

Team exercise

Embedded System Design Project (DAT096)

v 1.0

Lena Peterson

January 20, 2012

1 Introduction

You are about to take on a team effort which requires you all to cooperate to be successful. Before the effort commences, you need to decide, among yourselves, how your team responsibilities will be distributed, and what your rules for cooperation will be. Today, we will start that process; you will need more time and more thinking to finish it, but you will need to be done in the first half of next week to continue with the work of planning the actual project. This exercise is intended to set the tone for that work, and hopefully for the rest of the course; *a well-functioning team regularly considers and re-assesses its ways of working.*

In each team, one member has been designated Project Manager. Importantly, those of you who are not Project Managers still have a *shared responsibility* for the outcome of the project. Today, we will focus on four components of that responsibility:

The rule of contributing: Team members have a responsibility to contribute to the issues in focus. Opinions, hopes, feelings are valid contributions too, not just facts, work hours, and results!

The rule of inclusion: Team members have a responsibility to include the other team members in the process; to inquire and be curious about what the others can contribute.

The rule of connecting: Team members have a responsibility to react and connect to the contribution of others; to offer associations, support, or constructive critique.

The rule of integrating: Team members have a responsibility to make conclusions and integrate what has been said by others.

A short rule of thumb, handy to keep in mind, is to strive to *balance talking and listening*, figuratively as well as literally.

2 The Task

The Task is to write a Team Agreement to guide cooperation during the project¹. The LIPS project model includes a template for a Team Agreement. It lists a number of issues that the team will or may have to face; you are encouraged to agree ahead of time how to handle these issues. (The template says nothing about the actual project tasks; how to divide the development responsibilities are the subject of the planning document which is due in a couple of weeks.)

You are free to modify the template if you wish; you are welcome, but not required, to ask for input from teachers. Once you have arrived at an Agreement with signatures from all Team members, you will submit one copy of the agreement in a sealed envelope to the course Examiner (to be used in case of grave disagreements among Team members, when the Examiner may need to mediate).

3 The exercise

The exercise comprises the initial discussions of the Task. The form we use is often called fishbowl. During these discussions, you should strive to follow the four Rules given above. Two teams pair up. One team will be the *observers* of the discussion among the members of the other team; observers will be silent and will not focus on the Task, but *only* on how well the four Rules above are followed. We recommend that each observer focuses on one of the discussers. After some time, maybe 20 minutes, discussion is paused, the teams switch places and the observers discuss what they have seen among them selves (without addressing the other team directly) for about 10 minutes while the other team is listening silently. The observer discussion should be respectful but honest. Start by pointing out good examples, and then point to what could be improved. Be as concrete and specific as possible. Literal quotes are often helpful so make noted while observing.

Next, the roles are reversed. To help observers, the next page shows the four Rules with space to write down your observations.

[Additionally, the discussing team will need to assign a secretary who notes your progress on the Task.]

4 Reflection

The exercise is quite short due to lack of time. To make the most of it, you are encouraged to write down your own reflections afterwards, and save these notes for future reference. Here are some questions you might use for personal reflection:

- What kinds of feedback proved most useful and constructive?

¹In case the team has already written its Team Agreement, the task is to write the Project Plan

- What is the main message I bring with me from this exercise?
- After today, can I identify one single thing I should strive to improve in my own interactions with other team members?

Contribute facts, opinions, etc

Include the contributions of others

Connect by associations, support, criticism

Integrate the collected and connected contributions into conclusions