



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

- 1 Analyze the growing popularity of teams in organizations.
- 2 Contrast groups and teams.
- 3 Compare and contrast four types of teams.
- 4 Identify the characteristics of effective teams.
- 5 Show how organizations can create team players.
- 6 Decide when to use individuals instead of teams.
- 7 Show how our understanding of teams differs in a global context.

MyManagementLab

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KILLING BIN LADEN

The decision by the U.S. government on May 1, 2011, to send SEAL Team Six to hunt and capture or kill Osama bin Laden was, by all accounts, not an easy one. Appreciating the team dynamics of this decision helps us understand how teams make key decisions.

The decision of a government to deploy military force to capture or kill is obviously among the most serious, and often controversial, decisions leaders and teams can make. Keep in mind that our focus here is not on the merits of the decision, but on how the decision was made.

In 2010, U.S. intelligence identified and located a man whom captured al Qaeda operatives had named as Osama bin Laden's courier. After spending months tracking him and analyzing the compound in Pakistan, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) analysts were convinced there was a "strong possibility" that bin Laden was also hiding there. At that point, Navy SEAL teams began training to take the compound. But no one knew for sure whether bin Laden was actually there.

The mission carried considerable risk. The members of the administration's national security team brought up past failed missions: the U.S. Army battle in Mogadishu, Somalia (depicted in the movie, *Black Hawk Down*), and the attempted rescue of U.S. hostages in Iran. "There wasn't a meeting when someone didn't mention 'Black Hawk Down,'" said one team member. The United States might be sending troops into hostile territory with no proof that the target of their efforts was even there. The president later said military commanders put the odds of a successful mission at 55–45.

Over the next 2 months, the administration's national security team met at least six times. Some members were against the operation, pending more definitive proof that bin Laden was actually there. None came. After a final meeting between the president and his national security team at 2 P.M. on Sunday, May 1, the 40 elite SEAL Team Six commandos departed in four helicopters from an undisclosed location in Afghanistan, the eastern border of which is about 120 miles west of bin Laden's compound. A White House photo shows Obama and his national security team anxiously watching as the mission played out on the situation room monitor. Obama is tieless and grim-faced, his eyes fixed on the screen. Hillary Clinton, holding a hand to her mouth, and Robert Gates, his arms folded across his chest, gaze at the same point. After the "minutes passed like days," the team received confirmation that the mission was over. "Geronimo"—the code name given bin Laden—was dead.

That many members of the decision-making team were willing to voice their reservations probably aided the decision-making process. President Obama later told *60 Minutes*: "The fact that there were some who voiced doubts about this approach was invaluable, because it meant the plan was

Understanding Work Teams

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*We're going to turn this team around
360 degrees. —Jason Kidd*

Photo: Official White House photograph shows U.S. President Barack Obama, Vice President Joe Biden, US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton as they receive an update on the mission against Osama bin Laden. Source: Pete Souza/AFP/Getty Images/Newscom.



sharper, it meant that we had thought through all of our options, it meant that when I finally did make the decision, I was making it based on the very best information.”

Sources: A. Kruglanski, “Obama’s Choice and the Social Psychology of Group Decision Making,” *Huffington Post* (May 12, 2011), downloaded June 1, 2011, from www.huffingtonpost.com/; B. Steiden, “Bin Laden Dead,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (May 3, 2011), downloaded June 2, 2011, from www.ajc.com/; and M. Mazzetti, H. Cooper, and P. Baker, “Behind the Hunt for Bin Laden,” *The New York Times* (May 2, 2011), downloaded June 2, 2011, from www.nytimes.com/.

Teams are increasingly the primary means for organizing work in contemporary business firms. In fact, there are few more damaging insults than “not a team player.” Do you think you’re a team player? Take the following self-assessment to find out.



SELF-ASSESSMENT LIBRARY

How Good Am I at Building and Leading a Team?

In the Self-Assessment Library (available on CD or online), take assessment II.B.6 (How Good Am I at Building and Leading a Team?) and answer the following questions.

1. Did you score as high as you thought you would? Why or why not?
2. Do you think you can improve your score? If so, how? If not, why not?
3. Do you think there is such a thing as team players? If yes, what are their behaviors?

Why Have Teams Become So Popular?

- 1 Analyze the growing popularity of teams in organizations.

Decades ago, when companies such as W. L. Gore, Volvo, and General Foods introduced teams into their production processes, it made news because no one else was doing it. Today, it’s just the opposite. The organization that *doesn’t* use teams has become newsworthy. Teams are everywhere.

How do we explain the current popularity of teams? As organizations have restructured themselves to compete more effectively and efficiently, they have turned to teams as a better way to use employee talents. Teams are more flexible and responsive to changing events than traditional departments or other forms of permanent groupings. They can quickly assemble, deploy, refocus, and disband. But don’t overlook the motivational properties of teams. Consistent with our discussion in Chapter 7 of employee involvement as a motivator, teams facilitate employee participation in operating decisions. So another explanation for their popularity is that they are an effective means for management to democratize organizations and increase employee motivation.

The fact that organizations have turned to teams doesn’t necessarily mean they’re always effective. Decision makers, as humans, can be swayed by fads and herd mentality. Are teams truly effective? What conditions affect their potential? How do members work together? These are some of the questions we’ll answer in this chapter.

Differences Between Groups and Teams

2 Contrast groups and teams.

Groups and teams are not the same thing. In this section, we define and clarify the difference between work groups and work teams.¹

In Chapter 9, we defined a *group* as two or more individuals, interacting and interdependent, who have come together to achieve particular objectives. A **work group** is a group that interacts primarily to share information and make decisions to help each member perform within his or her area of responsibility.

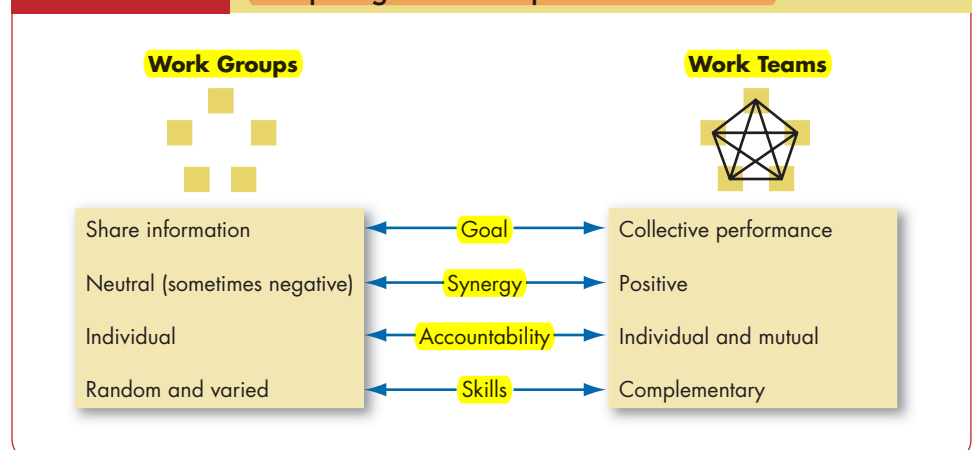
Work groups have no need or opportunity to engage in collective work that requires joint effort. So their performance is merely the summation of each group member's individual contribution. There is no positive synergy that would create an overall level of performance greater than the sum of the inputs.

A **work team**, on the other hand, generates positive synergy through coordinated effort. The individual efforts result in a level of performance greater than the sum of those individual inputs. Exhibit 10-1 highlights the differences between work groups and work teams.

These definitions help clarify why so many organizations have recently restructured work processes around teams. Management is looking for positive synergy that will allow the organizations to increase performance. The extensive use of teams creates the *potential* for an organization to generate greater outputs with no increase in inputs. Notice, however, that we said *potential*. There is nothing inherently magical that ensures the achievement of positive synergy in the creation of teams. Merely calling a *group* a *team* doesn't automatically improve its performance. As we show later in this chapter, effective teams have certain common characteristics. If management hopes to gain increases in organizational performance through the use of teams, its teams must possess these.

Exhibit 10-1

Comparing Work Groups and Work Teams



work group A group that interacts primarily to share information and to make decisions to help each group member perform within his or her area of responsibility.

work team A group whose individual efforts result in performance that is greater than the sum of the individual inputs.

Types of Teams

3 Compare and contrast four types of teams.

Teams can make products, provide services, negotiate deals, coordinate projects, offer advice, and make decisions.² In this section, we describe the four most common types of teams in an organization: *problem-solving teams*, *self-managed work teams*, *cross-functional teams*, and *virtual teams* (see Exhibit 10-2).

Problem-Solving Teams

In the past, teams were typically composed of 5 to 12 hourly employees from the same department who met for a few hours each week to discuss ways of improving quality, efficiency, and the work environment.³ These **problem-solving teams** rarely have the authority to unilaterally implement any of their suggestions. Merrill Lynch created a problem-solving team to figure out ways to reduce the number of days it took to open a new cash management account.⁴ By suggesting cutting the number of steps from 46 to 36, the team reduced the average number of days from 15 to 8.

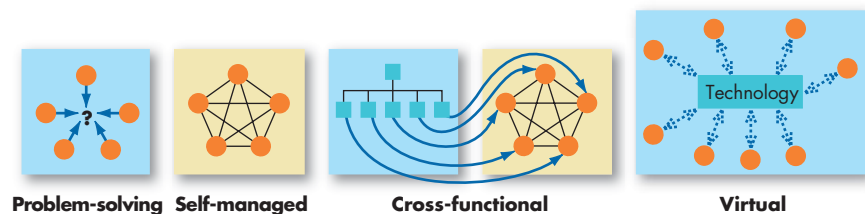
Self-Managed Work Teams

Problem-solving teams only make recommendations. Some organizations have gone further and created teams that not only solve problems but implement solutions and take responsibility for outcomes.

Self-managed work teams are groups of employees (typically 10 to 15 in number) who perform highly related or interdependent jobs and take on many of the responsibilities of their former supervisors.⁵ Typically, these tasks are planning and scheduling work, assigning tasks to members, making operating decisions, taking action on problems, and working with suppliers and customers. Fully self-managed work teams even select their own members and evaluate each other's performance. Supervisory positions take on decreased importance and are sometimes even eliminated.

But research on the effectiveness of self-managed work teams has not been uniformly positive.⁶ Self-managed teams do not typically manage conflicts well. When disputes arise, members stop cooperating and power struggles ensue, which leads to lower group performance.⁷ Moreover, although individuals on these teams report higher levels of job satisfaction than other individuals, they also sometimes have higher absenteeism and turnover rates. One large-scale study of labor productivity in British establishments found that although using teams in general does improve labor productivity, no evidence supported the

Exhibit 10-2 Four Types of Teams



Sprig Toys, Inc. uses cross-functional teamwork in creating toys that are made of recycled products to keep the planet healthy and kids off the couch. The Sprig Dream Team includes toy designers and toy industry-specific expertise in the areas of product design, patent development, supply chain strategy, market research, vendor sourcing, merchandising, branding, packaging, and marketing. Team members are dedicated to Sprig's mission of creating fun toys that encourage active play for kids and are battery-free, eco-friendly, and paint-free. Shown here with some Sprig toys are chief executive Craig Storey (standing, left) and the firm's co-founders.



Source: AP Photo/The Coloradoan, V. Richard Haro.

claim that self-managed teams performed better than traditional teams with less decision-making authority.⁸

Cross-Functional Teams

Starbucks created a team of individuals from production, global PR, global communications, and U.S. marketing to develop its Via brand of instant coffee. The team's suggestions resulted in a product that would be cost-effective to produce and distribute and that was marketed through a tightly integrated, multifaceted strategy.⁹ This example illustrates the use of **cross-functional teams**, made up of employees from about the same hierarchical level but different work areas, who come together to accomplish a task.

Many organizations have used horizontal, boundary-spanning groups for decades. In the 1960s, IBM created a large task force of employees from across departments to develop its highly successful System 360. Today cross-functional teams are so widely used it is hard to imagine a major organizational undertaking without one. All the major automobile manufacturers—Toyota, Honda, Nissan, BMW, GM, Ford, and Chrysler—currently use this form of team to coordinate complex projects. Cisco relies on specific cross-functional teams to identify and capitalize on new trends in several areas of the software market. The teams are the equivalent of social-networking groups that collaborate in real time to identify new business opportunities in the field and then implement them from the bottom up.¹⁰

problem-solving teams Groups of 5 to 12 employees from the same department who meet for a few hours each week to discuss ways of improving quality, efficiency, and the work environment.

self-managed work teams Groups of 10 to 15 people who take on responsibilities of their former supervisors.

cross-functional teams Employees from about the same hierarchical level, but from different work areas, who come together to accomplish a task.

Cross-functional teams are an effective means of allowing people from diverse areas within or even between organizations to exchange information, develop new ideas, solve problems, and coordinate complex projects. Of course, cross-functional teams are no picnic to manage. Their early stages of development are often long, as members learn to work with diversity and complexity. It takes time to build trust and teamwork, especially among people from different backgrounds with different experiences and perspectives.

Virtual Teams

The teams described in the preceding section do their work face to face. **Virtual teams** use computer technology to unite physically dispersed members and achieve a common goal.¹¹ They collaborate online—using communication links such as wide-area networks, videoconferencing, or e-mail—whether they're a room away or continents apart. Virtual teams are so pervasive, and technology has advanced so far, that it's probably a bit of a misnomer to call them "virtual." Nearly all teams today do at least some of their work remotely.

Despite their ubiquity, virtual teams face special challenges. They may suffer because there is less social rapport and direct interaction among members. Evidence from 94 studies entailing more than 5,000 groups found that virtual teams are better at sharing unique information (information held by individual members but not the entire group), but they tend to share less information overall.¹² As a result, low levels of virtuality in teams results in higher levels of information sharing, but high levels of virtuality hinder it. For virtual teams to be effective, management should ensure that (1) trust is established among members (one inflammatory remark in an e-mail can severely undermine team trust), (2) team progress is monitored closely (so the team doesn't lose sight of its goals and no team member "disappears"), and (3) the efforts and products of the team are publicized throughout the organization (so the team does not become invisible).¹³

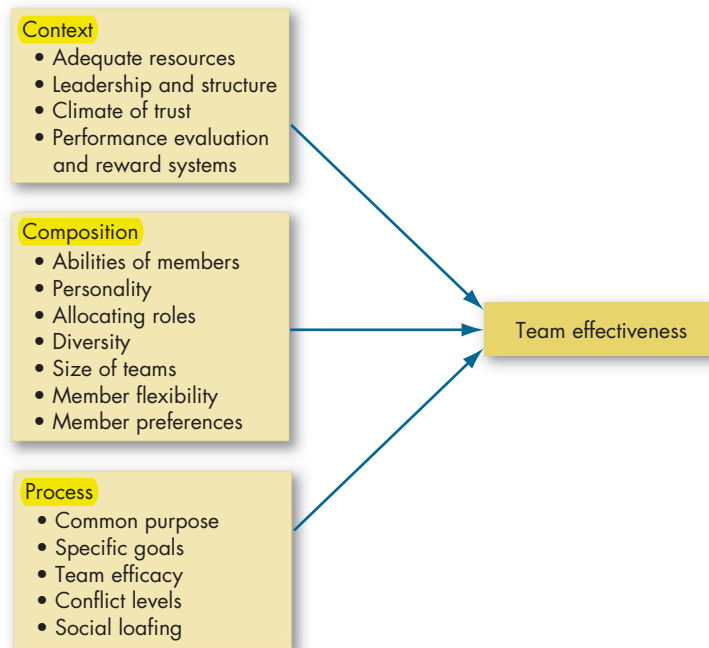
Creating Effective Teams

4 Identify the characteristics of effective teams.

Many have tried to identify factors related to team effectiveness.¹⁴ However, some studies have organized what was once a "veritable laundry list of characteristics"¹⁵ into a relatively focused model.¹⁶ Exhibit 10-3 summarizes what we currently know about what makes teams effective. As you'll see, it builds on many of the group concepts introduced in Chapter 9.

The following discussion is based on the model in Exhibit 10-3. Keep in mind two points. First, teams differ in form and structure. The model attempts to generalize across all varieties of teams, but avoid rigidly applying its predictions to all teams.¹⁷ Use it as a guide. Second, the model assumes teamwork is preferable to individual work. Creating "effective" teams when individuals can do the job better is like perfectly solving the wrong problem.

We can organize the key components of effective teams into three general categories. First are the resources and other contextual influences that make teams effective. The second relates to the team's composition. Finally, process variables are events within the team that influence effectiveness. What does team effectiveness mean in this model? Typically, it has included objective measures of the team's productivity, managers' ratings of the team's performance, and aggregate measures of member satisfaction.

Exhibit 10-3 Team Effectiveness Model

Context: What Factors Determine Whether Teams Are Successful

The **four contextual factors** most significantly related to team performance are adequate resources, effective leadership, a climate of trust, and a performance evaluation and reward system that reflects team contributions.

Adequate Resources Teams are part of a larger organization system; every work team relies on resources outside the group to sustain it. A scarcity of resources directly reduces the ability of a team to perform its job effectively and achieve its goals. As one study concluded, after looking at 13 factors related to group performance, “perhaps one of the most important characteristics of an effective work group is the support the group receives from the organization.”¹⁸ This support includes timely information, proper equipment, adequate staffing, encouragement, and administrative assistance.

Leadership and Structure Teams can’t function if they can’t agree on who is to do what and ensure all members share the workload. Agreeing on the specifics of work and how they fit together to integrate individual skills requires leadership and structure, either from management or from the team members themselves. It’s true in **self-managed teams** that team members absorb many of the

virtual teams Teams that use computer technology to tie together physically dispersed members in order to achieve a common goal.

Group Cohesiveness across Cultures

As you might suspect, researchers have paid a great deal of attention to the differences between individualists and collectivists in terms of team orientation. As we learned from Chapter 5 on personality and values, people from collectivist societies—like those found in much of East Asia, Latin America, and Africa—are generally more prone to look toward group goals as important and to emphasize collaborative processes. Individualist cultures like the United States, Canada, and the UK, on the other hand, emphasize individual achievement and performance.

Individualist cultures may have greater difficulty implementing team-based work processes for a variety of reasons. Collectivists appear more

sensitive to the moods of their co-workers, so the motivation and positive mood of one group member is likely to spill over to increase motivation and positive moods in others. Collectivist teams also already have a strong predisposition to work together as a group, so there's less need for increased teamwork. Other research suggests that collectively oriented teams are better able to pool resources and correct one another's errors than are individually oriented teams.

What's the lesson for managers? Managers in individualist cultures may need to work harder to increase team cohesiveness. One way to do this is to give teams more challenging assignments and provide them with more

independence. Alternatively, managers may find it useful to promote a collectivist orientation for team processes even when working with groups of individualists.

Sources: Based on R. Ilies, D. T. Wagner, and F. P. Morgeson, "Explaining Affective Linkages in Teams: Individual Differences in Susceptibility to Contagion and Individualism-Collectivism," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 92, no. 4 (2007), pp. 1140–1148; E. C. Dierdorff, S. T. Bell, and J. A. Belohlav, "The Power of 'We': Effects of Psychological Collectivism on Team Performance Over Time," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 96, no. 2 (2011), pp. 247–262; and J. E. Driskell, E. Salas, and S. Hughes, "Collective Orientation and Team Performance: Development of an Individual Differences Measure," *Human Factors* 52, no. 2 (2010), pp. 316–328.

duties typically assumed by managers. However, a manager's job then becomes managing *outside* (rather than inside) the team.

Leadership is especially important in **multiteam systems**, in which different teams coordinate their efforts to produce a desired outcome. Here, leaders need to empower teams by delegating responsibility to them, and they play the role of facilitator, making sure the teams work together rather than against one another.¹⁹ Teams that establish shared leadership by effectively delegating it are more effective than teams with a traditional single-leader structure.²⁰

Climate of Trust Members of effective teams trust each other. They also exhibit trust in their leaders.²¹ Interpersonal trust among team members facilitates cooperation, reduces the need to monitor each others' behavior, and bonds members around the belief that others on the team won't take advantage of them. Team members are more likely to take risks and expose vulnerabilities when they believe they can trust others on their team. And, as we will discuss in Chapter 12, trust is the foundation of leadership. It allows a team to accept and commit to its leader's goals and decisions.

Performance Evaluation and Reward Systems How do you get team members to be both individually and jointly accountable? Individual performance evaluations and incentives may interfere with the development of high-performance teams. So, in addition to evaluating and rewarding employees for their individual contributions, management should modify the traditional, individually oriented evaluation and reward system to reflect team performance and focus on hybrid systems that recognize individual members for their exceptional

An Ethical Choice

Using Global Virtual Teams as an Environmental Choice

Many teams in geographically dispersed organizations have turned to electronic media to improve communication across locations. However, there may be an equally strong *ethical* argument for using global virtual teams: it may be a more environmentally responsible choice than having team members travel internationally when they need to communicate. A very large proportion of airline, rail, and car transport is for business purposes and contributes greatly to global carbon dioxide emissions. When teams are able to meet virtually rather than face-to-face, they dramatically reduce the amount of energy consumed.

In a globally connected world, what sorts of actions might you take to

minimize your organization's environmental impact from business travel? Several tips might help to get you started thinking about ways that global virtual teams can be harnessed for greater sustainability:

1. Encourage all team members to think about whether a face-to-face meeting is really necessary, and to try to utilize alternative communication methods whenever possible.
2. Communicate as much information as possible through virtual means, including e-mail, telephone calls, and teleconferencing.
3. When traveling to team meetings, choose the most environmentally

responsible methods possible, such as flying in coach rather than business class. Also, check the environmental profile of hotels prior to booking rooms.

4. Make the business case for sustainable business travel alternatives. Most experts agree that teleconferencing and environmentally responsible travel arrangements not only help the environment but are more cost-effective as well.

Sources: P. Tilstone, "Cut Carbon... and Bills," *Director* (May 2009), p. 54; and L. C. Latimer, "6 Strategies for Sustainable Business Travel," *Greenbiz* (February 11, 2011), www.greenbiz.com.

contributions and reward the entire group for positive outcomes.²² Group-based appraisals, profit sharing, gainsharing, small-group incentives, and other system modifications can reinforce team effort and commitment.

Team Composition

The team composition category includes variables that relate to how teams should be staffed—the ability and personality of team members, allocation of roles and diversity, size of the team, and members' preference for teamwork.

Abilities of Members Part of a team's performance depends on the knowledge, skills, and abilities of its individual members.²³ It's true we occasionally read about an athletic team of mediocre players who, because of excellent coaching, determination, and precision teamwork, beat a far more talented group. But such cases make the news precisely because they are unusual. A team's performance is not merely the summation of its individual members' abilities. However, these abilities set limits on what members can do and how effectively they will perform on a team.

Research reveals some insights into team composition and performance. First, when the task entails considerable thought (solving a complex problem

multiteam systems Systems in which different teams need to coordinate their efforts to produce a desired outcome.

such as reengineering an assembly line), high-ability teams—composed of mostly intelligent members—do better than lower-ability teams, especially when the workload is distributed evenly. That way, team performance does not depend on the weakest link. High-ability teams are also more adaptable to changing situations; they can more effectively apply existing knowledge to new problems.

Finally, the ability of the team's leader also matters. Smart team leaders help less-intelligent team members when they struggle with a task. But a less intelligent leader can neutralize the effect of a high-ability team.²⁴

Personality of Members We demonstrated in Chapter 5 that personality significantly influences individual employee behavior. Many of the dimensions identified in the Big Five personality model are also relevant to team effectiveness; a review of the literature identified three.²⁵ Specifically, teams that rate higher on mean levels of conscientiousness and openness to experience tend to perform better, and the minimum level of team member agreeableness also matters: teams did worse when they had one or more highly disagreeable members. Perhaps one bad apple *can* spoil the whole bunch!

Research has also provided us with a good idea about why these personality traits are important to teams. Conscientious people are good at backing up other team members, and they're also good at sensing when their support is truly needed. One study found that specific behavioral tendencies such as personal organization, cognitive structuring, achievement orientation, and endurance were all related to higher levels of team performance.²⁶ Open team members communicate better with one another and throw out more ideas, which makes teams composed of open people more creative and innovative.²⁷

Suppose an organization needs to create 20 teams of 4 people each and has 40 highly conscientious people and 40 who score low on conscientiousness. Would the organization be better off (1) forming 10 teams of highly conscientious people and 10 teams of members low on conscientiousness, or

British Chief Inspector of Nuclear Installations Mike Weightman is the leader of an 18-member global team created by the International Atomic Energy Commission to study the Fukushima nuclear power station accident triggered by the 2011 earthquake in Japan. This high-ability team with members from 12 countries includes experts with experience across a wide range of nuclear specialties. Team members apply their technical expertise, problem-solving and decision-making skills, and interpersonal skills to their mission of identifying lessons learned from the accident that can help improve nuclear safety around the world. In this photo, Weightman (left) shakes hands with the Fukushima plant chief after the team inspected the crippled nuclear power plant.



Source: HO/AFP/Getty Images/Newscom.

(2) “seeding” each team with 2 people who scored high and 2 who scored low on conscientiousness? Perhaps surprisingly, evidence suggests option 1 is the best choice; performance across the teams will be higher if the organization forms 10 highly conscientious teams and 10 teams low in conscientiousness.²⁸

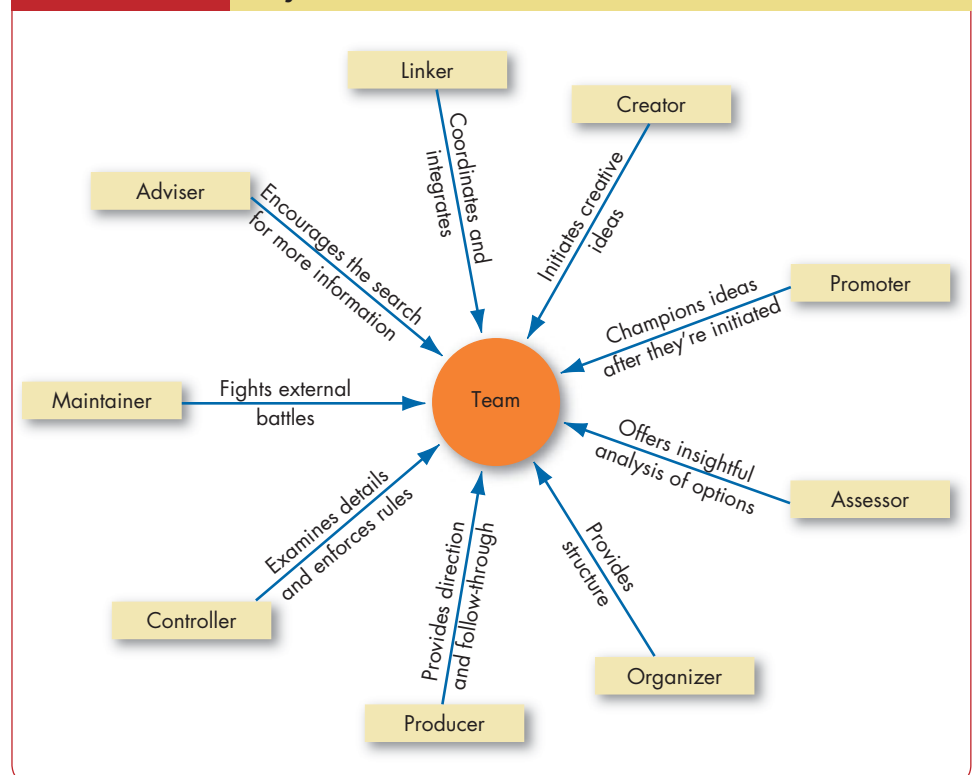
Allocation of Roles Teams have different needs, and members should be selected to ensure all the various roles are filled. A study of 778 major league baseball teams over a 21-year period highlights the importance of **assigning roles appropriately**.²⁹ As you might expect, teams with more experienced and skilled members performed better. However, the experience and skill of those in core roles who handle more of the workflow of the team, and who are central to all work processes (in this case, pitchers and catchers), were especially vital. In other words, **put your most able, experienced, and conscientious workers in the most central roles in a team.**

We can identify nine potential team roles (see Exhibit 10-4). Successful work teams have selected people to play all these roles based on their skills and preferences.³⁰ (On many teams, individuals will play multiple roles.) To increase the likelihood the team members will work well together, managers need to understand the individual strengths each person can bring to a team, select members with their strengths in mind, and allocate work assignments that fit with members’ preferred styles.

Diversity of Members In Chapter 9, we discussed research on the effect of diversity on groups. How does *team* diversity affect *team* performance? The degree to which members of a work unit (group, team, or department) share a common demographic attribute, such as age, sex, race, educational level, or

Exhibit 10-4

Key Roles of Teams



length of service in the organization, is the subject of **organizational demography**. Organizational demography suggests that attributes such as age or the date of joining should help us predict turnover. The logic goes like this: turnover will be greater among those with dissimilar experiences because communication is more difficult and conflict is more likely. Increased conflict makes membership less attractive, so employees are more likely to quit. Similarly, the losers in a power struggle are more apt to leave voluntarily or be forced out.³¹

Many of us hold the optimistic view that diversity should be a good thing—diverse teams should benefit from differing perspectives. Two meta-analytic reviews of the research literature show, however, that demographic diversity is essentially unrelated to team performance overall, while a third actually suggests that race and gender diversity are negatively related to team performance.³² One qualifier is that gender and ethnic diversity have more negative effects in occupations dominated by white or male employees, but in more demographically balanced occupations, diversity is less of a problem. Diversity in function, education, and expertise are positively related to group performance, but these effects are quite small and depend on the situation.

Proper leadership can also improve the performance of diverse teams.³³ When leaders provide an inspirational common goal for members with varying types of education and knowledge, teams are very creative. When leaders don't provide such goals, diverse teams fail to take advantage of their unique skills and are actually *less* creative than teams with homogeneous skills. Even teams with diverse values can perform effectively, however, if leaders provide a focus on work tasks rather than leading based on personal relationships.

We have discussed research on team diversity in race or gender. But what about diversity created by national differences? Like the earlier research, evidence here indicates these elements of diversity interfere with team processes, at least in the short term.³⁴ Cultural diversity does seem to be an asset for tasks that call for a variety of viewpoints. But culturally heterogeneous teams have more difficulty learning to work with each other and solving problems. The good news is that these difficulties seem to dissipate with time. Although newly formed culturally diverse teams underperform newly formed culturally homogeneous teams, the differences disappear after about 3 months.³⁵ Fortunately, some team performance-enhancing strategies seem to work well in many cultures. One study found that teams in the European Union made up of members from collectivist and individualist countries benefited equally from having group goals.³⁶

Size of Teams Most experts agree, keeping teams small is a key to improving group effectiveness.³⁷ Generally speaking, the most effective teams have five to nine members. And experts suggest using the smallest number of people who can do the task. Unfortunately, managers often err by making teams too large. It may require only four or five members to develop diversity of views and skills, while coordination problems can increase exponentially as team members are added. When teams have excess members, cohesiveness and mutual accountability decline, social loafing increases, and more people communicate less. Members of large teams have trouble coordinating with one another, especially under time pressure. If a natural working unit is larger and you want a team effort, consider breaking the group into subteams.³⁸

Member Preferences Not every employee is a team player. Given the option, many employees will select themselves *out* of team participation. When people who prefer to work alone are required to team up, there is a direct threat to the team's morale and to individual member satisfaction.³⁹ This result suggests

Members of Wells Fargo's ethnography teams are diversified in function and expertise. Working in the bank's strategic account-management group, team members possess a variety of banking experiences and skills in treasury management, investments, credit cards, and relationship management. The teams visit clients to interview their key managers and observe how employees perform various financial workflows such as payroll and accounts payable. From these studies, the ethnography teams help clients improve their work processes and use of technology. Wells Fargo benefits by gaining a deeper understanding of customer needs and improving customer responsiveness.



Source: Cindy Charles / PhotoEdit

that, when selecting team members, managers should consider individual preferences along with abilities, personalities, and skills. High-performing teams are likely to be composed of people who prefer working as part of a group.

Team Processes

The final category related to team effectiveness is process variables such as member commitment to a common purpose, establishment of specific team goals, team efficacy, a managed level of conflict, and minimized social loafing. These will be especially important in larger teams and in teams that are highly interdependent.⁴⁰

Why are processes important to team effectiveness? Let's return to the topic of social loafing. We found that $1 + 1 + 1$ doesn't necessarily add up to 3. When each member's contribution is not clearly visible, individuals tend to decrease their effort. Social loafing, in other words, illustrates a process loss from using teams. But teams should create outputs greater than the sum of their inputs, as when a diverse group develops creative alternatives. Exhibit 10-5 illustrates how group processes can have an impact on a group's actual effectiveness.⁴¹ Teams are often used in research laboratories because they can draw on the diverse skills of various individuals to produce more meaningful research than researchers working independently—that is, they produce positive synergy, and their process gains exceed their process losses.

Common Plan and Purpose Effective teams begin by analyzing the team's mission, developing goals to achieve that mission, and creating strategies for

organizational demography The degree to which members of a work unit share a common demographic attribute, such as age, sex, race, educational level, or length of service in an organization, and the impact of this attribute on turnover.

Myth or Science?

“Teams Work Best Under Angry Leaders”

This statement is false as a general rule. However, there *are* situations when teams perform their best when their leader is angry.

If you have ever seen an episode of one of celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay’s reality television shows (*Hell’s Kitchen*, *The F Word*, *Kitchen Nightmares*)—where Ramsay regularly terrorizes culinary teams with outbursts, threats, and intimidation—you have seen how angry leaders motivate. But does this approach really get results? Many of us would be skeptical. A harsh, temperamental approach to leading teams would seem to be reliably counterproductive. Who would want to work for such a leader?

As it turns out, the angry team leader may, in fact, have his or her place. A recent study found that whereas teams filled with relatively agreeable members were the most

motivated and performed the best when their leader showed happiness, teams filled with relatively disagreeable members were the most motivated and did best when their leader expressed anger.

Why do disagreeable teams do their best when their leader is angry? If you recall our discussion of agreeableness in Chapter 5, disagreeable individuals are more direct, more argumentative, and less conflict-averse than their more agreeable counterparts. Disagreeable teams may react better to an angry leader because the leader is speaking a language the team can understand, or the disagreeable team members may be less sensitive to inconsiderate behavior (of which the display of anger is a prime example).

Asked to reflect on his angry approach to leading teams, Ramsay said, “When there’s no adrenaline

flying high and there’s very little pressure created, you don’t get results.” For some types of teams (those filled with team members as disagreeable as their leader), it appears he is right. Tough love seems to work best with tough teams.

Sources: G. A. Van Kleef, A. C. Homan, B. Beersma, and D. van Knippenberg, “On Angry Leaders and Agreeable Followers: How Leaders’ Emotions and Followers’ Personalities Shape Motivation and Team Performance,” *Psychological Science* 21, no. 12 (2010), pp. 1827–1834; G. A. Van Kleef, A. C. Homan, B. Beersma, D. van Knippenberg, B. van Knippenberg, and F. Damen, “Searing Sentiment or Cold Calculation? The Effects of Leader Emotional Displays on Team Performance Depend on Follower Epistemic Motivation,” *Academy of Management Journal* 52, no. 3 (2009), pp. 562–580; and S. Lyall, “The Terrible-Tempered Star Chef of London,” *The New York Times* (February 23, 2005), downloaded June 3, 2011, from <http://select.nytimes.com/>.

achieving the goals. Teams that consistently perform better have established a clear sense of what needs to be done and how.⁴²

Members of successful teams put a tremendous amount of time and effort into discussing, shaping, and agreeing on a purpose that belongs to them both collectively and individually. This common purpose, when accepted by the team, becomes what celestial navigation is to a ship captain: it provides direction and guidance under any and all conditions. Like a ship following the wrong course, teams that don’t have good planning skills are doomed; perfectly executing the wrong plan is a lost cause.⁴³ Teams should also agree on whether their goal is to learn about and master a task or simply to perform the task; evidence suggest that different perspectives on learning versus performance goals lead to lower levels of team performance overall.⁴⁴ It appears that these differences in goal orientation have their effects by reducing discussion and sharing

Exhibit 10-5 Effects of Group Processes

$$\text{Potential group effectiveness} + \text{Process gains} - \text{Process losses} = \text{Actual group effectiveness}$$

Team members of NASCAR race car driver Danica Patrick's pit crew shown here work toward the common goal of winning the race. Providing direction, momentum, and commitment, the pit crew's plan is to function at top speed with no errors in checking the car, fixing parts, changing tires, and pumping gas. Each member of the pit crew has a specific job and a clear sense of what needs to be done. And each member continuously fine-tunes his job to shave time off the pit stops, which are so important because they may win or lose a race.



Source: Brandon Wade/MCT/Newscom.

of information. In sum, having all employees on a team strive for the same *type* of goal is important.

Effective teams also show **reflexivity**, meaning they reflect on and adjust their master plan when necessary. A team has to have a good plan, but it also has to be willing and able to adapt when conditions call for it.⁴⁵ Interestingly, some evidence does suggest that teams high in reflexivity are better able to adapt to conflicting plans and goals among team members.⁴⁶

Specific Goals Successful teams translate their common purpose into specific, measurable, and realistic performance goals. Specific goals facilitate clear communication. They also help teams maintain their focus on getting results.

Consistent with the research on individual goals, team goals should also be challenging. Difficult but achievable goals raise team performance on those criteria for which they're set. So, for instance, goals for quantity tend to raise quantity, goals for accuracy raise accuracy, and so on.⁴⁷

Team Efficacy Effective teams have confidence in themselves; they believe they can succeed. We call this *team efficacy*.⁴⁸ Teams that have been successful raise their beliefs about future success, which, in turn, motivates them to work harder. What can management do to increase team efficacy? Two options are helping the team achieve small successes that build confidence and providing training to improve members' technical and interpersonal skills. The greater the abilities of team members, the more likely the team will develop confidence and the ability to deliver on that confidence.

Mental Models Effective teams share accurate **mental models**—organized mental representations of the key elements within a team's environment that team members share.⁴⁹ If team members have the wrong mental models, which is particularly likely with teams under acute stress, their performance suffers.⁵⁰

reflexivity A team characteristic of reflecting on and adjusting the master plan when necessary.

mental models Team members' knowledge and beliefs about how the work gets done by the team.

In the Iraq War, for instance, many military leaders said they underestimated the power of the insurgency and the infighting among Iraqi religious sects. The similarity of team members' mental models matters, too. **If team members have different ideas about how to do things, the team will fight over methods rather than focus on what needs to be done.**⁵¹ One review of 65 independent studies of team cognition found that teams with shared mental models engaged in more frequent interactions with one another, were more motivated, had more positive attitudes toward their work, and had higher levels of objectively rated performance.⁵²

Conflict Levels Conflict on a team isn't necessarily bad. As we discuss in Chapter 15, conflict has a complex relationship with team performance. Relationship conflicts—those based on interpersonal incompatibilities, tension, and animosity toward others—are almost always dysfunctional. However, when teams are performing nonroutine activities, disagreements about task content (called *task conflicts*) stimulate discussion, promote critical assessment of problems and options, and can lead to better team decisions. A study conducted in China found that moderate levels of task conflict during the initial phases of team performance were positively related to team creativity, but both very low and very high levels of task conflict were negatively related to team performance.⁵³ In other words, both too much and too little disagreement about how a team should initially perform a creative task can inhibit performance.

The way conflicts are resolved can also make the difference between effective and ineffective teams. A study of ongoing comments made by 37 autonomous work groups showed that effective teams resolved conflicts by explicitly discussing the issues, whereas ineffective teams had conflicts focused more on personalities and the way things were said.⁵⁴

Social Loafing As we noted earlier, individuals can engage in social loafing and coast on the group's effort because their particular contributions can't be identified. Effective teams undermine this tendency by making members individually and jointly accountable for the team's purpose, goals, and approach.⁵⁵ Therefore, members should be clear on what they are individually responsible for and what they are jointly responsible for on the team.



What Is My Team Efficacy?

In the Self-Assessment Library (available on CD or online), take assessment IV.E.2 (What Is My Team Efficacy?).

Turning Individuals into Team Players

- 5 Show how organizations can create team players.

We've made a strong case for the value and growing popularity of teams. But many people are not inherently team players, and many organizations have historically nurtured individual accomplishments. Finally, teams fit well in countries that score high on collectivism. But what if an organization wants

OB Poll**Different Views on the Importance of Teamwork****Percent indicating teamwork as high priority skill in workplace**

Source: Based on "New Study Sheds Light on Chicago's Employment Landscape," PR Newswire (May 4, 2011). Reprinted with permission from The Gallup Organization.

to introduce teams into a work population of individuals born and raised in an individualistic society? A veteran employee of a large company, who had done well working in an individualistic company in an individualist country, described the experience of joining a team: "I'm learning my lesson. I just had my first negative performance appraisal in 20 years."⁵⁶

So what can organizations do to enhance team effectiveness—to turn individual contributors into team members? Here are options for managers trying to turn individuals into team players.

Selecting: Hiring Team Players

Some people already possess the interpersonal skills to be effective team players. When hiring team members, be sure candidates can fulfill their team roles as well as technical requirements.⁵⁷

When faced with job candidates who lack team skills, managers have three options. First, don't hire them. If you have to hire them, assign them to tasks or positions that don't require teamwork. If that is not feasible, the candidates can undergo training to make them into team players. In established organizations that decide to redesign jobs around teams, some employees will resist being team players and may be untrainable. Unfortunately, they typically become casualties of the team approach.

Creating teams often means resisting the urge to hire the best talent no matter what. The Los Angeles Galaxy professional soccer team paid enormously for British star David Beckham's talents, seemingly without considering whether he was a team player.⁵⁸ The result was low levels of coordination and cooperation with the team. Personal traits also appear to make some people better candidates for working in diverse teams. Teams made up of members who like to work through difficult mental puzzles also seem more effective and capitalizing on the multiple points of view that arise from diversity in age and education.⁵⁹



Employees of Cigna, a global health services corporation, learn how to become team players by participating in WhirlyBall competitions. Organizations like Cigna use the team sport as a team-building exercise in which two teams maneuver WhirlyBugs on a court while using scoops to toss a ball back and forth among team members in trying to score a goal. WhirlyBall is one of many team-building activities that employees participate in to build their teamwork skills and experience the satisfaction that teamwork can provide.

MyManagementLab

For an interactive application of this topic, check out this chapter's simulation activity at www.mymanagementlab.com.

Training: Creating Team Players

Training specialists conduct exercises that allow employees to experience the satisfaction teamwork can provide. Workshops help employees improve their problem-solving, communication, negotiation, conflict-management, and coaching skills. L'Oréal, for example, found that successful sales teams required much more than being staffed with high-ability salespeople: management had to focus much of its efforts on team building. "What we didn't account for was that many members of our top team in sales had been promoted because they had excellent technical and executional skills," said L'Oréal's senior VP of sales, David Waldock. As a result of the focus on team training, Waldock says, "We are no longer a team just on paper, working independently. We have a real group dynamic now, and it's a good one."⁶⁰ Employees also learn the five-stage group development model described in Chapter 9. Developing an effective team doesn't happen overnight—it takes time.

Rewarding: Providing Incentives to Be a Good Team Player

An organization's reward system must be reworked to encourage cooperative efforts rather than competitive ones.⁶¹ Hallmark Cards Inc. added to its basic individual-incentive system an annual bonus based on achievement of team goals. Whole Foods directs most of its performance-based rewards toward team performance. As a result, teams select new members carefully so they will contribute to team effectiveness (and thus team bonuses).⁶² It is usually best to set a cooperative tone as soon as possible in the life of a team. As we already noted, teams that switch from a competitive to a cooperative system do not immediately share information, and they still tend to make rushed, poor-quality decisions.⁶³ Apparently, the low trust typical of the competitive group will not be readily replaced by high trust with a quick change in reward systems. These problems are not seen in teams that have consistently cooperative systems.

Promotions, pay raises, and other forms of recognition should be given to individuals who work effectively as team members by training new colleagues, sharing information, helping resolve team conflicts, and mastering needed new skills. This doesn't mean individual contributions should be ignored; rather, they should be balanced with selfless contributions to the team.

Finally, don't forget the intrinsic rewards, such as camaraderie, that employees can receive from teamwork. It's exciting and satisfying to be part of a successful team. The opportunity for personal development of self and teammates can be a very satisfying and rewarding experience.

Beware! Teams Aren't Always the Answer

- 6 Decide when to use individuals instead of teams.

Teamwork takes more time and often more resources than individual work. Teams have increased communication demands, conflicts to manage, and meetings to run. So, the benefits of using teams have to exceed the costs, and that's not always the case.⁶⁴ Before you rush to implement teams, carefully assess whether the work requires or will benefit from a collective effort.

How do you know whether the work of your group would be better done in teams? You can apply three tests.⁶⁵ First, can the work be done better by more than one person? A good indicator is the complexity of the work and the need

for different perspectives. Simple tasks that don't require diverse input are probably better left to individuals. Second, does the work create a common purpose or set of goals for the people in the group that is more than the aggregate of individual goals? Many service departments of new-vehicle dealers have introduced teams that link customer-service people, mechanics, parts specialists, and sales representatives. Such teams can better manage collective responsibility for ensuring customer needs are properly met.

The final test is to determine whether the members of the group are interdependent. Using teams makes sense when there is interdependence among tasks—the success of the whole depends on the success of each one, *and* the success of each one depends on the success of the others. Soccer, for instance, is an obvious *team* sport. Success requires a great deal of coordination between interdependent players. Conversely, except possibly for relays, swim teams are not really teams. They're groups of individuals performing individually, whose total performance is merely the aggregate summation of their individual performances.

MyManagementLab

Now that you have finished this chapter, go back to www.mymanagementlab.com to continue practicing and applying the concepts you've learned.

Summary and Implications for Managers

- 7** Show how our understanding of teams differs in a global context.

Few trends have influenced jobs as much as the massive movement to introduce teams into the workplace. The shift from working alone to working on teams requires employees to cooperate with others, share information, confront differences, and sublimate personal interests for the greater good of the team.

- Effective teams have common characteristics. They have adequate resources, effective leadership, a climate of trust, and a performance evaluation and reward system that reflects team contributions. These teams have individuals with technical expertise as well as problem-solving, decision-making, and interpersonal skills and the right traits, especially conscientiousness and openness.
- Effective teams also tend to be small—with fewer than 10 people, preferably of diverse backgrounds. They have members who fill role demands and who prefer to be part of a group. And the work that members do provides freedom and autonomy, the opportunity to use different skills and talents, the ability to complete a whole and identifiable task or product, and work that has a substantial impact on others.
- Finally, effective teams have members who believe in the team's capabilities and are committed to a common plan and purpose, an accurate shared mental model of what is to be accomplished, specific team goals, a manageable level of conflict, and a minimal degree of social loafing.
- Because individualistic organizations and societies attract and reward individual accomplishments, it can be difficult to create team players in these environments. To make the conversion, management should try to select individuals who have the interpersonal skills to be effective team players, provide training to develop teamwork skills, and reward individuals for cooperative efforts.

We Can Learn Much About Work Teams from Studying Sports Teams

POINT

In nearly every nation on earth, sports teams are looked upon as examples of teamwork and collective achievement. We celebrate when our favorite teams win and commiserate with others when they lose. Individual sports like golf or singles tennis can be enjoyable to play and, depending on your taste, to watch, but nothing compares to the exhilaration of seeing teams—whether it is football (soccer or American football), basketball, or baseball—band together and succeed.

Of course, it only stands to reason that we seek to draw leadership lessons from these teams. After all, they won at the highest levels of competition, and sometimes they can provide a unique window into team dynamics because their actions are so visible. There is nothing wrong in seeing what we can learn from these teams in terms of making our teams at work more effective. We learn from examples, and if the examples are good ones, the learning is good, too.

Interestingly, some research suggests that, more than those in other cultures, U.S. individuals tend to use team metaphors rather than references to family, the military, or other institutions. Hewlett-Packard's Susie Wee writes:

Every so often someone asks me what I learned in grad school that helped me in the working world. I can say that many of my most important learnings from school came from playing team sports. My school had a women's club ice hockey team that I played on for 10 years (as an undergrad and grad student). Over these 10 years, my role on the team evolved from a benchwarmer . . . to a player . . . to a captain . . . back to a player . . . and to an assistant coach. Many of my everyday experiences with the team turned into learnings that stayed with me and help me at work.

A perhaps more subtle learning comes from how you make yourself a part of the team when you are the "worst skilled" player or a bench warmer. You can still make important contributions by having a great attitude, [and] by working hard to improve your skills. This directly carries over to the working world, as no matter what your skill or experience level, you can always find a way to make an important contribution to your team.

My advice to people? Students—get involved in a team sport! Workers—treat your career like a team sport!

COUNTERPOINT

Susie Wee's story is a nice one, but that fact that she found her athletic experience helpful doesn't prove much, because that experience may be specific to Susie Wee. A lot of mischief is created in our understanding of organizational behavior when folks try to over-generalize from their past experience.

There certainly is no shortage of athletes and coaches hawking books they propose have organizational implications. In fact, such books are a veritable cottage industry for current and former NFL coaches. Tony Dungy can tell you how to be a "mentor leader" of your team. Rex Ryan can tell you how to use passion and humor to lead teams. Even Bill Walsh (who died in 2007) has a 2010 team leadership book whose theme is "the score takes care of itself." Vince Lombardi (who died in 1970) seems to have a book on team leadership published every year. In all these books, the coaches spend a lot of time discussing how their approach is relevant in the business world. These are all good coaches, some of them are great coaches, but there is little reason to believe athletic teams function like work teams. How many coaches go on to successful careers in organizations outside the athletic context?

In fact, some in-depth reporting on the 2010 U.S. Winter Olympic Team, which won more medals in Vancouver than have ever been won by a U.S. team, demonstrate it was not really a team. The hockey team didn't have much to do with the figure skating team, which didn't have much interaction with the curling team. However, even within the teams organized by sport, there often was no team effort in any real sense of the word. Speedskater Shani Davis, winner of a gold and a silver medal, neither lived nor practiced with the team. He didn't even allow his biography to be posted on the team's Web site. Skier Lindsey Vonn, snowboarder Shaun White, and many others were similarly and rather defiantly "on their own."

There are not many organizations in which a member of a team could get by with that kind of behavior. It often happens, and in fact may be the norm, in sports teams where winning is the only thing that matters. That is one of many differences between sports teams and work teams.

Source: G. B. Gibson and D. M. McDaniel, "Moving Beyond Conventional Wisdom: Advancements in Cross-Cultural Theories of Leadership, Conflict, and Teams," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 5, no. 4 (2010), pp. 450–462; K. Thomas, "U.S. Olympic Glory, From Stars Hardly on Team," *The New York Times* (February 28, 2010), pp. 1, 4; and S. Schomer, "HP's Susie Wee and the 'Wall of Touch,'" *Fast Company* (May 1, 2010), downloaded June 3, 2011, from www.fastcompany.com/.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- 1 How do you explain the growing popularity of teams in organizations?
- 2 What is the difference between a group and a team?
- 3 What are the four types of teams?
- 4 What conditions or context factors determine whether teams are effective?
- 5 How can organizations create team players?
- 6 When is work performed by individuals preferred over work performed by teams?
- 7 What are three ways in which our understanding of teams differs in a global context?

EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE FIXED VERSUS VARIABLE FLIGHT CREWS

Break into teams of five. Assume that you've been hired by AJet, a startup airline based in St. Louis. Your team has been formed to consider the pros and cons of using variable flight crews and to arrive at a recommendation on whether to follow this industry practice at AJet.

Variable flight crews are crews formed when pilots, co-pilots, and flight attendants typically bid for schedules on specific planes (for instance, Boeing 737s, 757s, or 767s) based on seniority. Then they're given a monthly schedule made up of 1- to 4-day trips. Thus, any given flight crew on a plane is rarely together for more than a few days at a time. A complicated system is required to complete the schedules. Because of this system, it's not unusual for a senior pilot at a large airline to fly with a different co-pilot on every trip during any given month. And a pilot and co-pilot who work together for 3 days in

January may never work together again the rest of the year. (In contrast, a fixed flight crew consists of the same group of pilots and attendants who fly together for a period of time.)

In considering whether to use variable flight crews, your team is to answer the following questions:

1. What are the primary advantages of variable flight crews?
2. If you were to recommend some version of fixed flight crews, drawing from the material in this chapter, on what criteria would you assign AJet crews?

When your team has considered the advantages and disadvantages of variable flight crews and answered these questions, be prepared to present to the class your recommendations and justification.

ETHICAL DILEMMA Unethical Teams

We often think of unethical behavior as individual behavior. However, in many cases, unethical behavior is a team effort. The Enron, Adelphia, and WorldCom corporate scandals were brewed by members of the top management teams in these organizations. The BP oil disaster implicated several teams that failed to ensure construction and safety guidelines were followed. Do these examples show that team unethical behavior is limited to top management teams, or can it also occur with "ordinary" work teams?

A study of 126 three-member teams of undergraduates suggests that unethical team behavior can occur beyond top management teams. In this study, teams were given a problem on which to work, with the following instructions:

You are assigned a team project in one of your finance courses. Your team waits until the last minute to being working. To save time, a friend suggests using an old project out of his fraternity files. Does your team go along with this plan?

How many of the teams decided to cheat? About 37 percent decided to use the old project.

Because this exercise was hypothetical, the authors also studied team cheating in another way—by allowing teams to self-grade a "decoy" assignment (an aspect of their assignment that did not in reality exist) that counted as 2 percent of their course grade. How many teams cheated here? About one in four.

This study found that team cheating was greater when a team was composed of utilitarian members (those who think the ends justify the means). However, utilitarian attitudes were more likely to translate into team cheating when team members felt interpersonally "safe"—when they felt there was little risk within the team of being attacked or ridiculed for propositions or arguments they made.

The upshot? It appears that in the right circumstances, all types of teams are capable of behaving unethically.

By holding individual team members accountable, and by providing a climate of “voice” where dissenting team members feel free to speak up, managers can discourage team unethical behavior.

Questions

1. Do you know for certain that you would have refused to agree to the unethical behavior in the experiment?

2. Do you think the team nature of the decision makes it more likely or less likely that individuals will choose to behave unethically?
3. In this study, all team members were required to sign a response form indicating they agreed with the decision. Do you think the results would change if consensus or a signature was not required?

Sources: M. J. Pearsall and A. P. J. Ellis, “Thick as Thieves: The Effects of Ethical Orientation and Psychological Safety on Unethical Team Behavior,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 96, no. 2 (2011), pp. 401–411; and D. W. White and E. Lean, “The Impact of Perceived Leader Integrity on Subordinates in a Work Team Environment,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 81, no. 4 (2008), pp. 765–778.

CASE INCIDENT 1 Why Don’t Teams Work Like They’re Supposed to?

Despite years of promises that teamwork will serve as a cure-all for the problems of business, many managers have found that even teams with highly motivated, skilled, and committed members can fail to achieve the expected results. Professor Richard Hackman from Harvard University has been studying teams for years and believes that more often than not, failing to establish the groundwork for effective team performance leads teams to be less effective than if the leader simply divided up tasks and had each individual work on his or her assigned part. As Hackman notes, “I have no question that a team can generate magic. But don’t count on it.”

What are the main factors Hackman has identified that lead to effective teams? Teams should be kept small and have consistent membership to minimize the types of coordination tasks that take up valuable time. Too often, organizations set up project-based teams and then reconfigure them, without considering the stages of group development that might have to occur before the team can achieve full performance. Supports need to be in place, like group-based rewards and clearly defined group responsibilities. Surprisingly, in his study of 120 senior management teams, Hackman found fewer than 10 percent of members agreed about who was even on the team!

Successful teams also have assertive, courageous leaders who can invoke authority even when the team resists direction. Similar lessons were derived from the failure of Ghana Airways, a state-run organization that experienced frequent changes in top management that were disruptive to establishing a consistent leadership team. As a result

of excessive turbulence and lack of strategic vision, the 40-year-old air carrier that was once an emblem for the country went bankrupt.

Do these weaknesses mean teams are never the answer to a business problem? Obviously, it is often necessary to bring together and coordinate individuals with a diverse set of skills and abilities to solve a problem. It would be impossible for all the management tasks of a complex organization like Ghana Airways to be done by disconnected individuals. And often there is more work to be done in a compressed time period than any one individual can possibly accomplish. In these cases, it is wise to consider how to best heed the advice provided above and ensure your team isn’t less than the sum of its parts.

Questions

1. What do you think of the elements of successful teamwork Hackman has identified? Do you believe these elements are necessary for effective team performance?
2. Can you think of other conditions necessary for teams to be effective?
3. Imagine you’ve been asked to assemble and lead a team of high-potential new hires to work on the development of an international marketing campaign. What specific steps might you take early in the team’s life to ensure that the new team is able to avoid some of the problems Hackman identified? Is there any way to break down the overall group goal into subtasks so individual accountability can be enhanced?

Sources: D. Coutu, “Why Teams Don’t Work” *Harvard Business Review* (May 2009), pp. 99–105; G. Gregory, “Why All-Star Teams Fail,” *Lab Manager Magazine* (January 11, 2011), www.labmanager.com; and J. Amankwah-Amoah and Y. A. Debrah, “The Protracted Collapse of Ghana Airways: Lessons in Organizational Failure,” *Group and Organization Management* 35, no. 5 (2010), pp. 636–665.

CASE INCIDENT 2 Multicultural Multinational Teams at IBM

When many people think of a traditional, established company, they think of IBM. IBM has been famous for its written and unwritten rules—such as its no-layoff policy, its focus on individual promotions and achievement, the expectation of lifetime service at the company, and its requirement of suits and white shirts at work. The firm was one of the mainstays of the “man in a gray flannel suit” corporate culture in the United States.

Times have certainly changed.

IBM has clients in 170 countries and now does two-thirds of its business outside the United States. As a result, it has overturned virtually all aspects of its old culture. One relatively new focus is on teamwork. While IBM uses work teams extensively, like almost all large organizations, the way it does so is unique.

To foster appreciation of a variety of cultures and open up emerging markets, IBM sends hundreds of its employees to month-long volunteer project teams in regions of the world where most big companies don’t do business. Al Chakra, a software development manager located in Raleigh, North Carolina, was sent to join GreenForest, a furniture manufacturing team in Timisoara, Romania. With Chakra were IBM employees from five other countries. Together, the team helped GreenForest become more computer-savvy to increase its business. In return for the IBM team’s assistance, GreenForest was charged nothing.

This is hardly altruism at work. IBM firmly believes these multicultural, multinational teams are good investments. First, they help lay the groundwork for uncovering business in emerging economies, many of which might be expected to enjoy greater future growth than mature markets. Stanley Litow, the IBM VP who oversees the

program, also thinks it helps IBMers develop multicultural team skills and an appreciation of local markets. He notes, “We want to build a leadership cadre that learns about these places and also learns to exchange their diverse backgrounds and skills.” Among the countries where IBM has sent its multicultural teams are Turkey, Tanzania, Vietnam, Ghana, and the Philippines.

As for Chakra, he was thrilled to be selected for the team. “I felt like I won the lottery,” he said. He advised GreenForest on how to become a paperless company in 3 years and recommended computer systems to boost productivity and increase exports to western Europe.

Another team member, Bronwyn Grantham, an Australian who works at IBM in London, advised GreenForest about sales strategies. Describing her team experience, Grantham said, “I’ve never worked so closely with a team of IBMers from such a wide range of competencies.”

Questions

1. If you calculate the person-hours devoted to IBM’s team projects, they amount to more than 180,000 hours of management time each year. Do you think this is a wise investment of IBM’s human resources? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think IBM’s culture changed from formal, stable, and individualistic to informal, impermanent, and team-oriented?
3. Would you like to work on one of IBM’s multicultural, multinational project teams? Why or why not?
4. Multicultural project teams often face problems with communication, expectations, and values. How do you think some of these challenges can be overcome?

Sources: Based on C. Hymowitz, “IBM Combines Volunteer Service, Teamwork to Cultivate Emerging Markets,” *The Wall Street Journal* (August 4, 2008), p. B6; S. Gupta, “Mine the Potential of Multicultural Teams,” *HR Magazine* (October 2008), pp. 79–84; and H. Aguinis and K. Kraiger, “Benefits of Training and Development for Individuals and Teams, Organizations, and Society,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 60, no. 1 (2009), pp. 451–474.

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