

WORK

Application 8-3

Based on Self-Assessment 8-1, list some things that a team could do to improve its level of teamwork. Use experiences associated with a present or past job.

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Effective team leaders find ways to maximize the benefits of teams and to minimize the limitations of teams. Suggested methods for accomplishing this include an understanding of the significance of culture, norms, and beliefs; recognition of fault line triggers; use of suitable leadership styles; development of team incentives and recognition; and effective use of intra-team communications.³⁸ More on these when we discuss the characteristics of effective teams and the role of top management and team leaders in creating effective teams.

Complete Self-Assessment 8-1 to evaluate teamwork from your own work experience.

SELF-ASSESSMENT 8-1

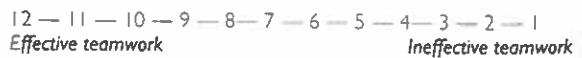
Assessing Teamwork in Your Group

Based on experiences you have or have had with teams, indicate whether your team has (or had) the following characteristics by placing a checkmark in the appropriate column:

In my team:	Mostly True	Mostly False		Mostly True	Mostly False
1. There is a common understanding and commitment to group goals on the part of all team members.	_____	_____	8. Members are provided with the opportunity for continuous learning and training in appropriate skills.	_____	_____
2. Members support and provide constructive feedback to one another's ideas.	_____	_____	9. Every team member is treated equally.	_____	_____
3. Members do not feel the pressure to conform to group standards of performance and conduct.	_____	_____	10. Members are more likely to provide backup and support for one another without the team leader's instruction.	_____	_____
4. Dissenting views are accepted and discussed rather than suppressed in favor of consensus.	_____	_____	11. Rewards and recognition are linked to individual as well as team results.	_____	_____
5. The level of interpersonal interaction among members is high.	_____	_____	12. Roles and responsibilities for performing various tasks are clearly established.	_____	_____
6. Much of the responsibility and authority for making important decisions is turned over to the team.	_____	_____			
7. There is an open communication channel for all members to voice their opinions.	_____	_____			

Scoring

Add up the number of mostly true answers and place the total on the continuum below.



Interpreting the Score

The higher the score, the more effective is the teamwork. Self-assessment exercises like this can be used by groups during team building to improve teamwork. You will learn more about the team leader's role in building effective teams in the next section and about SMTs later in the chapter.

Self-Assessment 8-2 should help you assess the culture for creativity in your organization or institution.

SELF-ASSESSMENT 8-2

Assessing the Culture for Creativity

Place a checkmark in the appropriate column for each question.

In my team:	Mostly Agree	Mostly Disagree		Mostly Agree	Mostly Disagree
1. Organizational practices generally encourage creativity.	_____	_____	8. Employees have greater autonomy to think and act freely than they would in another organization.	_____	_____
2. The reward system has been carefully designed to encourage creativity.	_____	_____	9. In looking around, it is certain that the work environment has been carefully designed to encourage creativity.	_____	_____
3. People are not restricted by rules and regulations or many layers of approval when they want to try new ideas.	_____	_____	10. Managerial practices in this organization would lead to the conclusion that creativity and innovation are highly valued at all levels.	_____	_____
4. "Doing things the way they have always been done" is not a slogan that applies in this organization.	_____	_____			
5. People are able to experiment and dream outside their regular functional area on company time.	_____	_____			
6. The organization's culture values and appreciates input from members.	_____	_____			
7. People feel they have been properly matched with tasks that fit their skills, interests, and experiences.	_____	_____			

Scoring

Begin by placing a checkmark in the appropriate column for each question. Add up the number of "mostly agree" checkmarks and place the sum on the continuum below.



Interpreting the Score

The higher the score, the more supportive the organizational culture is of creativity and innovation. Self-assessment exercises like this can be used to encourage students to relate their work environments to the concepts in ways that others can benefit from their experience.

OPENING CASE Application



5. Southwest encourages its teams to be creative problem solvers. What are some examples of creative problem solving by Southwest teams?

Southwest employees have teamed up to find better ways of performing their task. Working together, Southwest employees found better and faster ways to turn around their planes in just 25 minutes, one of the fastest in the industry. There are also countless customer accounts of Southwest employees going out of their way to help them. In many of the cases, the employees took it upon themselves to find a solution to the customer's problem without waiting for managerial approval. The company definitely encourages its employees to find creative, yet efficient, ways to accomplish their tasks and this is showing in the company's bottom line.

SELF-ASSESSMENT 8-3

Personality Traits and Teams

Answer the following two questions, and then read how your personality profile can affect your teamwork.

I enjoy being part of a team and working with others more than working alone.

7 — 6 — 5 — 4 — 3 — 2 — 1

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

I enjoy achieving team goals more than individual accomplishments.

7 — 6 — 5 — 4 — 3 — 2 — 1

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

The stronger you agree with the two statements, the higher the probability that you will be a good team player. However, lower scores do not mean that you are not a good team player. The following is some information on how Big Five personality dimensions and their related motive needs can affect your teamwork.

Surgency—high need for power. If you have a high need for power, whether you are the team leader or not, you have to be careful not to dominate the group. Seek others' input, and know when to lead and when to follow. Even when you have great ideas, be sensitive to others so they don't feel that you are bullying them, and stay calm (adjustment) as you influence them. Be aware of your motives to make sure you use socialized, rather than personalized, power. You have the potential to make a positive contribution to the team with your influencing leadership skills. If you have a low need for power, try to be assertive so that others don't take advantage of you, and speak up when you have good ideas.

Agreeableness—high need for affiliation. If you have a high need for affiliation, you tend to be a good team player. However, don't let the fear of hurting relationships get in the way of your influencing the team when you have good ideas. Don't be too quick to give in to others; it doesn't help the performance of the team when you have a better idea that is not implemented. You have the potential to be a valuable asset to the team as you contribute your skills of working well with others and making them feel important. If you have a low need for affiliation, be careful to be sensitive to others.

Conscientiousness—high need for achievement. If you have a high need for achievement, you have to watch your natural tendency to be more individualistic than team oriented. It's good to have your own goals; but if the team and organization fail, so do you. Remember that there is usually more than one good way to do anything; your way is not always the best. In a related issue, don't be a perfectionist, as you can cause problems with team members. Being conscientious, you have the potential to help the team do a good job and reach its full potential. If you have a low need for achievement, push yourself to be a valuable contributor to the group, or pull your own weight.

Conducting Effective Team Meetings

In a team-oriented organization, leaders spend a great deal of time conducting meetings. Therefore, the need for conducting effective team meetings is stronger than ever.¹³⁵ The success of meetings depends on the leader's skill at managing the process. The most common complaints about meetings are that *there are too many of them*, *they are too long*, and *they are unproductive*. Meeting leadership skills can lead to more productive meetings. A few years back, Ford Motor Company spent \$500,000 to send 280 employees to a three-day training session on developing meeting leadership skills, with three one-day sessions to follow. After the training, fewer employees complained of meetings being too long or unproductive. Managers had gained the necessary meeting leadership skills and were putting this knowledge into practice. Ford's investment had obviously paid off. In this section, we learn how to plan and conduct a meeting and how to handle problem team members.