

It is not uncommon for two or more members of a team to not see “eye-to-eye” about how specific members are performing. I would like to offer two ideas that may help resolve this. However, keep the following in mind in any case:

Your fellow teammate is likely a good person who wants to do well. He/she is not the enemy.

Changing behavior for anyone is difficult but can be accomplished – it requires a long-term commitment from the team.

The first suggestion was offered by Dr. Jeff Kerssen-Griep (Communications Studies, U of P):

Try enlisting the “dominator” as an ally, claiming that you need his help with a problem (which you do...), then casting the problem as not aimed at him (i.e., you're worried that not enough is being heard from the whole group, that good ideas are going untapped, etc.). If he's an ally, he may turn his need to your ends. Usually works.

The other suggestion is to sit down with the “dominator” and discuss the situation. Here are some things to keep in mind when having such a discussion:

Avoid confrontational statements such as: “Your problem is that you don’t...” “You should allow us...” “You shouldn’t...” etc. Such statements put the other person on the defensive. These statements are easy to argue with – you’d likely get replies such as: “Oh yeah, well your problem is ...” “I am not...” “You aren’t perfect either...” etc.

Non-confrontational statements are typically more productive. Statements should be difficult to argue with. No one can disagree with how you feel when the other person behaves a certain way. The following statements can lead to progress in addressing your concerns:

“I would like to participate and learn as much as possible in this project. I feel like I’m not getting a chance. I have expressed these feelings before, but I still feel like my concerns have not been addressed. What can I do to help this situation?”

“I would like to have the opportunity to fully participate, but I feel like I am not being allowed enough chance to do so. What can I do to help this situation?”

“I am concerned with the success of our team. I am feeling like I have not been able to participate as much as I’d like. What can I do to help this situation?”

By asking “What can I do to help this situation” you have admitted that you are a part of the situation – which you are. It also shows that you are willing to help resolve it. It avoids placing blame, which is rarely a productive thing to do. In general “I” is a better word to use than “You”.