

Literature review
about team building
to achieve
performance
commerce essay



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From the beginning of time, people have formed groups. Groups provide the basis for family living, protection, waging war and work. Every time you're in a meeting, whether with one other person or twenty, you're in a group. Group behaviour has ranged from total chaos to dramatic change, but it is increasingly evident that groups enjoy their greatest success, but it is increasingly evident that groups enjoy their greatest success when they become more productive units called teams.

Companies are relying mostly on their human assets (the knowledge, competence and capabilities of the workforce) as a source of competitive advantage. They must be managed and developed as "knowledge-based resources include all the intellectual abilities and knowledge possessed by employees, as well as their capacity to learn and acquire more knowledge" (Jackson et al., 2003, p. 9). Today's business environment changes rapidly in financial, technological and social arenas, resulting in greater complexity than a single individual can handle. The pressures of the competitive environment have forced the organizations to change their organizational structure to the team-based organization (Johnson, 1993; Mohram, 1993).

Changes in our world are bringing changes to teams. Teams are highly interdependent, engage in difficult relationships and work towards common goals with incorrectly matched values and different ideas about how they must do things.

Whether new or established, teams evolve and organizations can do their bit to help them realize their full potential. One way is through team building

process. A team built from scratch needs to bond together and develop shared values and group dynamics.

How to create effective teams is a challenge in every organisation.

“ Sticks in a bundle are unbreakable.”

Kenyan Proverb

History of Team and Team Working

The emergence of the team idea can be drawn back to the late 1920s and early 1930s with the now model Hawthorne Studies. These involved a series of research actions intended to study in-depth what happened to a group of workers under a variety of circumstances.

From past literature reviews, the first crude productivity teams were developed in USA in the production of muskets for revolutionary war. In the late 1950's W. Edwards Deming and J. M. Juran with the help of Dr Ishikawa introduced quality circles which became a success during World War II across Japan.

A key aspect of teams and team working is ability of the group of individuals that comprises the team to be more creative than any of the individuals working alone. Teams are viewed as being more appropriate for difficult tasks because they let members to divide the workload, develop and contribute expertise on subtasks, and monitor the work behaviours of other members. Teams having clear roles and mutual expectations provide a stable internal coordination for the team which leads to improved team performance (e. g. Janis, 1982, Choi 2002).

Definitions of teams have been influenced by different group concepts in psychology and social psychology (Hackman, 1990). Several concepts with similar meanings are widespread, such as: self-directed work groups, self-regulating work groups, self-managing work groups, semi-autonomous work groups, etc. (Benders and Van Hootegeem, 1999; Mueller et al., 2000).

“ Individually, we are one drop. Together we are an ocean. Ryunosuke Satoro

From the wider literature there are three types of teams identified:

real (distinct roles for members, task interdependence, outcome interdependence, clear objectives, team recognised both internally and externally, Borrill et al., 2001);

Pseudo (groups whose work is interdependent, but this is not recognised, Katzenbach and Smith, 1993a, b); and

Quasi teams (groups in which individuals admitted to being a team but who could not affirm all four of the following features: Clear objectives, working together, different roles and recognition (Borrill et al., 2001).

Group Work and Team Work

Many managers seem satisfied with group performance. Other managers are creating a climate where individuals are willing to give their best and work together in teams with the same number of people doing similar jobs with same technology while improving productivity. For teamwork and group work, the aim is to achieve an outcome that is beyond that which can be successfully attained by an individual member. In spite of these common

areas it is difficult to achieve the same level of synergy with group work as occurs with teamwork.

Group work and Group Dynamics

A group consists of individuals grouped together for administrative purposes only, working independently, sometimes at cross purposes with others.

Members are told what to do rather than being asked what the best approach would be. Groups are developed through the application of group dynamics theory and knowledge in ways that help groups to become more effective, performing and cohesive. The main aim is the minimization of growing pain and maximisation of continual improvement and performance.

“ There is no such thing as a self-made man. You will reach your goals only with the help of others.”

George Shinn

Group Dynamics

Group dynamics is the study of groups, especially of smaller groups (less than 20 people) and also a general term for group processes because people in small groups interact and influence each other in dominant and difficult ways, groups develop many dynamic processes that separate them from a random collection of individuals

Group dynamics is one of the frontiers of social psychology and seeks new ways to understand group behaviour. The emphasis is on then applying this knowledge to help groups function better. Kurt Lewin ((1890-1947) identified two aspects involved namely

Interdependence of fate. A group exists when people in it realize their fate depends on the fate of the group as a whole' (Brown 1988: 28).

Task Interdependence. If the group's task is dependent on each other members for achievement, then a powerful dynamic is created.

Team work

Before going into further discussion, the differential aspect between a group and a team has to be identified to better understand what results are expected from employees. When an employee joins a firm, he/she works in groups to give out expected results at the end of the day. Teams challenge the concept of bounded rationality and make employees think out of the box to achieve more than expected and mainly for the achievement of the strategic view of the firm. The difference can be showed in the table (refer to Appendix).

“ It is not a question of how well each process works; the question is how well they all work together.”

Lloyd Dobens

Not all groups in organizations are teams, but all teams are groups. The disparity between a team and a group is that a team is mutually dependent for general performance. A group meets the requirements of a team only if its members focus on helping one another to complete organizational objectives.

“ A team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.” (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993)

In recent years, teams have flourished in a variety of structures and functions. There are problem-solving teams, cross-functional planning teams, self-directed work groups, and empowered teams, quality improvement, problem solving and newly virtual teams. The purpose of all these teams often designed to improve collaboration, knowledge, and communication, empower employees, improve creativity and innovation, and cut costs. The responsibilities of teams are quite comprehensive, and may include distribution of duties, planning and programming of schedules, making decisions about products and services, creating new ideas and solving problems (Kirkman and Shapiro, 1997)

“ Many hands make light work.”

John Heywood

Team Building

Team building is an emerging aspect in the economy. The main objective is to make employee rethink their strategies, processes, systems, and the way in which they work together to achieve organizational goals. One of the primary objectives of teambuilding is maximizing performance. The aim and purpose of a team is to perform, get results and achieve victory in the workplace and marketplace.

Buller (1986) defined team building as a planned intervention facilitated by a third-party consultant that develops the problem-solving capacity and solves

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major problems of an intact work group. Woodman and Sherwood (1980) proposed that team building was designed to enhance organizational effectiveness by improving team operation through developing problem-solving procedures and skills and increasing role clarity (cf. Beer, 1976, 1980; DeMeuse & Liebowitz, 1981; Dyer, 1977)

Porras and Berg (1978) observed that team building was one of the most frequently used organization development interventions. This has led to a substantial increase in team performance. Furthermore, Shandler and Egan (1996) state that by application of principles of team building, “ any group can transform itself...into a high-performing team”. The bottom line is that team building takes time, because a group can only become a team through sustained, disciplined action. So to make teams pay off, the organization needs to support team development on an ongoing basis.

At the end of the day, individual problems become group problems and group goals become individual goals. Team building has to be met through different steps before achieving performance.

Finding good players is easy. Getting them to play as a team is another story.”

Casey Stengel

Several definitions of team building have been interpreted over the past years. For example, Woodman and Sherwood (1980) proposed that team building was designed to enhance organizational effectiveness by improving team operation through developing problem-solving procedures and skills

and increasing role clarity (cf. Beer, 1976, 1980; DeMeuse & Liebowitz, 1981; Dyer, 1977).

Effective teambuilding is the way for success and profitability, leading high performance teams to function effectively in specific corporate culture and maximizing performance: these are the actions and objectives that differentiate the great from the merely good. A further analysis of what team building can produce is as follows (cf. Beer, 1976, 1980; DeMeuse & Liebowitz, 1981; Dyer, 1977):

Manage organizational change and development

Re-energize the team towards a common goal

Assist the team in restructuring or dissolution

Help overcome states of confusion, disorganization or unpredictable outcomes

Assist temporary work teams to come together quickly

Enable merging teams to let go of the past and focus on future success

Assist new team members, including new team leaders, to work together more effectively

Create a vision and strategy for success

Identify common values and success measurements

Complaints from internal or external customers concerning the quantity or quality of output

“ When a team outgrows individual performance and learns team confidence, excellence becomes a reality.” Joe Paterno

Negative aspect of Team Building

It has been found that team building is not a universal remedy for organisational effectiveness. Management has to provide necessary approaches to encourage teams in all environments. Ineffective teams make organizations to misuse resources, fall short of performance aims and objectives, revise designs, and extend period to market.

One of the negative aspects after the processes and a successful team build, can be that team closes in on itself and sees its success as beating other teams in the organisation. Such competitive behaviour can have a negative impact on company performance.

The shortcomings of team building may be difficulties in assessing the performance of an individual's role in a team, free riders and high coordination and expenditure costs to put together appropriate team members

Team Building and Performance

For many years there has been a concern with the need to evaluate the effectiveness of teambuilding and performance interventions in organizational development projects. A study may reveal that a team is effective and performing more in a particular circumstance or situation.

However, this does not mean that the team will always be effective under the various conditions in which it may be required to operate.

Performance is a useful term to denote the capability of a team (for either a comparative or isolated assessment) and the processes that the team undertake. However, the notion of performance can be unrepresentative of how effective the team actually is (in terms of its contribution to the mission). The idea of increasing performance is to harness the ideas and experience of the staff so that they can be a lot more happily engaged in their work through trust in their teamwork

“ Great teamwork is the only way we create the breakthroughs that define our careers” Pat Riley

A team must be considered in terms of both performance and effectiveness. According to Henderson and Walkinshaw (2002), the performance and effectiveness of a team is defined as follows:

- Performance - the execution of an action; something accomplished; what is going on inside the team;
- Measure of performance - the extent to which a team executes the actions required in order to be effective
- Effectiveness - the accomplishment of a desired result, especially as viewed after the fact
- Measure of effectiveness - the extent to which a team meets the demands which are placed upon it.

From the research of Henderson and Walkinshaw, it is evident that effectiveness pertains specifically to the accomplishment of the goals, milestones, and objectives as defined by the requirements of the context or the stakeholders. By contrast, performance pertains more closely to how well the task work and teamwork is carried out.

Performance may be evaluated against a variety of criteria, such as reducing mistakes, continuous improvement in the quality of outputs, increased productivity, or customer satisfaction (Manz and Neck, 1997). On the contrary, some assessors like Buller, 1986; Woodman & Sherwood, 1980 have disapproved the idea between the link with team building and performance as there is no convincing evidence. Smither, Houston, and McIntire (1996) concluded that “ Research findings on the effectiveness of team building provide a complex mix of results that make drawing firm conclusions difficult” (p. 324).

“ Build for your team a feeling of oneness, of dependence on one another and of strength to be derived by unity.” Vince Lombardi

Even though team building brings in more advantages, some criticisms are found based on little evidence. Past research work and literature has been interpreted in different ways. There has been no precise validity in identifying the link between team building and performance. Little evidence has been found to create the relationship. Some research carried out by Woodman and Sherwood (1980), DeMeuse and Liebowitz (1981), Buller (1986), Sundstrom, DeMeuse, and Futrell (1990), and Tannenbaum, Beard, and Salas (1992), concluded that that team building was described in

encouraging ways by most of the studies reviewed, but there was a general lack of definitive, convincing evidence for the beneficial effects of team building on performance

Druckman and Bjork (1994) noted that the enthusiasm for these approaches among practitioners “ is not matched by strong empirical support for their effect on team performance” (p. 125)

There is no determination of whether there is a beneficial effect of team building on performance based on previous narrative literature of this research. Team building is not necessarily a good fit for all organizations. In fact, studies show that certain organizational structures, cultures, programs, and procedures undermine teams. So no matter how much team-building initiatives are pushed, teams won't be effective in these work settings. These types of organizations include ones with:

Hierarchical or bureaucratic structures.

Authoritarian cultures, which lock power and control in one place.

Cultures that primarily reward individual performance and initiative.

It is an unfortunate and unacknowledged fact that so-called team building events don't improve team performance unless they're part of an ongoing team development strategy.

“ It is amazing how much people can get done if they do not worry about who gets the credit.”

Sandra Swinney

Components of Effective Team Building to assess Performance

When assessing the effectiveness of team building on performance, some main factors and variables have to be taken account of. These factors will help in assessing the validity and provide results. Beer (1976, 1980), Dyer (1977), and Buller (1986) have discussed four current models of team building. Subsequently, Adams et al. (p. 4) 2002 further introduced the seven constructs of effective teaming which are clearly defined goals, common purpose, role clarity, psychological safety, mature communication, productive conflict resolution, and accountable interdependence.

Goal setting,

Goals and objectives are set from top to operational management levels. These goals contribute to overall achievement of the mission and vision statements of the company to perform effectively and efficiently. Team Building helps in clarifying the team's sense of direction to achieve individual and team goals. They are exposed to a goal setting team building involvement. Goal setting may consist of the team's values, purpose, strategies and vision.

Interpersonal relations,

Team members are met to communicate with each other to share their views and ideas. This creates mutual understanding, support and sharing of feelings. Interpersonal relations may include acceptance, individual involvement, conflict resolution and provision of feedback at each stage.

Team building process is meant to develop trust and confidence in the team in which members must work collectively to accomplish results.

“ When your work speaks for itself, don’t interrupt.” — Henry J. Kaiser

Problem solving

All teams are formed to work on a specific assignment given by top management. Action plans are done to achieve results. Problems are inevitable to come across. The team building process make employees become involved in action planning for the solution of problems involved and for implementation and evaluation of solutions. The process includes problem solving strategies, decision making processes, performance appraisal and communication.

Role clarification

Team members have their own respective role to play. Team building process gives rise to role clarification in order to create an understanding of what is accepted from each team member and others in the accomplishment of goals. Role clarification may involve establishing roles, delegating responsibilities, creation of autonomy and accountability.

Psychological safety

Psychological safety is the shared belief that the team is secure for interpersonal threat taking (Edmondson, 1999). If trust is present in the team, the members will bring in their personal touch. There is confidence of not being embarrassed, rejected or even punished for giving out their views.

Questions and suggestions are most welcomed in the discussions and meetings. This fosters creativity among the members to perform better.

When a team outgrows individual performance and learns team confidence, excellence becomes a reality.” Joe Paterno

Mature communication,

Mature communication refers to team members' capability to communicate ideas visibly and concisely. In addition, each team member needs to pay attention without interrupting, clarify what others have said, and provide and receive productive comments. Team members need the facility to convey compelling reasons for their ideas.

Productive conflict resolution

Productive conflict resolution refers to the procedures and measures taken by team members when a conflict takes place. When these actions lead to results such as aiding the clarification of the problem, increasing the cohesiveness among team members, exploring alternative positions, increasing the involvement of everyone affected by the conflict, and enhancing the decision-making process (Capozzoli, 1995), the team will have successfully managed the conflict.

Accountable interdependence

Accountable interdependence is the last of the eight constructs. The accountability for the productivity of the team is the duty of each team member. Accountable interdependence refers to each team member's

understanding the joint dependence of all team members' responsibility for the quality and quantity of the team's work.

Rawlings contends that a new team paradigm is expanding where management teams among all levels are being requested to work together with more interdependence, with shared accountabilities outside their classic function, and with higher levels of trust and participation (2000). All components discussed above have a direct link between team building and performance. It can be found that these constructs are mainly benefits arising from team building processes which can be further identified in next section.

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Bruce Tuckman Model

In order to know what to look forward to team building it is practical to investigate a few team building models. Though the models certainly differ they usually have the same opinion on two basic pretexts. There are expected phases every team goes through on its way to forming a highly productive team. And second, that leader and team member can improve the quality of their team's relations during each stage. The possibly most famous and easy model to keep in mind is that of Bruce Tuckman (1965)

The Figure above shows the different stages where a team gains maturity and competence, starts creating relationships and identify different leadership styles. Delegation, accountability and responsibility are shared

among members while providing a brilliant arrangement to assess the process of enriching teams and teamwork

The nice thing about teamwork is that you always have others on your side.

Margaret Carty

Stages of Group Development

Dr Bruce Tuckman issued the Forming Storming Norming Performing model in 1965 while adding later on, Adjourning, in the 1970s. The FSNP theory is a well-designed and useful description of team development and performance.

Forming

The first stage involves the establishment of the team where individuals try their best to look forward and consider the work to be done. There is presence of insecurity and dependence on team leaders. Members focus mainly on routines such as team establishment, who does what, when to meet, etc. and assembling information and intuitions about others, about the scope of the task and how to approach it.

Storming

The second stage shows more energy spent in addressing important issues while remaining nice to each other. The members needs to compromise on goals to enable progress and avoid distractions. Some will get involved while some will remain in the security of stage 1. Conflicts are sometimes inevitable.

Individual commitment to a group effort –that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.” Vince Lombardi

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Norming

A “ norm” is something everyone understands. At this stage, members understand the clear and agreed tasks and responsibilities. Norming is a phase of productivity. Members are able to understand each other’s skills and capabilities while solving all their arguments. There is sharing of roles and responsibilities and presence of Commitment and Unity.

Performing

The final stages engage using the skill and understanding with each other to obtain results for each other and the business. There is presence of autonomy, sharing, commitment, clear strategic vision in over-achieving goals and objectives. Disagreements are solved positively. However, not all groups reach this stage.

Adjourning

The fifth stage was added later on, to analyse the break-up of the group upon achievement and completion of task. It is inevitable to find someone moving on to new environments. Thus, the group should prepare itself to reorganize its work and re performs the stages effectively. Some writers describe stage 5 as “ Deforming and Mourning”, recognising the sense of loss felt by members.

“ A person who never made a mistake never tried anything new.

Albert Einstein

Conclusion

An organisation is already a team but it is broken down to small units so that job performance is achieved and to enable all employees to share a personal touch in the achievement of goals and objectives of the organisation.

Employees work as a group upon joining a firm. It is the role of management to give out a helping hand to make employees feel their own importance in the organisation and among co-workers. This can be done through a team building process. An individual already have its own core competencies and it is through trust in the respective team it can be applied.

Team building creates a sense of belongingness among team members and the organisation as a whole. Team building can bring in more change than expected. It is directly linked with motivation, leadership and performance. However, Team building is being seen as a one event opportunity where the ideal idea is to a continuous one. Thus it is not necessary to find a large extent of team performance being achieved.

“ Team building is a process, NOT an event.”