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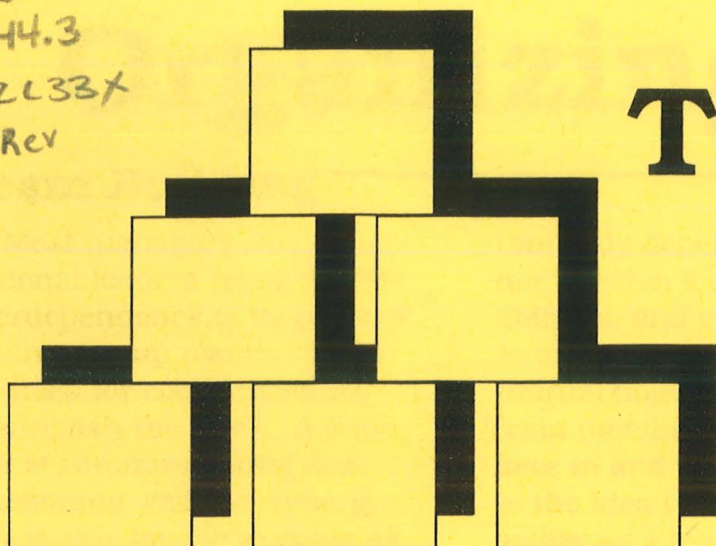
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Nebraska Cooperative Extension CC 351



Team Building

Organizing a Team

Increased Communication
Greater Trust
Creative Thinking
Greater Productivity
More Accomplishments

Arnold Bateman
June, 1990



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Organizing a Team

Team Building

Most managers and organizational leaders recognize the interdependence of employees or other group members and the need for cooperation to accomplish the work. A team that is communicating and functioning well has synergy; that is why people working as a team can achieve better results than individuals working alone. That does not mean, however, that productivity will automatically go up by putting a group of good performers together.

There are several conditions that must exist before an effective team can be developed:

1. The group must have a reason for working together that makes sense to the team members.
2. Team members must be

mutually dependent on one another's experience, abilities, and commitment in order to accomplish mutual objectives.

3. Team members must believe in and be committed to the idea that working together as a team is preferable to working alone, thus leading to more effective decisions and improved productivity.
4. The team must be accountable as a functioning unit within a larger organizational context.
5. Team members need to understand that they will be recognized (rewarded) for their team efforts and accomplishments.

Teams function more efficiently when members of the team recognize and follow

certain agreed-upon behaviors. These standards or norms are a basis for making decisions, for encouraging participation, for taking risks, and for rewarding behaviors that facilitate cooperation or resolution of conflict.

Norms are not intended to restrict the abilities of team members and organizations in achieving their objectives, but are to be established for the purpose of helping the individual and team function more effectively.

Some norms for effective group functioning might be:

- Before evaluating a member's contribution, others check their assumptions to ensure they have properly understood.
- Each person speaks on his or her own behalf and lets others speak for themselves.
- When the group is not working well together it devotes time to finding out why and makes the necessary adjustments.
- Conflict is inevitable but will be managed and dealt with positively.

The Resource/Skills Bank shown in Figure 1 can be a useful tool in assisting both the team leader and team members in allocating work responsibilities. Using this process can help in aligning work allocations with individual interests and skills. It

The basic purpose of team building is to provide a way whereby individuals or groups can come together in a learning setting to acquire interactive skills to accomplish the following tasks.

- To set goals and priorities that will facilitate accomplishing the team purpose.
- To analyze and/or allocate the way work is performed according to team members' roles, responsibilities, leadership abilities, personal skills, and technical knowledge.
- To analyze the team as a working unit by evaluating such processes as establishing norms, decision making, and communications.
- To examine working relationships among team members and parent organization.

can also be used as a tool for giving each team member a responsible task that will contribute to accomplishing the overall purposes of the team.

Characteristics of Team Members

Studies conducted by the American Management Association have found that an effective team member has a positive, encouraging attitude, is above average on the achievement scale, and has the necessary skills to make a contribution. An effective team member is friendly and flexible, is seen as a giver, and is not jealous of other team members and their accomplishments. An effective team member is tolerant of others, does not intimidate, and will not be intimidated by others.

People that are seen as superstars or overachievers

by other team members usually do not fit into a team environment very well because they are used to doing things by and for themselves. Underachievers who may be seen as unmotivated and habitually negative are frequently rejected by the team.

Productive Group Characteristics

When people working together as a team follow these steps, communication, trust, and productivity will greatly increase among team members:

- Team members listen and pay attention to one another.
- People discuss the subject at hand and are willing to work through conflict as opposed to avoidance of conflict.
- Everyone has a chance to state his or her views.

- Members know and use problem-solving steps.
- Members are clear about group decisions and are committed to them.
- Frequent feedback is given to help members stay focused on team goals.

Figure 2, Team Building Steps, helps to emphasize the importance of effective communication in organizing and developing teamwork. If the team leader and/or team members are lacking in effective communication skills, it will be difficult to establish real trust until team members feel comfortable in expressing their feelings, ideas, and concerns.

The lack of effective open communication among team members can lead to avoidance and/or oppression of conflict. When this happens, the team can lose its effectiveness as a group in draw-

RESOURCE/SKILLS BANK				
FOR				
(Team)			(Date Completed)	
MEMBER	INTERESTS	SKILLS	TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE	RESOURCES

Figure 1

ing upon the knowledge, experiences, and ideas of all team members in coming up with the best solutions for accomplishing the team objectives.

Team members need to understand that conflict is a part of every group and learning to manage it will lead to more productive, satisfied team members and a greater exchange of ideas.

Putting the Team Together

When building a team, (according to Ichok Adizer, a business consultant and graduate school professor in southern California) the leader should consider the basic skills needed by members of the group. Four types of people are needed. They are:

1. A producer. This person knows how to get the job done.
2. An administrator. He or she is able to plan and organize.
3. An entrepreneur. This individual has vision and creative problem-solving abilities.
4. An integrator. This person can take an individual goal and transform it into a group goal.

When organizing a team, one should try to assemble in the group individuals who possess one or more of each of these four qualities. The input of each is critical in achieving a productive, well-balanced team. The best

decisions come from teams in which everyone is committed to contributing and working together.

Role of Team Leader

In order for the team to effectively function and maintain good communica-

from those of a traditional manager. Key words for describing this leadership role are guiding, stimulating, coaching, and coordinating.

Guidance refers to the process of directing the discussion and providing structure for planning and action to take place.

Stimulation involves reinforcing productive team efforts, and checking and receiving feedback to determine if all team members are actively involved in the process.

Coaching may be done both one-on-one and in groups with other team members by giving feedback, asking if they are having problems, giving helpful suggestions, and recommending outside resources that can be helpful in alleviating the problem. Coaches do not repress conflict but manage it so that a constructive solution is found.

Coordinating will involve improving communication and feedback among team members through improving the work environment, controlling the operational climate, and in general, indirectly doing things that help to produce a cohesive, finely-tuned working team.

A successful team leader is skilled at dealing with feelings of people along with practical methods of effective problem solving. The leader

Team Building Steps

- Increased communications
- Leads to greater trust among team members
- Leads to greater exchange of ideas
- Leads to more creative thinking
- Leads to greater productivity
- Leads to better solutions
- Leads to more accomplishments by team members

FIGURE 2

tions with the parent organization, there needs to be a designated leader. The team leader may be appointed by management or selected by the team members from among the group.

This leadership role can be challenging in that the leader will need to provide structure and support while still being a team member. To accomplish this task, the leadership responsibilities must be viewed differently

needs to use a management approach that encourages team member participation in making decisions that affect the group.

The skills most needed by the team leader are: linking together individuals who can contribute, bringing clarity to objectives, building a climate that is both supportive and confronting, ensuring that work methods are satisfying and effective, and setting an environment that encourages and allows for the discussion of all relevant issues.

Team Members' Roles

The essential roles that a team member must perform may take some time to become part of his or her behavior, since much of their previous training and work experience has stressed competition and individual accomplishment. In a team situation, each member must be interdependent. In other words, every member needs the other members' expertise, experience, and energy to achieve mutual goals. Team member roles function in two ways:

- Building a harmonious group.
- Coordinating task accomplishments.

Consultants who have worked with developing cohesive work teams list four essential team roles in group situations. They include an involving role, a listening role, a supporting role and a

Essential Team Roles

Involving role. One initiates action. A team member may motivate others by getting them involved in an idea or problem. The involving role consists of asking questions of other members to "bring out" or stimulate each team member.

Listening role. A member listens actively (nodding, leaning forward), expressing that he/she is really hearing what is being said. Active listeners encourage group members to express themselves.

Supporting role. A team member gives an added dimension to good ideas by their support. By supporting and encouraging others, the team member strengthens confidence and trust.

Compromising role. One member gives up something for problem solving to take place. Compromising can lead to team productivity. It is a role that is necessary for cooperation and collaboration.

compromising role. They are positive, team-centered roles which keep a group moving toward creativity and problem solving.

Phases of a Team's Development

A team is a living entity. It progresses from early to mature phases, independent of the nature of the team or the task it must perform. One aspect of this development is the members' attitude or relationships, both within the team and with the team leader.

Judith D. Palmer in her chapter "For the Manager Who Must Build a Team," (Reddy and Jamison, 1988), refers to four phases of team development: "forming, storming, norming, and performing."

Forming is the orientation period. The team is not

sure what its task is and members are not well acquainted with each other, nor have they learned what sort of a team leader they have. Team members want to be told what to do. They tend to respond to the leader's requests and express negative feelings either very politely or privately.

During this first phase, the team leader needs to empower the members and assist them in establishing guidelines for accomplishing the task. One way to help do this is by soliciting team members' ideas by asking open-ended questions and complimenting them when appropriate. Using the Resource/Skills Bank in Figure 1 can be helpful in starting this process.

Storming is the phase when team members feel more comfortable expressing their opinions. They may

challenge the team leader's authority and recommendations. Some members may become dissatisfied and challenge not only what the team is to do and how it is doing it, but also the leader's role and style of leadership. As a team leader, one must not try to avoid this phase. A team that does not go through the storming phase will not learn how to deal with conflict. According to Palmer, "teams that never storm are passive, fragmented, and significantly less creative." Phase two is a sorting out period where each member begins to find his or her place as a team member. However, it should be noted that team members can and will change roles according to personal interests and team needs as circumstances change.

Norming is the third phase and builds on what was learned in phase two. Team members begin drawing upon their cumulative experiences for working out their problems and pulling together as a cohesive group. This process should result in the team establishing procedures for handling conflicts, decisions, and methods to accomplish the team projects.

During this process the team leader needs to continue with activities that empower team members, create trust, provide a vision of what the team can become, and teach decision-making and conflict management skills.

Performing is phase four and is where the payoff should come. In this phase the team has achieved some

harmony, defined its tasks, worked out its relationships, and begins to produce results. Leadership is provided by the team members best suited for the task at hand. Members have learned how to work together, manage conflict, and contribute their resources to accomplishing the team's purposes.

After reaching phase four the team leader needs to remain alert to the team's needs in skill development, conflict management, trust building, and improvement of attitudes. When changes occur that affect the team's task, membership, or other areas of concern, it is not uncommon for the team to repeat the four-phase cycle. However, the process should be much smoother after the first time around.

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