

WEEK 9

Understanding Work Teams



Learning Outcomes

- Explain the growing popularity of teams in organizations
- Contrast teams with groups
- Identify four types of teams
- Describe conditions when teams are preferred over individuals
- Specify the characteristics of effective teams
- Explain how organization can create team players
- Describe the advantages and disadvantages of diversity for work teams
- Explain how management can keep teams from becoming stagnant and rigid

Teams Versus Groups: What's The Difference?

- **Work group:** A group that interacts primarily to share information and to make decisions to help each group member perform within his or her area of responsibility
- **Work team:** A group whose individual efforts result in a performance that is greater than the sum of the individual inputs
- A work team generates positive synergy through coordinated effort
- Many organizations are looking for the positive synergy that will allow their organizations to increase performance
- The extensive use of teams create the potential for an organization to generate greater outputs with no increase in inputs (cost)

Comparing Work Group And Work Team

Criteria	Work Teams	Work Groups
Goal	Collective Performance	Share Information
Synergy	Positive	Neutral (sometimes negative)
Accountability	Individual And Mutual	Individual
Skills	Complementary	Random And Varied

Types Of Teams

- **Problem-Solving teams:** Group of 5 to 12 employees from the same department who meet for a few hours each week to discuss ways of improving quality, efficiency, and the work environment
- **Self-managed work teams:** Groups of 10 to 15 people who take on responsibilities of their former supervisors
- Typically it includes planning, pace of work, making operations decisions, taking operating decisions, taking action on problems, working with suppliers and customers
- Fully self-managed work teams even select their own members and have the members evaluate each other's performance
- Example: PepsiCo, Hewlett-Packard, Xerox, etc

Criticism Of Self-Managed Team

- Self-managed team does not work well when downsizing the company, as the employees see the self-managed team as an assistant for their own executioner
- It is situational dependent (e.g. economic growth, history of the company, order volume, etc)
- The reward structure will influence the spirit of the team
- The training need in the global work team (e.g. in Mexico, there is low tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty. Employees strongly respect hierarchical authority)

Cross-Functional Teams

- **Cross-functional team:** Employees from about the same hierarchical level, but from different work areas who come together to accomplish a task
- It can be formed by the committees composed of members from across departments
- For instance, the designer from Toyota, manufacturer from BMW, supplier from IBM to complete a certain project
- It is very time-consuming to build up the trust among the team members who are from different backgrounds

Virtual Teams

- **Virtual teams** - Teams that use computer technology to tie together physically dispersed members in order to achieve a common goal
- That allow the people to collaborate online, using communication links like video-conferencing, e-mail, etc
- The three primary factors that differentiate virtual teams from face-to-face teams are:
 - the absence of paraverbal (tone of voice, inflection) and nonverbal cues (facial expressions)
 - limited social context
 - the ability to overcome time-constraints
- The virtual teams are normally task-oriented and less socially and emotionally involved
- It is unlimited time zone involvement
- Example: Credit card information is located globally and the companies use virtual team to implement the marketing plan

Be Aware! Teams Aren't Always The Answer

- Teamwork takes more time and often more resources than individual work. For instance, it can increase time for communication demands, conflicts to be managed, and meeting to be run.
- The test must be assessed if the work is done by one person or the team
- ✓ The complexity of the work (clerical job, telephone salesman, car repairer, direct sales)
- ✓ Does the work create common goals? For instance, many cars set up the teams [mechanics, parts specialist] to serve the customers by profit sharing scheme
- ✓ Do the teams fit the situations?
(Swimming team and Soccer team)

A Team-Effectiveness Model

Work design

- Autonomy
- Skills Variety
- Task Identity
- Task significance
-

Context

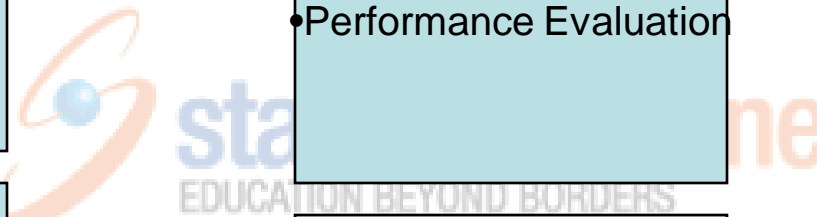
- Adequate Resources
- Leadership
- Climate of Trust
- Performance Evaluation

Composition

- Ability
- Personality
- Roles and Diversity
- Size
- Flexibility
- Preference for Teamwork

Process

- Common Purpose
- Specific Goals
- Team Efficacy
- Conflict
- Social Loafing

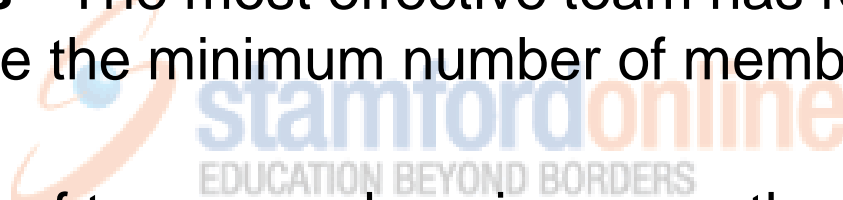


Creating Effective Teams

- **Work Design** - Effective teams need to work together and take collective responsibility to complete significant tasks
- The work design category includes variables like freedom, autonomy, different skills and talents, etc.
- **Composition** - This category includes variables that relate to how teams should be staffed:
 - ✓ **Abilities of Members** - Team requires four different types of skills - technical skills, problems solving skills, decision making skills, interpersonal skills
 - ✓ **Personality** - These are the variables such as conscientious, extroversions, agreeableness, etc

Creating Effective Teams

- ✓ **Allocating Roles and Diversity** - Managers need to understand the individual strength and allocate the task to suit their strength
- ✓ **Size of Teams** - The most effective team has fewer than 10 members, while the minimum number of members must be five
- ✓ As the number of team members increase, the cohesiveness and mutual accountability declines, social loafing increases
- ✓ **Members Preferences** - Not every member is a team player. The preferences of the individual includes abilities, personalities, skills



Creating Effective Teams

- **Context** - The four contextual factors that appear to be the most significantly related to team performance are the presence of adequate resources, effective leadership, a climate of mutual trust, performance evaluation and reward system
- ✓ **Adequate Resources** - The resources can be the top management support, information technology, talented staff, etc
- ✓ **Leadership and Structure** - It refers to the types of leadership and the structural design of the organization
- ✓ **Climate of Trust** - The climate of trust is cultivated by the leader
- ✓ **Performance Evaluation and Reward System** - Individual performance evaluation such as fixed hourly rate, individual incentives, profit sharing, gain sharing, group-based appraisal, etc to build up the commitment

Creating Effective Teams

- **Process** - The effectiveness of the team depends on the processes. The variables include:
 - ✓ **A common purpose** - The effectiveness of the team is to have a common vision which is agreed by the members (e.g. Ship Captain guides the direction)
 - ✓ **Specific goals** - Successful team translates their common purpose into specific, measurable, and realistic performance goals
 - ✓ **Team efficacy** - The successful team must have confidence in themselves. The leader must provide training to the team members
 - ✓ **Conflict levels** - Conflict can be bad and good for suggesting new ideas, stimulate discussions, assess critical problems to the team members

Turning Individual Into Team Players

- **The challenge** - To perform well as team members, individuals must be able to communicate openly and honestly to confront differences and resolve conflicts and to sublimate personal goals for the good of the team
- For instance, the large US corporations like AT&T, Motorola, Ford. These companies are cultivating personal achievement. The individual will have a sense of joining the team for personal rewards
- However, when these firms are operating in Japan, the conflict in national cultures exists

Turning Individual Into Team Players - Shaping Team Players

- **Selection** - Many candidates don't have team player skills, i.e., interpersonal skills. Therefore, the manager must train them to be an effective team player with patience
- **Training** - Training can be for the communication skills, technical skills, and conceptual skills
- **Rewards** - The promotion and payment will be based on the performance evaluation (e.g. information sharing, helping the other colleagues)

Discuss Questions

1. Don't teams create conflict? Is it good or bad? Give reasons to support your answer.
2. How do effective teams minimize group thinking?
3. How do effective teams minimize social loafing?
4. Contrast self-managed team and cross-functional team.

