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Summary of “Introduction to Teamwork” by S. McCahan

What does teamwork in engineering look like? Teamwork is a fundamental part of any group of people who want to work together. In McCahan’s article “Introduction to Teamwork [1],” he discusses fundamentals of engineering design teams, various types of teams, and organizational skills. McCahan defines these teams as “A team is a group of people who come together to work in an interrelated manner toward a common goal [1].” A team achieving this common goal is the pinnacle of teamwork, and this article informs the reader of efficient and effective ways a team can operate.

There can be some confusion on what can and cannot classify as a team, McCahan’s article states: “A group of people who come together to make independent decisions to reach a goal do not form a team [1].” This statement implies that a team is a group of people with a common goal who work together to achieve this goal; they do not work independently of each other. There are two categories of teams when considering their functions; The function types are cross-functional and within-function teams [1]. Alternatively, you can categorize teams based off of their performance; they can be categorized as pseudo teams, potential teams, and real teams, with real teams having the most communication between its members [1].

Although communication is one of the most important parts of a team, “Introduction to Teamwork” includes elaborations on not only this but other important

parts to a team that can increase its performance as well. Organization, production, and team management are all teamwork essentials. The organization of teams splits up based on three phases; a team will go through the stages of forming, storming, and norming [1]. It is important that throughout these phases, the team establishes rules and order. One should always be cautious to be respectful to all their teammates in these beginning stages of a team. The team then begins production, where “the team is cohesive and dedicated to working on the project [1].” In addition to this, the team should pick out a team leader for management who “will be the member of the team whose role is the closest to that of a project manager found in engineering companies [1].” Teamwork is more than simply communication and results. A team needs to work together to establish a common goal, unanimously organize thoughts and ideas, and produce work that reflects the common goal. All of these aspects are a necessity for any good team, and it is important to remember a team is, as McCahan says, “not simply the sum of its parts. Highly successful teams are able to leverage the differences in people's abilities and styles to be productive [1].”

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