

A Brief Overview on “Introduction to Teamwork” from S. McCahan’s Book

What makes an effective team successful in performing better than a group of individuals working alone? In the chapter “Introduction to Teamwork”^[1] from her book “Designing Engineers: An Introductory Text”, Susan McCahan argues that effective team employs better strategies in generating new ideas and in bringing diverse perspectives as there’s active communication, commitment, cooperation, and mutual understanding between each member. McCahan classified these groups as “Highly Performing”^[1], as their collaborated effort in resolving mutual conflict as well as their commitment to the shared goal, helps them in having developed communication skills and synergistic work habits^[1].

Building a successful team requires the continuing effort of everyone in the group. In McCahan’s words: “Part of being a high-performance team is developing the habit of reflection”^[1], which means that each member should work together in learning and reflecting from their previous experiences with each other. Starting from the very onset, a group may go through many stages of team development, mainly the organizing and producing stage. As it coalesces into a working unit, a group goes through three main organizing stages: forming, storming and norming^[1].

In the forming stage, members generally learn to get comfortable around each other. As the group develops, the roles of everyone start to get more apparent, which leads to the most crucial stage of the development process: storming^[1]. During this stage, disagreements in ideas, opinions, decisions, and work habits lead to conflicts among members. An assertive team leader can help the group focus on the shared goal of the team during this stage, by making everyone focus on the task rather than others’ personalities. As McCahan puts it: “This is the least comfortable stage of team development but is a very important one.”^[1]

The last stage of the organization of the group is the norming stage, where everyone learns to recognize their differences and their shared interest^[1]. As the roles and responsibilities become clearly defined, the group enters in the producing and performing

stage^[1], where “the team focuses on developing efficient and effective processes and procedures for accomplishing shared goals.”^[1]

Cited References

- [1] S. McCahan *et al.*, “Introduction to Teamwork,” in “Designing Engineers: An Introductory Text”, Hoboken, NY: Wiley, 2015, p. 215-252.