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“The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don’t play together, the club won’t be worth a dime.”

Former UCLA basketball coach John Wooden, quoting Hall-of-Famer Babe Ruth
Gary W. Green, Orlando Sentinel/MCT/Getty Images

17

Teams and Teamwork

Two heads really can be better than one

CHAPTER QUICK START

Surely you've experienced the highs and the lows of teams and teamwork—as a team contributor and as a team leader. Teams and teammates can be inspirational and they can be frustrating. They can accomplish great things or do very little of consequence. The more we know about teams, teamwork, and our personal tendencies toward team contributions, the better prepared we are to participate in today's team-driven organizations.

Key Takeaways

- Identify the ways teams contribute to organizations.
- Explain current trends in the use of teams in organizations.
- Describe the key processes through which teams work.
- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of team decision making.

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“Sticks in a bundle are hard to break”—*Kenyan proverb*

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, determined people can change the world”—*Margaret Mead*, anthropologist

“Pick good people, use small teams and give them great tools so that they are very productive.”—*Bill Gates*, businessman and philanthropist

“Gettin’ good players is easy. Gettin’ ‘em to play together is the hard part”—*Casey Stengel*, Hall of Fame Major League baseball manager

From proverbs to societies to sports to business, the operation of teams and teamwork has been a consistent focal point of collective organization and is widely recognized as a critical tool for accomplishing great things.¹ Even so, just the words *group* and *team* elicit both positive and negative reactions in the minds of many people who have been involved—either as observers or participants—in these collectives. Although it is an embedded idiom in Western culture that “two heads are better than one,” we also are warned by an idiom equally embedded in our culture that “too many cooks spoil the broth.” A true skeptic of the kind of collective action implied by groups or teams can be heard to say: “A camel is a horse put together by a committee.”

Teams have a great deal of performance potential but also are extremely complex in how they function. Teams can be a supercharged vehicle for the achievement of great successes, and they can also be the cause of equally monstrous failures.² More than a third of individuals participating in teams report dissatisfaction with teamwork. Less than half of team members report receiving training in team dynamics.³ Still, many people prefer to work in teams than working independently. What is clear is that there is a great deal of variability in responses to—and the effectiveness of—teams in organizations today.

Teams in Organizations

TAKEAWAY 1 What are teams and how do they fit in organizations?

LEARN MORE ABOUT | Teamwork pros • Teamwork cons • Meetings, meetings, meetings
Organizations as networks of groups

A **team** is a relatively small set of people with complementary skills who regularly interact with one another, working together interdependently to achieve shared goals.⁴ **Teamwork** is the process of team members working together to accomplish these goals. Managers must be prepared to perform at least four important teamwork roles. A *team leader* serves as the appointed head of a team or a work unit. A *team member* serves as a contributing part of a project team. A *network facilitator* serves as the peer leader and networking hub for a special task force. A *coach or developer* serves as a team's advisor on ways to improve team processes and performance.

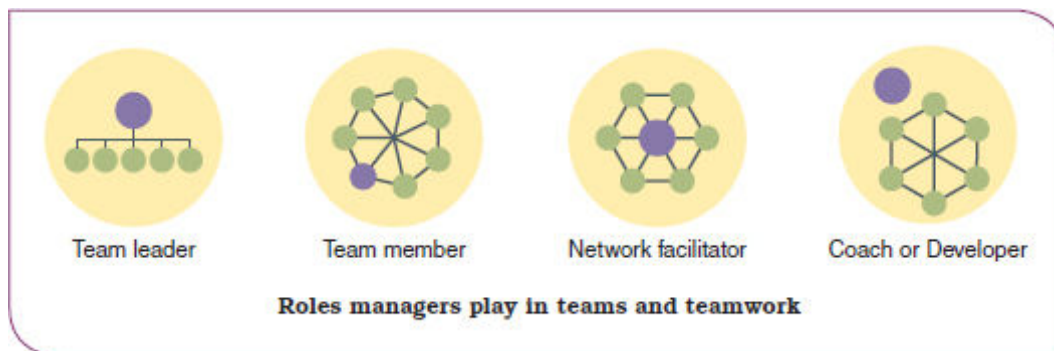
A **team** is a collection of people who regularly interact to pursue common goals.

Teamwork is the process of people actively working together interdependently to accomplish common goals.

A fundamental difference between teams and groups is whether the goals or outcomes members are tasked with require that they work interdependently with one another or independently of one another. The **interdependence** that is characteristic of teams puts members in positions where they depend on each other to fulfill tasks and carry out work effectively.⁵ Interdependence influences the way team members combine inputs such as ideas and efforts

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to create outcomes such as a completed task or project.⁶ And when team members are interdependent, they tend to share information and communicate with one another more often, as well as act cooperatively and helpfully toward one another.⁷



Interdependence is the extent to which employees depend on other members of their team to carry out their work effectively.

Teamwork Pros

Although working effectively with other members within a team can be hard work, the effort is worth it when the team meets anticipated performance expectations.⁸ The real benefit of teams is their capacity to accomplish goals and performance expectations far greater than what's possible for individuals alone. This collective performance potential is called **synergy**, which is the creation of a whole that is greater than the sum of its individual parts.

Synergy is the creation of a whole greater than the sum of its individual parts.

Synergy pools the individual talents and efforts of a team's members to create extraordinary results through collective action. When Jens Voigt, one of the top racers on the Tour de France,

was asked to describe a “perfect cyclist,” for example, he created a composite of his nine-member team: “We take the time trial legs of Fabian Cancellara, the speed of Stuart O’Grady, the climbing capacity of our leaders and my attitude.” His point in describing each of these individual’s talents was that the tour is simply too hard for a single rider to win based on his own talents. Like so many other performance drivers in the workplace, the synergies made possible through effective teamwork represent a critical key to the success of teams.⁹

Just being a member of a team is often good for its members. The personal connections developed through membership can help employees to do their jobs better—getting help, making contacts, sharing ideas, responding to favors, and avoiding roadblocks. The personal relationships that develop among team members can help satisfy important needs that may be difficult to meet in regular work or personal settings, offering positive interpersonal interactions, a sense of security and belonging, and emotional support.¹⁰

The Many Benefits of Teams

- Performance gains through synergy
- More resources for problem solving
- Improved creativity and innovation
- Improved decision-making quality
- Greater member commitment to tasks
- Increased member motivation
- Increased need satisfaction of members

Teamwork Cons

Although teams have a great potential to increase the collective performance of members, what also is clear is that expectations and anticipated performance gains don’t always materialize as intended when teams and teamwork are used. Problems with teams and members within teams can easily transform their great potential into frustration and failure.¹¹

Personality conflicts and work style differences can disrupt how well teams function. Unclear tasks, ambiguous agendas, and ill-defined problems and roles can cause teams to work too long on the wrong things. Sometimes team members start out motivated and then lose their motivation because teamwork takes too much time and effort away from other tasks, deadlines, and priorities. A lack of success also can hurt members’ morale. It’s also easy for members to lose motivation when the team is poorly organized and led, or when other members slack off.¹²

Anyone who’s had any extensive experience working in teams has encountered **social loafing**. This is the presence of “free-riders” who slack off because responsibility for various tasks is diffused in teams and others are present to do the work, picking up the slack.¹³ Although social loafing can be very frustrating and can hurt team performance, there are things that team leaders or concerned team members can do when others don’t do their work. The possibilities include making individual contributions more visible, rewarding individuals for their contributions, making task assignments more interesting, and keeping team sizes small so that free-riders are subject to more intense peer pressure and leader evaluation.¹⁴

Social loafing is the tendency of some members to avoid responsibility by “free-riding” during group tasks.

Social Loafing Is Hurting Team Performance



Masterfile

1. *Psychology study:* A German researcher asked people to pull on a rope as hard as they could. First, individuals pulled alone. Second, they pulled as part of a group. The results from this study showed that people pull harder when working alone than when working as part of a team. Such “social loafing” is the tendency for individuals to reduce their level of effort when working with others.
2. *Faculty office:* A student wants to speak with the instructor about his team’s performance on the last project. There were four members, but two did almost all of the work. The other two largely disappeared, showing up only at the last minute to be part of the formal presentation. His point is that the team was disadvantaged because two free-riders were responsible for reduced performance capacity.
3. *Telephone call from the boss:* “John, I really need you to serve on this committee. Will you do it? Let me know tomorrow.” In thinking about this, John ponders: I’m overloaded, but I don’t want to turn down the boss. I’ll accept but let the committee members know about my situation. I’ll be active in discussions and try to offer viewpoints and perspectives that are helpful. However, I’ll let them know up front that I can’t be a leader or volunteer for any extra work.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What are the ethical issues involved in team situations when some members sit back and let others do more of the work the entire team is responsible for doing? When you join a team, do all of the team’s members have an ethical obligation to do a similar amount of work—why or why not? When it comes to John, does the fact that he intends to be honest with the other committee members make any difference? Isn’t he still going to be a social loafer while earning credit from his boss for serving on the committee? Is his approach ethical—or should he simply decline to participate on the committee? What factors would make you more/less comfortable with another member not pulling their weight on the team?

Meetings, Meetings, Meetings

“We have the most ineffective meetings of any company,” says a technology executive. “We just seem to meet and meet and meet, and we never seem to do anything,” says another in the

package delivery industry. “We realize our meetings are unproductive. A consulting firm is trying to help us, but we’ve got a long way to go,” says a corporate manager.¹⁵

What do you think when someone says: “Let’s have a meeting”? Are you ready and willing, or apprehensive and even upset to have to participate? We aren’t always happy to get a request to add another meeting to our busy schedules. The problems described in the nearby box don’t help.¹⁶ You might even be able to add to the list from personal experience.

Good meetings don’t happen by accident. People have to work hard and work together to make meetings productive and rewarding. Face-to-face and virtual meetings are where lots of information is shared, decisions get made, and people gain understanding of the issues and of one another. They’re important and necessary. This is why knowing more about teams and teamwork is so useful.

Seven Deadly Sins of Meetings

1. People arrive late, leave early, and don’t take things seriously.
2. The meeting is too long, sometimes twice as long as necessary.
3. People don’t stay on topic; they digress and are easily distracted.
4. The discussion lacks candor; people are unwilling to tell the truth.
5. The right information isn’t available, so decisions are postponed.
6. Nothing happens when the meeting is over; no one puts decisions into action.
7. Things never get better; the same mistakes are made meeting after meeting.

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Organizations as Networks of Groups

Formal groups are officially recognized and supported by the organization. They may be called departments (e.g., market research department), units (e.g., audit unit), groups (e.g., customer service group), or divisions (e.g., office products division), among other possibilities. These formal groups form interlocking networks that serve as the foundation of the organization’s structure, and managers are key “linking pins” among them. Managers lead formal groups at one level while also serving as members of groups at the next higher level and in groups formed across functional areas.¹⁷

A **formal group** is an officially recognized collective that is supported by the organization.

Informal groups also are present and important in all organizations. They emerge from natural or spontaneous relationships among members. Some informal groups are *interest groups* where workers join together to pursue a common cause, such as better working conditions. Some emerge as *friendship groups* that develop for a wide variety of personal reasons, including shared non-work interests and social connections. Others exist as *support groups*, in which members basically help one another to do their jobs or to cope with common problems.

An **informal group** is unofficial and emerges from relationships and shared interests among members.

Although people may sometimes use informal groups as a forum for airing dissatisfactions and spreading rumors, the social connections they offer can also play many positive roles in organizations. Tapping into relationships within informal groups can help speed workflow and “get things done” in ways not possible within the formal structure defined in an organizational chart. Members of informal groups can also satisfy needs that are otherwise left unmet in their formal work assignments. These include gaining friendship, security, support, and a sense of belongingness.

Learning Check 1

TAKEAWAYQUESTION 1 What are teams and how do they fit in organizations?

BE SURE YOU CAN • define *team* and *teamwork* • explain why *interdependence* is a key characteristic of teams • identify four roles managers perform in teams • define *synergy* • explain teamwork pros and cons • discuss the implications of social loafing • explain the potential benefits of informal groups

Trends in the Use of Teams

TAKEAWAY 2 What are current trends in the use of teams?

LEARN MORE ABOUT | Committees, project teams, and task forces • Cross-functional teams

Self-managing teams • Virtual teams • Team building

A trend toward greater empowerment in organizations today shows up as an emphasis on committees, project teams, task forces, cross-functional teams, and self-managing teams. Importantly, all of these different forms function in both face-to-face and virtual forms.

Committees, Project Teams, and Task Forces

A **committee** brings employees together outside of their daily job duties to work together for a specific purpose. A committee’s agenda is typically narrow, focused, and ongoing. Organizations usually have a variety of permanent or standing committees dedicated to a wide variety of issues, such as diversity, quality, and product development. Committees are led by a designated head or chairperson, who is held accountable for the committee’s performance.

A **committee** is designated to work on a special task on a continuing basis.

Project teams or **task forces** bring people together to work on common problems, but on a temporary rather than permanent basis. The goals and task assignments are specific and completion deadlines are clear. Creativity and innovation may be part of the agenda. Project teams, for example, can be formed to develop a new advertising campaign, redesign an office layout, or streamline a work process.¹⁸

A **project team** or **task force** is convened for a specific purpose and disbands when its task is completed.

Cross-Functional Teams

Many organizations make use of **cross-functional teams** that pull together members from across different functional units to work on common goals. These teams help reduce the **functional chimneys problem** by eliminating “walls” that can otherwise limit communication and cooperation among employees from different departments and functions. Target CEO Gregg Steinhafel, for example, says that his firm uses cross-functional teams from “merchandising, marketing, design, communications, presentation, supply chain and stores” to create and bring to customers new limited-edition fashions.¹⁹

A **cross-functional team** operates with members who come from different functional units of an organization.

The **functional chimneys problem** is a lack of communication across functions.

Self-Managing Teams

Traditional work teams consisting of first-level supervisors and their immediate subordinates are increasingly being replaced in a growing number of organizations with **self-managing work teams**. As shown in [Figure 17.1](#), these teams operate with a high degree of task interdependence, authority to make many decisions about how they work, and collective responsibility for results.²⁰ The expected advantages from self-managed teams are better performance, reduced costs, and high levels of morale.

Members of a **self-managing work team** have the authority to make decisions about how they share and complete their work.

Multitasking is a key feature of all self-managing teams, whose members each have the skills to perform several different jobs. Within a team the emphasis is always on participation. Self-managing teams operate with members sharing tasks and taking collective responsibility for management functions traditionally performed by supervisors. The “self-management” responsibilities include planning and scheduling work, training members in various tasks, distributing tasks, meeting performance goals, ensuring high quality, and solving day-to-day operating problems. In some self-managing teams, members have the authority to “hire” and “fire” other members. Typical characteristics of self-managing teams include:

Characteristics of self-managing teams

- Members are held collectively accountable for performance results.
- Members have discretion in distributing tasks within the team.
- Members have discretion in scheduling work within the team.
- Members are able to perform more than one job on the team.
- Members train one another to develop multiple job skills.
- Members evaluate one another’s performance contributions.
- Members are responsible for the total quality of team products.

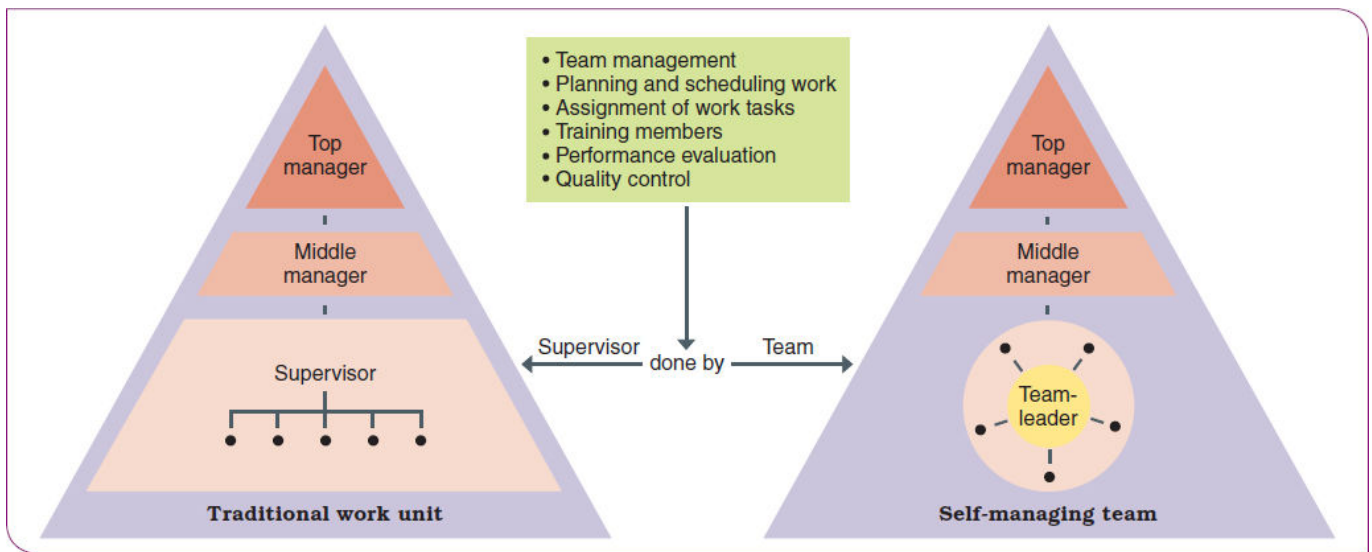


FIGURE 17.1 Organizational and management implications of self-managing work teams.

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analysis> MAKE DATA YOUR FRIEND

> Meetings are frequent, but many say the ones they attend are ineffective.

Unproductive Meetings Are Major Time Wasters



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A survey of some 38,000 workers around the world links low productivity with bad meetings, poor communication, and unclear goals.

- 69% of meetings attended are considered ineffective.
- 32% of workers complain about team communication.
- 31% complain about unclear objectives and priorities.

YOUR THOUGHTS?

Do the results from this survey match your own experiences with team meetings? Given the common complaints about meetings, what can a team leader do to improve them? Think about recent meetings you have attended. In what ways were the best meetings different from the worst meetings? Did your own behavior play a significant role in both of these cases? How do the interactions of team members influence the quality of these meetings? Why?

Virtual Teams

Scene: U.S.-based IT manager needs to meet with team members in Brazil, the Philippines, and Poland. Rather than pay for everyone to fly to a common location, he checks world time zones, sends an e-mail to schedule, and then turns on his tablet to join the other team members online at the scheduled time using Google FaceTime or Skype.

The constant emergence of new technologies is making virtual collaboration both easier and more common. At home it may be Twitter, Linked In, or Instagram; at the office it's likely to be a wide variety of online meeting resources. Members of **virtual teams**, also called **distributed teams**, work together through computer mediation rather than face to face.²¹ They operate like other teams with respect to what gets done. In virtual teams, it's the way that

things get done that is different. This difference has both potential advantages and disadvantages.²²

Members of a **virtual team** or **distributed team** work together and solve problems through computer-based interactions.

In terms of potential advantages, virtual teams can save a significant amount of time and travel expense when members work in different locations. They also can be easily expanded to include more members as needed, and the discussions and shared information can be archived for later access. Virtual teams are usually quite efficient because members are less prone to stray off task and get sidetracked by interpersonal difficulties. A vice president for human resources at Marriott, for example, once called electronic meetings “the quietest, least stressful, most productive meetings you’ve ever had.”²³

The lack of face-to-face interaction in virtual teams also creates potential disadvantages. It limits the role of emotions and nonverbal cues in communication and often contributes to member relationships that are depersonalized.²⁴ “Human beings are social animals for whom building relationships matters a great deal,” says one scholar. “Strip away the social side of teamwork and, very quickly, people feel isolated and unsupported.”²⁵ The following guidelines can help keep the possible downsides of virtual teamwork to a minimum:²⁶

Guidelines for virtual teamwork

- Select team members high in initiative and capable of self-starting.
- Select members who will join and engage the team with positive attitudes.
- Select members known for working hard to meet team goals.
-

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Begin with social messaging that allows members to exchange information about each other in order to personalize the process.

- Assign clear goals and roles so that members can focus while working alone and also know what others are doing.
- Gather regular feedback from members about how they think the team is doing and how it might work more effectively.
- Provide regular feedback to team members about team accomplishments.

Team Building

High-performance teams of all the types just described operate with characteristics like those shown in the box.²⁷ But real, effective teamwork and the great results teamwork can generate don't happen by accident.

Team building is a sequence of planned activities used to analyze the functioning of a team and to make constructive, systematic changes in how it operates.²⁸ The process begins with developing awareness that a problem may be present or may develop within the team. Members then work together to gather data and fully understand the nature of the problem, make plans to

correct it, implement the plans the team develops, and evaluate results from the plan. This whole process is repeated as difficulties or new problems are discovered within the team.

Team building is a sequence of activities to analyze a team and make changes to improve its performance.

Characteristics of High-Performance Teams

- Clear and elevating goals
- Task-driven, results-oriented structure
- Competent, hard-working members
- Collaborative culture
- High standards of excellence
- External support and recognition
- Strong, principled leadership

There are many ways to gather data for team building, including structured and unstructured interviews, survey questionnaires, and team meetings. Regardless of the method used to help understand what's happening, the basic principle of team building remains the same. It is a careful and collaborative assessment of all of the various aspects of the team, ranging from how members work together to the results they are able to achieve.

Team building can be done with consulting assistance or under the direction of a manager. It can also be done in the workplace or take place at outside locations. A popular approach is to bring team members together in special outdoor settings where their capacities for teamwork are put to the test through unusual and physically demanding experiences, such as obstacle courses. There's lots of room for innovation in team building, with options including activities like scavenger hunts, work with charities, cooking schools,

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building and sculpting, and competitive activities.²⁹ Says one team-building trainer: "We throw clients into situations to try and bring out the traits of a good team."³⁰

Issues&Trends

Cooking Together and Other Novel Ways to Build Teams



© Mikael Dubois/Age Fotostock America, Inc.

The outdoor experience approach to team-building is tried and true. But, it's also a bit old hat to some. A variety of new options are being tried avoid team-building burnout. When 25 global managers from Thermo Fisher Scientific got together, five-person teams cooked dinner with culinary coaches. One participant said: "We were all leaders and the process highlighted the differences in the way we all approach a situation, which person would be in charge, and how work would be delegated." Senior executives at Superior Farms attended a team-building session where they had to operate heavy construction equipment. A vice president said that the help of a teammate speaking through her headset allowed her to run the big excavator. "He was so patient with me and knew exactly what I needed to hear," she said.

Learning Check 2

TAKEAWAYQUESTION 2 What are current trends in the use of teams?

BE SURE YOU CAN • differentiate a committee from a task force • explain the benefits of cross-functional teams • discuss potential advantages and disadvantages of virtual teams • list the characteristics of self-managing work teams • explain how self-managing teams are changing organizations • describe the typical steps in team building

How Teams Work

TAKEAWAY 3 How do teams work?

LEARN MORE ABOUT | Team inputs • Stages of team development • Norms and cohesiveness
Task and maintenance roles • Communication networks

An **effective team** does three things well—perform its tasks, satisfy its members, and remain viable for the future.³¹ On the *task performance* side, a work team is expected to transform resource inputs (such as ideas, materials, and information) into product outputs (such as a report, decision, service, or commodity). With respect to *member satisfaction*, members should take pleasure from both the team's performance accomplishments and their contributions toward making these happen. As to *future viability*, the team should have a social fabric and

work climate that makes its members willing and able to work well together in the future, again and again as needed.

An **effective team** achieves high levels of task performance, membership satisfaction, and future viability.

You sometimes hear top executives saying that team effectiveness comes from having “the right players in the right seats on the same bus, headed in the same direction.”³² The open-systems model in [Figure 17.2](#) supports this view. It shows that a team’s effectiveness is influenced by inputs—“right players in the right seats”—and by process—“on the same bus, headed in the same direction.”³³ You can remember the implications of this figure by the following **Team Effectiveness Equation**:³⁴

Team Effectiveness Equation Team effectiveness = Quality of inputs + (Process gains – Process losses).

Team effectiveness = Quality of inputs + (Process gains – Process losses)

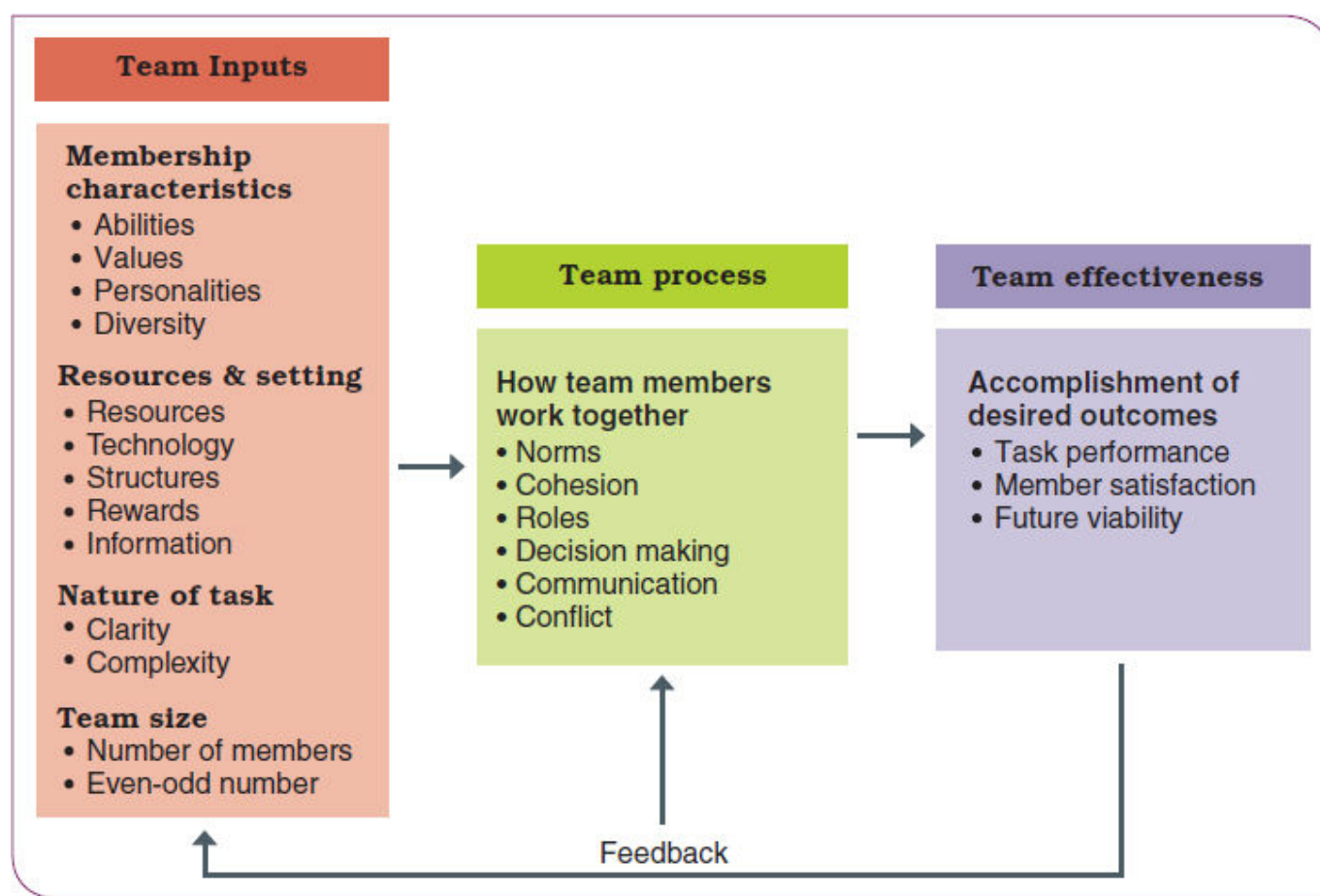


FIGURE 17.2 An open-systems model of team effectiveness.

Team Inputs

Among the important inputs that influence team effectiveness are membership characteristics, resources and setting, nature of the task, and team size.³⁵ You can think of these conditions as the drivers that prepare the team for action. A team with the right inputs has a greater chance of having a positive process and being effective.

Membership Characteristics

The right blend of member characteristics on a team is critical for success. Teams need members with the right abilities, or skill sets, to master and perform tasks well. Teams must also have members whose attitudes, values, and personalities are sufficiently compatible for everyone to work well together. How often, for example, have you read or heard about college sports teams where a lack of the right “chemistry” among talented players leads to subpar team performance? As one of the chapter opening quotes states: “Gettin’ good players is easy. Gettin’ ‘em to play together is the hard part.”³⁶

choices> THINK BEFORE YOU ACT

> “There is no ‘T’ in team!” is a common cry. But basketball superstar Michael Jordan once responded: “There is an ‘T’ in win.”

Creating Disharmony to Build a Better Team



Jonathan Daniel/Allsport/Getty Images

“There is no ‘I’ in team!” is a common cry. But basketball superstar Michael Jordan once responded: “There is an ‘I’ in win.” What’s the point here? Jordan is suggesting that someone as expert in task direction as himself shouldn’t always be subordinated to the team. Rather, the team’s job may be to support his or her talents so that they shine to their brightest potential.

In his book, *There Is an I in Team: What Elite Athletes and Coaches Really Know about High Performance* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2012), Cambridge scholar Mark de Rond notes that sports metaphors abound in the workplace. We talk about “heavy hitters” and ask teammates to “step up to the plate.” The real world of teamwork is dominated by the quest for cooperation, perhaps at the cost of needed friction. And that, according to du Rond, is a potential performance problem. “When teams work well,” du Rond says, “it is because, not in spite, of individual differences.”

Those in favor of du Rond’s views are likely to argue that even if superstars bring a bit of conflict to the team, the result may well be added creativity and a performance boost. Instead of trying to make everyone happy, perhaps it’s time for managers and team leaders to accept that disharmony can be functional, adding a needed edge. A bit of team tension may be a price worth paying for high performance. *Those worried about du Rond’s views* might say there’s a fine line between a superstar’s real performance contribution and the collateral damage or negative impact caused by personality and temperament clashes. That line is a hard one to spot and to manage.

YOUR TAKE?

Given what we know about teams and your personal experiences with them, should we be finding ways to accommodate superstars on a team ... or avoid them?

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Team diversity, in the form of different values, personalities, experiences, demographics, and cultures among the members of the team affects how teams work.³⁷ It is easier to manage relationships among members of more *homogeneous teams*—teams where members share similar characteristics. It is harder to manage relationships among the members of more *heterogeneous teams*—where members are more dissimilar to one another. As team diversity increases, so does the complexity of members’ interpersonal relationships. But the potential complications of membership diversity also come with special performance opportunities. When heterogeneous teams are well managed, the variety of ideas, perspectives, and experiences within them can be a valuable problem solving and performance asset.

Team diversity represents the differences in values, personalities, experiences, demographics, and cultures among members.

Resources and Setting

The available resources and organizational setting can influence how well team members use and pool their talents to accomplish team tasks. Teams function best when members have good information, material resources, technology, organization structures, and rewards. The physical work space also is critical, and the physical plant spaces of many organizations are being

architecturally designed to directly facilitate teamwork. At SEI Investments, employees work in a large, open space without cubicles or space dividers; each has a private set of office furniture and fixtures—all of it on wheels. All of the technology that employees use easily plugs and unplugs from suspended power beams that run overhead. This makes it easy for project teams to convene and disband as needed, and for people to meet and communicate during the ebb and flow of daily work.³⁸

Nature of the Task

The nature of the tasks teams are responsible for not only sets standards for the talents needed by team members, it also affects how they work together. Clearly defined tasks are easier to deal with. Complex tasks require a lot more of members in terms of information sharing and coordinated action.³⁹ The next time you fly, check out the ground crews. You should notice some similarities between them and NASCAR pit crews. If you fly United Airlines, in fact, there's a chance that the members of the ramp crews have been through "Pit Crew U." United is among the many organizations sending employees to Pit Instruction & Training in Mooresville, North Carolina. At this facility, where NASCAR racing crews train, United's ramp workers learn to work intensely and under pressure while meeting the goals of teamwork, safety, and job preparedness. Teams participate in the training at the Mooresville facility to achieve better teamwork to reduce aircraft delays and service problems.⁴⁰

Team Size

Team size affects how well team members work together, handle disagreements, and make decisions. Having an odd numbers of members, such as in juries, helps prevent "ties" when votes need to be taken. And importantly, the number of potential interactions among team members increases geometrically as teams get bigger. Large team size creates communication and relationship problems for members and leaders. It's also easier for individuals to hide and engage in social loafing in larger teams.

The general conclusions from social science research are that very small teams—four members or fewer—may be dominated by one or two strong characters. Six- to eight-member teams are probably best for creative problem solving because their members are better able to form trusting relationships and function more like families. When teams get larger than this, the added size and complexity can be difficult to manage.⁴¹ Amazon.com's founder and CEO Jeff Bezos is a great fan of teams. But he also has a simple rule when it comes to sizing the firm's product development teams: No team should be larger than two pizzas can feed.⁴² Have you ever been on a team that was too large? How did the members interact?

Stages of Team Development

Although having the right inputs is critical, it doesn't guarantee team effectiveness. **Team process** also plays an important role. This is the way that the members of a team actually

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work together as they transform inputs into output. Also called *group dynamics*, the process aspects of any group or team include how members develop norms and cohesiveness, share roles, make decisions, communicate with one another, and handle conflicts.⁴³ Importantly,

teams experience different process challenges as they pass through the stages of team development—forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.⁴⁴

Team process is the way team members work together to accomplish tasks.

Forming Stage

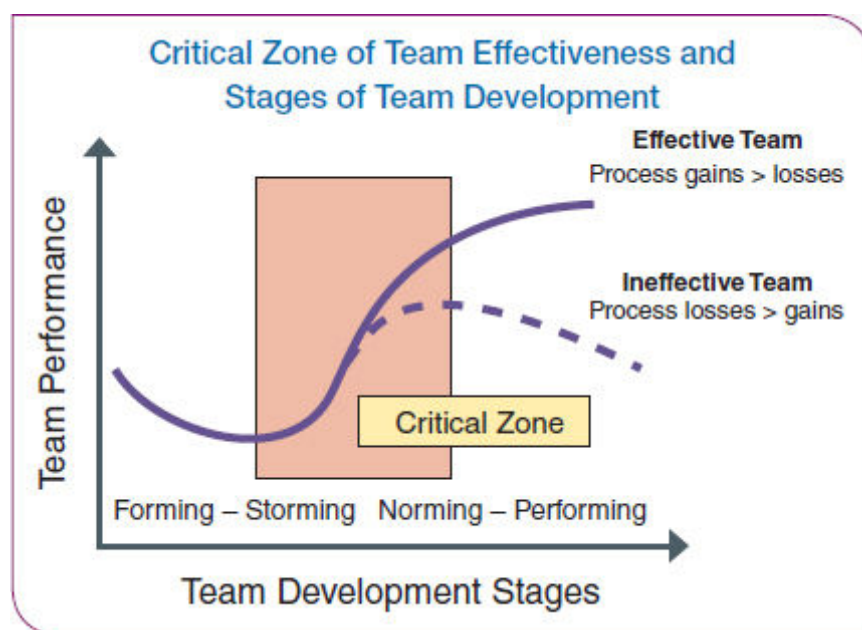
The forming stage of team development involves the first entry of individual members into a team. This is a time of initial task orientation and interpersonal testing. When people first come together, they ask questions: “What can or does this team offer me?” “What will I be asked to contribute?” “Can my needs be met while my efforts serve the task needs of the team?”

In the forming stage individuals begin to identify with other members and with the team itself. They are concerned about getting acquainted, establishing relationships, discovering what behavior is acceptable, and learning how others perceive the team’s task. This may also be a time when some members rely on others who appear “powerful” or especially “knowledgeable.” Such things as prior experience with team members in other contexts and personal impressions of organization culture, goals, and practices may affect emerging relationships between members. Difficulties in the forming stage tend to be greater in more culturally and demographically diverse teams.

Storming Stage

The storming stage is a period of high emotionality and can be the most difficult stage to pass through successfully. Tensions often emerge over tasks and interpersonal concerns. There may be periods of outright hostility and infighting. Coalitions or cliques may form around personalities or interests. Subgroups may form around faultlines defined by areas of agreement and disagreement. Conflict also may develop as members compete to impose their preferences on other members and to become influential.

Important changes occur in the storming stage as task agendas become clarified and members begin to understand one another’s styles. Attention begins to shift toward obstacles that stand in the way of task accomplishment. Efforts are made to find ways to meet team goals while also satisfying members’ individual needs. The storming stage is part of a “critical zone” in team development, where successes create long-term gains while failures create long-lasting problems.



Norming Stage

It is in the norming stage that team members begin to cooperate with one another. Shared rules of conduct emerge and the team develops a sense of leadership as each member starts to occupy and fulfill key roles. Interpersonal hostilities start to diminish and harmony is emphasized, but minority viewpoints may still be discouraged.

The norming stage also is part of the critical zone of team development. As members develop initial feelings of closeness, a division of labor, and shared expectations, this helps protect the team from disintegration. In fact, holding the team together may seem more important than accomplishing important tasks.

Performing Stage

Teams in the performing stage are more mature, organized, and well-functioning. They score high on the criteria of team maturity shown in [Figure 17.3](#).⁴⁵ Performing is a stage of integration in which team members are able to deal in creative ways with complex tasks and interpersonal conflicts. The team operates with a clear and stable structure, and members are motivated by team goals. The primary challenges in the performing stage are to continue to refine how the team operates and build relationships to keep everyone working well together as an integrated unit.

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Adjourning Stage

The final stage of team development is adjourning, when team members prepare to achieve closure and disband. Temporary committees, task forces, and project teams should disband with a sense that important goals have been accomplished. This can be an emotional period after team members have worked together intensely for a period of time. Adjourning is a time when it is important to acknowledge everyone's contributions, praise them, and celebrate the team's success. A team ideally disbands with everyone feeling they would like to work with one another again in the future.

Norms and Cohesiveness

A **norm** is a behavioral expectation of team members.⁴⁶ It is a "rule" or "standard" that guides behavior. Typical team norms relate to such things as helpfulness, participation, timeliness, work quality, creativity and innovation. A team's performance norm is critical, as it defines the level of work effort and performance that members are expected to contribute. Work groups and teams with positive performance norms are more successful accomplishing task objectives than are teams with negative performance norms.

A **norm** is a behavioral expectation, rule, or standard to be followed by team members.

	Very poor			Very good	
1. Trust among members	1	2	3	4	5
2. Feedback mechanisms	1	2	3	4	5
3. Open communications	1	2	3	4	5
4. Approach to decisions	1	2	3	4	5
5. Leadership sharing	1	2	3	4	5
6. Acceptance of goals	1	2	3	4	5
7. Valuing diversity	1	2	3	4	5
8. Member cohesiveness	1	2	3	4	5
9. Support for each other	1	2	3	4	5
10. Performance norms	1	2	3	4	5

FIGURE 17.3 Criteria for assessing the maturity of a team.

Managing Team Norms

Team leaders should help and encourage members to develop positive norms. During the forming and storming stages of development, for example, norms relating to expected attendance and levels of commitment are important. By the time the performing stage is reached, norms relating to adaptability and change become relevant. Here are some things leaders can do to help their teams build positive norms:⁴⁷

How to build positive team norms

- Act as a positive role model.
- Reinforce desired behaviors with rewards.
- Control results by performance reviews and regular feedback.
- Train and orient new members to adopt desired behaviors.
- Recruit and select new members who exhibit desired behaviors.
- Hold regular meetings to discuss progress and ways of improving.
- Use team decision-making methods to reach agreement.

One normative issue of growing research interest is the extent to which members of teams display virtuousness and share a commitment to moral behavior. The work of scholar Kim Cameron, for example, discusses **team virtuousness** in respect to these five norms of moral behavior.⁴⁸ *Optimism*—Team members are expected to strive for success even when experiencing setbacks. *Forgiveness*—Team members are expected to forgive one another's mistakes and avoid assigning blame. *Trust*—Team members are expected to be courteous with one another and interact in respectful, trusting ways. *Compassion*—Team members are

expected to help and support one another and to show kindness in difficult times. *Integrity*—Team members are expected to be honest in what they do and say while working together.

Team virtuousness indicates the extent to which members adopt norms that encourage shared commitments to moral behavior.

Managing Team Cohesiveness

Team members vary in their adherence to established group norms. Conformity to norms is largely determined by the strength of team **cohesiveness**, the degree to which members are attracted to and motivated to remain part of a team.⁴⁹ Members of teams that are highly cohesive value their membership and strive to maintain positive relationships with

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other team members. Because of this, they tend to conform to team norms. In the extreme, violation of a norm on a highly cohesive team can result in a member being expelled or socially ostracized.

Cohesiveness is the degree to which members are attracted to and motivated to remain part of a team.

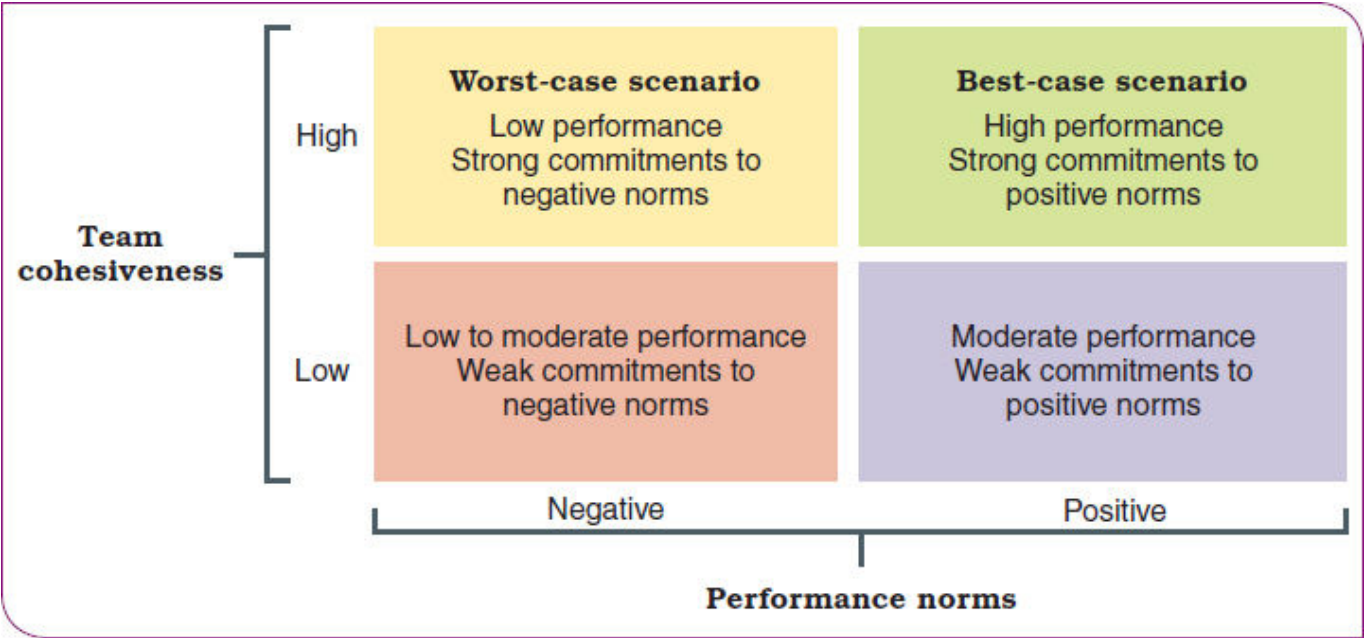


FIGURE 17.4 How cohesiveness and norms influence team performance.

[Figure 17.4](#) shows the power of cohesiveness. The “best-case” scenario is a team with high cohesiveness and a high performance norm. Strong conformity to norms by members of “high-high” teams is likely to have a beneficial effect on team performance. Contrast this with the “worst-case” scenario of high cohesiveness and a low performance norm. Members of “high-low” teams conform to the low performance norm and restrict their work efforts in order to adhere to the norm.

We’ve already discussed ways to build positive norms. But, the implications of [Figure 17.4](#) suggest that managers also must be good at building high levels of cohesiveness as well. This can be done in the following ways:

How to increase team cohesiveness

- Create agreement on team goals.
- Reward team rather than individual results.
- Increase membership homogeneity.
- Increase interactions among members.
- Decrease team size.
- Introduce competition with other teams.
- Provide physical isolation from other teams.

Task and Maintenance Roles

Research on the social psychology of collectives such as groups and teams identifies two types of roles or activities that are essential if members are to work well together.⁵⁰ **Task activities** contribute directly to the team's performance purpose, while **maintenance activities** support the emotional life of the team as an ongoing social system.

A **task activity** is an action taken by a team member that directly contributes to the team's performance purpose.

A **maintenance activity** is an action taken by a team member that supports the emotional life of the team.

Although the team leader or supervisor should give these activities special attention, the responsibility for task and maintenance activities also should be shared and distributed among all team members. Anyone can help lead a team by acting in ways that satisfy these needs. The concept of **distributed leadership** in teams makes every member continually responsible for both recognizing when task or maintenance activities are needed, and also taking actions to provide them.

Distributed leadership is when all members of a team contribute helpful task and maintenance behaviors.

Leading through task activities involves making an effort to define and solve problems, and to advance work activities toward performance results. Without the relevant task activities such as initiating agendas, sharing information, and others shown in [Figure 17.5](#), teams have difficulty accomplishing their objectives. *Leading through maintenance activities*, by contrast, helps strengthen the team as a social system. When maintenance activities such

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as gatekeeping, encouraging others, and reducing tensions are performed, good interpersonal and working relationships are achieved, increasing the probability that the team will stay together over the longer term.

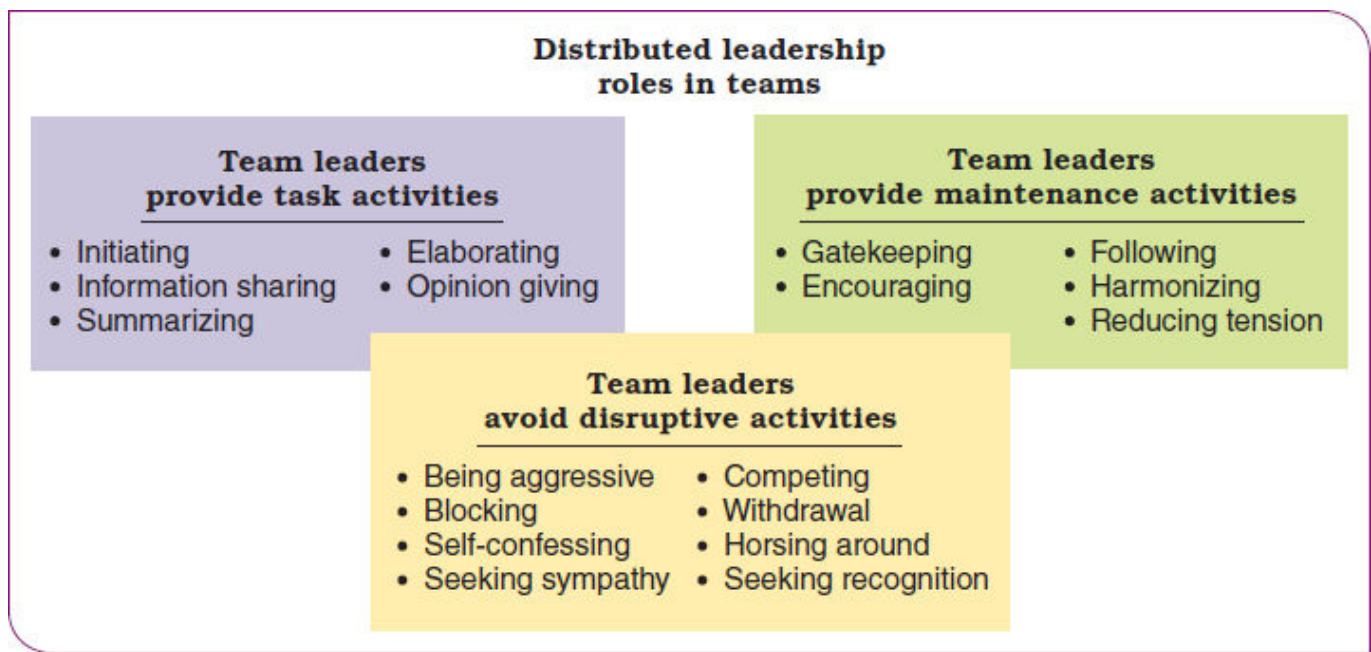


FIGURE 17.5 Distributed leadership helps teams meet task and maintenance needs.

Both team task and maintenance activities stand in distinct contrast to the **disruptive activities** described in [Figure 17.5](#). Activities such as showing incivility toward other members, withdrawing from discussions, and fooling around are self-serving and detract from, rather than enhance, team effectiveness. Unfortunately, very few teams are immune to dysfunctional behavior. Every team member shares in the responsibility for minimizing its occurrence.

Disruptive activities are self-serving behaviors that interfere with team effectiveness.

Communication Networks

There is considerable research on the team interaction patterns and communication networks shown in [Figure 17.6](#).⁵¹ When team members must interact intensively and work closely together on complex tasks, this need is best met by a **decentralized communication network**. Sometimes called the *all-channel or star communication network*, this pattern of interaction is where all members communicate directly with one another. At other times

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team members can work on tasks independently, with the required work being divided among them. This creates a **centralized communication network**, sometimes called a *wheel or chain communication structure*. In this pattern of interaction, activities are coordinated and results pooled by a central point of control.

A **decentralized communication network** allows all members to communicate directly with one another.

In a **centralized communication network**, communication flows only between individual members and a hub, or center point.

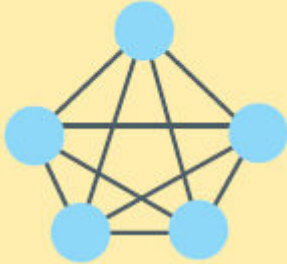
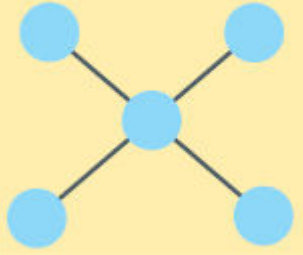
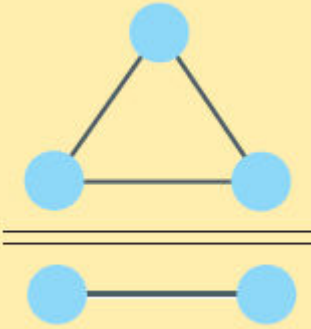
Pattern	Diagram	Characteristics
Interacting Group Decentralized communication network		High interdependency around a common task Best at complex tasks
Co-acting Group Centralized communication network		Independent individual efforts on behalf of common task Best at simple tasks
Counteracting Group Restricted communication network		Subgroups in disagreement with one another Slow task accomplishment

FIGURE 17.6 Interaction patterns and communication networks in teams.

When teams are composed of subgroups experiencing issue-specific disagreements, such as a temporary debate over the best way to achieve a goal, the resulting interaction pattern often involves a **restricted communication network**. Here, polarized subgroups contest one another and may even engage in conflict. Communication between subgroups is limited and biased, with negative consequences for group process and effectiveness.

In a **restricted communication network**, subgroups have limited communication with one another.

The best teams use each of these communication networks, but they use them in the right ways and at the right times. Centralized communication networks seem to work better on simple tasks.⁵² These tasks lend themselves to more centralized control because they require little creativity, information processing, problem solving, or collaborative effort. The reverse is true for more complex tasks, for which interacting groups perform better. Decentralized communication networks support the more intense interactions and information sharing required to perform complicated tasks. Even conflicting groups can be useful. When teams get complacent, the conflict that emerges from them can be a source of creativity and critical evaluation. But when these subgroups stop

short term.

insight> LEARN ABOUT YOURSELF

> *Sports teams whose members play together the longest win more because the players get to know each other's moves and playing tendencies.*

Don't Short Your Team Contributions

Positive **team contributions** are things that members do to help their team succeed at their tasks and help one another enjoy the experience of being on the team.

Scene—Hospital operating room: Scholars notice that heart surgeons have lower death rates for similar procedures performed in hospitals where they do more operations than in hospitals where they do fewer operations.

Why? Researchers say the operations are more likely to be successful because the doctors in the better hospitals spend more time working together with members of their surgical teams. It's not only the surgeon's skills that count, they say "The skills of the team, and of the organization, matter." The ability to practice together increases how effectively the skills of the members of the surgical team can be integrated with one another. Practice increases the potency of team contributions.

Scene—NBA basketball court: Scholars find that basketball teams win more games the longer the players have been together.

Why? Researchers claim it's a "teamwork effect." Sports teams whose members have played together the longest tend to win more games because the players get to know each other's moves and playing tendencies. Players develop a sense, over time, of what their teammates are thinking and where they will be on the court before they get there. Knowledge of other team members increases the benefits of team contributions.

A large part of your career success will depend on how well you work in and lead teams. Take a look at the list of "must-have" team skills presented here. Do you have the skills portfolio and personal commitment to make truly valuable team contributions?

"Must Have" Team Skills

- Encouraging and motivating others
- Accepting suggestions
- Listening to different points of view
- Communicating information and ideas
- Persuading others to cooperate
- Resolving and negotiating conflict
- Building consensus
- Fulfilling commitments
- Avoiding disruptive acts and words

GET TO KNOW YOURSELF BETTER

Have a serious conversation with others who know and work with you about your performance as a team member and team leader. What do you expect that

they'll say? Ask for suggestions on how you could improve your team contributions. Prepare a short presentation to a potential employer describing your team skills. Write a set of notes on how you will describe yourself and what examples you will give to support your potential as a team leader and member.

Learning Check 3

TAKEAWAYQUESTION 3 How do teams work?

BE SURE YOU CAN • define team *effectiveness* • identify inputs that influence effectiveness • discuss how membership diversity influences team effectiveness • list five stages of group development • define *group norm* and list ways to build positive group norms • define *cohesiveness* and list ways to increase group cohesion • explain how norms and cohesiveness influence team performance • differentiate between task, maintenance, and disruptive activities • describe the use of decentralized and centralized communication networks

Decision Making in Teams

TAKEAWAY 4 How do teams make decisions?

LEARN MORE ABOUT | Ways teams make decisions • Advantages and disadvantages of team decisions
Groupthink • Creative team decision making

Decision making, the process of making choices among alternative possible courses of action, is one of the most important processes that occur in groups and teams. The best teams will use a variety of decision-making methods over time as they face different kinds

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of problems.⁵³ But as with other aspects of teamwork, decision making also can be challenging.⁵⁴ Edgar Schein, a respected scholar and consultant, says all this can be better understood when we recognize that teams use at least six methods to make decisions: lack of response, authority rule, minority rule, majority rule, consensus, and unanimity.⁵⁵

Decision making is the process of making choices among alternative possible courses of action.

wisdom> LEARN FROM ROLE MODELS

> If two pizzas aren't enough to feed a team, it's too big.

Amazon's Jeff Bezos Feeds Innovation with Two-Pizza Teams



Ted S. Warren/AP Photos

[Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)'s founder and CEO Jeff Bezos is one of America's top businesspersons and a technology visionary. He's also a great fan of teams. Bezos coined a simple rule when it comes to sizing the firm's product development teams: If two pizzas aren't enough to feed a team, it's too big.

Don't expect to spot a stereotyped corporate CEO in Jeff Bezos. His standard office attire is still blue jeans and a blue-collared shirt. But, this attire comes with a unique personality and a great business mind. If you go to [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) and click on the "Gold Box" at the top, you'll be tuning in to Bezos's vision. It's a place for special deals, lasting only an hour and offering everything from a power tool to a new pair of shoes. If you join Amazon Prime and "One-Click" your way to free shipping and a hassle-free checkout, you're benefiting from his vision as well. And, of course, there's also the Kindle. Not only has it become Amazon's best-selling product ever, but it also made electronic books an everyday reality—one that competitors have been racing to take advantage of.

Amazon's innovations don't just come out of the blue. They're part and parcel of the management philosophy Bezos has instilled at the firm. And teams are a central ingredient in the innovation process. Bezos calls Amazon's small two-pizza teams "innovation engines," betting that they'll help fight creeping bureaucracy as the company grows larger and more complex.

FIND THE INSPIRATION

Is Bezos on to a great management lesson with his notion of the two-pizza team? What difference does team size make in your experience? Can you come up with an example of a team with over a dozen members that performed really well? If so, how can you explain its success? On the other hand, can a team be too small? What example can you give of a team that would have done better if it was just a little bigger?

Ways Teams Make Decisions

In *decision by lack of response*, one idea after another is suggested without any discussion taking place. When the team finally accepts an idea, all others have been bypassed by simple

lack of response rather than by critical evaluation. The last alternative is chosen by default.

In *decision by authority rule*, the leader, manager, committee head, or other authority figure makes a decision for the team. This can be done with or without discussion and is very time-efficient. Whether the decision ultimately is good or bad, however, depends on whether the authority figure has the necessary information and expertise, and on how well this approach is accepted by other team members.

In *decision by minority rule*, two or three people are able to dominate or “railroad” the team into making a decision that they prefer. This often is done by providing a suggestion and then forcing quick agreement by challenging the team with such statements as “Does anyone object? No? Well, let’s go ahead then.”

One of the most common things teams do, particularly when signs of disagreement emerge, is to take a vote and arrive at a *decision by majority rule*. Although this is broadly consistent with the democratic political process, it has some potential problems. The very act of voting can create coalitions as some people become “winners” and others “losers.” Those in the minority—the “losers”—may feel left out or discarded without having had a fair say. They may be unenthusiastic about implementing the decision of the “majority,” and lingering resentments may impair future team effectiveness. Such possibilities are well illustrated in the political arena, where candidates receiving only small and controversial victory margins end up struggling against entrenched opposition from the losing party.

Teams often are encouraged to achieve *decision by consensus*. This is where full discussion leads to one alternative being favored by most members, and the other members agree to support it. When a consensus is reached, even those who may have opposed the decision know that their views have been heard by everyone involved. Consensus does not require unanimous support, but it does require that members be able to argue, engage in reasonable conflict, and still get along with and respect one another.⁵⁶ As pointed out in the nearby box, true consensus occurs only when any dissenting members have been able to speak their mind and know they’ve been heard.⁵⁷

How to Achieve Consensus

1. Don’t argue blindly; consider others’ reactions to your points.
2. Don’t change your mind just to reach quick agreement.
3. Avoid conflict reduction by voting, coin tossing, or bargaining.
4. Keep everyone involved in the decision process.
5. Allow disagreements to surface so that issues can be deliberated over.
6. Don’t focus on winning versus losing; seek acceptable alternatives.
7. Discuss assumptions, listen carefully, and encourage members’ inputs.

A *decision by unanimity* may be the ideal state of affairs. “Unanimity” means that all team members agree on the course of action to be taken. This is a logically perfect method, but it also is extremely difficult to achieve in practice. One of the reasons that teams sometimes turn to authority decisions, majority voting, or even minority decisions is the difficulty of managing team processes to achieve consensus or unanimity.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Team Decisions

When teams take time to make decisions by consensus or unanimity, they gain special advantages over teams relying more on individual or minority decision methods.⁵⁸ The process of making a true team decision increases the availability of useful information, knowledge, and expertise. It expands the number of action alternatives teams examine, and helps to avoid bad decisions that emerge through tunnel vision and the consideration of only one

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or a few options. Team decisions also increase members' understanding and acceptance. This helps to build members' commitment to work hard to implement decisions the team has made together.

Issues&Trends

When Teams Stand Up, Decisions Speed Up



Cultura Creative/Alamy

Did you ever wonder what it would take to move decisions along a lot faster in a team meeting? One solution is simple: Take away the seats. At the software firm Atomic Object, seats are out and speed is in. At the regular team meeting that starts each workday, every one stands up. Meetings also have to be on time and are expected to stay on task; no playing Angry Birds or chatting. Even tables are out at many Atomic Object meetings. A vice president declares “They make it too easy to lean or rest laptops.” Stand-up meetings are popular in the tech industry, where some call them “agile meetings.” At Atomic Object, agile they are; the typical meeting lasts less than five minutes.

The potential disadvantages of team decision making trace largely to the difficulties with group processes. It can be hard to reach agreement when many people are trying to make a team decision. There may be social pressure to conform and even minority domination, where some members feel forced or “railroaded” into accepting a decision advocated by one vocal individual or small coalition. The time required to make team decisions also can sometimes be a real

disadvantage. As more people are involved in the dialogue and discussion, decision making takes longer. This added time may be costly, even prohibitively so under certain circumstances.

Groupthink

One of the potential downsides of team decision making is what psychologist Irving Janis called **groupthink**, the tendency for highly cohesive teams to lose their critical evaluative capabilities.⁵⁹ Although it may seem counterintuitive, a high level of cohesiveness can be a disadvantage if strong feelings of team loyalty make it hard for members to criticize and evaluate one another's ideas and suggestions objectively.

Groupthink is a tendency for highly cohesive teams to lose their evaluative capabilities.

Members of very cohesive teams may feel so strongly about the group that they won't say or do anything that might harm it. They end up publicly agreeing with actual or suggested courses of action about which they have serious private, unspoken doubts or objections. Groupthink occurs as the desire to hold the team together and avoid disagreements results in poor decisions.

Janis suggests that groupthink played a role in well-known historical disasters such as the lack of preparedness of U.S. naval forces for the Japanese attack on Pearl

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Harbor, the Bay of Pigs invasion under President Kennedy, the many roads that led to the United States' difficulties in the Vietnam War, and the space shuttle *Challenger* explosion. But he also says that when the groupthink symptoms listed in the nearby box are spotted, managers and team leaders can prevent them from causing too much harm if they act proactively.

Symptoms of Groupthink

Illusions of invulnerability—Members assume that the team is too good for criticism or is beyond attack.

Rationalizing unpleasant and disconfirming data—Members refuse to accept contradictory data or to thoroughly consider alternatives.

Belief in inherent group morality—Members act as though the group is inherently right and above reproach.

Stereotyping competitors as weak, evil, and stupid—Members refuse to look realistically at other groups.

Applying direct pressure to deviants to conform to group wishes—Members refuse to tolerate anyone who suggests the team may be wrong.

Self-censorship by members—Members refuse to communicate personal concerns to the whole team.

Illusions of unanimity—Members accept consensus prematurely, without testing its completeness.

Mind guarding—Members protect the team from hearing disturbing ideas or outside viewpoints.

When you are leading or are part of a team heading toward groupthink, don't assume there's no way out. Janis noted, for example, that after suffering the Bay of Pigs fiasco, President Kennedy approached the Cuban missile crisis quite differently. He purposely did not attend some cabinet discussions and allowed the group to deliberate without him. His absence helped the cabinet members talk more openly and to be less inclined to try and say things that were consistent with his own thinking. When a decision was finally reached, the crisis was successfully resolved.

In addition to having the leader stay absent for some team discussions, Janis has other advice on how to get a team that is moving toward groupthink back on track. You can assign one member to act as a critical evaluator or "devil's advocate" during each meeting. Subgroups can be assigned to work on issues and then share their findings with the team as a whole. Outsiders can be brought in to observe and participate in team meetings and offer their advice and viewpoints on both team processes and tentative decisions. The team can also hold a "second chance" meeting after an initial decision is made to review, change, or even cancel the decision. With actions like these available, there's no reason to let groupthink lead a team down the wrong pathways.

Creativity in Team Decision Making

When team creativity is needed in special situations, managers shouldn't hesitate to use time-tested brainstorming and nominal group techniques. Both techniques can be used in face-to-face or in virtual team settings.

Classic **brainstorming** usually asks members to follow these strict guidelines. *Don't criticize each other*—withhold judging or evaluating ideas as they are being presented. *Welcome "freewheeling"*—the wilder or more radical the idea, the better. *Go for quantity*—the more ideas generated, the greater the likelihood that one or more will be outstanding. *Keep building on one another's ideas*—don't hesitate to piggyback and tweak one or more existing ideas into new forms.

Brainstorming engages group members in an open, spontaneous discussion of problems and ideas.

At the Aloft Group, Inc., a small advertising firm in Newburyport, Massachusetts, President Matt Bowen says brainstorming works best if he specifies the goal—ideally in a sentence that he distributes a day or two ahead of the session. He limits the brainstorming session to an hour, and keeps the group small—ideally five to seven members. He allows no criticism—there is no such thing as a "bad" idea. He also encourages everyone to build on one another's ideas and is sure to follow up by implementing something from the brainstorming session.⁶⁰

In situations where brainstorming won't work, such as in a situation prone to intense disagreement and interpersonal conflicts, an approach known as the **nominal group technique** can sometimes be useful.⁶¹ It uses a highly structured meeting agenda that allows everyone to contribute ideas without the interference of evaluative comments by others. Participants are first asked to work alone and respond in writing with possible solutions to a stated problem. Ideas are then shared in round-robin fashion without any criticism or discussion, and all ideas are recorded as they are presented. Ideas are next discussed and clarified in another round-robin sequence, with no evaluative comments allowed. Finally, members individually and silently follow a written voting procedure that ranks all alternatives in priority order.

The **nominal group technique** structures interaction among team members discussing problems and ideas.

TAKEAWAYQUESTION 4 How do teams make decisions?

Be sure you can • illustrate how groups make decisions by authority rule, minority rule, majority rule, consensus, and unanimity • list advantages and disadvantages of group decision making • define *groupthink* and identify its symptoms • illustrate how brainstorming and the nominal group technique can improve creativity in team decision making

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Management Learning Review

Get Prepared for Quizzes and Exams

Summary

TAKEAWAYQUESTION 1

What are teams and how do they fit in organizations?

- A team is a collection of people working together interdependently to accomplish a common goal.
- Teams help organizations perform through synergy—the creation of a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.
- Teams help satisfy important needs for their members by providing sources of job support and social satisfactions.
- Social loafing and other problems can limit the performance of teams.
- Organizations operate as networks of formal and informal teams and groups.

FOR DISCUSSION Why do people often tolerate social loafers at work?

TAKEAWAYQUESTION 2

What are current trends in the use of teams?

- Committees and task forces are used to accomplish special tasks and projects.
- Cross-functional teams bring members together from different departments and help improve lateral relations and integration in organizations.
- New developments in information technology are making virtual teams commonplace at work, but virtual teams also pose special management challenges.
- Self-managing teams are changing organizations, as team members perform many tasks previously done by their supervisors.
- Team building engages members in a process of assessment and action planning to improve teamwork and future performance.

FOR DISCUSSION What are some of the things that virtual teams probably can't do as well as face-to-face teams?

TAKEAWAYQUESTION 3

How do teams work?

- An effective team achieves high levels of task performance, member satisfaction, and team viability.
- Important team inputs include the organizational setting, nature of the task, size, and membership characteristics.
- A team matures through various stages of development, including forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.
- Norms are the standards or rules of conduct that influence team members' behavior; cohesion is the attractiveness of the team to its members.
- In highly cohesive teams, members tend to conform to norms; the best situation is a team with positive performance norms and high cohesiveness.
- Distributed leadership occurs as members share in meeting a team's task and maintenance needs.
- Effective teams make use of alternative communication structures, such as centralized and decentralized networks, to best complete tasks with distinct communication requirements.

FOR DISCUSSION What can be done if a team gets trapped in the storming stage of group development?

TAKEAWAYQUESTION 4

How do teams make decisions?

- Teams can make decisions by lack of response, authority rule, minority rule, majority rule, consensus, and unanimity.
- Although group decisions often make more information available for problem solving and generate more understanding and commitment, they are slower than individual decisions and may involve social pressures to conform.
- Groupthink is the tendency for members of highly cohesive teams to lose their critical evaluative capabilities and make poor decisions.
- Techniques for improving creativity in teams include brainstorming and the nominal group technique.

FOR DISCUSSION Is it possible that groupthink doesn't only occur when groups are highly cohesive, but also when they are pre-cohesive?

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Self-Test 17

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. When a group of people is able to achieve more than what its members could by working individually, this is called _____.

- a. social loafing**
 - b. consensus**
 - c. viability**
 - d. synergy**
- 2.** One of the recommended strategies for dealing with a group member who engages in social loafing is to _____.
- a. redefine tasks to make individual contributions more visible**
 - b. ask another member to encourage this person to work harder**
 - c. give the person extra rewards and hope he or she will feel guilty**
 - d. just forget about it**
- 3.** In an organization operating with self-managing teams, the traditional role of _____ is replaced by the role of team leader.
- a. chief executive officer**
 - b. first-line supervisor**
 - c. middle manager**
 - d. general manager**
- 4.** An effective team is defined as one that achieves high levels of task performance, member satisfaction, and _____.
- a. resource efficiency**
 - b. future viability**
 - c. consensus**
 - d. creativity**
- 5.** In the open-systems model of teams, the _____ is an important input factor.
- a. communication network**
 - b. decision-making method**
 - c. performance norm**
 - d. set of membership characteristics**
- 6.** The team effectiveness equation states the following: Team effectiveness = Quality of inputs + (_____ – Process losses).
- a. Process gains**
 - b. Leadership impact**
 - c. Membership ability**
 - d. Problem complexity**
- 7.** A basic rule of team dynamics states that the greater the _____ in a team, the greater the conformity to norms.
- a. membership diversity**
 - b. cohesiveness**
 - c. task structure**

d. competition among members

- 8.** Members of a team tend to start to get coordinated and comfortable with one another in the _____ stage of team development.
- a.** forming
 - b.** norming
 - c.** performing
 - d.** adjourning
- 9.** One way for a manager to build positive norms within a team is to _____.
- a.** act as a positive role model
 - b.** increase group size
 - c.** introduce groupthink
 - d.** isolate the team
- 10.** To increase the cohesiveness of a group, a manager would be best off _____.
- a.** starting competition with other groups
 - b.** increasing the group size
 - c.** acting as a positive role model
 - d.** introducing a new member
- 11.** Groupthink is most likely to occur in teams that are _____.
- a.** large in size
 - b.** diverse in membership
 - c.** high-performing
 - d.** highly cohesive
- 12.** A team member who does a good job at summarizing discussion, offering new ideas, and clarifying points made by others is providing leadership by contributing _____ activities to the group process.
- a.** required
 - b.** task
 - c.** disruptive
 - d.** maintenance
- 13.** A _____ decision is one in which all members agree on the course of action to be taken.
- a.** consensus
 - b.** unanimous
 - c.** majority
 - d.** nominal
- 14.** A team performing very creative and unstructured tasks is most likely to succeed using _____.

- a. a decentralized communication network
 - b. decisions by majority rule
 - c. decisions by minority rule
 - d. more task than maintenance activities
15. Which of the following approaches can help groups achieve creativity in situations where lots of interpersonal conflicts are likely to occur?
- a. nominal group technique
 - b. minority rule
 - c. consensus
 - d. brainstorming

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Short-Response Questions

- 16. How can a manager improve team effectiveness by modifying inputs?
- 17. What is the relationship among a team's cohesiveness, performance norms, and performance results?
- 18. How would a manager know that a team is suffering from groupthink (give two symptoms), and what could the manager do about it (give two responses)?
- 19. What makes a self-managing team different from a traditional work group?

Essay Question

- 20. Marcos Martinez has just been appointed manager of a production team operating the 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. shift in a large manufacturing firm. An experienced manager, Marcos is pleased that the team members really like and get along well with one another, but they also appear to be restricting their task outputs to the minimum acceptable levels. What could Marcos do to improve things in this situation, and why should he do them?

Management Skills & Competencies Make yourself valuable!

Evaluate Career Situations

What Would You Do?

1. New Task Force

It's time for the first meeting of the task force that you have been assigned to lead. This is a big opportunity, since it's the first time your supervisor has given you this level of responsibility. There are seven members of the task force, all of whom are your peers and co-workers. The task is to develop a proposal for increased use of flexible work schedules and telecommuting in the organization. What will your agenda be for the first meeting, and what opening statement will you make?

2. Declining Performance

You’ve been concerned for quite some time about a drop in the performance of your work team. Although everyone seems to like one another, the “numbers” in terms of measured daily performance are on the decline. It’s time to act. What will you look at, and why, to determine where and how steps might be taken to improve the effectiveness of the work team?

3. Groupthink Possibilities

The members of the executive compensation committee that you are chairing show a high level of cohesiveness. It’s obvious that they enjoy being part of the committee and are proud to be on the board of directors. But the committee is about to approve extraordinarily high bonuses for the CEO and five other senior executives. This is occurring at a time when executive pay is getting a lot of criticism from the press, unions, and the public at large. What can you do to make sure groupthink isn’t causing this committee to potentially make a bad decision? What clues might you use to determine whether groupthink is having an influence on what is taking place?

Reflect on the Self-Assessment

Team Leader Skills

Instructions

Consider your experience in groups and work teams while completing the following inventory. Rate yourself on each item using the following scale (circle the number that applies).⁶²

1 = Almost never

2 = Seldom

3 = Sometimes

4 = Usually

5 = Almost always

Question: “How do I behave in team leadership situations?”

1 2 3 4 5	1.	Facilitate communications with and among team members between team meetings.
1 2 3 4 5	2.	Provide feedback/coaching to individual team members on their performance.
1 2 3 4 5	3.	Encourage creative and “out-of-the-box” thinking.
1 2 3 4 5	4.	Continue to clarify stakeholder needs/expectations.
1 2 3 4 5	5.	Keep team members’ responsibilities and activities focused within the team’s objectives and goals.
1 2 3 4 5	6.	Organize and run effective and productive team meetings.
1 2 3 4 5	7.	Demonstrate integrity and personal commitment.
1 2 3 4 5	8.	Have excellent persuasive and influencing skills.
	9.	Respect and leverage the team’s cross-functional diversity.

1 2 3 4	
PRINTED BY: jromero0950@email.phoenix.edu.	
Printing is for personal private use only. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted without publisher's prior permission. Violation will be prosecuted.	10. Recognize and reward individual contributions to team performance. 11. Use the appropriate decision-making style for specific issues. 12. Facilitate and encourage border management with the team's key stakeholders. 13. Ensure that the team meets its commitments. 14. Bring team issues and problems to the team's attention and focus on constructive problem solving. 15. Provide a clear vision and direction for the team.

Assessment Scoring

This inventory measures seven dimensions of team leadership. Add your scores for the items next to each dimension below to get an indication of your potential strengths and issues.

Providing the Team

Developing People

Team Problem Solving and Decision Making

4, 12 Stakeholder Relations

5, 13 Team Performance

6, 14 Team Process

7, 8, 15 Providing Personal Leadership

Interpretation

The higher your score, the more confident you are on the particular skill and leadership capability. Consider giving this inventory to people who have worked with you in teams and have them rate you. Compare the results to your self-assessment. Also, remember it is doubtful that any one team leader is capable of exhibiting all of the skills listed. More and more, organizations are emphasizing teams that blend a variety of skills, rather than depending on the vision of the single, heroic leader figure. As long as the necessary leadership skills are represented within the membership of the team, it is more likely that the team will be healthy and achieve a high level of performance. Of course, the more skills you bring with you to team leadership situations, the better the team is likely to perform.

Contribute to the Class Exercise

Work Team Dynamics

Preparation

Think about your class work group, a work group you are involved in for another course, or any other group suggested by your instructor. Use this scale to indicate how often each of the following statements accurately reflects your experience in the group. [63](#)

- 1 All the time
- 2 Very often
- 3 Sometimes
- 4 Never happens

1. My ideas get a fair hearing.
2. I am encouraged to give innovative ideas and take risks.
3. Diverse opinions within the group are encouraged.
4. I have all the responsibility I want.
5. There is a lot of favoritism shown in the group.
6. Members trust one another to do their assigned work.
7. The group sets high standards of performance excellence.
8. People share and change jobs a lot in the group.
9. You can make mistakes and learn from them in this group.
10. This group has good operating rules.

Instructions

Form teams as assigned by your instructor. Ideally, this will be the group you have just rated. Have all members share their ratings, and then make one overall rating for the team as a whole. Circle the items for which there are the biggest differences of opinion. Discuss those items and try to determine what accounts for these differences. In general, the better a team scores on this instrument, the higher its creative potential. Make a list of the five most important things members believe they can do to help the team perform better. Nominate a spokesperson to summarize your discussion for the class as a whole.

Manage a Critical Incident

The Rejected Team Leader

You have been a team leader at a big-box electronics store for three years, and the team you supervise is great. Everyone is hard working, gets along really well, comes in early, stays late, helps one another, and gets the job done. The members go out together after work and are good friends with each other and with you. A week ago, your team was assigned exclusive responsibility for designing and setting up the upcoming product display for tablets and other mobile devices in an entire section of the store. Crystal—one of your team members—was especially excited about the project. She has been taking online courses at the local technical college and wants to move into advertising design as a career. Because the team works so well together, you had expected the whole process to go smoothly with a bunch of great display formats figured out for you to choose from. But by the end of the week, you'd only gotten one proposal from the team, and it wasn't very good. You talked to each team member individually. They all stood behind the design the team had submitted. They got mad at you for suggesting that they come up with another design, and wouldn't even listen to you. They wouldn't tell you how they came up with the design, how they figured things out, or share any information with you at all. Even though you are the supervisor, you are also a friend, so it was hard

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