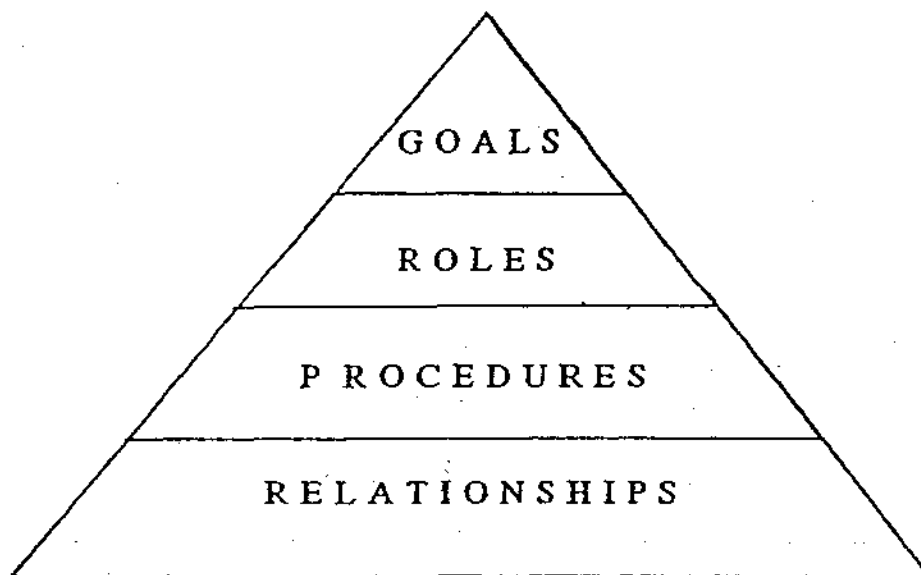# A MODEL OF TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

A simple but useful "model" of team effectiveness consists of a heirarchy of four key variables, or effectiveness: **Goals, Roles, Procedures and Relationships**. The hierarchy indicates the order in which maintenance functions should be carried out, that is, one would first check and if necessary "repair" goals, then move on to roles, then procedures, then relationships.

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              GOALS
             ROLES
          PROCEDURES
        RELATIONSHIPS
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GOALS:

* *understood*
* *accepted*

At the top of the hierarchy are **GOALS** which must be understood and accepted by all team members. If this criterion is not met, team effectiveness must suffer because people will be pulling in different directions.

ROLES:

* *clear*

Next in the hierarchy are **ROLES**. Role clarity is knowing exactly what each member of the team, including the Team Leader, expects or wants each other member to do. Team Leaders, for example, quite often suffer from "role ambiguity"; it is easier for a leader to spell out expectations to subordinates than it is for subordinates to tell their boss what they need or want to help them do their jobs.

- *conflict free*

An individual can be clear about his or her role and still experience *role conflict*. For example, you can experience role conflict when one colleague expects you to do one thing and another colleague had incompatible expectations. If you meet one set of expectations, this may prevent you from meeting the other. Role conflict may occur as a result of conflicting expectations of other team members, or may involve non-team members. For instance, an individual working on two projects for two different Team Leaders may find it impossible to meet the expectations of both. Or, a Team Leader may find it impossible to meet the demands of both her boss and members of her team. A classic example is of the person whose marriage requires that he or she spend week-nights at home and whose career requires heavy travel. Although a certain amount of role conflict is inevitable, research has shown that it is highly debilitating in terms of diverting energy from the task, especially if there is no acceptable means of resolving the conflict.

Unless roles are clear and reasonably free of conflict, the team will not be effective.

PROCEDURES:

- *decision making*

- *problem solving*

- *meeting management*

- *conflict management*

The third level in the hierarchy are the **PROCEDURES** the team uses for getting work done together. An effective team will have a procedure for making high quality decisions that are carried out. It will have a way of solving problems which fully exploits the fact that it is a group with a range of resources. The team will manage its time together in meetings so as to maximize work output and carry out necessary team maintenance. Finally, an effective team will recognize task-related conflict as an opportunity for learning and growth rather than as an unfortunate hinderance, and will have procedures for managing conflict which make it productive.

RELATIONSHIPS: Whenever a group of people must work closely together to achieve a task, they will develop feelings towards each other. The extent to which people trust, support, respect, and feel comfortable with one another can influence the way they work together.

Similarly, the negative consequences of bad feelings are clear in verbal or non-verbal behavior. People avoid one another, snipe at each other (directly or in a backbiting fashion), and simply experience working together as a "pain." One hears may references to "personality clashes" and "bad chemistry" in these instances.

The Importance of the Hierarchy: Symptoms vs. Causes

For most people, the causes of poor teamwork are seen to be in the relationship area. *If* this were true, the options for solution are few and of limited value—changing personnel or some true form of personality change!

Extensive experience with this model supports an alternative assumption. The causes of poor teamwork stem mainly from one of the other three areas: goals, roles, or procedures. The interpersonal feelings that people do experience are real, but they are more often **symptoms**, not causes, of poor teamwork and coordination of resources.

If, for example, two people have very different ideas as to the priority of goals and have not dealt with this as a goal difference, sooner or later they will conclude they have a "personality clash." Similarly, if a role problem goes unaddressed and unresolved as a role problem, sooner or later two people will avoid talking to each other or working together and it will look like an interpersonal conflict.

Stemming from the above is a general principle concerning the strategy for improving team effectiveness. There is a hierarchy or rational order in which the obstacles to coordination "ought" to be addressed. Addressing the question "Who should do what?" (a roles question) should be postponed until the "What?" (a goals question) has been addressed. The procedural question ("How?") should follow after the "What?" and "Who?" issues have been addressed.

This is not meant to cast personality issues totally aside. The issue of interpersonal relationships requires a bit more explanation. Goal conflicts, role conflicts, and procedural issues do, in fact, manifest themselves in interpersonal relationships. In

this sense, interpersonal relationships are present throughout the model. If a team has worked through its goals, roles, and procedural issues and still finds itself with a member (or members) who are not "on board", a basic value conflict may exist. This is often essentially an intra-personal issue: an individual finds her/himself unable to accept and work within the constraints as dictated by the task and agreed to by the team, including her/him. A mismatch between person and job exists and the only viable remaining alternative may be to seek a more personally congruent job situation (i.e., a transfer or new position).

In the overwhelming majority of cases, when the root cause of the problem is successfully addressed, the "bad" feelings disappear. Team members may not like each other, but they will be able to work effectively together because energy is not being drained away for task-related reasons (e.g., goals, roles, procedures).

*This whole discussion assumes a constant level of relevant technical competence among the team members. If this assumption is not true, team building will not significantly improve results—it is not alchemy.

The Wisdom of the Geese
by Angeles Arien

In the fall when you see geese heading back south for the winter, flying along in a "V" formation, you might be interested in knowing what has been discovered about why they fly that way.

It has been learned that as each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in a "V" formation, the whole flock adds at least 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own.

BASIC TRUTH # 1: *People who share a common direction and sense of common purpose can get there quicker.*

Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to do it alone and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front.

BASIC TRUTH # 2: *It's harder to do something alone than together.*

When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back in the wing formation and another goose flies point.

BASIC TRUTH #3: *Shared leadership and interdependence gives each of us a chance to lead as well as an opportunity to rest.*

The geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

BASIC TRUTH #4: *We need to make sure our honking is encouraging and not discouraging.*

Finally, when a goose gets sick or is wounded by gunshot and falls out, two geese fall out of formation and follow it down to provide help and protection. They stay with it until it is either able to fly or until it dies, and they launch out on their own or with another formation to catch up with their own group.

BASIC TRUTH #5: *We need to stand by each other in good and tough times.*