

# Building effective teams



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Work teams of all types are being empowered to perform tasks that previously were employees' responsibility. As organizations move toward more highly empowered work teams, the organizations that invest resources to train teams can increase both team and organizational effectiveness. Management often rushes to form work teams without considering how the behaviors needed for effective team work differ from those needed for effective individual contributions. Team members may receive little or no training to ensure that they can perform the required tasks and achieve the goals set.

Communication Issues in Situations 1. Not informing other departments of status and updated schedules. Improving communication in organization involves more accurate encoding, transmitting, decoding and updating at the interdepartmental level. People can overcome barriers to effective communication. They must first be aware that barriers exist and can cause serious organizational problems. Then they must be willing to invest the effort and time necessary to overcome the barriers. When departments do not communicate or update the status of information, then, there will be confusion in the process.

To avoid this, employees must be able to follow up to determine whether important messages have been understood. Feedback doesn't have to be verbal; in fact, actions often speak louder than words. The sales manager who describes desired changes in the monthly sales planning report receives feedback from the report itself when it is turned in. If it contains the proper changes, the manager knows the message was received and understood.

Managers who tell everyone to see the big picture often create a serious communication overload.

Rather than trying to keep everyone involved, top-level management need follow the “ need-to-know” principle transmitting communication and updating people in other areas of the organization that need the necessary information. Sometimes it is useful to regulate the flow of information and procedures that need to be brought to the attention of the people in the other departments. As long as performance falls within the acceptable range, the regular procedures are followed. Misunderstandings and confusion can be reduced when adequate and timely feedback of information is done.

Information must always be updated. Feedback mechanisms and reporting systems need to be established so managers know whether their messages have been understood, accepted and followed. Sometimes, a useful technique here is to manage the timing of messages so they are received in an orderly manner. This principle is similar to the procedure many executives use in responding to their in-basket. Incoming mail is sorted into piles of related topics. A similar procedure can be used, to some extent, with verbal communication where specific time periods are scheduled for discussing a specific topic.

“ Knowledge work is a process requiring knowledge from both internal and external sources to produce a product that is distinguished by its specific information content” (Kappes and Thomas). 2. Blaming between people of different races This is a big communication barrier that needs immediate remedy. When one has a grudge against someone, he tends to make that someone responsible for everything he finds wrong. When a person in one

department blames someone, his desire to judge and punish is often what is at work.

Someone blames another when he is angry because the action made things turn out differently than he wished—if not through his words, then through his manner and tone of voice. One can put all the responsibility for what happened to him, in a way that implies what he did was “ wrong” or “ bad. ” Moreover, blame breeds resentment. “ it’s your fault! ” is a red-flag phrase. It is to a person what a matador’s cape is to a bull. The hooker in blame is that smidgen of truth in what one said or implied. One can seldom say, “ That’s just what you feel-it has nothing to do with me.

” When a person’s blamer goes to work, it is very canny. It knows exactly where to go zap, where to pick out that nasty kernel of truth. A put-down artist is an expert at zeroing in on where you feel bad about oneself and making him feel even smaller there. Two messages get mixed up in blame: one party’s statement of how he feels (I’m angry and disappointed”) and one’s evaluation of the other party (“ Scum like you shouldn’t be aloud to work in this company. ”). The feelings about the situation are often hidden in the “ you-are-bad” message, instead of being said straight out.

One-way blaming in the organization is overcome is help open up communication between two blaming departments. Members of these departments must also be reminded that they need to take responsibility for their part in what happened. 3. Lack of standardization among terms used with different departments. This signifies uniform and consistent procedures or knowledge of terms that employees are to follow in doing their jobs. They must be aware of not only the terms used in the different departments but

also the written procedures, job descriptions, instructions, rules and regulations to standardize the routine aspects of jobs.

Standards among terms used with different departments allow people to reinforce values important to the organization's success. This approach may seem mechanical, but if terms were not standardized, many organizations couldn't achieve their goals and will have confusion of meanings in the process. Terms serve to bind as well as to separate departments. Terms sometimes block more than they reveal. They can prevent a true look. One is unlikely ever to know the whole truth of something. Someone else may see or touch a thing in a different way than one does, and know another side of it.

An idea or statement, or concept is true to the degree that it helps one accurately experience the thing or event it represents. Some of the terms team members use are: free riding which means that a member does not contribute fully to team performance but still sharing in team rewards despite making less effort than the others; groupthink which is an agreement-at-any-cost mentality that results in ineffective work team decision-making and may lead to poor solutions; productive controversy which occurs when team members value different points of view and seek to draw them out to facilitate creative problem-solving (Hellriegel et al 1996).

Dryer and Ericksen (March 2004) propose that human behaviors in high-reliability organizations can affect organizational performance. They examine several Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) strategies that engender and reinforce certain human behaviors that in turn can result to reliability in organizations that " operate under trying conditions, i. e. , those

that manage complex and interdependent systems subject to substantial external volatility. " They believe reliability in organizations (like mining firms) is a " critical process-based" measure of organizational performance (Dryer and Ericksen, 2004).

Communication Strategy Team discussions are important. This is crucial especially in discussing feelings for these reflect the emotional climate of a team. The four feelings most likely to influence work team effectiveness and productivity are the feelings of trust, openness, freedom and interdependence. The more these feelings are present, the more likely the work team will be effective and the members will experience satisfaction. These feelings probably are present in a formal or informal group to which one belongs if they agree with the following statements:

- Trust- Members have confidence in each other.
- Openness - Members are really interested in what others have to say.
- Freedom - Members do what they do out of a sense of responsibility to the group, not because of a lot of pressure from others.
- Interdependence - Members coordinate and work together to achieve common goals. Indeed, in organizations, departments can easily get into trouble when they forget that they are sometimes dealing with abstractions, and then act as though they were concrete things and events.

REFERENCES Dryer, L. and Ericksen, J. (March 2004).

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