

**Common issues teams face
at the workplace**

A team is a type of group that has certain identifying characteristics. Members of a team have shared goals related to their work and defined organisational functions. They have to interact with each other to achieve these shared objectives. They also possess individual roles. All teams are groups, but not all groups are teams. A group consists of people who work together, but can do their jobs without one another. A team is a group of people where individuals cannot do their work in isolation, at least not effectively, without the other members of their team.

With increased usage of team culture, globalisation and need to retain talent, understanding the psychology and dynamics of teams is critical. Team structures are set up in many organizations, but all of the systems are focussed towards managing individuals. Creating team-centric organisations, like in flat structures, means radically altering the structure, support systems and the culture. Creating a team and failing to give it the freedom and authority to act is frustrating, yet at the same time, processes need to be in place which gives direction to the team. Leading a team is different from supervising one. Supervisors give advice and instructions; a leader of a team, instead, is facilitative, nurturing and

instructions; a leader of a team, instead, is facilitative, nurturing and seeking. His role is to ensure that the team profits optimally from its shared knowledge, experience, and skill and the environment is pleasant, happy and energising for all.

As I work with teams in the capacity of a leadership coach, I have observed some common issues that teams face in the corporate world today. They are:

1. Trust A lack of trust breeds in teams over time - causes could be poor leadership, remote locations, diverse members, large teams, lack of structure and processes, unclear vision and generally less concern for people in an organisation. Good leadership makes trust a priority. To set a robust thriving culture, trust is the key. It is the most important ingredient for building and maintaining great teams.

Trust is gained by trusting someone first. Overcoming those fears, letting go and being the first one to trust takes self awareness and being comfortable with oneself.

2. Absence of team identity

Members sometimes don't feel mutually accountable to one another for the objectives of the team. There is a lack of commitment and effort, conflict between the team goals and personal goals, or poor collaboration. All this happens if the team lacks identity as a cohesive unit. They need to stand collectively. Aligning the team with the values of the organisation is a good way to achieve it. A point to note when teams are too cohesive is that there are often conflicts with other teams in the organisation.

3. Lack of open communication

Often teams suffer from poor communication. Poor communication leads to inefficiencies, misunderstandings, redundancies and several other problems. Over time, this is a factor that generates a lack of trust among people. It starts out with small things that go unnoticed or are taken for granted as normal order of business. Soon, it spreads like a virus and contaminates the culture of the company. Certain warning signs of this are allusions to problems but failure to formally address them; back biting; people talking over one another and not really listening to understand; consistent silence from some people;

consistent silence from some people;
false consensus due to groupthink
or fear - everyone in agreement
without truly agreeing.

4. Difficulty making decisions

Some teams face a lot of difficulty when decisions have to be made and adhered to. Newly formed teams tend to face this more often. Team members may be rigidly adhering to their positions during decision-making or making repeated arguments rather than introducing new information. Ambiguity in authority can lead to difficulties in decision-making across the organisation.

The process, formal or informal that a team tends to follow in making decisions among themselves, needs to be understood by all the members. You can read more in my book *Team Decision Making*.

5. Inability to resolve conflicts

Conflicts are common when a group of people works together towards common goals. Personal motivations can come in the way.

Communication issues also end up leading to difficulty in resolving conflicts within the team. Conflicts can be looked upon as a vehicle for growth, understanding and transformation. Conflicts cannot be resolved when tensions are high and team members make personal attacks or demonstrate aggressive behaviour. Good leadership and continued development of the emotional intelligence of the team can make conflicts productive and useful.

6. Debilitating team characteristics

Team characteristics like its size, location, diversity and demographics can be indicative drivers of team behaviour. Some teams have too many members; all efforts may not be effective in such cases. Ideal team size is six to eight people. If the team is too diverse, more sharing will help others understand each others' differences and perspectives.

7. Ineffective leadership

Leaders need to convey the roles and purpose clearly. Leaders can fail teams by not defining a compelling vision for the team, not delegating, or not representing multiple constituencies. Leaders need to be conscious of any imbalance in involvement of its people.

Increased maturity level of each team member leads to cohesive teams. Well-functioning teams need to have clear objectives, meet regularly, participate in a constructive debate about how to best serve client needs, share information with one another, coordinate their work, support each other, and review their performance and think about ways to improve it.