened. Universities and employers have an opportunity to commonly focus on teamwork, and on the skills and attitudes of the team members. By creating awareness of such aspects within a team, and actively applying them, a team's ability to accomplish its objectives is greatly enhanced. The challenge is to define how these elements will be integrated within the curriculum of universities and the training processes of employers. Together they have the ability to lay the foundations for the inspiring projects of the future, enabled by more successful teams.