

12 Angry Men: The Power of Productive Conflict

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The Movie *12 Angry Men* and Effective Collaborative Teams

12 Angry Men (1957) is a gripping examination of a diverse group of 12 jurors who are uncomfortably brought together to deliberate after hearing the facts in a seemingly open-and-shut murder trial case. The jurors retire to a room to do their civic duty and pass a just verdict for the indigent minority defendant with a criminal record whose life is in the balance.

The jury of angry men—entrusted with the power to send an uneducated, tenement-dwelling teenager to the electric chair for killing his father with a switchblade—is locked in a small room on a stifling summer day until they come up with a unanimous decision. This compelling film examines the men's cultural differences, individual and collective prejudices, perceptual biases, and other character flaws that threaten to taint their decision-making abilities, cause them to ignore the real issues in the case, and potentially lead them to perpetrate a miscarriage of justice.

Using several clips from the movie, this workshop focuses on five qualities that support effective teams: open inquiry, accepting responsibility for making a decision, participation of team members, the value of productive conflict in uncovering ideas and new information, and the essential role of diversity in decision making. Each of these qualities is discussed through the lens of the classic movie, and then compared to the work of effective collaborative teams in a PLC.

Participants are encouraged to engage with each other and reflect on how to improve the effectiveness of their team.

Scene 1: There's always one.

What did you see that illustrated *effective* team dynamics?

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What did you see that illustrated *ineffective* team dynamics?

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Scene 2: Maybe you can still smell it on me too.

What did you see that illustrated *effective* team dynamics?

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What did you see that illustrated *ineffective* team dynamics?

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Scene 3: Gamble for support.

What did you see that illustrated *effective* team dynamics?

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What did you see that illustrated *ineffective* team dynamics?

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Scene 4: Could they be wrong?

What did you see that illustrated *effective* team dynamics?

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What did you see that illustrated *ineffective* team dynamics?

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Scene 5: There's a danger here.

What did you see that illustrated *effective* team dynamics?

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What did you see that illustrated *ineffective* team dynamics?

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Scene 6: You're all alone.

What did you see that illustrated *effective* team dynamics?

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What did you see that illustrated *ineffective* team dynamics?

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How can we apply these themes to our collaborative teamwork?

1. Team norms and protocols create a safe environment for teamwork.
2. Prejudice gets in the way of the truth.
3. Getting to the bottom of a complex issue takes time and effort.
4. Check your intuitions—neither dismiss them, nor trust them blindly.
5. There are many interpretations of facts or data.
6. Test others' opinions, question their assumptions, and draw your own conclusions.
7. Civility will encourage your teammates to listen more attentively.
8. Coalitions can work for or against you—and they can shift.
9. Reason and assertiveness can both be powerful tactics, depending on the situation.
10. Patient silence and vocal persistence can both be powerful, at the right times.
11. One determined and skilled individual can wield a lot of influence.

