

Shared Standards

What is happening when people share a commitment to a common goal, yet continue to disagree with each other? We may want the same future, yet we seem attached to very different ideas about what constitutes progress and what success looks like. We often fail to understand how others can see things differently from us, since our point of view always seems more accurate, more 'real'.

As human beings, we each perceive the world according to our own history, experience, beliefs and assumptions. As a result, two people can look at a problem or issue and have entirely different interpretations about what they see or understand to be true. This applies to every aspect of our lives—from the seemingly mundane to highly complex, coordinated actions. For example, you may attend a meeting and determine the conversation was interesting, while I may have found the same discussion boring.

One way to deal with this dilemma is to create shared standards. Standards are crucial for building and nurturing an atmosphere that produces creativity and trust. If we are committed to being a high-performance group or to achieving a 'big' vision, then adhering to a group standard forms a solid foundation for our collective success.

Taking the time to develop shared standards within a group increases people's commitment. If we all participate in creating the standards, we will more likely own them and be responsible for adhering to them. And if someone in the group does not adhere to a standard, then we have a shared context in which to address it.

Standards can be created for the following endeavors:

- Holding effective meetings
- Developing processes and procedures
- Creating successful projects.

Standards are LESS effective if they are:

- Created for the purpose of controlling
- Created by the leader alone
- Not measurable (stated in assessments)
- Not concrete.

Standards are MOST effective if they are:

- Created for the purpose of increasing coordination and building trust
- Created and owned by all team members
- Measurable (stated as assertions)
- Kept up-to-date and revisited from time to time.