

Team development



Team Development Intercultural communication remains a significant issue for businesses and non-commercial organizations around the world. It remains a significant issue because miscommunication and related misunderstandings can negatively affect an organization's pursuit of its objectives (Organizational Cultures, 2000). The notions of diversity and multicultural teams, in the context of team development, are central considerations. This essay will examine how diversity and multicultural teams can actually contribute in positive and productive ways to team development.

There are both demonstrated advantages and disadvantages associated with multicultural teams (Stahl, nd). The goal ought to be to emphasize the advantages while at the same time making organizational adjustments to better understand the disadvantages and thereby convert them into advantages.

As an initial matter, multicultural teams generate more creativity. Team members have more experiences, more background facts to draw on, and more information to contribute to the team. This creativity results in a critical analysis of problems rather than a mere acceptance of previously-accepted norms. Precise definitions become important. There is, in a short, an inherent need in the diversity context to analyze and to clarify more completely than in a non-diverse environment. Team building, as a result, becomes a more thoughtful and analytical process. These contributions manifest themselves in very useful ways. Problems are presented, defined, and a broader spectrum of alternatives proposed.

The potential disadvantages are real, and have been empirically established, but can also be converted into team building advantages. There are issues,

for example, of mistrust and a lack of cohesion in some multicultural settings. Stereotypes and issues of bias may present themselves as obstacles. Some of these problems are rather straightforward. They may involve a certain slowness because of translation problems and language problems. This need not, however, remain a disadvantage. It can be managed to result in a more precise definition of terms and problems. More, alternative definitions might be considered; indeed, some of these alternatives may prove more valuable for the team. That said, these obstacles can be overcome.

How do organizations, therefore, go about maximizing the advantages while minimizing the disadvantages? This is a tricky question. Certain risk factors for the presence of these disadvantages need to be identified (Adler, 2002). For instance, cultural domination should be anticipated and eliminated. Another risk factor includes the preference accorded to certain cultural categories to the exclusion of other cultural categories. An example would be preferences accorded to members of more individualistic cultures at the expense of more collective-oriented team members. There are also demonstrable differences of opinion among diverse teams regarding the balance between short and long-term goals. These risk factors, if identified and anticipated, can be minimized so as to use diversity as a positive aspect of team development.

In the final analysis, the prerequisite diversity of multicultural teams can contribute to a more effective process of team development. It can add creative value and result in demonstrable increases in productivity. It is quite important, however, to anticipate potential disadvantages, and to either minimize those disadvantages or manage them in such a way that they also

become advantages.

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