GROUPS AND TEAMS AT WORK. Paper instructions: In this second Case Assignment, the assignment is going to test your understanding of how successful teams operate efficiently through teamwork. Teamwork relies upon individuals to work together to achieve common team goals through sharing knowledge and skills. Successful teamwork relies upon synergism existing between all team members and the creation of an environment where they are all willing to contribute and participate to promote and nurture a positive, effective team environment. Team members must be flexible enough to adapt to a cooperative work environment where goals are achieved through collaboration and social interdependence rather than placement of their focus on individualized, competitive goals. Please see Table 1 on pages 642 and 643 in Tarricone and Luca (2002). It provides a summary of literature on the successful attributes needed for effective teamwork as follows: Commitment to team success and shared goals - team members are committed to the success of the team and their shared goals for the project. Successful teams are motivated, engaged, and aim to achieve at the highest level; Interdependence - team members need to create an environment where together they can contribute far more than as individuals. A positive interdependent team environment brings out the best in each person, enabling the team to achieve their goals at a far superior level (Johnson & Johnson, 1995, 1999). Individuals promote and encourage their fellow team members to achieve, contribute, and learn; Interpersonal Skills includes the ability to discuss issues openly with team members; be honest, trustworthy, and supportive; and show respect and commitment to the team and to its individuals. Fostering a caring work environment is important, including the ability to work effectively with other team members; Open Communication and positive feedback - actively listening to the concerns and needs of team members, valuing their contribution, and expressing this helps to create an effective work environment. Team members should be willing to give and receive constructive criticism and provide authentic feedback; Appropriate team composition is essential in the creation of a successful team. Team members need to be fully aware of their specific team role and understand what is expected of them in terms of their contribution to the team and the project; and Commitment to team processes, leadership & accountability - team members need to be accountable for their contribution to the team and the project. They need to be aware of team processes, best practice, and new ideas. Effective leadership is essential for team success, including shared decision-making and problem solving. There are two teams of students working on projects. In the end, one team was successful in completing their project on time while the other was not. Successful Team This team of students was highly successful in developing a quality project, as well as being highly collaborative. Their journal entries continually reflected positive comments about other team members, and at no stage during the semester was there a request or requirement to transfer marks from one team member to another. Team meetings were always friendly, and at no stage were team issues discussed as being problematic. The team always focused on the project and how the process of development could be improved by exploring expectations of the tutor, client, and end users. An analysis of the data collected from this team indicated that they showed the attributes needed for successful teamwork. In almost all of their responses in interviews, focus group meetings, and questionnaires, it was evident that this team was committed to: Commitment to team success and shared goals - the team was highly focused on delivering a quality product, and not pre-occupied by personal issues that might have interrupted this objective. They facilitated and nurtured positive, cooperative-working relationships based upon the focus of developing a quality final product that would impress their client tutor, peers, and end users. The whole team was strongly motivated to outperform other teams and shared a strong common goal of wanting to develop a product that would support their chances of gaining employment at the end of the course. This was evident in almost all of their responses. Interdependence – the team members felt that they had a responsibility towards the other members of the team and that the success of the project was based upon each team member’s contribution. Team members were always happy to help peers when they were experiencing difficulties. The team would proactively brainstorm problems individual team members were having and offer assistance if needed. Interpersonal skills – the team recognized that team members had different personalities and experienced problems at different stages. They showed consideration for each other, and respected and supported others in difficult times. Open communication and positive feedback – the team recognised that it was a “healthy thing” to discuss problems or difficult issues and try to offer constructive help/criticism in trying to resolve these. They strongly valued open dialogue that enabled team members to express their concerns in a non-defensive manner. They were open and truthful about all aspects of the project. Appropriate team composition – this team was proactive in selecting their team members well in advance for this unit. They had carefully considered the skills needed for each team member, and also the type of personality for each team member. These were carefully discussed and considered by two team members four months before the unit commenced. Commitment to team processes, leadership & accountability - team members were all aware of the importance of everyone’s role within the team and the process used by the team to plan and track the timing and quality of required tasks. The project manager was well respected by the team, and always consulted the team before making any major decisions. Also, the team had a number of quality assurance procedures which helped monitor activities as well as individual team members’ accountabilities. Unsuccessful Team Another team of students experienced severe team problems, which caused it to become dysfunctional; it had to be split. At the first peer assessment session, marks were transferred between team members, as it was perceived that some team members were not contributing. Even though agreement was made at this meeting that marks should be transferred, and suggestions were made about how to improve the situation, resentment amongst team members escalated. This was clearly evident from the comments being made through the confidential on-line journal entries each week. The tutor had several meetings with the project manager and individuals to help try to resolve issues, but to no avail. At one of the team meetings, a serious disagreement occurred in which one of the team members verbally berated another, from which point there was no reconciliation. After this altercation, team members felt they could no longer work together, so even though they would experience a heavier workload, they unanimously agreed to split and form two separate teams. An analysis of the responses given by the successful team indicated that this team had a strong awareness of the attributes needed for successful teamwork. Comparing responses from this team against the key attributes needed for successful teams shown in Table 1, it was evident that this team was not congruent with these criteria. Review the descriptors in Table 1 on pages 642 and 643 in Tarricone and Luca (2002) that describe the successful team, then review the commentary about the unsuccessful team and create your own Table in which you change the descriptors to ones applicable to the unsuccessful team. Then, include paragraph descriptions of the six attributes as was done for the successful team above. Last, address these final questions about the unsuccessful team: How would you recommend the unsuccessful team resolve its conflicts? What steps could you take to improve the team’s performance?