

Teamwork in Business

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1 Learning Objectives

This note intends to find the answers for the following learning objectives:

- Define a team and describe its key characteristics - SEC 2.
- Explain why organizations use teams and describe different types of teams - SEC 3,4.
- Explain why teams may be effective or ineffective - SEC 5, 7.
- Identify factors that contribute to team cohesiveness - SEC 6.
- Understand the importance of learning to participate in team-based activities - SEC 8.
- Identify the skills needed by team members and the roles that members of a team might play - SEC 9, 10.
- Learn how to survive team projects in college (and actually enjoy yourself) - .
- Explain the skills and behaviors that foster effective team leadership - SEC 11.

2 Team

To understand what a team is, we need to distinguish between a *team* and a *group*. A **team** is a group of individual with complementary skills that work toward achieving a specific goal. However, a **group** is a bunch of independent individual that work independently toward a shared goal. This can be seen with a quote from Bonnie Edelstein, a consultant in organizational development suggests, “A group is a bunch of people in an elevator. A team is also a bunch of people in an elevator, but the elevator is broken.”

2.1 Team Characteristics

There are 5 key characteristics of a team:

1. *Shared accountability*: This forces teammates to work better.
2. *Function interdependently*
3. *Require stability*

4. *Hold authority and decision making powers:*

5. *Operate in social context:*

3 Teams and Organizations

An organization uses team because of their effect on overall workplace effectiveness, productivity, and performance, both organizational and individual. This is supported by data cited by the book from companies and *fig 1.2*.

4 Types of Teams

There are four types of teams

4.1 Manager-led Team

A **manager-led team** is one with the manager being the team leader and is in charge of setting team goals, assigning tasks, and monitoring the team's performance. The individual team members have relatively *little autonomy*.

For example, the key employees of a professional football team (a manager-led team) are highly trained (and highly paid) athletes, but their activities on the field are tightly controlled by a head coach. As team manager, the coach is responsible both for developing the strategies by which the team pursues its goal of winning games and for the outcome of each game and season. They're also solely responsible for interacting with managers above them in the organization. The players are responsible mainly for executing plays.

4.2 Self-Managed Team

A **self-managed team** (also known as self-directed teams) have considerable autonomy. They are usually small and often absorb activities that were once performed by traditional supervisors. A manager or team leader may determine overall goals, but the members of the self-managed team control the activities needed to achieve those goals.

For example, Whole Foods Market teams, the largest natural-foods grocer in the United States. Each store is run by 10 departmental teams, and virtually every store employee is a member of a team. Each team has a designated leader and its own performance targets. (Team leaders also belong to a store team, and store-team leaders belong to a regional team.) To do its job, every team has access to the

kind of information—including sales and even salary figures—that most companies reserve for traditional managers.

Note that the degree of autonomy depends on the organization.

4.3 Cross-Functional Team

A cross-functional team is composed of members cut across an organization's functional areas (operations, marketing, finance, and so on). A cross-functional team is designed to take advantage of the special expertise of members drawn from different functional areas of the company.

For example, it is used prominently in the product-development process at Nike, where they take advantage of expertise from both inside and outside the company. Typically, team members include not only product designers, marketing specialists, and accountants but also sports-research experts, coaches, athletes, and even consumers.

4.4 Virtual Team

A **virtual team** is composed of members that participate from any location or at any time of day, and teams can “meet” for as long as it takes to achieve a goal or solve a problem—a few days, weeks, or months. This was made possible with technologies such as videoconferencing, which allow people to interact simultaneously and in real time, offering a number of advantages in conducting the business of a virtual team. Furthermore, team size does not seem to be an obstacle when it comes to virtual-team meetings.

For example, in building the F-35 Strike Fighter, US defense contractor Lockheed Martin staked the \$225 billion project on a virtual product-team of unprecedented global dimension, drawing on designers and engineers from the ranks of eight international partners from Canada, the United Kingdom, Norway, and Turkey.

5 Factors in Effective Teamwork

Team members should:

- Depend on each other.
- Trust each other.
- Work together rather than individually.

- Boost each others confidence in their work.
- Enjoy being on a team.

Leadership should:

- Rotate leadership roles.

6 Factors of Team cohesiveness

A team's **cohesiveness** refers to how attractive a team is to its members. Factors of a team's cohesiveness:

- *Size*: The smaller the team the more satisfied its team members are.
- *Similarity*: The more similar the team member's mentality and attitude, the more they are satisfied.
- *Success*: A team that is successful has satisfied members.
- *Exclusiveness*: A team that is exclusive, very hard to get into, the more satisfied the members are to join it.
- *Competition*: A team that competes with others better with the sole goal to win, enhances their cohesiveness.

For example, Real Madrid Football club. It is a team with *limited size*, with a *winner's mentality*, has a *history of successes*. Furthermore, it is *extremely exclusive* with only the best of the best being members and *competes* in top competitions and for the trophies.

7 Obstacles to Team Success

- *Group thinking* is the tendency to conform to group pressure in making decisions, while failing to think critically or to consider outside influences.
- *Motivation and Frustration*: People have their ups and downs. It is hard to maintain high levels of motivation, which causes frustrations. This decreases a team's productivity.
- *Unwillingness to Cooperate*: Not cooperating with the team will cause failures.

- *Lack of Managerial Support*: Lack of support (ex: funding, personell, etc) causes a team to struggle toward achieving its goals.
- *Failure of Managers to Delegate Authority*

8 Why Participate in Team-Based Activities

The reasoning that the book has givin is that you *will* find yourself in a team one day. It is an important skill to have, where many executive rate it highly.

9 Skills That a Team Needs

A successful team needs a mixture of these three skills:

- **Technical Skills**: Any skills used to help the team perform a specific task.
- **Decision-Making and Problem-Solving Skills**: A team will always have problems. Hence, it is good to have members that can identify problems, evaluate solutions, and choose the best one.
- **Interpersonal Skills**: There will be conflicts between members. So it is good to have a member that can listen, provide feedback, and resolve conflicts. Furthermore, to explain the team's project to outsiders.

10 Team Members Roles

| Task-facilitating roles | Example | Relationship-building roles | Example |
|----------------------------|--|-----------------------------|--|
| Direction giving | "Jot down a few ideas and we'll see what everyone has come up with." | Supporting | "Now, that's what I mean by a practical application." |
| Information seeking | "Does anyone know if this is the latest data we have?" | Harmonizing | "Actually, I think you're both saying pretty much the same thing." |
| Information giving | "Here are the latest numbers from ..." | Tension relieving | "Before we go on, would anyone like a drink?" |
| Elaborating | "I think a good example of what you're talking about is ..." | Confronting | "How does that suggestion relate to the topic that we're discussing?" |
| Urging | "Let's try to finish this proposal before we adjourn." | Energizing | "It's been a long time since I've had this many laughs at a meeting in this department." |
| Monitoring | "If you'll take care of the first section, I'll make sure that we have the second by next week." | Developing | "If you need some help pulling the data together, let me know." |
| Process analyzing | "What happened to the energy level in this room?" | Consensus building | "Do we agree on the first four points even if number five needs a little more work?" |
| Reality testing | "Can we make this work and stay within budget?" | Empathizing | "It's not you. The numbers are confusing." |
| Enforcing | "We're getting off track. Let's try to stay on topic." | Summarizing | "Before we jump ahead, here's what we've decided so far." |

10.1 Task Facilitating Role

A **task-facilitator** has the role of accomplishing a team's goal. They are extremely valuable when instruction are not clear and progress is too slow. See *fig 1* for extra details.

10.2 Relationship-Building Role

A **relationship-bulder** has the role of maintaining and improving a team's cohesiveness. See *fig 1* for extra details.

10.3 Blocking Role

A **blocker** is a person with behaviors that inhibits the team or an individual. They are to be removed as not to hinder a team's progress. See *fig 2* for extra details to specific behaviors.

| Blocking behavior | Tactics |
|---------------------------|--|
| Dominate | Talk as much as possible; interrupt and interject |
| Overanalyze | Split hairs and belabor every detail |
| Stall | Frustrate efforts to come to conclusions: decline to agree, sidetrack the discussion, rehash old ideas |
| Remain passive | Stay on the fringe; keep interaction to a minimum; wait for others to take on work |
| Overgeneralize | Blow things out of proportion; float unfounded conclusions |
| Find fault | Criticize and withhold credit whenever possible |
| Make premature decisions | Rush to conclusions before goals are set, information is shared, or problems are clarified |
| Present opinions as facts | Refuse to seek factual support for ideas that you personally favor |
| Reject | Object to ideas by people who tend to disagree with you |
| Pull rank | Use status or title to push through ideas, rather than seek consensus on their value |
| Resist | Throw up roadblocks to progress; look on the negative side |
| Deflect | Refuse to stay on topic; focus on minor points rather than main points |

11 Leader's Skills

A proper leader should have these skills. Note, not all of them are mentioned.

- *Show Integrity*: Act on your words and values.
- *Be Clear and Consistent*
- *Generate Positive Energy*
- *Acknowledge Common Point of Views*: When team has their own point of view, do not ignore it and acknowledge it.

- *Manage Agreements and Disagreements*: Building on the previous one, clearly explain your point of view with strong and clear evidence.
- *Encourage and Coach*
- *Share Information*