

## **The Preconditions for an Effective Team**

**By Auscar Wambiya**

There is a general agreement that effective teams are the missing link to results delivery in organizations generally. Problems like hurriedly convened teams, absence of synergy in teams and disgruntled team members can be traced to lack of care in the set-up process of teams. Research nor confirms that there are six preconditions that increase the chances that a team will perform well and deliver on its mandate. They include, creating a real team and not a team in name only, having a compelling purpose towards which team members work, getting the right people into the right teams, having clear norms of conduct in team work, being in a supportive context to enable team work and having competent coaching to facilitate team purpose. Let's expound on each briefly.

A real team has to do with a bounded set of people who work together over some period of time to accomplish a common task and not an amorphous set of individuals who are a team in name only. In real teams, it is clear who is and is not a member, members are interdependent for accomplishing the work and the team has reasonable stability of membership.

A challenging and consequential team's purpose is characterized by desired end states clearly specified but the means used to pursue those ends left mainly to the team. A compelling purpose is clearly stated, a "stretch" to achieve, consequential for others and specifies the ends sought but not procedural details.

The team has to also have the right number and mix of members being people who have the capabilities the work requires and who also are skilled in working collaboratively with others. Where the right people are found, members have ample task and teamwork skills, there are no "derailers" on the team and the team has the right number and mix of members.

The team needs to have clear norms of conduct that promote both full utilization of members' capabilities and active planning of the team's performance strategy. Clear norms means that team norms of conduct are clear and appropriate, support the full use of *all* members' contributions and support active planning of team performance strategies.

The team's organizational context needs to provide the material, technical, and informational supports that the team needs to accomplish its work, as well as recognition and reinforcement of good team performance. Supportive context of a team is where information needed for the work is readily available, educational and technical assistance are available when needed, good team performance is recognized and reinforced and the team can get the material resources it needs for the work at hand.

The team should, finally, receive competent, well-timed coaching to help members work through problems and exploit emerging opportunities. Available coaching is where the team has ready access to coaching assistance and coaches are competent in dealing with team dynamics. Great teams are made of these preconditions. Together, each achieves more.

***The writer is a consultant on Strategy, Leadership and Development***