Chapter Seven:

Team Dynamics

Learning Objectives

1. Define teams and informal groups, and explain why employees join informal groups.

2. Discuss the benefits and limitations of teams.

3. Outline the team effectiveness model and discuss how task characteristics, team size, and team composition influence team effectiveness.

4. Discuss how the six team processes—team development, norms, roles, cohesion, trust, and mental models—influence team effectiveness.

5. Discuss the characteristics and factors required for the success of self-directed teams and remote teams.

6. Identify four constraints on team decision making and discuss ways to improve decision making and creativity in teams.

"Great things in business are never done by one person, they're done by a team of people."
Steve Jobs

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What Are Teams?

1. Groups of two or more people.

2. Exist to fulfill a purpose.

3. Interdependence and need for collaboration.

4. Mutual accountability.

5. Perceive themselves to be a team.

Types of Teams

Permanence: How long the team exists.

Skill diversity: Extent to which members have different skills, knowledge.

Authority dispersion: How much decision making is distributed throughout the team.

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Informal Groups

Groups that exist primarily for the benefit of their members.

Reasons why informal groups exist:

- Innate drive to bond.

- Social identity.

- Goal accomplishment.

- Emotional support.

Informal groups potentially benefit organizations.

Advantages and Challenges of Teams

Advantages:

1. Better decisions, products.

2. Better information sharing and coordination.

3. Higher motivation due to team membership.

Challenges:

- Individuals are better than teams for some tasks.

- Process losses.

- Social loafing.

Social Loafing Causes and Remedies

Social loafing is more likely to occur:

- When individual performance is hidden, indistinguishable.

- Work is not intrinsically motivating.

- Due to individual characteristics.

- When employees lack motivation to help team goals.

Minimizing social loafing:

- Form smaller teams.

- Measure individual performance.

- Specialize tasks.

- Increase job enrichment.

- Increase mindfulness of team obligations.

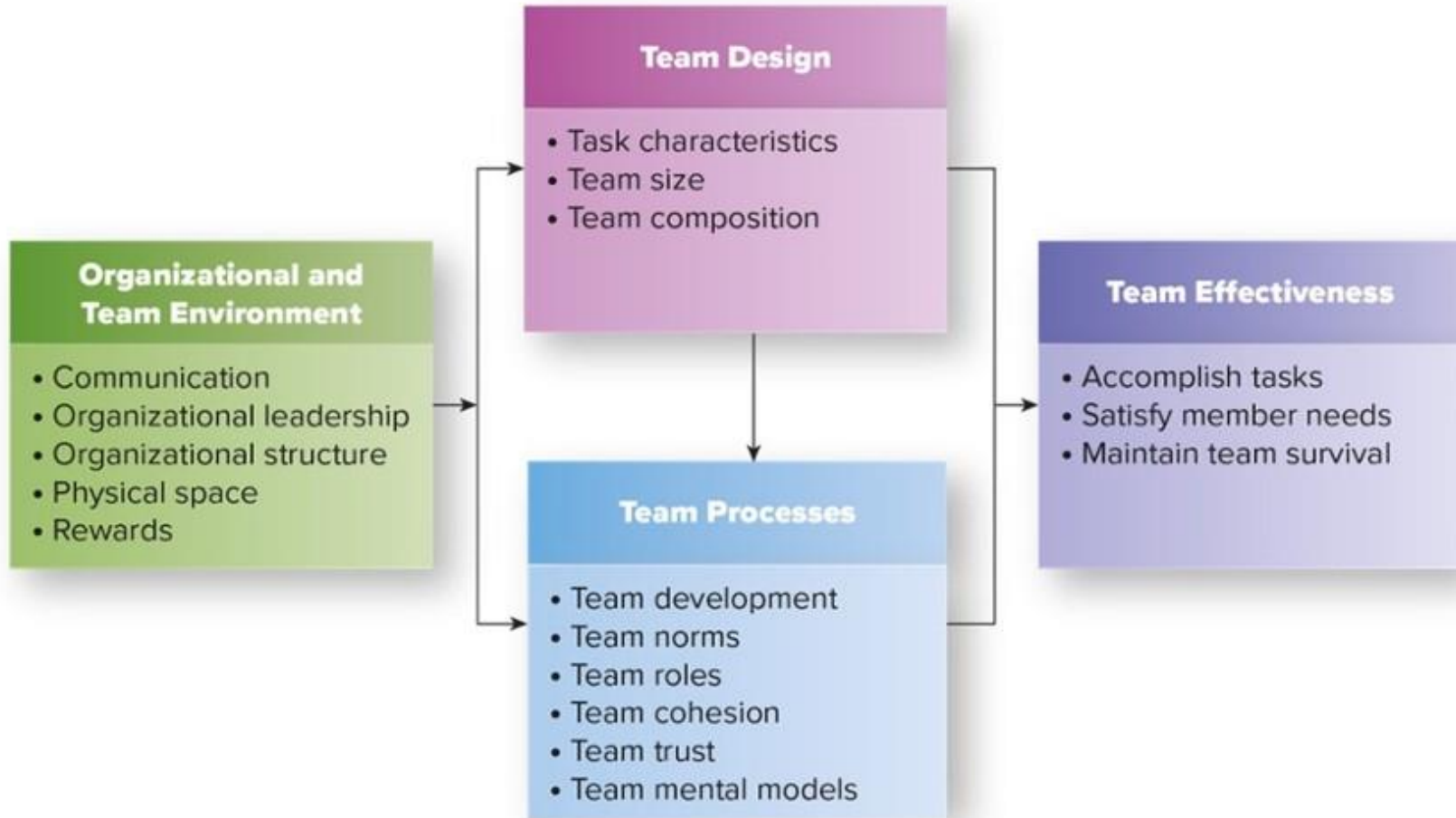- Select motivated, team-oriented employees.

Team Effectiveness Model

Exhibit 7.2 Team Effectiveness Model

Access the text alternative for slide images.

Organization and Team Environment

- Communication systems.

- Organizational leadership.

- Organizational structure.

- Physical space.

- Reward systems.

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Best Task Characteristics for Teams

1. Complex tasks divisible into specialized roles.

2. Well-structured tasks.
   - Low task variability.
   - High task analyzability.

3. Higher task interdependence.

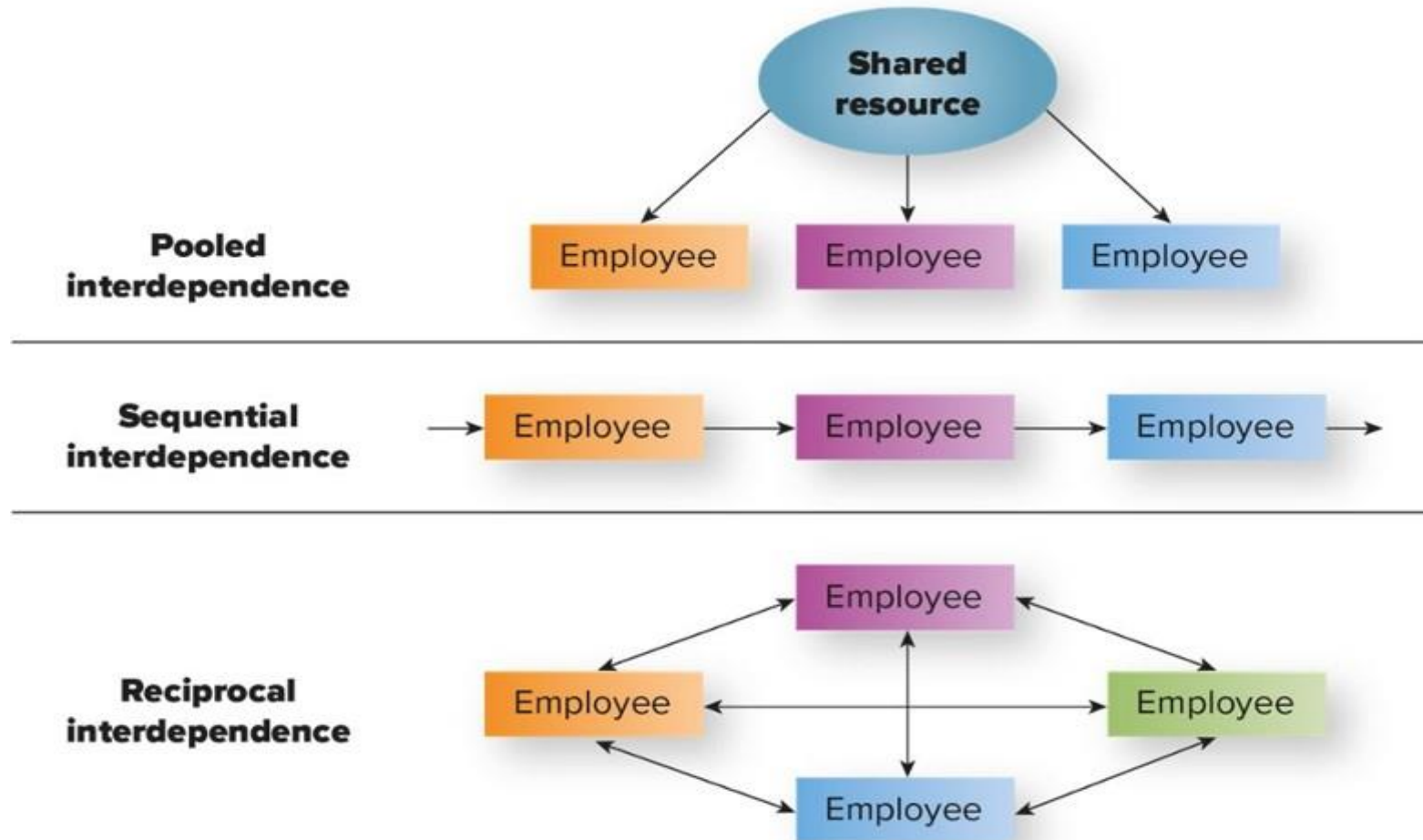Peopleimages/Getty Images

Levels of Task Interdependence

Exhibit 7.3 Levels of Task Interdependence

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Team Size

Smaller teams are better because:

- Less process loss.

- Feel more engaged in teamwork.

- Faster team development.

But team must be large enough to accomplish task.

Task work and teamwork.

Effective team members must engage in task work and teamwork.

Taskwork — behaviors that complete the assigned tasks.

- They have the motivation, ability, and role perceptions (MARS model internal elements) to do their job.

Teamwork — behaviors that support the team — effective team member behaviors (5 Cs)

Team Composition

EXHIBIT 7.4 Five Cs of Effective Team Member Behavior

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Team Composition: Diversity

Team members have diverse knowledge, skills, perspectives, values, etc.

Advantages:

- View problems/alternatives from different perspectives.

- Broader knowledge base.

- Better representation of constituents.

Disadvantages:

- Slower team development.

- Susceptible to "faultlines."

Team Processes

- Cognitive and emotional dynamics of the team that continually change with the team's ongoing evolution and development.

- Includes team development, norms, roles, cohesion, trust, mental models.

- Team development, the heart of team processes; the other processes are embedded in team development.
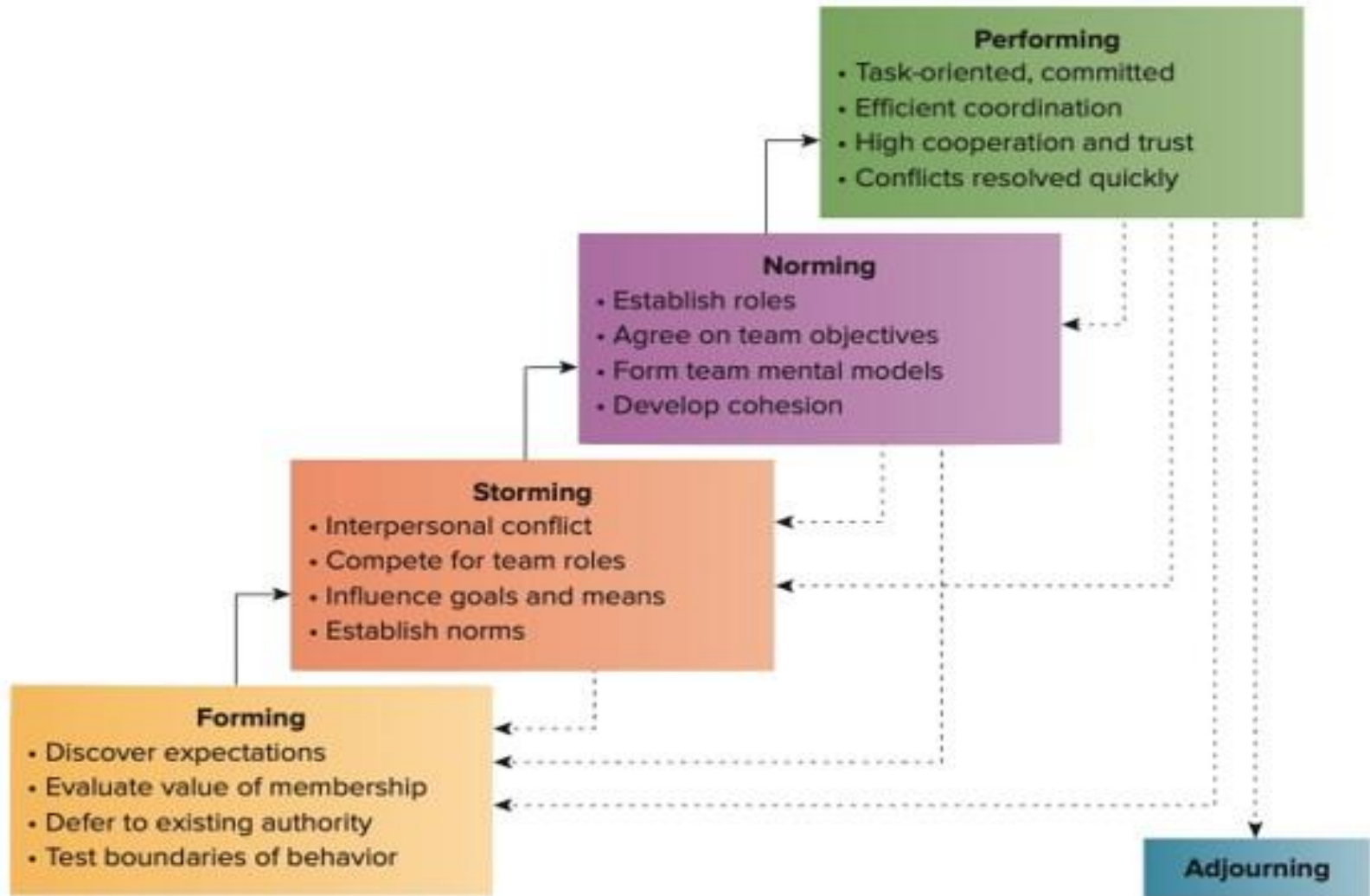
Stages of Team Development

Exhibit 7.5 Stages of Team Development

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Team Norms

Informal rules, shared expectations to regulate behavior.

Why teams develop norms:

- Improve team performance/wellbeing.

- Improve predictability and conflict-avoidance with team members.

- Routinize behavior with minimal cognitive effort.

Managing team norms:

- Select team members with preferred values and past behavior.

- State desired norms when forming teams.

- Ongoing coaching of norms to team members.

- Introduce team-based rewards that counter dysfunctional norms.

- Disband teams with dysfunctional norms.

Team Roles

Set of behaviors that people are expected to repeatedly perform because they hold formal or informal positions in a team and organization.

Roles and norms establish/reinforce behavior.

Roles are acquired formally or informally.

Types of roles:

- Taskwork roles: assist the team's performance.

- Teamwork roles: support team development/dynamics.

Team Cohesion

The degree of attraction people feel toward the team and their motivation to remain members.

Better team cohesion with:

- Higher member similarity.
- Smaller team size.
- Frequent member interaction.
- Somewhat difficult team entry.
- Higher team success.
- More external competition or challenges.

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Team Cohesion and Performance

High cohesion teams usually perform better because:

- Motivated to maintain membership, achieve team objectives.

- Share information more frequently.

- Higher coworker satisfaction.

- Better social support (minimizes stress).

- Resolve conflict more swiftly and effectively.

Cohesion increases performance when:

- Task interdependence is high.

- Team norms are consistent with organizational objectives.

Trust in Teams

Positive expectations one person has toward another person or group in situations involving risk.

Three levels of trust:

- Calculus-based (lowest).

- Knowledge-based.

- Identification-based (highest).

Swift trust:

- Initially a moderate or high level of trust in coworkers when people join a team.

Team Mental Models

Shared mental models: Team members hold similar images and expectations about the team.

Complementary mental models: Each member's mental model is unique but compatible with others.

Benefits of shared and complementary team mental models.

- Improve coordination.

- Belief/confidence that the team is a functioning social entity.

- Directory of the team's diverse knowledge repository.

Team Building

Formal activities to improve the team development processes.

Types of team building:

- Goal setting.

- Problem-solving.

- Role clarification.

- Interpersonal relations.

Team building can be effective under specific conditions.

Self-Directed Teams

Self-directed teams defined:

- Cross-functional groups organized around work processes.

- Complete entire piece of work, requires interdependent tasks.

- Autonomy over task decisions.

Success factors:

1. Responsible for entire work process.

2. High interdependence within the team.

3. Low interdependence with other teams.

4. Autonomy to organize and coordinate work.

5. Work site/technology support team communication/coordination and job enrichment.

Remote (Virtual/Distributed) Teams

Team remoteness varies with:

- Geographic dispersion.

- Percentage of members who work apart.

- Percentage of time that members work apart.

Remote team success factors:

1. Members apply effective teamwork behaviors (5 Cs).

2. Freedom to use a toolkit of communication channels.

3. Moderate or higher task structure.

4. Opportunities to meet face-to-face.

Team Decision-making Constraints

- Time constraints.

- Evaluation apprehension.

- Peer pressure to conform.

- Overconfidence (inflated team efficacy).

General Guidelines for Team Decisions

1. Checks/balances avoid individual dominance.

2. Maintain optimal team size.

3. Encourage team confidence, be wary of overconfidence.

4. Team norms encourage critical thinking.

5. Support psychological safety.

6. Use team structures that encourage creativity.

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Creative Team Structures: Brainstorming

Four brainstorming rules:

- Speak freely.
- Don't criticize others or their ideas.
- Provide as many ideas as possible.
- Build on others' ideas.

Brainstorming can be effective, but requires:

- Experienced facilitator.
- Confident employees.
- Learning orientation and psychological safety culture.

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Other Creative Team Structures

Brainwriting:

- Brainstorming without conversation.

- Less production blocking than brainstorming.

Electronic brainstorming:

- Brainwriting with technology.

- Reduces production blocking, evaluation apprehension, conformity.

Nominal group technique:

- Brainwriting with verbal stage.

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