

10

Understanding Work Teams

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SLAYING TEAMWORK

You might not think a band with albums titled *Reign in Blood* and *Seasons in the Abyss* and songs called "Angel of Death" and "Public Display of Dismemberment" could teach us anything about effective teamwork. However, effective teamwork is actually one of the reasons Slayer has been among the most successful bands in the "thrash metal" genre.

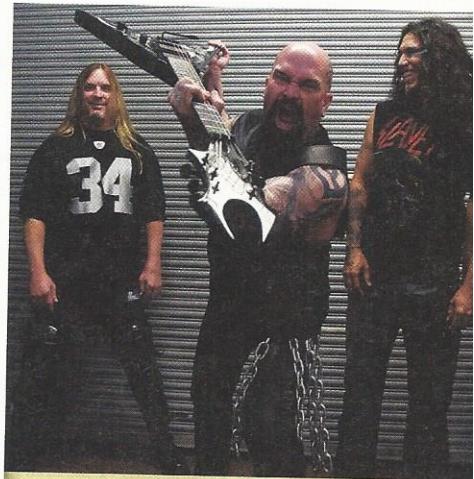
Formed in 1981 by guitarists Kerry King and Jeff Hanneman, drummer Dave Lombardo, and joined by lead singer Tom Araya, Slayer quickly drew attention for their controversial and angry lyrics, blistering pace, and shocking album covers. In addition to developing a loyal fan base, Slayer has earned critical praise, winning back-to-back Grammy awards in 2007 and 2008. Their 2006 album, *Christ's Illusion*, debuted at number 5 on the Billboard chart, their highest position ever.

Members' lives outside the band look very different from the macabre personae they convey onstage. Araya operates a farm with his wife and two kids, King is an advocate against drug use, and Dave Lombardo has recorded classical music in Italy. (In May 2013, the band lost Hanneman, who died of liver failure resulting after a spider bite caused necrotizing fasciitis.)

How did Slayer remain a fixture in the heavy metal scene for more than 30 years, even when the genre faded in popularity? For one, they knew their product and how to sell it. "We scare people," says Araya. Just as important, however, was their teamwork and camaraderie. King and Hanneman easily and often alternated playing lead and rhythm. As King explained, "There is nothing like 'I need more leads than you' or 'I have to have the same amount of leads as you'" to create problems. And when it came to decisions, members were encouraged to communicate openly with each other and voice their opinions. Then, like a small democracy, they voted. Hanneman explained that the process was effective because, even when the group went a different way than what he wanted, his opinion was at least heard.

Ultimately, the importance of effective teamwork for Slayer was summarized by Araya, who stated, "The four of us—we try to make sure we're all together. Cause if one person stumbles, it takes a while to catch up."

Sources: A. Barker, "Jeff Hanneman Dead: Slayer Guitarist was 49," *Variety* (May 2, 2013), <http://variety.com/2013/music/people-news/jeff-hanneman-dead-slayer-guitarist-1200442635/>; R. Blatt, "Business Lessons from Slayer: A Reflection in Honor of Jeff Hanneman," *Forbes* (May 12, 2013), downloaded on June 4, 2013, from www.forbes.com; and D. Lang, "Jeff Hanneman Dead: Slayer Guitarist Dies at Age 49," *The Huffington Post* (May 2, 2013), www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/02/jeff-hanneman-dead_n_3205149.html.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

- 1 Analyze the growing popularity of teams in organizations.
- 2 Contrast groups and teams.
- 3 Contrast the five types of teams.
- 4 Identify the characteristics of effective teams.
- 5 Show how organizations can create team players.
- 6 Decide when to use individuals instead of teams.

Teams are increasingly the primary means for organizing work in contemporary business firms. In fact, there are few more damaging insults than “not a team player.” Do you think you’re a team player? Take the following self-assessment to find out.



How Good Am I at Building and Leading a Team?

In the Self-Assessment Library (available in MyManagementLab), take assessment II.B.6 (How Good Am I at Building and Leading a Team?), and answer the following questions.

1. Did you score as high as you thought you would? Why or why not?
2. Do you think you can improve your score? If so, how? If not, why not?
3. Do you think there is such a thing as team players? If yes, what are their behaviors?

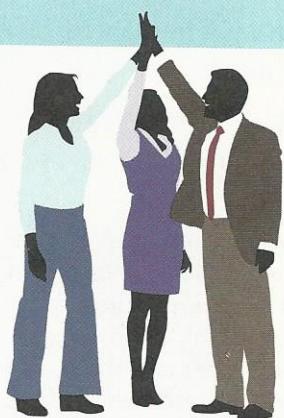
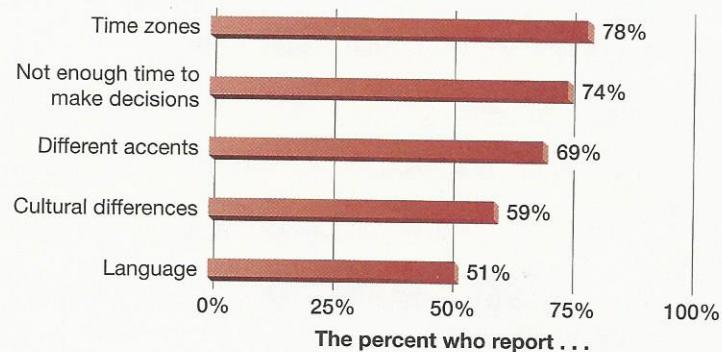
Why Have Teams Become So Popular?

- 1 Analyze the growing popularity of teams in organizations.

Decades ago, when companies such as W. L. Gore, Volvo, and General Foods introduced teams into their production processes, it made news because no one else was doing it. Today, it’s just the opposite. The organization that *doesn’t* use teams has become newsworthy. Teams are everywhere.

How do we explain the current popularity of teams? As organizations have restructured themselves to compete more effectively and efficiently, they have turned to teams as a better way to use employee talents. Teams are more flexible and responsive to changing events than traditional departments or other forms of permanent groupings. They can quickly assemble, deploy, refocus, and disband. But don’t overlook the motivational properties of teams. Consistent with our discussion in Chapter 7 of employee involvement as a motivator, teams facilitate employee participation in operating decisions. Thus, another explanation

OB Poll The Challenge of the Virtual Team



Note: Data is from a survey of 3,301 respondents from 102 countries.

Source: Based on RW3 CultureWizard, "The Challenges of Working in Virtual Teams: Virtual Teams Survey Report—2012," www.rw-3.com/2012VirtualTeamsSurveyReport.pdf, p. 4.

for their popularity is that they are an effective means for management to democratize organizations and increase employee motivation.

The fact that organizations have turned to teams doesn't necessarily mean they're always effective. Decision makers, as humans, can be swayed by fads and herd mentality. Are teams truly effective? What conditions affect their potential? How do members work together? These are some of the questions we'll answer in this chapter.

Differences Between Groups and Teams

2 Contrast groups and teams.

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 performance that is greater than the sum of the individual inputs.*

Groups and teams are not the same thing. In this section, we define and clarify the difference between work groups and work teams.¹

In Chapter 9, we defined a *group* as two or more individuals, interacting and interdependent, who have come together to achieve particular objectives. A **work group** is a group that interacts primarily to share information and make decisions to help each member perform within his or her area of responsibility.

Work groups have no need or opportunity to engage in collective work that requires joint effort. So their performance is merely the summation of each group member's individual contribution. There is no positive synergy that would create an overall level of performance greater than the sum of the inputs.

A **work team**, on the other hand, generates positive synergy through coordinated effort. The individual efforts result in a level of performance greater than the sum of those individual inputs. In both work groups and work teams, there are often behavioral expectations of members, collective normalization efforts, active group dynamics, and some level of decision making (even if just informally about the scope of membership). Both work groups and work teams may be called upon to generate ideas, pool resources, or coordinate logistics such as work schedules; for the work group, however, this effort will be limited to information gathering for decision makers outside the group (not team actionable).

Whereas we can think of a work team as a subset of a work group, the team is constructed to be purposeful (symbiotic) in its member interaction. The distinction between a work group and a work team should be kept even when the terms are mentioned interchangeably in differing contexts. Exhibit 10-1 highlights the differences between work groups and work teams.

Exhibit 10-1 Comparing Work Groups and Work Teams



These definitions help clarify why so many organizations have recently restructured work processes around teams. Management is looking for positive synergy that will allow the organizations to increase performance. The extensive use of teams creates the *potential* for an organization to generate greater outputs with no increase in inputs. Notice, however, that we said *potential*. There is nothing magical that ensures the achievement of positive synergy in the creation of teams. Merely calling a *group* a *team* doesn't automatically improve its performance. As we show later in this chapter, effective teams have certain common characteristics. If management hopes to gain increases in organizational performance through the use of teams, its teams must possess these.

Types of Teams

- 3** Contrast the five types of teams.

problem-solving teams Groups 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.

Teams can make products, provide services, negotiate deals, coordinate projects, offer advice, and make decisions.² In this section, first we describe four common types of teams in organizations: *problem-solving teams*, *self-managed work teams*, *cross-functional teams*, and *virtual teams* (see Exhibit 10-2). Then, we describe *multiteam systems*, which utilize a “team of teams” and are becoming increasingly widespread as work increases in complexity.

Problem-Solving Teams

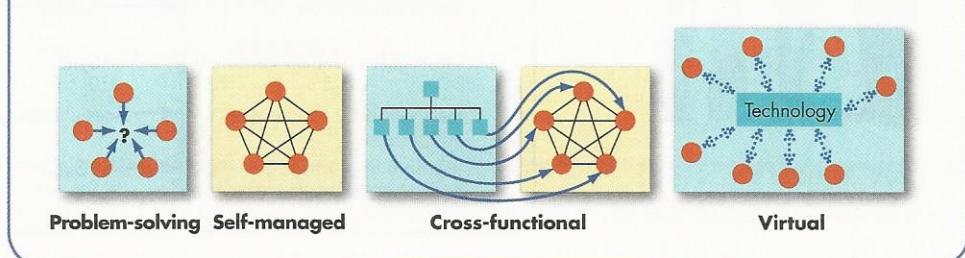
In the past, teams were typically composed of 5 to 12 hourly employees from the same department who met for a few hours each week to discuss ways of improving quality, efficiency, and the work environment.³ These **problem-solving teams** rarely have the authority to unilaterally implement any of their suggestions. Merrill Lynch created a problem-solving team to figure out ways to reduce the number of days it took to open a new cash management account.⁴ By suggesting cutting the number of steps from 46 to 36, the team reduced the average number of days from 15 to 8.

Self-Managed Work Teams

Problem-solving teams only make recommendations. Some organizations have gone further and created teams that not only solve problems, but also implement solutions and take responsibility for outcomes.

Self-managed work teams are groups of employees (typically 10 to 15 in number) who perform highly related or interdependent jobs and take on many of the responsibilities of supervisors.⁵ Typically, these tasks are planning and scheduling work, assigning tasks to members, making operating decisions, taking action on problems, and working with suppliers and customers. Fully

Exhibit 10-2 Four Types of Teams



self-managed work teams even select their own members and evaluate each other's performance. Supervisory positions take on decreased importance and are sometimes even eliminated.

Research on the effectiveness of self-managed work teams has not been uniformly positive.⁶ Self-managed teams do not typically manage conflicts well. When disputes arise, members stop cooperating and power struggles ensue, which leads to lower group performance.⁷ However, when team members feel confident that they can speak up without being embarrassed, rejected, or punished by other team members—in other words, when they feel psychologically safe—conflict is actually beneficial and boosts performance.⁸ In addition, one study of 45 self-managing teams of factory workers found that when team members perceived that economic rewards such as pay were dependent on input from their teammates, performance improved for both individuals and the team as a whole.⁹

Finally, although individuals on teams report higher levels of job satisfaction than other individuals, they also sometimes have higher absenteeism and turnover rates. One large-scale study of labor productivity in British establishments found that although using teams in general does improve labor productivity, no evidence supported the claim that self-managed teams performed better than traditional teams with less decision-making authority.¹⁰ Thus, it appears that for self-managing teams to be advantageous, a number of situational factors must be in place.

Cross-Functional Teams

Starbucks created a team of individuals from production, global PR, global communications, and U.S. marketing to develop its Via brand of instant coffee. The team's suggestions resulted in a product that would be cost-effective to produce and distribute and that was marketed with a tightly integrated, multifaceted strategy.¹¹ This example illustrates the use of **cross-functional teams**, made up of employees from about the same hierarchical level but different work areas, who come together to accomplish a task.

cross-functional teams *Employees from about the same hierarchical level, but from different work areas, who come together to accomplish a task.*



Photo 10-1 Sprig Toys CEO Craig Storey (standing, left) and the firm's co-founders shown here promote cross-functional teamwork in creating eco-friendly toys made from recycled products. Teams include toy designers and specialists in patent development, market research, merchandising, branding, packaging, and marketing.

Many organizations have used horizontal, boundary-spanning teams for decades. In the 1960s, IBM created a large task force of employees from across departments to develop its highly successful System 360. Today, cross-functional teams are so widely used it is hard to imagine a major organizational undertaking without one. All the major automobile manufacturers—Toyota, Honda, Nissan, BMW, GM, Ford, and Chrysler—currently use this form of team to coordinate complex projects. Cisco relies on specific cross-functional teams to identify and capitalize on new trends in several areas of the software market. Cisco's teams are the equivalent of social-networking groups that collaborate in real time to identify new business opportunities in the field and then implement them from the bottom up.¹²

Cross-functional teams are an effective means of allowing people from diverse areas within or even between organizations to exchange information, develop new ideas, solve problems, and coordinate complex projects. Of course, cross-functional teams are no picnic to manage. Their early stages of development are often long, as members learn to work with diversity and complexity. It takes time to build trust and teamwork, especially among people from varying backgrounds with different experiences and perspectives.

Virtual Teams

virtual teams *Teams that use computer technology to tie together physically dispersed members in order to achieve a common goal.*

The teams described in the preceding section do their work face-to-face. **Virtual teams** use computer technology to unite physically dispersed members and achieve a common goal.¹³ They collaborate online—using communication links such as wide-area networks, videoconferencing, or e-mail—whether they're a room away or continents apart. Virtual teams are so pervasive, and technology has advanced so far, that it's probably a bit of a misnomer to call them "virtual." Nearly all teams today do at least some of their work remotely.

Despite becoming more widespread, virtual teams face special challenges. They may suffer because there is less social rapport and direct interaction among members, leaving some feeling isolated. One study showed that team leaders can reduce feelings of isolation, however, by communicating frequently and consistently with team members so none feel unfairly disfavored.¹⁴ In addition, evidence from 94 studies entailing more than 5,000 groups found that virtual teams are better at sharing unique information (information held by individual members but not the entire group), but they tend to share less information overall.¹⁵ As a result, low levels of virtuality in teams results in higher levels of information sharing, but high levels of virtuality hinder it. For virtual teams to be effective, management should ensure that (1) trust is established among members (one inflammatory remark in an e-mail can severely undermine team trust), (2) team progress is monitored closely (so the team doesn't lose sight of its goals and no team member "disappears"), and (3) the efforts and products of the team are publicized throughout the organization (so the team does not become invisible).¹⁶

Multiteam Systems

multiteam system *A collection of two or more interdependent teams that share a superordinate goal; a team of teams.*

The types of teams we've described so far are typically smaller, standalone teams, though their activities relate to the broader objectives of the organization. As tasks become more complex, teams are often made bigger. However, increases in team size are accompanied by higher coordination demands, creating a tipping point at which the addition of another member does more harm than good. To solve this problem, organizations are employing **multiteam systems**, collections of two or more interdependent teams that share a superordinate goal. In other words, multiteam systems are a "team of teams."¹⁷

To picture a multiteam system, imagine the coordination of response needed after a major car accident. There is the emergency medical services team, which responds first and transports the injured to the hospital. An emergency room team then takes over, providing medical care, followed by a recovery team.

An Ethical Choice**Virtual Teams Leave a Smaller Carbon Footprint**

Despite being in different countries, or even on different continents, many teams in geographically dispersed teams are able to communicate effectively without meeting face-to-face, thanks to technology such as videoconferencing, instant messaging, and e-mail. In fact, members of some of these virtual teams may never meet each other in person. Although the merits of face-to-face versus electronic communication have been debated, there may be a strong *ethical* argument for virtual teams. Keeping team members where they are, as opposed to having them travel every time they need to meet, may be a more environmentally responsible choice. A very large proportion of airline, rail, and car transport is for business purposes and contributes greatly to global carbon dioxide emissions.

When teams are able to meet virtually rather than face-to-face, they dramatically reduce their “carbon footprint.”

In a globally connected world, what sorts of actions might you take to minimize your organization’s environmental impact from business travel? Several tips might help to get you started thinking about ways that virtual teams can be harnessed for greater sustainability:

1. Encourage all team members to think about whether a face-to-face meeting is really necessary and to try to utilize alternative communication methods whenever possible.
2. Communicate as much information as possible through virtual means, including e-mail, telephone calls, and videoconferencing.
3. When traveling to team meetings, choose the most environmentally

responsible methods possible. Also, check the environmental profile of hotels before booking rooms.

4. If the environmental savings are not enough motivation to reduce travel, consider the financial savings. According to a recent survey, businesses spend about 8 to 12 percent of their entire budget on travel. Communicating electronically can therefore result in two benefits: (a) it’s cheaper and (b) it’s good for the environment.

Sources: P. Tilstone, “Cut Carbon . . . and Bills,” *Director* (May 2009), p. 54; L. C. Latimer, “6 Strategies for Sustainable Business Travel,” *Greenbiz* (February 11, 2011), www.greenbiz.com; and F. Gebhart, “Travel Takes a Big Bite Out of Corporate Expenses,” *Travel Market Report* (May 30, 2013), downloaded on June 9, 2013, from www.travelmarketreport.com.

Although the emergency services team, the emergency room team, and the recovery team are technically independent, their activities are interdependent, and the success of one depends on the success of the others. Why? Because they all share the higher goal of saving lives.

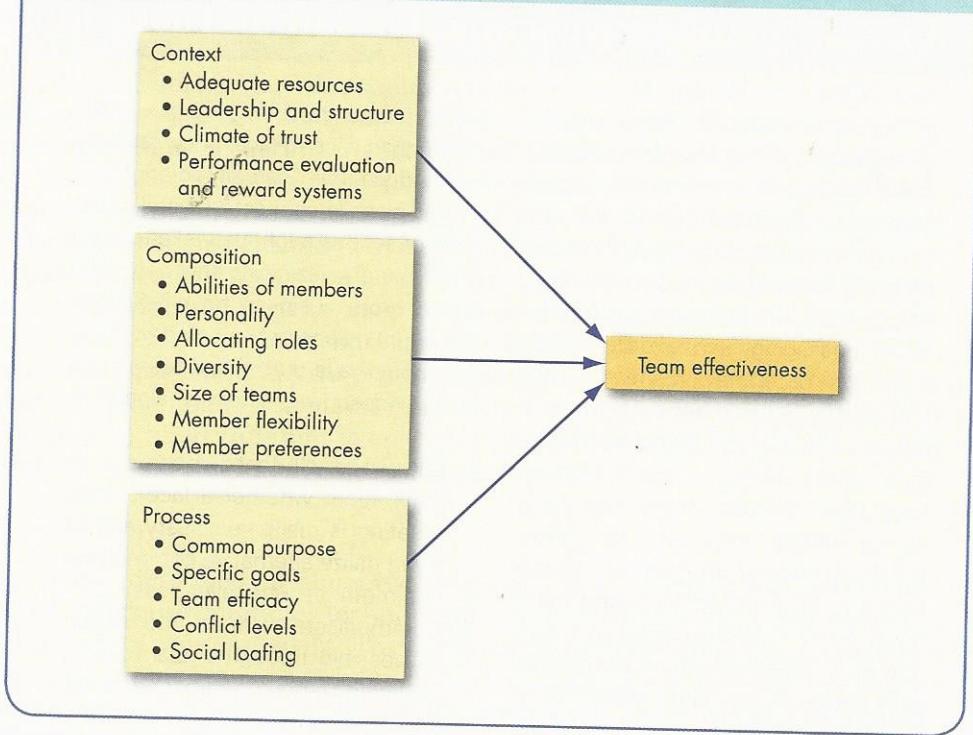
Some factors that make smaller, more traditional teams effective do not necessarily apply to multiteam systems and can even hinder their performance. One study showed that multiteam systems performed better when they had “boundary spanners” whose job was to coordinate with members of the other subteams. This reduced the need for some team member communication. Restricting the lines of communication was helpful because it reduced coordination demands.¹⁸ Research on smaller, standalone teams tends to find that opening up all lines of communication is better for coordination, but when it comes to multiteam systems, the same rules do not always apply.

Creating Effective Teams

- 4** Identify the characteristics of effective teams.

Many people have tried to identify factors related to team effectiveness.¹⁹ To help, some studies have organized what was once a “veritable laundry list of characteristics”²⁰ into a relatively focused model.²¹ Exhibit 10-3 summarizes what we currently know about what makes teams effective. As you’ll see, it builds on many of the group concepts introduced in Chapter 9.

Exhibit 10-3 Team Effectiveness Model



In considering the team effectiveness model, keep in mind two points. First, teams differ in form and structure. The model attempts to generalize across all varieties of teams, but avoids rigidly applying its predictions to all teams.²² Use it as a guide. Second, the model assumes teamwork is preferable to individual work. Creating “effective” teams when individuals can do the job better is like perfectly solving the wrong problem.

We can organize the key components of effective teams into three general categories. First are the resources and other *contextual* influences that make teams effective. The second relates to the team’s *composition*. Finally, *process* variables are events within the team that influence effectiveness. What does *team effectiveness* mean in this model? Typically, it has included objective measures of the team’s productivity, managers’ ratings of the team’s performance, and aggregate measures of member satisfaction.

Context: What Factors Determine Whether Teams Are Successful

The four contextual factors most significantly related to team performance are adequate resources, effective leadership, a climate of trust, and a performance evaluation and reward system that reflects team contributions.

Adequate Resources Teams are part of a larger organization system; every work team relies on resources outside the group to sustain it. A scarcity of resources directly reduces the ability of a team to perform its job effectively and achieve its goals. As one study concluded after looking at 13 factors related to group performance, “perhaps one of the most important characteristics of an effective work group is the support the group receives from the organization.”²³ This support includes timely information, proper equipment, adequate staffing, encouragement, and administrative assistance.

gLOBalization!

Developing Team Members' Trust Across Cultures

The development of trust is critical in any work situation, but especially in multicultural teams, where differences in communication and interaction styles may lead to misunderstandings, eroding members' trust in one another.

Are there cultural differences in how much people trust others in general? Are there cultural differences in the factors people take into account when deciding how much to trust others? Researchers say "yes" to both questions—for the most part. Regarding the first question, some studies have shown that overall levels of trust differ across cultures. For example, Germans have been found to be less trusting of people from other countries, such as Mexicans and

Czechs. Japanese have been found to be more trusting of U.S. counterparts than the other way around, but only in long-lasting relationships. Chinese and U.S. workers seem to trust each other equally.

For the second question, some evidence suggests people from different cultures do pay attention to different factors when deciding whether someone is trustworthy. Risk taking appears to be more critical to building trust for U.S. workers than for Japanese, perhaps reflecting that the United States is lower in uncertainty avoidance than Japan. Both Chinese and Mexicans appear to rely more than U.S. employees on emotional cues such as mutual understanding, openness, and social bonding, and less on cognitive cues

such as reliability, professionalism, and economic cooperation.

When interacting with others from different cultures, whether in a formal team setting or not, it seems that what drives you to trust your colleagues may differ from what drives your colleagues to trust you, and recognizing these differences can help to facilitate higher levels of trust.

Sources: Based on D. L. Ferrin and N. Gillespie, "Trust Differences Across National-Societal Cultures: Much To Do, or Much Ado About Nothing," in M. N. K. Sanders, D. Skinner, G. Dietz, N. Gillespie, and Roy J. Lewicki (eds.), *Organizational Trust: A Cultural Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 42–86; and J. Lauring and J. Selmer, "Openness to Diversity, Trust and Conflict in Multicultural Organizations," *Journal of Management & Organization* (November 2012), pp. 795–806.

Leadership and Structure Teams can't function if they can't agree on who is to do what and ensure all members share the workload. Agreeing on the specifics of work and how they fit together to integrate individual skills requires leadership and structure, either from management or from the team members themselves. It's true in self-managed teams that team members absorb many of the duties typically assumed by managers. However, a manager's job then becomes managing *outside* (rather than inside) the team.

Leadership is especially important in multiteam systems. Here, leaders need to empower teams by delegating responsibility to them, and they play the role of facilitator, making sure the teams work together rather than against one another.²⁴ Teams that establish shared leadership by effectively delegating it are more effective than teams with a traditional single-leader structure.²⁵

Climate of Trust Members of effective teams trust each other. They also exhibit trust in their leaders.²⁶ Interpersonal trust among team members facilitates cooperation, reduces the need to monitor each others' behavior, and bonds members around the belief that others on the team won't take advantage of them. Team members are more likely to take risks and expose vulnerabilities when they believe they can trust others on their team. And, as we discuss in Chapter 12, trust is the foundation of leadership. It allows a team to accept and commit to its leader's goals and decisions. But it's not just the overall level of trust in a team that's important. How trust is dispersed among team members also matters. Trust levels that are asymmetric and imbalanced between team members can mitigate the performance advantages of a high overall level of trust.²⁷

Performance Evaluation and Reward Systems How do you get team members to be both individually and jointly accountable? Individual performance evaluations and incentives may interfere with the development of high-performance teams. So, in addition to evaluating and rewarding employees for their individual contributions, management should modify the traditional, individually oriented evaluation and reward system to reflect team performance and focus on hybrid systems that recognize individual members for their exceptional contributions and reward the entire group for positive outcomes.²⁸ Group-based appraisals, profit sharing, gainsharing, small-group incentives, and other system modifications can reinforce team effort and commitment.

Team Composition

The team composition category includes variables that relate to how teams should be staffed—the ability and personality of team members, allocation of roles, diversity, size of the team, and members' preference for teamwork.

Abilities of Members Part of a team's performance depends on the knowledge, skills, and abilities of individual members.²⁹ It's true we occasionally read about an athletic team of mediocre players who, because of excellent coaching, determination, and precision teamwork, beat a far more talented group. But such cases make the news precisely because they are unusual. A team's performance is not merely the summation of its individual members' abilities. However, these abilities set limits on what members can do and how effectively they will perform on a team.

Research reveals some insights into team composition and performance. First, when the task entails considerable thought (solving a complex problem such as reengineering an assembly line), high-ability teams—composed of mostly intelligent members—do better than lower-ability teams, especially

Myth or Science?

“Team Members Who Are ‘Hot’ Should Make the Play”

Before we tell you whether this statement is true or false, we need to take a step back and address another question: “Can individuals go on ‘hot’ streaks?” In teams, and especially in sports, we often hear about players who are on a streak and have the “hot hand.” Basketball player LeBron James scores five baskets in a row, golfer Rory McIlroy makes three birdies in a row for the European Ryder Cup team, and tennis player Serena Williams hits four aces in a row during a doubles match with her sister Venus. Most people (around 90 percent) believe LeBron, Rory, and Serena will continue to score well because they are on a hot streak, performing above their average.

Although people *believe* in the “hot hand,” the score is tied on whether it actually exists. About half the relevant studies have shown that it does, while the remaining half show it does not. But perception is often reality, so perhaps the more important question is whether belief in the hot hand affects teams’ strategies. One study of volleyball players showed that coaches and players allocate more balls to players who are believed to have the hot hand. Is this a good strategy? If the hot player’s performance is typically lower than her teammates’, then giving her more balls to hit will hurt the team because the better players aren’t getting enough chances to hit. But if the player’s

performance is typically higher than that of her teammates, giving her more balls to hit will likely help the team.

Considering all the research to date, however, the opening statement appears to be false.

Sources: M. Raab, B. Gula, and G. Gigerenzer, “The Hot Hand Exists in Volleyball and Is Used for Allocation Decisions,” *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied* 18, no. 1 (2012), pp. 81–94; T Gilovich, R. Vallone, and A. Tversky, “The Hot Hand in Basketball: On the Misperception of Random Sequences,” *Cognitive Psychology* 17 (1985), pp. 295–314; and M. Bar-Eli, S. Avugos, and M. Raab, “Twenty Years of ‘Hot Hand’ Research: The Hot Hand Phenomenon: Review and Critique,” *Psychology, Sport, and Exercise* 7 (2006), pp. 525–553.

Photo 10-2 Mike Weightman (second from left) led an 18-member, high-ability global team created by the International Atomic Energy Agency to study a nuclear power plant accident triggered by an earthquake in Japan. Team members from 12 countries provided experience and expertise in safety and a wide range of nuclear specialties.



Source: TEPCO/AFLO/newscom.

when the workload is distributed evenly. That way, team performance does not depend on the weakest link. High-ability teams are also more adaptable to changing situations; they can more effectively apply existing knowledge to new problems.

Finally, the ability of the team's leader also matters. Smart team leaders help less-intelligent team members when they struggle with a task. A less intelligent leader can conversely neutralize the effect of a high-ability team.³⁰

Personality of Members We demonstrated in Chapter 5 that personality significantly influences individual employee behavior. Some dimensions identified in the Big Five personality model are relevant to team effectiveness; a review of the literature identified three.³¹ Specifically, teams that rate higher on mean levels of conscientiousness and openness to experience tend to perform better, and the minimum level of team member agreeableness also matters: teams did worse when they had one or more highly disagreeable members. Perhaps one bad apple *can* spoil the whole bunch!

Research has provided us with a good idea about why these personality traits are important to teams. Conscientious people are good at backing up other team members, and they're good at sensing when their support is truly needed. One study found that specific behavioral tendencies such as personal organization, cognitive structuring, achievement orientation, and endurance were all related to higher levels of team performance.³² Open team members communicate better with one another and throw out more ideas, which makes teams composed of open people more creative and innovative.³³

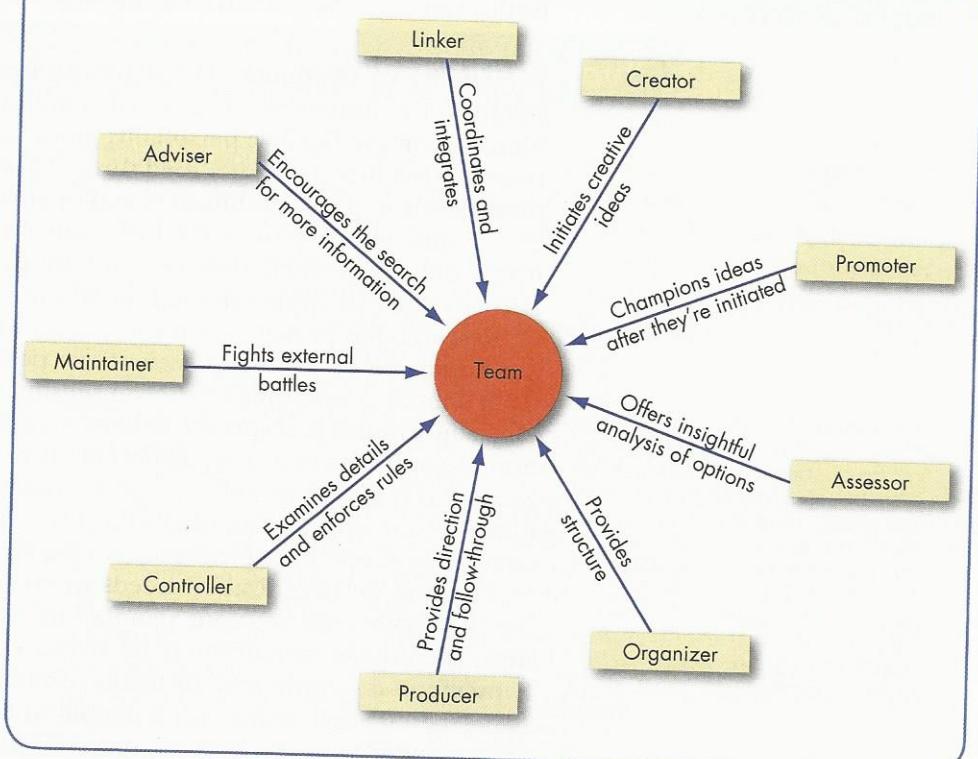
Suppose an organization needs to create 20 teams of 4 people each and has 40 highly conscientious people and 40 who score low on conscientiousness. Would the organization be better off (1) forming 10 teams of highly conscientious people and 10 teams of members low on conscientiousness, or (2) "seeding" each team with 2 people who scored high and 2 who scored low on conscientiousness? Perhaps surprisingly, evidence suggests option 1 is the

best choice; performance across the teams will be higher if the organization forms 10 highly conscientious teams and 10 teams low in conscientiousness. The reason is that a team with varying conscientiousness levels will not work to the peak performance of the highly conscientious members. Instead, a group normalization dynamic (or simple resentment) will complicate interactions and force the highly conscientious members to lower their expectations, reducing the group's performance. In cases like this, it does appear to make sense to "put all of one's eggs [conscientious team members] into one basket [into teams with other conscientious members]."³⁴

Allocation of Roles Teams have different needs, and members should be selected to ensure all the various roles are filled. A study of 778 major league baseball teams over a 21-year period highlights the importance of assigning roles appropriately.³⁵ As you might expect, teams with more experienced and skilled members performed better. However, the experience and skill of those in core roles who handle more of the workflow of the team, and who are central to all work processes (in this case, pitchers and catchers), were especially vital. In other words, put your most able, experienced, and conscientious workers in the most central roles in a team.

We can identify nine potential team roles (see Exhibit 10-4). Successful work teams have selected people to play all these roles based on their skills and preferences.³⁶ (On many teams, individuals will play multiple roles.) To increase the likelihood team members will work well together, managers need to understand the individual strengths each person can bring to a team, select members with their strengths in mind, and allocate work assignments that fit with members' preferred styles.

Exhibit 10-4 Key Roles of Teams



organizational demography *The degree to which members of a work unit share a common demographic attribute, such as age, sex, race, educational level, or length of service in an organization, and the impact of this attribute on turnover.*

Diversity of Members In Chapter 9, we discussed research on the effect of diversity on groups. How does *team* diversity affect *team* performance? The degree to which members of a work unit (group, team, or department) share a common demographic attribute, such as age, sex, race, educational level, or length of service in the organization is the subject of **organizational demography**. Organizational demography suggests that attributes such as age or the date of joining should help us predict turnover. The logic goes like this: Turnover will be greater among those with dissimilar experiences because communication is more difficult and conflict is more likely. Increased conflict makes membership less attractive, so employees are more likely to quit. Similarly, the losers in a power struggle are more apt to leave voluntarily or be forced out.³⁷

Many of us hold the optimistic view that diversity should be a good thing—diverse teams should benefit from differing perspectives. Two meta-analytic reviews of the research literature show, however, that demographic diversity is essentially unrelated to team performance overall, while a third review actually suggests that race and gender diversity are negatively related to team performance.³⁸ One qualifier is that gender and ethnic diversity have more negative effects in occupations dominated by white or male employees, but in more demographically balanced occupations, diversity is less of a problem. Diversity in function, education, and expertise are positively related to group performance, but these effects are quite small and depend on the situation.

Proper leadership can also improve the performance of diverse teams.³⁹ One study of 68 teams in China found that teams diverse in terms of knowledge, skills, and ways of approaching problems were more creative, but only when their leaders were transformational and inspiring.⁴⁰

We have discussed research on team diversity in race or gender. But what about diversity created by national differences? Like the earlier research, evidence here indicates these elements of diversity interfere with team processes, at least in the short term.⁴¹ Cultural diversity does seem to be an asset for tasks that call for a variety of viewpoints. But culturally heterogeneous teams have more difficulty learning to work with each other and solving problems. The good news is that these difficulties seem to dissipate with time. Although newly formed culturally diverse teams underperform newly formed culturally homogeneous teams, the differences disappear after about 3 months.⁴²

Size of Teams Most experts agree, keeping teams small is a key to improving group effectiveness.⁴³ Generally speaking, the most effective teams have five to nine members. Experts suggest using the smallest number of people who can do the task. Unfortunately, managers often err by making teams too large. It may require only four or five members to develop diversity of views and skills, while coordination problems can increase exponentially as team members are added. When teams have excess members, cohesiveness and mutual accountability decline, social loafing increases, and people communicate less. Members of large teams have trouble coordinating with one another, especially under time pressure. When a natural working unit is larger and you want a team effort, consider breaking the group into subteams if it's difficult to develop effective coordination processes.⁴⁴

Member Preferences Not every employee is a team player. Given the option, many employees will select themselves *out* of team participation. When people who prefer to work alone are required to team up, there is a direct threat to the team's morale and to individual member satisfaction.⁴⁵ This suggests that, when selecting team members, managers should consider individual preferences along with abilities, personalities, and skills. High-performing teams are likely to be composed of people who prefer working as part of a group.



Photo 10-3 A Japanese nurse (left) served on a seven-member medical team formed by the International Committee of the Red Cross and deployed to the Philippines after a typhoon hit Mindanao Island. The small team of health care workers had the capacity to respond quickly and effectively in providing patients with emergency medical care.



Team Processes

The final category related to team effectiveness includes process variables such as member commitment to a common purpose, establishment of specific team goals, team efficacy, a managed level of conflict, and minimized social loafing. These will be especially important in larger teams and in teams that are highly interdependent.⁴⁶

Why are processes important to team effectiveness? Let's return to the topic of social loafing. We found that $1+1+1$ doesn't necessarily add up to 3. When each member's contribution is not clearly visible, individuals tend to decrease their effort. Social loafing, in other words, illustrates a process loss from using teams. But teams should create outputs greater than the sum of their inputs, as when a diverse group develops creative alternatives. Exhibit 10-5 illustrates how group processes can have an impact on a group's actual effectiveness.⁴⁷ Teams are often used in research laboratories because they can draw on the diverse skills of various individuals to produce more meaningful research than researchers working independently—that is, they produce positive synergy, and their process gains exceed their process losses.

Common Plan and Purpose Effective teams begin by analyzing the team's mission, developing goals to achieve that mission, and creating strategies for achieving the goals. Teams that consistently perform better have established a clear sense of what needs to be done and how.⁴⁸

Exhibit 10-5 Effects of Group Processes

$$\text{Potential group effectiveness} + \text{Process gains} - \text{Process losses} = \text{Actual group effectiveness}$$

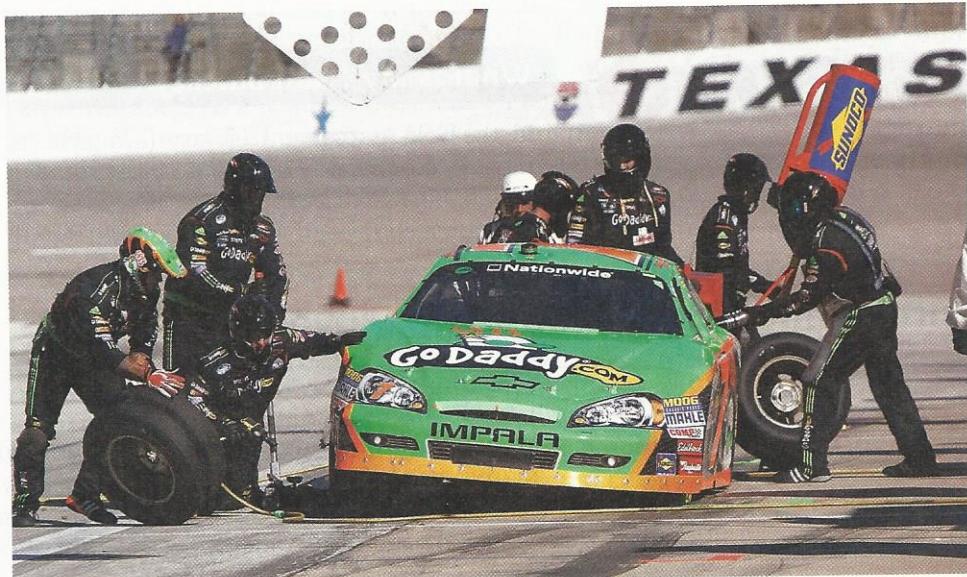
Members of successful teams put a tremendous amount of time and effort into discussing, shaping, and agreeing on a purpose that belongs to them both collectively and individually. This common purpose, when accepted by the team, becomes what GPS is to a ship captain: It provides direction and guidance under any and all conditions. Like a ship following the wrong course, teams that don't have good planning skills are doomed; perfectly executing the wrong plan is a lost cause.⁴⁹ Teams should agree on whether their goal is to learn about and master a task or simply to perform the task; evidence suggest that different perspectives on learning versus performance goals lead to lower levels of team performance overall.⁵⁰ It appears that these differences in goal orientation produce their effects by reducing discussion and sharing of information. In sum, having all employees on a team strive for the same *type* of goal is important.

Effective teams show **reflexivity**, meaning they reflect on and adjust their master plan when necessary. A team has to have a good plan, but it also has to be willing and able to adapt when conditions call for it.⁵¹ Interestingly, some evidence does suggest that teams high in reflexivity are better able to adapt to conflicting plans and goals among team members.⁵²

Specific Goals Successful teams translate their common purpose into specific, measurable, and realistic performance goals. Specific goals facilitate clear communication. They help teams maintain their focus on getting results.

Consistent with the research on individual goals, team goals should also be challenging. Difficult but achievable goals raise team performance on those criteria for which they're set. So, for instance, goals for quantity tend to raise quantity, goals for accuracy raise accuracy, and so on.⁵³

Team Efficacy Effective teams have confidence in themselves; they believe they can succeed. We call this *team efficacy*.⁵⁴ Teams that have been successful raise their beliefs about future success, which, in turn, motivates them to work harder. In addition, teams that have a shared knowledge of who knows what within the team can strengthen the link between team members' self-efficacy and their individual creativity because members can more effectively solicit opinions and advice from their teammates.⁵⁵ What can management do to increase team efficacy? Two options are helping the team achieve small successes that build confidence and providing training to improve members' technical and interpersonal skills. The greater the abilities of team members, the more likely the team will develop confidence and the ability to deliver on that confidence.



reflexivity A team characteristic of reflecting on and adjusting the master plan when necessary.

Photo 10-4 Pit crew team members of NASCAR race car driver Danica Patrick work toward the common goal of winning the race. Each member has a specific job and a clear sense of what needs to be done to execute the crew's plan of working at top speed with no errors in checking the car, fixing parts, changing tires, and pumping gas.

mental models Team members' knowledge and beliefs about how the work gets done by the team.

Mental Models Effective teams share accurate **mental models**—organized mental representations of the key elements within a team's environment that team members share.⁵⁶ If team members have the wrong mental models, which is particularly likely in teams under acute stress, their performance suffers.⁵⁷ The similarity of team members' mental models matters, too. If team members have different ideas about how to do things, the team will fight over methods rather than focus on what needs to be done.⁵⁸ One review of 65 independent studies of team cognition found that teams with shared mental models engaged in more frequent interactions with one another, were more motivated, had more positive attitudes toward their work, and had higher levels of objectively rated performance.⁵⁹



Conflict Levels Conflict on a team isn't necessarily bad. As we discuss in Chapter 15, conflict has a complex relationship with team performance. *Relationship conflicts*—those based on interpersonal incompatibility, tension, and animosity toward others—are almost always dysfunctional. However, when teams are performing nonroutine activities, disagreements about task content—called *task conflicts*—stimulate discussion, promote critical assessment of problems and options, and can lead to better team decisions. A study conducted in China found that moderate levels of task conflict during the initial phases of team performance were positively related to team creativity, but both very low and very high levels of task conflict were negatively related to team performance.⁶⁰ In other words, both too much and too little disagreement about how a team should initially perform a creative task can inhibit performance.

The way conflicts are resolved can also make the difference between effective and ineffective teams. A study of ongoing comments made by 37 autonomous work groups showed that effective teams resolved conflicts by explicitly discussing the issues, whereas ineffective teams had conflicts focused more on personalities and the way things were said.⁶¹

Social Loafing As we noted earlier, individuals can engage in social loafing and coast on the group's effort when their particular contributions can't be identified. Effective teams undermine this tendency by making members individually and jointly accountable for the team's purpose, goals, and approach.⁶² Therefore, members should be clear on what they are individually responsible for and what they are jointly responsible for on the team.



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What Is My Team Efficacy?

In the Self-Assessment Library (available in MyManagementLab), take assessment IV.E.2 (What Is My Team Efficacy?).

Turning Individuals into Team Players

- 5 Show how organizations can create team players.

We've made a strong case for the value and growing popularity of teams. But many people are not inherently team players, and many organizations have historically nurtured individual accomplishments. Teams fit well in countries that score high on collectivism, but what if an organization wants to introduce

teams into a work population of individuals born and raised in an individualistic society? A veteran employee of a large company, who had done well working in an individualistic company in an individualist country, described the experience of joining a team: “I’m learning my lesson. I just had my first negative performance appraisal in 20 years.”⁶³

So what can organizations do to enhance team effectiveness—to turn individual contributors into team members? Here are options for managers trying to turn individuals into team players.

Selecting: Hiring Team Players

Some people already possess the interpersonal skills to be effective team players. When hiring team members, be sure candidates can fulfill their team roles as well as technical requirements.⁶⁴

When faced with job candidates who lack team skills, managers have three options. First, don’t hire them. If you have to hire them, assign them to tasks or positions that don’t require teamwork. If that is not feasible, the candidates can undergo training to make them into team players. In established organizations that decide to redesign jobs around teams, some employees will resist being team players and may be untrainable. Unfortunately, they typically become casualties of the team approach.

Creating teams often means resisting the urge to hire the best talent no matter what. The New York Knicks professional basketball team pays Carmelo Anthony nearly \$20 million per year, and while he scores a lot of points for his team, statistics show he scores many of them by taking more shots than other highly paid players in the league, which means fewer shots for his teammates.⁶⁵ Personal traits also appear to make some people better candidates for working in diverse teams. Teams made up of members who like to work through difficult mental puzzles also seem more effective and able to capitalize on the multiple points of view that arise from diversity in age and education.⁶⁶

Training: Creating Team Players

Training specialists conduct exercises that allow employees to experience the satisfaction teamwork can provide. Workshops help employees improve their problem-solving, communication, negotiation, conflict-management, and coaching skills. L’Oréal, for example, found that successful sales teams required much more than being staffed with high-ability salespeople: Management had to focus much of its efforts on team building. “What we didn’t account for was that many members of our top team in sales had been promoted because they had excellent technical and executional skills,” said L’Oréal’s senior VP of sales, David Waldock. As a result of the focus on team training, Waldock says, “We are no longer a team just on paper, working independently. We have a real group dynamic now, and it’s a good one.”⁶⁷ Employees also learn the five-stage group development model described in Chapter 9. Developing an effective team doesn’t happen overnight—it takes time.

Rewarding: Providing Incentives to Be a Good Team Player

An organization’s reward system must be reworked to encourage cooperative efforts rather than competitive ones.⁶⁸ Hallmark Cards Inc. added to its basic individual-incentive system an annual bonus based on achievement of team goals. Whole Foods directs most of its performance-based rewards toward team performance. As a result, teams select new members carefully so they will contribute to team effectiveness (and, thus, team bonuses).⁶⁹ It is usually best to

Photo 10-5 New engineering employees of India's Tata Consultancy Services work in teams to construct paper boats during a team-building exercise at the firm's training center. Creating team players is essential to the success of TCS because employees must collaborate and work cohesively in providing IT consulting services and business solutions for global clients.



Source: Bloomberg via Getty Images.

set a cooperative tone as soon as possible in the life of a team. As we already noted, teams that switch from a competitive to a cooperative system do not immediately share information, and they still tend to make rushed, poor-quality decisions.⁷⁰ Apparently, the low trust typical of the competitive group will not be readily replaced by high trust with a quick change in reward systems. These problems are not seen in teams that have consistently cooperative systems.

Promotions, pay raises, and other forms of recognition should be given to individuals who work effectively as team members by training new colleagues, sharing information, helping resolve team conflicts, and mastering needed new skills. This doesn't mean individual contributions should be ignored; rather, they should be balanced with selfless contributions to the team.

Finally, don't forget the intrinsic rewards, such as camaraderie, that employees can receive from teamwork. It's exciting to be part of a successful team. The opportunity for personal development of self and teammates can be a very satisfying and rewarding experience.

Beware! Teams Aren't Always the Answer

- 6 Decide when to use individuals instead of teams.

Teamwork takes more time and often more resources than individual work. Teams have increased communication demands, conflicts to manage, and meetings to run. So, the benefits of using teams have to exceed the costs, and that's not always the case.⁷¹ Before you rush to implement teams, carefully assess whether the work requires or will benefit from a collective effort.

How do you know whether the work of your group would be better done in teams? You can apply three tests.⁷² First, can the work be done better by more than one person? A good indicator is the complexity of the work and the need for different perspectives. Simple tasks that don't require diverse input are

probably better left to individuals. Second, does the work create a common purpose or set of goals for the people in the group that is more than the aggregate of individual goals? Many service departments of new-vehicle dealers have introduced teams that link customer-service people, mechanics, parts specialists, and sales representatives. Such teams can better manage collective responsibility for ensuring customer needs are properly met.

The final test is to determine whether the members of the group are interdependent. Using teams makes sense when there is interdependence among tasks—the success of the whole depends on the success of each one, *and* the success of each one depends on the success of the others. Soccer, for instance, is an obvious *team* sport. Success requires a great deal of coordination between interdependent players. Conversely, except possibly for relays, swim teams are not really teams. They're groups of individuals performing individually, whose total performance is merely the aggregate summation of their individual performances.

Summary

Few trends have influenced jobs as much as the massive movement to introduce teams into the workplace. The shift from working alone to working on teams requires employees to cooperate with others, share information, confront differences, and sublimate personal interests for the greater good of the team.

Implications for Managers

- Effective teams have common characteristics. They have adequate resources, effective leadership, a climate of trust, and a performance evaluation and reward system that reflects team contributions. These teams have individuals with technical expertise as well as problem-solving, decision-making, and interpersonal skills and the right traits, especially conscientiousness and openness.
- Effective teams also tend to be small—with fewer than 10 people, preferably of diverse backgrounds. They have members who fill role demands and who prefer to be part of a group. And the work that members do provides freedom and autonomy, the opportunity to use different skills and talents, the ability to complete a whole and identifiable task or product, and work that has a substantial impact on others.
- Effective teams have members who believe in the team's capabilities and are committed to a common plan and purpose, have an accurate shared mental model of what is to be accomplished, share specific team goals, maintain a manageable level of conflict, and show a minimal degree of social loafing.
- Because individualistic organizations and societies attract and reward individual accomplishments, it can be difficult to create team players in these environments. To make the conversion, try to select individuals who have the interpersonal skills to be effective team players, provide training to develop teamwork skills, and reward individuals for cooperative efforts.

To Get the Most Out of Teams, Empower Them

POINT

If you want high-performing teams with members who like each other and their jobs, I have a simple solution. Remove the leash tied to them by management and let them make their own decisions. In other words, empower them. This trend started a long time ago, when organizations realized that creating layers upon layers of bureaucracy thwarts innovation, slows progress to a trickle, and merely provides hoops for people to jump through in order to get anything done.

You can empower teams in two ways. One way is structurally, by transferring decision making from managers to team members and giving teams the official power to develop their own strategies. The other way is psychologically, by enhancing team members' beliefs that they have more authority, even though legitimate authority still rests with the organization's leaders. However, structural empowerment leads to heightened feelings of psychological empowerment, giving teams (and organizations) the best of both worlds.

Research suggests empowered teams benefit in a number of ways. Members are more motivated. They exhibit higher levels of commitment to the team and to the organization. And they perform much better too. Empowerment sends a signal to the team that it is trusted and doesn't have to be constantly micro-managed by upper leadership. And when teams get the freedom to make their own choices, they accept more responsibility for and take ownership of both the good and the bad.

Granted, that responsibility also means empowered teams must take the initiative to foster their ongoing learning and development, but teams entrusted with the authority to guide their own destiny do just that. So, do yourself (and your company) a favor and make sure that teams, rather than needless layers of middle managers, are the ones making the decisions that count.

COUNTERPOINT

Empowerment advocates cite the benefits yet neglect the harm that can be done when too much decision-making power is given to teams. They think that, to create effective teams, all you have to do as a leader is nothing because, by empowering teams, you've effectively stepped away as a leader and have lost your authority. Empowerment can do some good in certain circumstances, but it's certainly not a cure-all.

Yes, organizations have become flatter over the past several decades, paving the way for decision-making authority to seep into the lower levels of the organization. But consider that many teams are "empowered" simply because the management ranks have been so thinned that there is no one left to make the key calls. Empowerment is then just an excuse to ask teams to take on more responsibility without an accompanying increase in tangible benefits like pay.

In addition, the organization's leadership already has a good idea of what it would like its teams (and individual employees) to accomplish. If managers leave teams to their own devices, how likely is it that those teams will always choose what the manager wanted? Even if the manager offers suggestions about how the team might proceed, empowered teams can easily ignore that advice. Instead, they need direction on what goals to pursue and how to pursue them. That's what effective leadership is all about.

Consider what happens when decision-making authority is distributed among team members. The clarity of each team member's role becomes fuzzy, and members lack a leader to whom they can go for advice. And finally, when teams are self-managed, they become like silos, disconnected from the rest of the organization and its mission. Simply handing people authority is no guarantee they will use it effectively. So, leave the power to make decisions in the hands of those who have worked their way up the organization. After all, they got to be leaders for a reason.

END-OF-CHAPTER REVIEW

MyManagementLab

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QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- 10-1** Explain the buzz words in successful organizations today—teams and teamwork.
- 10-2** Even though they are seemingly alike, explain the difference between teams and groups.
- 10-3** Differentiate each team type's role.

- 10-4** Explain the critical contextual factors that determine team effectiveness.

- 10-5** Demonstrate how organizations invest in developing team players.

- 10-6** Show that successful organizations intentionally select the right players, whether teams or individuals.

EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE Composing the “Perfect” Team

Break into teams of four to five. Assume you work for a company that redesigns existing products to improve them, from computer keyboards to bicycle helmets to toothbrushes. As a result, creativity is a key factor in whether your company succeeds in developing a product that is marketable.

You need to staff a new team of 5 individuals, and you have a pool of 20 to choose from. For each person, you have information about the following characteristics: intelligence, work experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness to experience, and extraversion.

Your team is to answer the following questions:

- 10-7.** If you could form your perfect team for this context, what would it look like? In other words, what

characteristics would you choose for each of the five members—a lot of work experience or a little; high, moderate, or low conscientiousness; and so on? Why?

- 10-8.** How, if at all, would your choices change if the task required teams to make quick decisions that were not necessarily the most creative? Why?

- 10-9.** Each member of your group should describe his or her ideal individual—one hypothetical person you'd most like to work with for this context (use the same criteria as in question 1). As a group, compare your responses. Does every person's ideal individual share the same characteristics, or are there differences? If you could, would you compose a team entirely of your ideal individuals? Why or why not?

ETHICAL DILEMMA It’s Easy to Be Unethical When Everyone Else Is

We often think of unethical behavior as individual behavior. However, in many cases, it's a team effort. Consider the doping scandal involving Tour de France cyclist Lance Armstrong and his teammates on the U.S. Postal Service Team. According to the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, Armstrong, his coaches, and several of his teammates “ran the most sophisticated, professionalized and successful doping program the sport has ever seen.” Five of eight riders on Armstrong's 1999 team admitted using performance-enhancing drugs, and Armstrong himself came clean in a widely publicized interview with Oprah Winfrey.

Teams in which unethical behavior occur are often high in status. Does unethical behavior occur only in elite teams

like top management and sports? Or can it also occur in everyday work teams?

A study of 126 three-member teams of undergraduates suggests that unethical team behavior can occur beyond top management teams. In this study, teams were given a problem on which to work, with the following instructions:

You are assigned a team project in one of your finance courses. Your team waits until the last minute to begin working. To save time, a friend suggests using an old project out of his fraternity files. Does your team go along with this plan?

How many of the teams decided to cheat? About 37 percent decided to use the old project.

Because this exercise was hypothetical, the authors also studied team cheating in another way—by allowing teams to self-grade a “decoy” assignment (an aspect of their assignment that did not in reality exist) that they thought counted as 2 percent of their course grade. How many teams cheated here? About one in four.

This study found that team cheating was greater when a team was composed of utilitarian members (those who think the ends justify the means). However, utilitarian attitudes were more likely to translate into team cheating when team members felt interpersonally “safe”—when they felt there was little risk within the team of being attacked or ridiculed for propositions or arguments they made.

The upshot? It appears that in the right circumstances, all types of teams are capable of behaving unethically. By holding individual team members accountable, and by providing a climate of “voice” where dissenting team

members feel free to speak up, managers can discourage team unethical behavior.

Questions

- 10-10.** Do you feel that the unethical behavior resulted from imitating the leader’s behavior as a role model—national superstar—or from each team member him- or herself?
- 10-11.** Discuss whether you think that the behavior of these cyclists reflects that they were a group rather than a team.
- 10-12.** In this study, all team members were required to sign a response form indicating they agreed with the group decision, which was ultimately the decision to cheat. Do you think the results would change if consensus or a signature was not required?

Sources: M. J. Pearsall and A. P. J. Ellis, “Thick as Thieves: The Effects of Ethical Orientation and Psychological Safety on Unethical Team Behavior,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 96, no. 2 (2011), pp. 401–411; D. W. White and E. Lean, “The Impact of Perceived Leader Integrity on Subordinates in a Work Team Environment,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 81, no. 4 (2008), pp. 765–778; and N. Karlinsky, “Lance Armstrong’s Teammates Say He Doped,” *ABC News* (October 10, 2012), downloaded on June 5, 2013, from www.abcnetwork.com.

CASE INCIDENT 1 Tongue-Tied in Teams

Thirty-one year old Robert Murphy has the best intentions to participate in team meetings, but when it’s “game time,” he chokes. An online marketing representative, Robert cannot be criticized for lack of preparation. After being invited to a business meeting with six of his co-workers and his supervisor, Robert began doing his research on the meeting’s subject matter. He compiled notes, arranged them neatly, and walked into the meeting room. As soon as the meeting began, “I just sat there like a lump, fixated on the fact that I was quiet.” The entire meeting passed without Robert contributing a word.

Robert is certainly not the first person, nor is he the last, to fail to speak up during meetings. While some employees may actually lack ability, the highly intelligent also freeze. One study found that if we believe our peers are smarter, we experience anxiety that temporarily blocks our ability to think effectively. In other words, worrying about what the group thinks of you makes you dumber. The study also found the effect was worse for women, perhaps because they are more socially attuned.

In other cases, failing to speak up may be attributed to personality. While the extraverted tend to be assertive and assured in group settings, the more introverted prefer to

collect their thoughts before speaking—if they speak at all. But again, even those who are extraverted can remain quiet, especially when they feel they cannot contribute.

What to do? Michael Woodward, an organizational psychologist, suggests pairing up with someone more assertive who can pull you into the conversation. Preparation is key, even if it means talking to the person facilitating the meeting beforehand to discuss your thoughts. And finally, the realization that others may be feeling the same anxiety can also help spark the confidence to speak up.

Questions

- 10-13.** Recall a time when you failed to speak up during a group meeting. What were the reasons for your silence? Are they similar to or different from the reasons discussed here?
- 10-14.** Beyond the tips provided in this Case Incident, can you think of other strategies that can help the tongue-tied?
- 10-15.** Imagine you are leading a team meeting and you notice that a couple of team members are not contributing. What specific steps might you take to try to increase their contributions?

Sources: E. Bernstein, “Speaking Up Is Hard to Do: Researchers Explain Why,” *The Wall Street Journal* (February 7, 2012), p. D1; and H. Leroy et al., “Behavioral Integrity for Safety, Priority of Safety, Psychological Safety, and Patient Safety: A Team-Level Study,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* (November 2012), pp. 1273–1281.

CASE INCIDENT 2 Multicultural Multinational Teams

As work has become more global, companies are realizing the benefits of composing teams of employees who not only have different cultural backgrounds, but who live in different countries. These multicultural, multinational teams are extremely diverse, allowing companies to leverage widely different points of view about business problems.

One company known for using multicultural, multinational teams is IBM. Although at one time IBM was famous for its written and unwritten rules—such as its no-layoff policy, focus on individual promotions and achievement, expectation of lifetime service at the company, and requirement of suits and white shirts at work—times have changed.

IBM has clients in 170 countries and now does two-thirds of its business outside the United States. As a result, it has overturned virtually all aspects of its old culture. One relatively new focus is on teamwork. To foster appreciation of a variety of cultures and open up emerging markets, IBM sends hundreds of its employees to month-long volunteer project teams in regions of the world where most big companies don't do business. Al Chakra, a software development manager located in Raleigh, North Carolina, was sent to join GreenForest, a furniture manufacturing team in Timisoara, Romania. With Chakra were IBM employees from five other countries. Together, the team helped GreenForest become more computer-savvy to increase its business. In return for the IBM team's assistance, GreenForest was charged nothing. IBM firmly believes these multicultural, multinational teams are good investments, because they help lay the groundwork

for uncovering business in emerging economies. IBM is not the only company to use multicultural, multinational teams. Intel Corp., for example, has teams of employees located in the United States, Israel, and Ireland.

To manage these types of teams effectively, leaders must possess certain characteristics. These include obvious factors like openness to cultural diversity and cultural intelligence. And according to a survey conducted by Miriam Erez, a faculty member at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, it is better for leaders to have a global rather than a cross-cultural perspective. What's the difference? A global perspective means integrating culturally different and geographically different individuals into a single, unified team. Leaders with a global perspective develop a global identity in addition to their local or national identity, while leaders with a cross-cultural perspective do not perceive themselves as belonging to more than one culture.

Questions

- 10-16. If you calculate the person-hours devoted to IBM's team projects, they amount to more than 180,000 hours of management time each year. Do you think this is a wise investment of IBM's human resources? Why or why not?
- 10-17. Would you like to work on a multicultural, multinational project team? Why or why not?
- 10-18. Multicultural project teams often face problems with communication, expectations, and values. How do you think some of these challenges can be overcome?

Sources: Based on C. Hymowitz, "IBM Combines Volunteer Service, Teamwork to Cultivate Emerging Markets," *The Wall Street Journal* (August 4, 2008), p. B6; S. Gupta, "Mine the Potential of Multicultural Teams," *HR Magazine* (October 2008), pp. 79–84; H. Aguinis and K. Kraiger, "Benefits of Training and Development for Individuals and Teams, Organizations, and Society," *Annual Review of Psychology* 60, no. 1 (2009), pp. 451–474; and K. Gurchiek, "Global Training Sought for Leaders of Multicultural Teams," *Society for Human Resource Management* (September 15, 2011), downloaded on June 5, 2013, from www.shrm.org.

MyManagementLab

Go to <http://www.pearsonglobaleditions.com/mymanagementlab> for the following Assisted-graded writing questions:

- 10-19. List the characteristics of an optimally successful team.
- 10-20. In reference to Case Incident 2, how could you foster a "global perspective" in a multicultural, multinational team, rather than just a "cross-cultural perspective?" Is this an important distinction to make?
- 10-21. MyManagementLab Only—comprehensive writing assignment for this chapter.