Cross-functional team

Cross-Functional TeamsWorking With Allies, Enemies & Other StrangersGlenn M. Parker, author of ??? Cross-Functional Teams???, is a consultant who works with organizations to improve quality and productivity by creating high-performance teams. His training and team-building techniques are becoming the standard for building teams in today??™s business place. His ideas, techniques, and advice have been utilized by many companies such as, Merck and Company, Johnson & Johnson, Bristol-Myers Squibb, 3M, and AT&T. Parker lives in Lawrenceville, New Jersey with his wife Judy.

In his spare time he plays tennis, cheers on the Philadelphia 76ers, and plans his next vacation. His book, ??? Cross-Functional Teams???, provides practical and helpful approaches to establishing cross-functional teams. Cross-Functional teams link people from different parts of an organization which is helpful in comprising cross-functional teams of any discipline in any industry to work collaboratively and attain functionality and profitable growth. The world we live in is changing and so is the world of business. This book describes how a cross-functional team is composed, obstacles to success and strategies for the implementation of effective cross-functional teams. Effective cross-functional teams have many advantages such as; speed, complexity, customer focus, creativity, organizational learning, and single point of contact.

Although some of the advantages apply to other types of teams as well, these advantages are especially true when played out in cross-functional teams and its factors. The context of such factors as leadership and empowerment, goal-setting, performance appraisal and rewards, interpersonal relations and management support. In the middle of these

factors sits cross-functional teams that are composed of experts, who posses a variety of functions, that are ready to move quickly and flexibly to adapt to the changing needs of the organization.

The members of cross-functional teams often function under self direction. They do not require specific directions. However, decision making in a team may depend on majority but is more often being lead by a manger or team leader. As with any team, the leader plays a very important role but leading a cross-functional team is much more difficult. The main reason these kinds of teams are made up is to deal with a complex subject or to resolve a demanding issue. The leader of cross-functional teams must have a diverse technical background to understand the subject and the contributions that are made from its diverse members. Team leaders also need to clarify their team??™s authority and to make a decision about key issues. One of the main issues with cross-functional teams is that they do not have the authority to make decisions and implement them.

Some teams will take the responsibility of making a decision under the assumption that they automatically are entitled to that kind of authority. It may be obvious, but an effective team needs to have a clear set of goals, a common purpose, and a clear mission. Because cross-functional teams are different from other teams, setting goals is very critical to its success. ??? One of the most important roles that clear goals play on a cross-functional team is to reduce the potential of conflicts and minimize past differences among the various disciplines represented on the team.

??? (p. 81) Members of a team seem to have a clear understanding of what they must deliver but are not sure where his or her piece of the puzzle fits in the overall prospective. Therefore, team members are only concerned with what they have to get done and are less inclined to any commitments toward the total project to make it work. To resolve this issue, the development of a common goal, which all members are willing to accept and support, needs to be thought out carefully and thoroughly that support the objective. In cross-functional teams, every team member is going to be faced with increased responsibility and is going to wonder how they are personally going to benefit from their participation on the team. Department managers will rarely see their employee??™s performance on a team and will not always get a complete view of what they did. It is up to the team leader to be in charge of giving the department manager the input that he or she needs to factor in an employee??™s reward.

Organizations are then required to shift their individual reward programs to team reward programs. While there will always be a need to reward an individual who goes above and beyond the call of duty, team reward programs have been put in place to be given when the job is complete. Even individual rewards must acknowledge people who are effective team players, offer their expertise, and pitch in and help out when necessary.

Cross-Functional teams provide an excellent opportunity for an employee to demonstrate their unique work styles and skills and contribute them to other styles that they are not familiar with. In this respect, people with different skills and styles can learn from each other and benefit from learning new skills and put outdated methods behind them. There are various training

programs that help people learn what it means to become a team player and how they can increase their personal effectiveness as team players. Cross-functional teams provide the framework for putting together different professions with different backgrounds and diverse trainings to solve a complex business problem, design a new system, or develop a new product.

Bringing together people from different parts of the company with different skills and training in diverse applications means that the outcomes will be more creative. The best results in cross-functional teams occur when the size of the team is limited. About four to six members is ideal, but no more than ten works best. Some cross-functional teams continue to try to operate with teams of 20, 30 and sometimes even 50 members with little or no success. There is very little a team can accomplish without the support of senior experts and functional department managers.

This is often a problem for many cross-functional teams because many of the other problems can be overcome with training, leadership and excellent communication skills. However, if management does not cooperate than the team is limited as to how far they are able to proceed. If the leaders of a particular organization want to succeed as a team based organization then they must set priorities to support the goal and quality of the cross-functional team that is working on the issue at hand. In my personal experiences with teams, I have already been involved with functional and many cross-functional teams with the company I currently work for. As a member of these teams I have been introduced to the expertise of senior engineers, sales managers and marketing directors. Every department has its own perspective on how and when something needs to be done. The main

variable within these teams is time constraints. But with the smartest people on all sides of the spectrum, these variables are easily resolved because there are no politics involved, only experts who know how to do the job right with no errors.

One of the biggest things I have learned from reading this book is that there is always something to be learned. If I am going to be the one who is chosen to be apart of a team than I need to learn and understand as much as I can about many different areas of the company. Having the knowledge to add ideas to other department heads, while successfully completing my end of the project, will make me much more valuable. I also believe that it is very important to become the team leader within these groups. Some of the team members may be technically savvy but lack the ability to communicate the information effectively.

By talking less and listening more, being the team leader means that I would have to posses both of these skills to keep the team from running into obstacles and to make it a rewarding experience for all the members involved. Eventually, after much hard work and effort, I will become a manager of a department and will definitely use the cross-functional method of creating teams to make sure I am getting the most out of those who have something to share. Being successful in today??™s fast-paced business world requires many divisions and its departments to work together in teams. The idea of cross-functional teams to bring together the best talent, experience and ideas to meet business needs is a great way to tackle any issue.

To stay on top of the technological advancements and the demanding need to develop new products, the smartest minds need to come together to develop the best product. These great minds have had the experience in many different aspects of business and have grown with the skills and techniques of others who have been mentors on teams before them. I feel that cross-functional teams is an excellent way to develop personally and professionally by evaluating what has happen and applying what you have learned from the other styles that are used by the diverse group of people that are put together to make a project run smoothly or solve an issue.