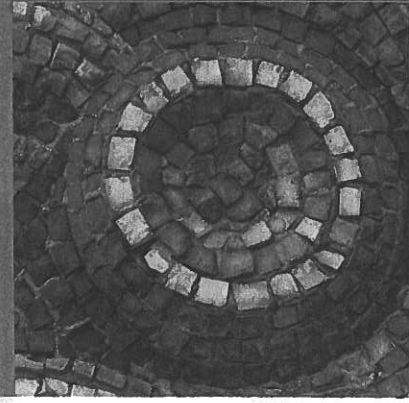


## CHAPTER 13

# Managing Work Groups and Teams



Sergii Tsololo/Photos.com

### Learning Outcomes

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

- 1 Define and identify types of groups and teams in organizations, discuss reasons people join groups and teams, and list the stages of group and team development.
- 2 Identify and discuss four essential characteristics of groups and teams.
- 3 Discuss interpersonal and intergroup conflict in organizations.
- 4 Describe how organizations manage conflict.
- 5 Describe the negotiation process.

### Management in Action

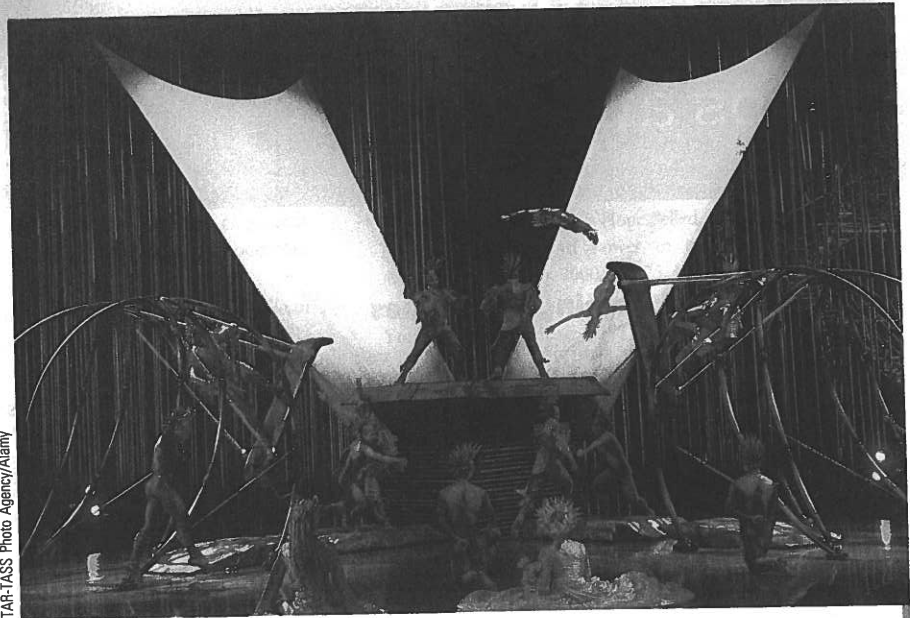
#### Managing by Clowning Around

*“It’s difficult to be creative in isolation.”*

—Lyn Heward, former president of Cirque du Soleil’s Creative Content Division

Fourteen-year-old Guy Laliberté dropped out of high school in Québec, Canada, because he wanted to see the world. “I decided to go into street performing because it was a traveling job,” he recalls, and although his skills were limited to playing the accordion and telling stories, they were enough to get him to London by the time he was 18. From there, he not only extended his travels to Europe but also broadened his repertoire to include fire breathing, juggling, magic, and stilt walking. “It was just an adventure,” he admits, “and I was planning to go back to school and have a regular life,” but his nearly decade-long adventure had only deepened his passion for street performing. When he returned to Canada, he joined a stilt-walking troupe, and in 1984, when he was 23 years old, Laliberté partnered with another high school dropout to form their own street-performance company. Today, he still runs that company, and as 80 percent owner of Cirque du Soleil, he’s one of the richest people in Canada.

Cirque du Soleil, which is French for *circus of the sun* (“The sun,” explains Laliberté, “stands for energy and youth, which is what I thought the circus should be about”), has completely transformed the traditional three-ring spectacle with trapeze artists, clowns, and lion tamers. Laliberté calls Cirque a “transdisciplinary experience”—an amalgam of breathtaking stunt work, dazzling stagecraft, surreal costumes, and pulsing music. There are currently 20 different Cirque shows, each developed around a distinctive theme and story arc, such as



ITAR-TASS Photo Agency/Alamy

Cirque du Soleil makes extensive use of teams to plan, design, and execute its elaborate shows such as *Varekai*, shown here being performed in Moscow.

“the urban experience in all its myriad forms” (*Saltimbanco*) and “a tribute to the nomadic soul” (*Varekai*). Headquartered in Montreal, Canada, the company now employs 5,000 people, including more than 1,300 artists, and its shows have been seen by 100 million spectators. Profits for 2012 were \$250 million on revenues of \$1 billion.

The key to this success, according to Laliberté, is creativity: “I believe that the profits will come from the quality of your creative products,” he says. “Since the beginning, I’ve always wanted to develop a self-feeding circle of creative productions: The positive financial returns from one show would be used to develop and create a new show, and so on.” He’s also convinced that his job is to provide a working environment that fosters collective creativity: “I believe in nurturing creativity and offering a haven for creators, enabling them to develop their ideas to the fullest. With more and more talented creators being drawn to Cirque in an environment that fulfills them, these [conditions] are ideal to continue developing great new shows.”

Lyn Heward, former president of Cirque’s Creative Content Division, calls the company’s process of training and integrating talented people “creative transformation.” “Everyone,” she says, “when they come to Cirque as an employee, even an accountant, comes there because it’s a creative and admired company, and they want to be able to contribute something creatively.” From her experience at Cirque, Heward drew up a nine-point guide to “creative transformation,” and at the heart of her list is a commitment to the value of teamwork. In fact, the fifth item on her list says, “Practice teamwork. True creativity requires stimulation and collaboration. It’s difficult to be creative in isolation.” Item 6 picks up the same theme: “Keep creativity fresh with hard-working bosses who constantly encourage and receive employees’ ideas and feedback and accept that there are often different ways of getting the same end result.”

"No matter what your product," Heward argues, "whether it's computers, cars, or anything else, your results [depend on] having a passionate strong team of people." In any workplace, she explains, "our most natural resource is the people we work with—the people we build our product with. Unless there's a strong commitment to teambuilding, passionate leadership, and creativity, even at Cirque it would not happen." Heward is willing to admit that "incredible freedom is a problem for most people because it requires us to think differently," but she's also confident that getting people committed to teamwork is the best way to get them to develop their creativity. Take Igor Jijikine, a Russian-born acrobat-actor who helped train performers for *Mystère*, Cirque's permanent show at Las Vegas's Treasure Island Hotel and Casino. "[T]he really challenging thing," he says,

is to change the mentality of the performers I work with. Many of our performers are former competitive gymnasts. Gymnastics is essentially an individual sport. Gymnasts never have to think creatively or be a part of a true team. They got here by being strong individuals. So, right from the start, we really challenge ourselves to erase the lines between athletics and artistry, between individuals and the group. We need to transform an individual into a team player everyone else can count on, literally with their lives.

Finally, Heward acknowledges that you can't imbue employees with the Cirque du Soleil culture and "then tell them to go work in their cubicles." The space in which they work, she says, "has to reflect [Cirque's] values and vision." All Cirque du Soleil productions are created and developed by teams working at the Montreal facility, which the company calls "the Studio" and describes as "a full-fledged creation, innovation, and training laboratory." In addition to administrative space—"eight floors of uniquely designed office spaces and relaxation areas conducive to inspiration"—the complex boasts acrobatic, dance, and theatrical studios, and the effect of the whole, says Heward, is that of "a fantastical playground." Creativity, she explains,

is fostered in work groups where people first get to know each other and then learn to trust one another. And in this playground, we recognize that a good idea can emerge from anywhere in the organization or from within a team. We make our shows from this collective creativity.

Cirque CEO Daniel Lamarre has a succinct way of explaining the company's success: "We let the creative people run it." As for Laliberté, he, too, is content to trust his creative people—an instinct, he says, that he learned in his days as a street performer: "In the street, you have to develop that instinct of trusting people and reading people because that instinct is your lifesaver." He lists himself as "Artistic Guide" in production notes and tries "not to be too involved in the beginning and during the process," the better to keep his perspective "fresh" and to "be able to give constructive recommendation on the final production." He also wants to do the same thing that he wanted to do when he was 14: "I still want to travel, I still want to entertain, and I most certainly still want to have fun."<sup>1</sup>