Coaching – Collaboration online

You are part of the team, but with different tasks!
Clearly you have different tasks from the others: you are the one who watches them and steps in when you have the impression you are needed. You give security in the way that you are there for them, see what is going on, give them feedback and motivation and help if asked to.
See how the group develops and support them in this development, in order to find their own goals as a group, tasks, content and working environment. You are not the one who decides about these issues, but rather the one who accepts and supports decisions made by the group.
Don't lead them- support them!

Therefore, you always need to know what is going on, so be updated in what happens in the group! Be the person they contact if problems appear and sort them out together with the entire group.

Help your team to organize themselves!
One of your biggest tasks will be to help the group members to get themselves organized as one single team. This is related to the goal of the whole project, the working environment they will have to design themselves, possible rules the group members would like to introduce, timelines, task assignments, etc.

Be aware that you are the one who raises questions about these topics, but not the one who makes the decisions about them. Coaching means to help a group to find its own way, goals and dynamics!

Fix your goals/ achievements!
Agree on what you will do within this project, what your aims are, what you want to achieve, what the result will look like.

Bring this issue up for discussion, but be aware that you ought not influence the group in its discussion. You are supposed to support them in helping them to find answers to the questions, but you should not be the one who gives them the solutions!

If you see that the group loses track of the original aim, step in and offer it for discussion to the whole group! It is absolutely normal and sometimes even essential to redefine the goal first fixed, within a work process. However, make sure that this is what all group members want and agree on!

Make tasks, expectations and framework clear.
The discussion about the achievements will automatically give indication about what the group will have to do. Still, things can be done in different ways, especially when the team is international. So are you sure the other team members know what is expected from them? Do they know what they can expect from you as coach?
If you raise this issue at the beginning, tasks and roles become clear and are negotiated if necessary, but tasks and roles will be much easier to fulfil if they have been agreed on before.

Support Communication between Members of the Team.
Working together online is different: people don't know each other personally, but rather gets to know each other within the project. Be aware that communication over the Internet follows its own rules. Misunderstandings and misinterpretations happen often enough, so try to express yourself as clearly as possible.

Its is also important to answer requests/emails to you as coach as soon as possible, but at the latest within 24h. All members should agree on giving notification if they are not reachable, although they are expected to be available at specific times. But for you as coach this issue is a MUST otherwise it can cause serious problems for the group members (frustration, anger, guilt).
Make clear that you are the one who will help sorting out the problems which might appear.

As a coach you should also consider the possibility of make a picture of youself available in a restricted area for your group members. It will be easier for them to get a 'connection' to you as their coach.

Motivate!
Learners need to be motivated, as otherwise they will lose interest. At the beginning it is important to point out the assets they do have: getting specialized in one topic, getting to know other people in foreign countries, etc.
Also give your team feedback already during their work.

Losing interest – What to do?
You see your group losing interest? Ask yourself if you can see the reason why: maybe the task set was too ambitious or the tasks assigned to a person are not what he/she had been expected.
Offer it for discussion to the whole group and work out the solution together: find the reason and get it going again, by adopting the new requirements into the group.
Even if your group fails, they will gain more experience in online teamwork. So give them the possibility to reflect on what happened and why they failed!

For questions concerning this suggested guidelines, please contact:

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