**Team Dynamics – Reading Material**

**Overview:**

Projects require that people work together, so teamwork has become an important concept in organizations. Effective teams are an intermediary goal towards getting good, sustainable results. Industry has seen increasing efforts through training and cross-training to help people to work together more effectively and to accomplish shared goals, whether colleagues are present or absent.

**Objectives:**

This reading material is designed to help you:

* Understand the Dynamics of Team Work

**What is a team?**

A team is a small group of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable

The Tortoise and The Hare - What they learn about teamwork.

Everyone knows about the story of the tortoise and the hare. What most people don't know is that the there are several valuable lessons on teamwork to be learnt from the story...

Long time ago, there was a tortoise and a hare who had an argument about who the faster runner was. They finally decided to take on one another on a race.

As the race started, the hare sprinted ahead briskly for some time. Realizing that it will take some time for the tortoise to catch up with him, he decided to seek shelter from the sun under a tree before continuing the race. As he sat under the tree, he gradually fell asleep. The tortoise, crawling at a steady pace, eventually overtook him and won the race. The hare woke up and realized that his complacency cost him the trophy.

The moral of the story is that the determined, hardworking and steady paced people will eventually overtake the fast but complacent. We are all familiar with this story.

Someone recently added a continuation to this age old tale. It goes like this:

The hare realized that he was over confident, complacent and took things too easily. He decided to have a re-match with the tortoise. The tortoise accepted his challenge.

This time, the hare ran with all his might and didn't stop until he crossed the finish line.

The moral of the story? Fast and consistent will always beat the slow and steady.

But the story doesn't end here.

This time, it was the tortoise that did the soul searching and he realized that if the hare didn't stop, there is no way he will beat him. He thought hard and decided on a different course and he challenged the hare to another re-match. The hare, of course, agreed.

With the lessons learnt from his previous failure in mind, the hare kept on running once the race started and didn't stop until the route leads him to the bank of a river. He was taken by surprise and he did not know what to do, since he could not swim. There were no bridges in sight and no one to ask for directions. As he was cracking his head, thinking of ways to cross the river, the tortoise strolled slowly along, dived into the river, swam across it and ultimately, finished the race before the hare.

The moral of the story? Know your strengths and take on your competitors in areas of your core competency.

The story still hasn't ended.

With the hare and the tortoise spending so much time together racing, they have become rather good friends, they have also developed mutual respect for one another as they realized that they are both different and they have different strengths. They decided to race again, but this time, as a team.

As the race started, the hare carried the tortoise and they sped to the river bank. There, they switched positions and the tortoise ferried the hare across the river. On the opposite bank, the hare again carried the tortoise and they crossed the finishing line together. They completed the race in a record time that both of them can never achieve if they were to do it alone. They also felt a greater sense of satisfaction than they'd felt earlier.

The moral of the story? It's good to be individually brilliant and to have strong core competencies but unless you're able to work in a team and harness each other's core competencies, you'll always perform below par because there will always be situations at which you'll do poorly and someone else does well.

Teamwork is mainly about situational leadership, letting the person with the relevant core competency for a situation take leadership. Being supportive team members is necessary for a team to advance.

There are more lessons on teamwork to be learned from this story. Note that neither the hare nor the tortoise gave up after failures. The hare decided to work harder and put in more effort after his failure. The tortoise changed his strategy because he was already working as hard as he could, but was not doing as well as he wished.

Imagine how long it will take the hare to learn how to swim! Or for the tortoise to learn to run fast. In this day and age when the environment changes at lightning speed, we have to learnt to work with people who have strengths in areas that we do not have.

It is the same in business, if we can collaborate with people who are experts in areas that we are not familiar with, we will realize that our market suddenly becomes bigger.

Adapted from unknown author's article.

**The Tuckman Model**

Team formation usually follows easily recognizable stages, known as "forming, storming, norming, and performing." Psychologist Bruce Tuckman, who created this memorable phrase, later added a fifth stage, "adjourning" or "mourning."

**FOUR STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT**

Tuckman described the four distinct stages that a group can as it comes together and starts to operate. This process can be subconscious, although an understanding of the stages can help a group reach effectiveness more quickly and less painfully.

Stage 1: Forming

Individual behavior is driven by a desire to be accepted by the others, and avoid controversy or conflict. Serious issues and feelings are avoided, and people focus on being busy with routines, such as team organization, who does what, when to meet, etc. But individuals are also gathering information and impressions - about each other, and about the scope of the task and how to approach it. This is a comfortable stage to be in, but the avoidance of conflict and threat means that not much actually gets done.

Features of this phase:

High dependence on leader for guidance and direction. Little agreement on team aims other than received from leader. Individual roles and responsibilities are unclear. Leader must be prepared to answer lots of questions about the team's purpose, objectives and external relationships. Processes are often ignored. Members test tolerance of system and leader.

Stage 2: Storming

Individuals in the group can only remain nice to each other for so long, as important issues start to be addressed. Some people's patience will break early, and minor confrontations will arise that are quickly dealt with or glossed over. These may relate to the work of the group itself, or to roles and responsibilities within the group. Some will observe that it's good to be getting into the real issues, whilst others will wish to remain in the comfort and security of stage 1. Depending on the culture of the organization and individuals, the conflict will be more or less suppressed, but it'll be there, under the surface. To deal with the conflict, individuals may feel they are winning or losing battles, and will look for structural clarity and rules to prevent the conflict persisting.

Features of this phase:

Decisions don't come easily within group. Team members vie for position as they attempt to establish themselves in relation to other team members and the leader, who might receive challenges from team members. Clarity of purpose increases but plenty of uncertainties persist. Cliques and factions form and there may be power struggles. The team needs to be focused on its goals to avoid becoming distracted by relationships and emotional issues. Compromises may be required to enable progress

Stage 3: Norming

As Stage 2 evolves, the "rules of engagement" for the group become established, and the scope of the group’s tasks or responsibilities is clear and agreed. Having had their arguments, they now understand each other better, and can appreciate each other's skills and experience. Individuals listen to each other, appreciate and support each other, and are prepared to change pre-conceived views: they feel they're part of a cohesive, effective group. However, individuals have had to work hard to attain this stage, and may resist any pressure to change - especially from the outside - for fear that the group will break up, or revert to a storm.

Features of this phase:

Agreement and consensus is largely forms among team, who respond well to facilitation by leader. Roles and responsibilities are clear and accepted. Big decisions are made by group agreement. Smaller decisions may be delegated to individuals or small teams within group. Commitment and unity is strong. The team may engage in fun and social activities. The team discusses and develops its processes and working style. There is general respect for the leader and some of leadership is more shared by the team.

Stage 4: Performing

Not all groups reach this stage, characterized by a state of interdependence and flexibility. Everyone knows each other well enough to be able to work together, and trusts each other enough to allow independent activity. Roles and responsibilities change according to need in an almost seamless way. Group identity, loyalty and morale are all high, and everyone is equally task-orientated and people-orientated. This high degree of comfort means that all the energy of the group can be directed towards the task(s) in hand.

Features of this phase:

The team is more strategically aware; the team knows clearly why it is doing what it is doing. The team has a shared vision and is able to stand on its own feet with no interference or participation from the leader. There is a focus on over-achieving goals, and the team makes most of the decisions against criteria agreed with the leader. The team has a high degree of autonomy. Disagreements occur but now they are resolved within the team positively and necessary changes to processes and structure are made by the team. The team is able to work towards achieving the goal, and also to attend to relationship, style and process issues along the way. team members look after each other. The team requires delegated tasks and projects from the leader. The team does not need to be instructed or assisted. Team members might ask for assistance from the leader with personal and interpersonal development.

Ten years after first describing the four stages, Bruce Tuckman revisited his original work and described another, final, stage:

Stage 5: Adjourning

This is about completion and disengagement, both from the tasks and the group members. Individuals will be proud of having achieved much and glad to have been part of such an enjoyable group. They need to recognize what they've done, and consciously move on. Some authors describe stage 5 as "Deforming and Mourning", recognizing the sense of loss felt by group members.

Features of this phase:

Tuckman's fifth stage, adjourning, is the break-up of the group, hopefully when the task is completed successfully, its purpose fulfilled; everyone can move on to new things, feeling good about what's been achieved. From an organizational perspective, recognition of and sensitivity to people's vulnerabilities in Tuckman's fifth stage is helpful, particularly if members of the group have been closely bonded and feel a sense of insecurity or threat from this change. Feelings of insecurity would be natural for people with high 'steadiness' attributes (as regards the 'four temperaments' or DISC model) and with strong routine and empathy style (as regards the Benziger thinking styles model, right and left basal brain dominance).

**Why Teamwork Matters: 4 Reasons**

You may have seen this a million times before, but nothing can sum up the meaning of TEAM than this

**“TEAM stands for**

**T – Together**

**E – Everyone**

**A – Achieves**

**M – More”**

~Chambless

1. **Motivation**

You have a greater number of people working together in close proximity on the same goal.

The motivation factor is going to be high especially when the team members understand each other, have a sense of healthy competition, are willing to help the others along and are big-hearted enough to take pride in each other’s successes. After all, what’s the fun in celebrating if you are going to do it alone?

Regular team-bonding exercises and outings will also lead to strong friendships and loyalty. A strong sense of loyalty towards the team works as an additional motivational factor for the team members.

No one would want to let his team member down by not putting forward their best foot forward. If you know that there are people depending on you and you are accountable to them, you would not lag behind in completing your work on time.

2. **Accelerated Learning**

People working in teams tend to learn more by their interactions with each other. Brainstorming sessions can help you view the same problem from different perspectives and arrive at the best possible solution.

If you were working alone, it is quite possible that you would have not thought about the different possible ways through which you could solve the problem.

When you have a number of people specialized in different areas working together, it is easy to divide the tasks according the strengths and interests of each person and at the same time, keep everyone happy.

If you are able to work in an area which is in alignment with your likes and interests, you will be able to put in your hundred percent into the job.

3. **Improved Efficiency**

If you have a team carrying out your project, you can always rest easy that there would be someone else to pick up the slack if any individual falls sick or is absent. Well-defined roles ensures that the work is completed on time and by the person who is the most suitable to do it.

This in turn, translates into improved efficiency and the work gets completed earlier than if only one person was working on the project.

Organizations can also save time and money if they have an efficient team to carry out their projects. Have you observed how easy it is to wind up your housework duties when your significant other pitches in and you both work in tandem?

If you were working alone, wouldn’t the same task have taken you double the amount of time? The same principle applies to an organizational workplace too!

4. **Better Interpersonal Skills**

Working in a team moulds you into a confident and social individual who is comfortable in his own skin. You learn to get along better with other people and get rid of your shyness and inhibitions.

You can deal with their faults and strengths without going overboard and accept criticism gracefully without taking it personally.

You share your views and opinions openly without fear of ridicule and criticism. A person who is always used to working alone may find it difficult to open up or deal with social situations.

Frequent team activities and exercises on the other hand, will make you more sociable and out-going.

Which team do you think is more successful: A team of record-breaking athletes with individual goals Or a competent team of professional athletes who understand the importance of good teamwork and have common goals?

Most challenges in the workplace today require much more than good solo performance. In increasingly complex organizations, success depends upon the degree of interdependence recognized within the team. Leaders can facilitate cooperation by highlighting the impact of individual members on team productivity and clarifying valued team member behaviors. The following F.A.C.T.S. model of effective team member behaviors (follow-through, accuracy, timeliness, creativity, and spirit) may serve as a guide for helping teams identify behaviors that support synergy within the work team.

Follow-through. One of the most common phrases heard in groups that work well together is "You can count on it." Members trust that when a colleague agrees to return a telephone call, read a report, talk to a customer, attend a meeting, or change a behavior, the job will be done. There will be follow-through. Team members are keenly aware that as part of a team, everything that they do—or don't do—impacts someone else.   
  
Accuracy. Another common phrase heard in effective work groups is "We do it right the first time." Accuracy, clearly a reflection of personal pride, also demonstrates a commitment to uphold the standards of the team, thus generating team pride.   
  
Creativity. Innovation flourishes on a team when individuals feel supported by colleagues. Although taking the lead in a new order of things is risky business, such risk is greatly reduced in a cooperative environment where members forgive mistakes, respect individual differences, and shift their thinking from a point of view to a viewing point.   
  
Timeliness. When work team members are truly cooperating, they respect the time of others by turning team priorities into personal priorities, arriving for meetings on time, sharing information promptly, clustering questions for people, communicating succinctly, and asking "Is this a good time?" before initiating interactions.   
  
Spirit. Being on a work team is a bit like being part of a family. You can't have your way all of the time, and—to add value—you must develop a generous spirit. Leaders can help work teams by addressing these "rules" of team spirit: value the individual; develop team trust; communicate openly; manage differences; share successes; welcome new members.