

Our experience leads us to the tentative conclusion that some relatively simple notions underlie success, namely:

1. Get the *right people* together for
2. A *large block of uninterrupted time*
3. To work on *high-priority problems or opportunities* that
4. *They have identified* and that are worked on
5. In *ways that are structured* to enhance the likelihood of
6. *Realistic solutions and action plans* that are
7. *Implemented enthusiastically* and
8. *Followed up* to assess actual versus expected results.¹³

These authors comment on the overall nature of team-building sessions as follows:

We have come to believe strongly that initial improvement efforts should be task oriented rather than focused on interpersonal relations. It is usually safer, less resisted, and more appropriate in terms of the problems and opportunities identified by the client. We have tended not to focus on team building per se; rather, we find that it occurs as a natural by-product of learning to solve problems in a group setting. However, we don't avoid interpersonal or team ineffectiveness issues if they are getting in the way of effective and efficient problem solving.¹⁴

When a team engages in problem-solving activities directed toward task accomplishment, the team members *build something together*. It appears that the act of building something together also builds a sense of camaraderie, cohesion, and *esprit de corps*. The major ingredients involved in a team's building something together are probably the eight steps identified by Bell and Rosenzweig.

In our own consulting we have increasingly come to designate these sessions as "team-building problem-solving workshops"—a clear signal to us and the client that *both* building a more effective team and solving priority problems constitute the business at hand. We consider team-building problem-solving interventions to be a cornerstone of OD technology.

An Example

An example of a team-building program might be helpful. The top management team of a quasi-governmental agency decided collectively that they "needed help to become more goal-directed and effective." They interviewed several consultants and selected one who the executive director (the boss) and the team felt was most appropriate for them, their organization, and their problems. At a meeting the consultant explained the team-building problem-solving process, how it would be conducted, and what could be expected of the consultant and the team. Questions were answered; mutual expectations were established.

The consultant then interviewed all team members in confidential interviews to gain an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the team and the organization. When the interviews were completed, the consultant met with the executive director to give him an overview of the interview results. While maintaining confidentiality, the consultant described the issues uncovered in the interviews and solicited the

executive director's reaction which was that the diagnosis agreed with his own perceptions. Let us explain why we include this step since not all OD practitioners give a preliminary overview to the team leader. We include this step for several reasons: so the leader will not be surprised (and possibly defensive) at the first team-building meeting; so that the leader is forewarned if he or she is viewed as a "problem"; so that we can gauge the leader's willingness to address the problems identified; and so that the leader can be coached to respond constructively to the array of problems. The leader is not allowed to censor problems or to delete problems from the agenda. This step is a useful one, in our view, in that it helps to build a foundation of trust and openness between the key client and the consultant. (The team had been informed that this step would occur.)

The next event was the first meeting, an all-day, off-site workshop. The executive director opened the meeting with remarks that established a constructive, optimistic climate. Next, the consultant presented the strengths and problem areas found in the interviews and asked the team to prioritize the problem areas in terms of importance and urgency. The rest of that day was spent exploring the three highest priority problems and developing action steps to correct the problems. Four subsequent all-day meetings were held at intervals of three or four weeks until the original problem agenda was worked through. This schedule allowed enough time between meetings to implement action steps, while at the same time keeping the level of momentum and energy high. At the fifth meeting the team decided to hold quarterly team-building meetings to monitor progress and to address and solve new problems. Three quarterly meetings were held with the consultant present and later meetings were held without him. This sequence of team-building intervention activities and events is typical.

An excellent statement of the team-building process is found in William Dyer's *Team Building: Issues and Alternatives*. He describes team building as a data gathering, diagnostic, action planning, and action taking process conducted by intact work teams. He says of the process,

One underlying assumption regarding teams in organizations is that resources are available in the individuals in the work unit. They have the capability to address and deal with the above questions, [issues of declining performance] and the problems behind the questions, if given the time, encouragement, and freedom needed to work honestly toward solutions. Team development in its best sense is creating the opportunity for people to come together to share their concerns, their ideas, and their experiences, and to begin to work together to solve their mutual problems and achieve common goals.¹⁵

The basic building blocks of organizations are teams, and one of the basic building blocks of organization development is team building.

PROCESS CONSULTATION INTERVENTIONS

The process consultation model is similar to team-building interventions except that process consultation places greater emphasis on diagnosing and understanding process events. Furthermore, the consultant's role is more nondirective and questioning as he or she gets the groups to solve their own problems.