Your road to success

LEVEL 4 DYNAMIC AND COLLABORATIVE TEAMS

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Contents

Using your study guide

Welcome to the study guide for **Dynamic and Collaborative Teams,** designed to support those completing an ABE level 4 Diploma.

Below is an overview of the elements of learning and related key capabilities (taken from the published syllabus), designed to support learners to assess their own skillset in terms of employability and to develop their own personal development plans.

Element of learning	Key capabilities
Element 1: The nature of teams within modern organisations	• Ability to explain what teams are and how the nature of teams has changed over time. • Ability to explain how teams form and become effective. • Ability to identify the additional challenges teams face in modern organisations.
Element 2: The principles and benefits of effective team working	• Ability to explain the commercial and social benefits of effective team working. • Ability to recommend how collaborative working can be fostered.
Element 3: The principles of effective team management	• Ability to identify the advantages and limitations of different approaches to the management of teams. • Ability to recommend practical ways that team working should be managed to achieve team objectives.
Element 4: Why team working can become dysfunctional	• Ability to identify the main reasons why team working breaks down. • Ability to recommend practical ways that collaborative work can be re-established.
Element 5: Your own skills and team working traits	• Ability to analyse your own skills and team working traits and roles. • Ability to evaluate the actions you can take to minimise challenges of working as part of a team.

This study guide follows the order of the syllabus, which is the basis for your studies. Each chapter starts by listing the syllabus learning outcomes covered and the assessment criteria.

L4 descriptor

Knowledge descriptor (the holder…)	Skills descriptor (the holder can…)
• Has practical, theoretical or technical knowledge and understanding of a subject or field of work to address problems that are well defined but complex and non-routine. • Can analyse, interpret and evaluate relevant information and ideas. • Is aware of the nature and approximate scope of the area of study or work. • Has an informed awareness of different perspectives or approaches within the area of study or work	• Identify, adapt and use appropriate cognitive and practical skills to inform actions, and address problems that are complex and non-routine while normally fairly well-defined. • Review the effectiveness and appropriateness of methods, actions and results.

The study guide includes a number of features to enhance your studies:

'Over to you': activities for you to complete, using the space provided.

Case studies: realistic business scenarios to reinforce and test your understanding of what you have read.

'Revision on the go': use your phone camera to capture these key pieces of learning, then save them on your phone to use as revision notes.

Examples: illustrating points made in the text to show how it works in practice.

Tables, graphs and charts: to bring data to life.

Reading list: identifying resources for further study, including Emerald articles (which will be available in your online student resources).

Source/quotation information to cast further light on the subject from industry sources.

Highlighted words throughout and **glossary terms** at the end of the book.

Note

Website addresses current as at June 2017.

The Nature of Teams within Modern Organisations

Introduction

The business environment is becoming ever more global and, as a consequence, the workplace is changing. **Hierarchical** organisations are generally a thing of the past; structures are usually flatter and the people within them are often required to work **cross-functionally** and with people at other locations, rather than as part of one department based in the same office.

Modern organisations present additional challenges to **team work**, including flexible and **remote working**, operating across time-zones and embracing different working and cultural practices. While **diversity** generally improves team working it does require team members to show more open-mindedness on the part of all concerned to find the best solutions.

This chapter introduces you to the nature of teams within modern organisations and the difficulties associated with team working within different organisational structures.

Learning outcomes

On completing the chapter, you will be able to:

1   **Describe the nature of teams within modern organisations and the difficulties associated with team working within different organisational structures**

Assessment criteria

1   **Describe the nature of teams within modern organisations and the difficulties associated with team working within different organisational structures**

   1.1   Explain what teams are and how the nature of teams has changed as the structure and nature of organisations have changed in recent years

   1.2   Explain using relevant concepts and theories, how teams form and become effective; the common pitfalls, and how effective working can be established

   1.3   Identify the additional challenges and potential difficulties that teams face given the nature of modern organisations, including virtual environments

Level 4 Dynamic and Collaborative Teams

Background

Teams are an essential part of organisational life. Team performance can have a positive or negative impact on the overall performance of the organisation.

The world of work is rapidly changing and fast-moving owing to innovations and changes in the wider environment caused by political, economic, social and technological factors. This has increased the requirement for individuals to be able to work effectively within team structures in order to deliver objectives. Individual performance is affected by and affects those people with whom an individual has to **collaborate** with as part of their day-to-day working life.

> " *Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success* "
>
> *Henry Ford*

However, working in an effective team does not just happen by accident. There are many different factors that lead to a team being successful. If you can understand the nature of teams, different structures and challenging factors that impact the effectiveness of teams, it will enable you to pinpoint areas where you can contribute to team effectiveness.

✏️ OVER TO YOU

Activity 1: Self-interest versus team interest

Reflect on situations where you have worked with teams in the past. Can you think of any examples where individuals have put the team's interest before their own self-interest? Given your experience, can teams ever be truly effective? Give reasons for your answer.

1.1 What are teams and how have they changed?

Most work taking place within an organisational environment requires some form of collaboration between members of the organisation. Teams exist at all levels of the organisation, from the most senior to the most junior employees. Regardless of the work environment, teams enable work to be organised – usually by role or task. There are some particular characteristics by which teams can be identified and understood.

Differences between groups and team

A **team** is a group of people who are working together to achieve a common purpose. A **group** consists of people who depend on each other in order to complete a task or achieve a goal. Although it is difficult to find a definition that everyone agrees on, which clearly separates a group from a team, there are some differences. Teams are generally small, usually made up of four to six members who have been selected for a specific purpose, whereas groups are larger and the membership is elective. It is important to note that although all teams are groups, groups are not necessarily teams.

Teams, therefore, differ from groups because of member behaviour and the reason for an individual to be part of, and remain, a member of the group.

✏️ OVER TO YOU

Activity 2: Team composition

Thinking about your own experience of working in teams and as part of a group, how would you explain the differences between teams and groups?

Characteristics of effective teams

The formation of teams is a natural aspect of human organisation, however, developing a team which is effective does not just happen naturally. **Dysfunctional** teams are a common situation in any organisation. However, there are certain factors that contribute to team effectiveness. These include the characteristics shown in Table 1.

Size	Teams tend to be smaller than groups in size to ensure effective communication and co-ordination of work. The smaller size of teams also supports team cohesion, to reduce the likelihood of factions and infighting.
Complementary roles	Roles which result in members sharing common objectives, developing solutions to the same problems and result in people interacting regularly, will help increase the cohesiveness between the team members.
Common purpose	A common purpose is the glue that holds the team together. It provides the direction that the team have committed to travel. Each team member knows why work needs to be done, and this helps them to focus on the end goal.
Interdependency	For the purpose to be achieved, every team member will need to deliver their work to the right standard. Sharing information and working to achieve success for each other are part of a collaborative **culture** that helps make teams effective.
Collective responsibility	An effective team will be responsible as a whole for delivering team objectives. All individuals within the team are responsible for the team decisions and actions as a whole. This collective accountability increases personal responsibility to get it right, for the team, and reduces fear of blame if things do go wrong.
Sense of membership and contribution	Team spirit doesn't happen overnight. However, the sense of belonging and individuals feeling as if they are contributing to a bigger purpose helps to develop morale, motivation and a united team front.
Accountability	**Accountability** means each team member is willing to be answerable for his or her actions and decisions. Individuals recognise that their choices have the power to support the team's success or contribute to the team's failure.

Table 1: Characteristics of effective teams

REVISION *on the* go

✏️ OVER TO YOU

Activity 3: Team composition

Evaluate a team you have been part of in terms of its size, composition and characteristics compared to those of an 'ideal' team.

📄 CASE STUDY: LEARNING TO BE EFFECTIVE

Sadiq experiences a shift in team dynamics

Situation/Task: Sadiq was part of an area management team for an engineering company. The multi-national enterprise had offices across the Middle East but each region, run by an area manager, operated as a separate business unit. Despite the best efforts of the Managing Director of the Middle East, each region, run by a country manager, was siloed. Communication and sharing best practice was limited and this resulted in duplication of effort, blame and misunderstanding.

Action: A leadership development programme was used to develop the cohesiveness of the team as well as to develop the country managers as individuals. As part of this programme, several support activities were introduced including;

- **Purposeful endeavour** focus to help the country managers contribute to, and understand, the shared purpose of the organisation.

- **Communities of practice** to develop cross-functional exchange of best practice and to work on problems that all areas had a common interest in resolving.

- **Learning buddies** to develop an interdependency between area country managers and keep them accountable for their personal learning and development commitments.

- **Day in the life** where individuals spent time with other country managers to understand them and their areas with a view of increasing team spirit and a sense of beloning.

Result: The participants reported an increased level of networking, not just at country manager level but throughout the regions. 'One organisation' thinking in the management team, and mechanisms being included in personal development plans (PDPs) throughout the Middle East were also developed. Several hundred thousand dollars of improvements in productivity were recorded in six months. Some communities of practice resulted in opening up future streams of revenue generation and this had a strategic impact upon the organisation as a whole.

Nature of teams

Teams are an important feature of organisational life. Team members must work together and collaborate with other teams in order to meet the objectives of the organisation. The influence that the manager and team members have on each other affects the effectiveness of team work, individual behaviour and quality of work performance.

Traditional structures

Traditional organisational structures are designed to enable the senior leadership within the organisation to command and control the way tasks are managed. A **hierarchical** organisation structure helps to ensure that people keep to the rules and required behaviours that individuals are expected to follow.

Characteristics of effective teams
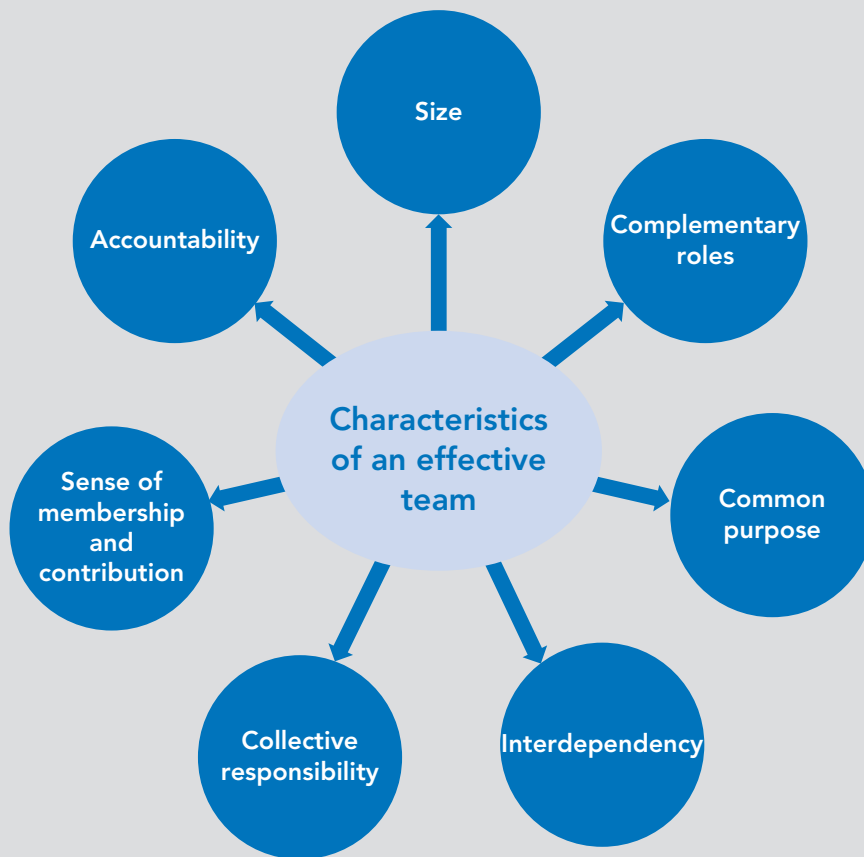
Figure 1.1: Characteristics of effective teams

Traditional hierarchical structures
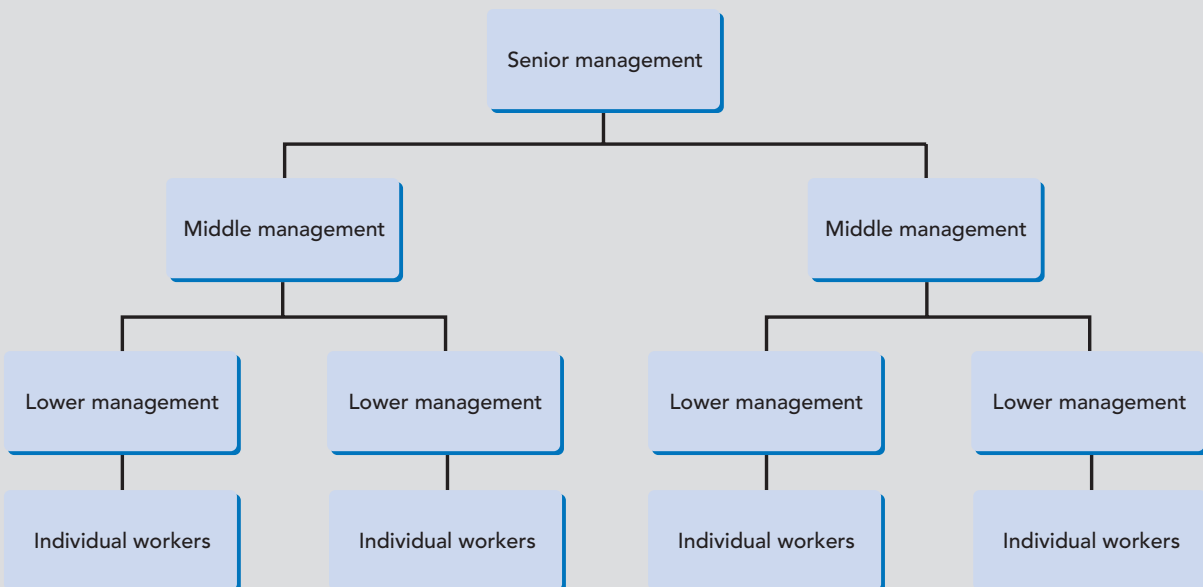
Figure 1.2: Traditional hierarchical structures

Permanent or departmental team work in a traditional structure is managed to achieve a defined goal. There are clear boundaries as to the responsibilities of each team.

Formal teams are identified as part of the organisational design, often depicted by an organisational chart. A formal team may be part of a division, department, section or a formal project team, which has been formed to deliver a particular task.

Informal teams are not part of the formal organisational structure, but form due to special interests, talent specialisms, personal relationships or a shared hobby. These teams tend to be cross-functional and can have a powerful effect on the organisation due to the influence of the members.

✎ OVER TO YOU

Activity 4: Purposeful endeavour

Evaluate a team you have been part of in terms of its purpose and how the team developed and was organised to achieve its objective(s).

Modern structures

Globalisation, a highly competitive market place, and technological advances have changed the way business is done. Modern organisational structures have moved away from the traditional pyramid shape toward a flatter hierarchy. **Matrix working** has resulted in less formal structures and the changing nature of work has led to cross-functional and multi-disciplinary working.

Modern structures
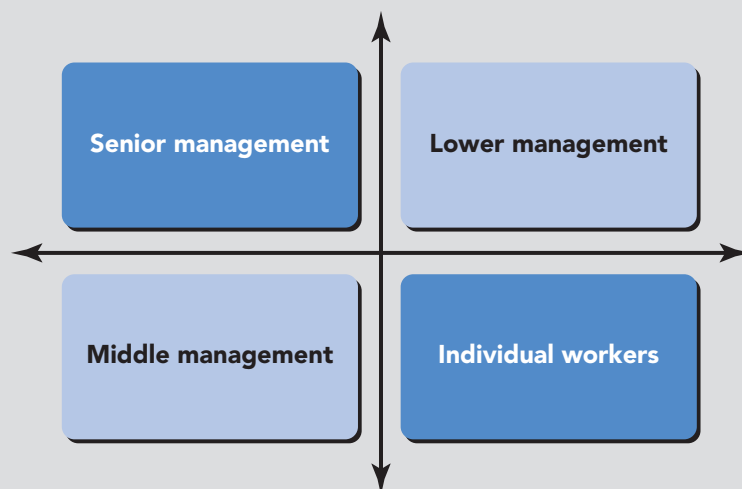
Figure 1.3: Modern organisational structures

Reporting lines

Matrix working means that individuals may work for more than one manager and be part of more than one team, especially where project work is the norm. This can lead to an individual being moved to a project team for a short period, while still performing their usual tasks, and therefore having multiple roles within the same organisational setting.

The chain of management determines reporting lines and means that decision making can track across horizontal or vertical team structures:

Vertical teams have a tall structure and hierarchy, with senior managers passing authority down the organisation through a series of management layers; the lower level managers are responsible for task-orientated work and higher level managers are responsible for strategy and direction. Vertical teams are more likely to be found in larger organisations which work along **functional lines**.

Horizontal teams are flat in structure and have fewer levels of management. This means that even senior managers will be more involved in the day-to-day tasks needed to deliver organisational performance. Horizontal teams are likely to work cross-functionally and have more loosely defined job responsibilities.

There are different types of organisational practices which have contributed to and evolved from the growing use of modern structures. These include the practices shown in Table 2.

Flexible working	**Flexible working** can take a number of forms, which may be flexible start and finish times, working different shift patterns and working in other locations, e.g. from home. Flexible working needs to suit the needs of the employee and the requirements of the organisation for it to be effective.
Experience	The value placed upon technical skills and experience in a specific job role and tasks are being replaced with a requirement for transferable skills. This allows individuals and teams to be flexible and move easily in response to the needs of the organisation.
Contribution	The emphasis in modern organisations on supporting teams is based upon the belief that the performance outcomes of a fully functional team are greater than the sum of individual contributions.
Project/temporary teams	Different groups will come together within the organisation either for the delivery of a specific project or an interim period, in order to achieve a particular need or outcome which must be delivered.
Outsourcing	Outsourcing involves the organisation contracting out work for a particular business function, service or task delivery. Examples include HR services and marketing.
Offshoring	Offshoring involves a relocation of a particular process from one country to another. Examples include manufacturing plants or call centres.

Virtual teams	Virtual teams have arisen due to the global nature of **multi-national enterprises** (MNEs) resulting in team members being located in different geographic regions. This has been made possible by the improvements in communication technology.
Diversity	The trends toward globalisation and movement of workers have resulted in organisations embracing diversity by accommodating differing cultural and work practices; for example, incorporating prayer rooms in office buildings.
Consensus decision making	With consensus decision-making, solutions are sought which everyone in the team can actively support. This is more dynamic than the "majority rules" approach that is most often taken in decision-making.
Facilitative leadership	Relationships and people are at the centre of facilitative leadership, which focuses on creating a results-driven but supportive work environment.
Mutual participation	Supporting information sharing and co-ordination by all stakeholders in a decision-making process, mutual participation is focused on fostering co-operation between different groups.
Multi-disciplinary skills	Due to the fast-paced competitive environment in which most organisations operate, the need for an agile workforce is essential. This has resulted in team members being able to contribute a range of skills and experience from a number of different professional fields.

Table 2: Organisational practices resulting from modern structures

REVISION *on the* go

✎ OVER TO YOU

Activity 5: Communication systems

Discuss with a study partner, if possible, the use of modern technology and its impact on communication at work, especially the use of email, social media, mobile phones and instant messaging. Have these new systems improved communication in the workplace? Give reasons for your answer.

1.2 How teams form and become effective

The formation of teams, and their subsequent performance, is not automatically effective and not as simple as putting people together and telling them to get on with it. The aim for any organisation is to develop a group of different individuals into a cohesive and united team, enabling high levels of performance.

Team development

In 1977 Tuckman and Jensen introduced what is now one of the most popular models of team development. This model identifies five main phases of group development, as shown in Table 3.

Forming	The initial stage of group formation brings together individuals who attempt to provide the relationship framework of the group, such as structure, roles and responsibilities. At this point, individuals are on their best behaviour and seeking to create a good impression.
Storming	A period of potential conflict, storming is the result of individual members of the group asserting themselves and being more forceful and open in sharing their opinions. Successful negotiation of the challenge and disagreement about the way the group works together should lead to agreement regarding group structures and processes.
Norming	As the conflict from the storming stage leads to established guidelines, norms of accepted behaviour become rooted into ways of working. Co-operation and planning increases as members move forward toward an agreed purpose.
Performing	With a firm foundation of purpose, leadership, roles, responsibilities and agreed group behaviour, the members begin to work effectively together as a team. This period will lead to purposeful focus and performance.
Adjourning	Adjourning is the final stage of team development, as a team is disbanded. This might be because a project team has completed the project or task, because members of the team move on to other teams or leave the organisation.

Table 3: The five main phases of group development (after Tuckman and Jensen)

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Stages of team development (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977)
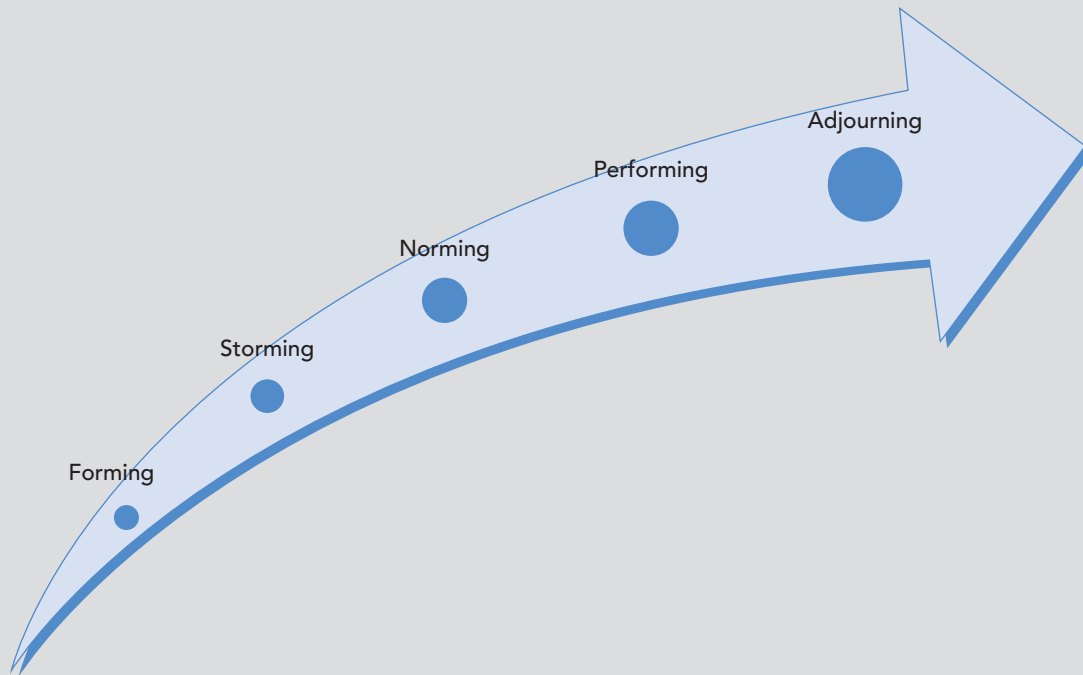
Figure 1.4: Stages of team development

In their book *The Wisdom of Teams*, Katzenbach and Smith (1993) provide rules for creating high performance teams. They suggest that for team development to be successful, a group needs a clear performance challenge.

> *A team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals and an approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.*
>
> *Katzenbach and Smith*

Katzenbach and Smith recommend that a specific purpose is developed to give meaning to a team's work. Team members should commit to clear, consistent performance criteria for which they are mutually accountable. Finally they suggest that team members should possess complementary skills. They offer a J- shaped curve for the development of a group into a real team. The stages include those shown in Table 4.

Working group	Team members share information but as yet have no common purpose or performance goals have not been set. No mutual accountability.
Pseudo team	The group is yet to begin performing as a team, and is therefore at the bottom of the performance curve. Individuals are risk averse and avoiding accountability.
Potential team	Movement toward a common goal, performance levels begin to rise but team members need to agree to mutual accountability.
Real team	Team members begin to move towards a shared purpose. Their skills are complementary and they begin to share accountability for team results.
High-performance team	Commitment towards relationships and personal development result in high performance.

Table 4: Development of a group into a high-performance team (after Katzenbach and Smith)

J curve (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993)
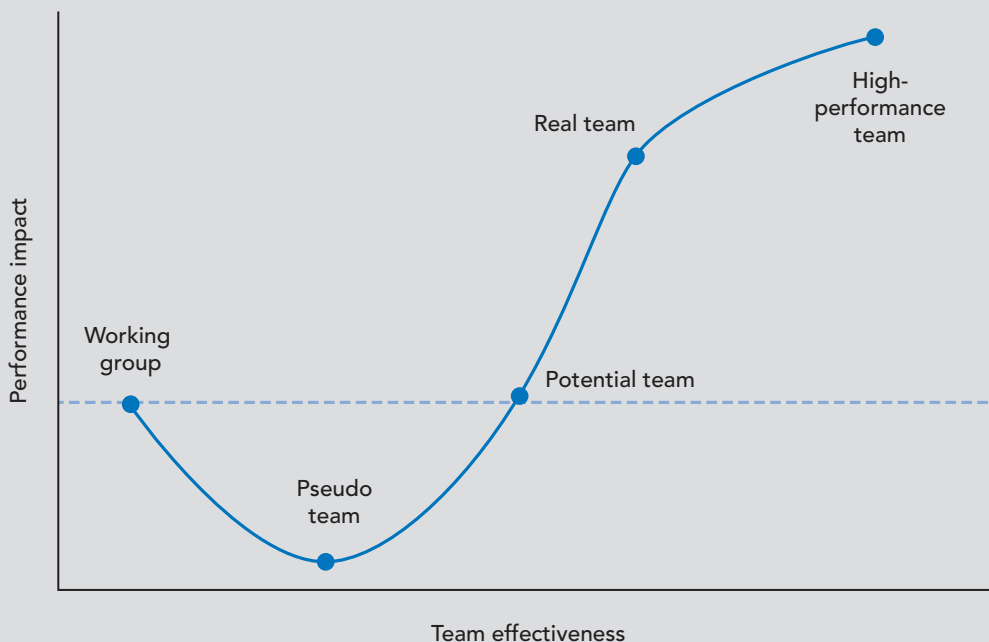
Figure 1.5: J curve after Katzenback and Smith (1993)

📄 CASE STUDY: EXPERIENCING A STORM

Kim experiences a heated disagreement

Kim joined a new project team in a manufacturing company. The first few meetings had a positive lively atmosphere with an agreement that there was a lot to get done and quite tight timescales. Although there was lots of discussion at these meetings, no decisions were made.

Sub-groups appear

At the next meeting individuals began to get more vocal, expressing opinions about priorities and next steps and views of sub-groups which seemed to have formed based on who worked in the same office building: "we think…" Over the course of the meeting the discussion became heated and there was intense disagreement about particular actions, including accusations of individual suggestions being "ridiculous" and "not based in reality". Kim was taken aback by the hostility displayed by certain members of the team.

No resolution

The meeting eventually finished when three people left early, commenting, "this project won't work…" and "this isn't what I signed up for…". No decisions were made that day, and there were accusations of people being "controlling" and "out of control."

This was the first time Kim had been a member of a project team and she was surprised at how comfortable other team members felt expressing their dissatisfaction and challenging other people within the team.

Next meeting

At the next meeting there seemed to have been some conciliatory conversations between various members of the team. The motivation team members had to achieve the goal of the team appeared to outweigh the differences of opinion.

✏️ OVER TO YOU

Activity 6: Where are you on the curve?

Think about a team that you are part of. Map where your team is in regard to team development using Tuckman and Jensen's stages of team development and Katzenbach and Smith's J curve. Given your analysis, what steps can you take to improve the performance of the team?

For example: The team appears to be storming. Everyone is arguing about who is to blame when things go wrong, and whether people are working as a team or for their individual interests. Need to agree team specific performance goals, especially on sticking to agreed delivery deadlines.

Common pitfalls

The models described provide a tool for which you can analyse the progress of team development. However, in every organisation there are common pitfalls that beset many teams, at all organisational levels, and that impacts on the ability to achieve effective performance levels.

Perhaps the most common complaint from managers is that teams and individuals work in **silos**. This means that information, knowledge and best practice is not shared across the team or with other teams, and people are working in isolation. Breaking down silos is difficult to do, often because people do not have time to share or because performance criteria results in people being rewarded for their individual contribution.

Group think happens when pressure for the group to remain friendly is so great that individual members of the group will not voice their own concerns, leading to dysfunctional decision making. Challenging the lack of questioning takes courage and a willingness to recognise why this might be happening and discuss these within the group.

The planning of team workload is perhaps the greatest danger to effective team work. Poor planning of team tasks can result individuals being unaware of what work is in the pipeline, and for blockages to occur because of lack of co-ordination, or a breakdown in communication. This will result in a lack of agreed priorities and missed deadlines.

Establishing effective teams

Establishing an effective team begins with concentrating on the compatibility of current team members. This means reviewing the contribution of each individual and being honest about where gaps and problems exist. When the opportunity arises to add new team members, or change the make-up of the existing team, different individuals can be selected to maximise productivity.

Opportunities to bring in new team members can vary. If there is a vacancy on the team then one option is to find a new full-time member to join the team. In addition to finding someone who has the right skills and experience needed, another dimension to consider is the needs and personalities of each team member. To help develop an effective team, choosing individuals who can complement each other is part of the process; for example a dominant individual will work well with someone comfortable with a subordinate individual role.

The social structures of a team will also affect **productivity**. Temporary contractors or specialists can be used to provide expert advice or skills for particular tasks or projects which will give the team increased flexibility and **agility**. Taking time to support the team to progress quickly through the stages of team development is important if the temporary assignments are going to be effective in the short-term.

Establishing effective working

There are many factors that contribute to establishing effective team working. These include the factors shown in Table 5.

Common goals	Establishing clear common goals helps team members to co-operate on the basis of shared values and priorities.
Roles and responsibilities	Defining roles and responsibilities helps to support group-centred behaviour and leads to individual satisfaction.
Clear timelines	Clear allocation of work with timelines for completing tasks gives direction to the team and helps the team to function as a unit focused on achieving key priorities.
Reporting and accountability	Establishing a clear reporting process and accountability allows the team to operate effectively within the organisation structure.
Support	Mechanisms of support can help to increase the cohesiveness of the team and can include the sharing of information, social interaction, group identification through symbols, ceremonies and stories.
Purpose and motivation	Maintaining purpose and motivation requires sharing information about team activity and celebrating progress and achievement.
Technology	Access to and utilisation of technology to enable effective communication between the team across locations and time zones.
Offshoring	Offshoring can increase access to skills and help teams to increase or decrease capacity in response to fast-changing demands on the team. Understanding different cultures, keeping the offshore team involved and regular reviews contribute to effective offshoring practices.
Outsourcing	Outsourcing can offer a team access to expertise in technical areas that close skills gaps and increase productivity.

Table 5: Factors that contribute to effective team working

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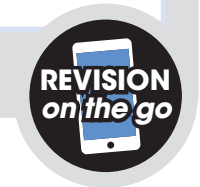
✎ OVER TO YOU

Activity 7: Theory versus reality

Learning about building an effective team in a textbook can 'gloss over' the reality of working in teams in real-life organisations or situations. What is your experience of the reality of team working, and what factors do you believe contributed to an effective team performance?

Factors contributing to effective team working

Figure 1.6: Factors contributing to effective team working
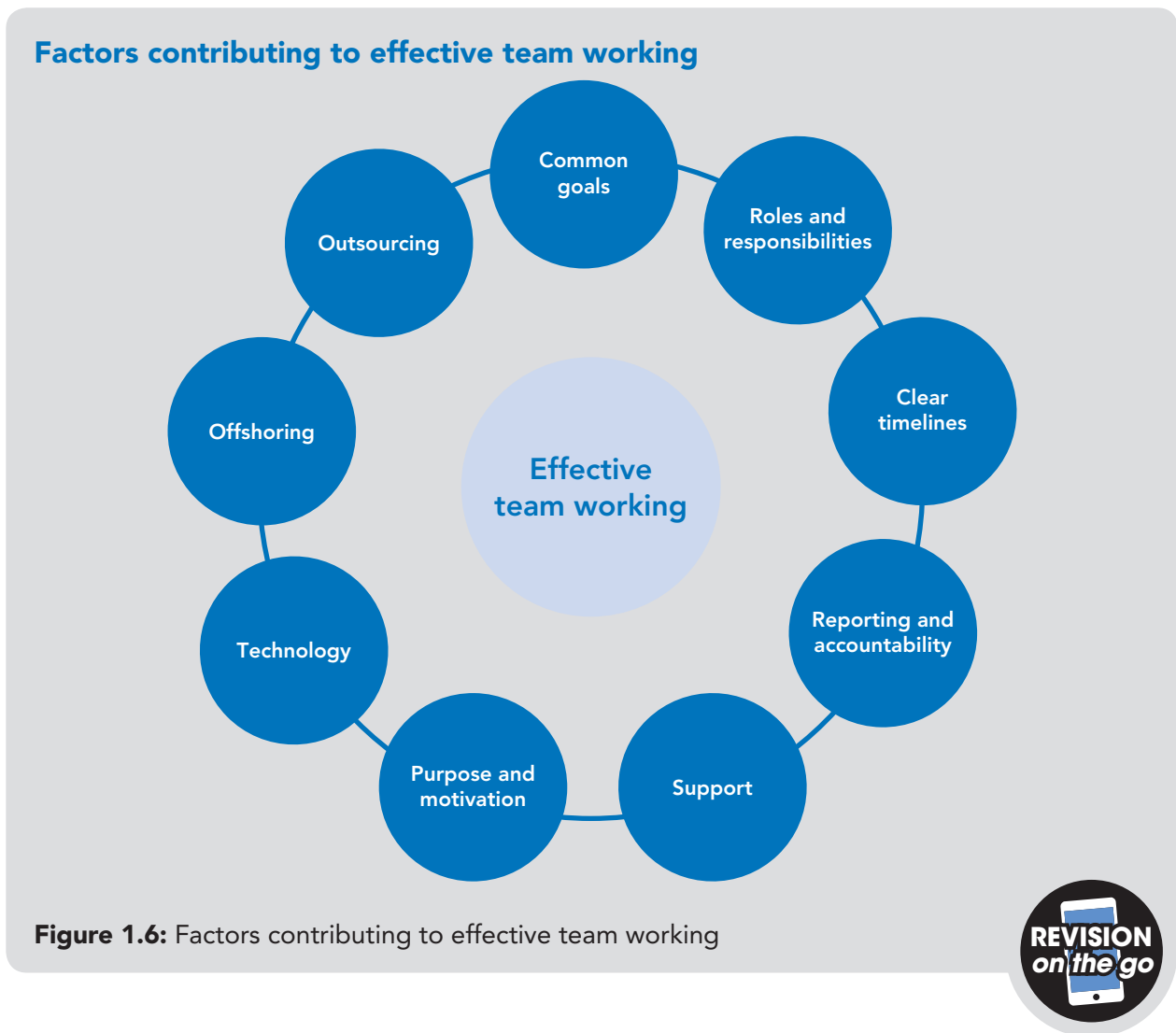
1.3 Difficulties that teams face

The increased level of globalisation, fast-moving competitive environments and technological advances present specific challenges to team working. Although modern organisational structures, as described in Chapter 1.1, have delivered more opportunities for flexible and agile working, they also introduce new challenges for team working.

Flexible working

Flexible working can offer opportunities for employers to tap into **talent** while giving employees **work-life balance**. Types of practice can vary, but include part-time or term-time working, job-sharing, flexitime, compressed or annualised hours or remote working. However, from a team perspective flexible working practices can present a significant challenge to team work. Something that might suit one individual can have a significant impact on how the team operates in practice.

For some job tasks, it might be necessary to be in a particular location at certain times and flexible working may result in other team members having to take on extra responsibilities and work to compensate. This can lead to resentment as some team members try to manage the priorities of the team. Flexible working arrangements can be managed but there needs to be clarity about roles and responsibilities and clear communication between the team members in order to manage tensions and pressures.

✎ OVER TO YOU

Activity 8: Theory versus reality

Consider how flexible working could work in your own job role, or one with which you are familiar. What would some of the positive effects be of such an arrangement? How would you address the challenges that such an arrangement would cause your team?

Remote working

Remote working can take a number of forms, including home-based working, mobile working or remote working. This allows team members the flexibility of working in a different location from an organisation's office or even from home. Where work has to be carried out in a specific location, remote working may not be possible but, where it is possible, one of the greatest challenges is the lack of time to build effective relationships, which provides the lifeblood for information sharing and communication processes for the team.

Although remote working benefits individuals by reducing their time commuting to a centralised office location, and offers the benefits of reducing interruptions, it also presents challenges. So the individual team member may miss the friendship that comes from frequent contact with the team, resulting in feelings of isolation. For the team, lack of personal contact can lead to reduced levels of trust, compromising knowledge sharing and the loss of body language and non-verbal cues which are an essential element to effective communication.

CASE STUDY: OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND

Vedika discovers the downside of remote working

Vedika worked as part of an IT project team whose members worked remotely in a number of remote locations across Kashmir. The 30-member strong team were responsible for introducing a key roll out of a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system.

At the beginning of the project there was very little communication from Vedika's line manager. After the initial email welcoming Vedika to the team, she had not had any communication from her line manager for nearly two months and the communications she had had from the team members were transactional in asking for specific tasks to be completed.

Vedika began to feel increasingly isolated and the team miscommunication led to significant dysfunction with regard to alignment of team goals and priorities.

The team interacts

After several months the line manager began a practice of asking the whole team to take part in an online meeting once a week for 30 minutes. The team also began using video chats as a regular team communication tool to increase team interaction, information sharing and investing in team development. This increased Vedika's sense of belonging and helped align team members to key priorities and goals.

The virtual organisation

Virtual organisations exist in an environment enabled by a network of information technology. **Virtual teams** can collaborate via the cloud, file sharing, asynchronous communication or synchronous online meetings. These virtual systems enable group communication and decision-making. The benefits of such an organisation mean that time and geography are removed as barriers; however, virtual organisations, and the management of remote teams, can lead to huge challenges. Most notably, the security of information exchange and timeliness of communication can cause barriers to team effectiveness. Further challenges are those found with remote working with regard to trust and interpersonal communication, which negatively impacts team cohesiveness and increases separation from team goals.

✏️ OVER TO YOU

Activity 9: Examining virtual teams

> **Think about the information technology that you use for communicating with people you may work with in a team. This may be a team from work, study group, sports team or group with whom you share a hobby. What are some of the pitfalls of electronic communication you have encountered?**

Offshoring

As we have discovered, developing an effective team is challenging at the best of times. **Offshoring** magnifies the challenges of developing effectiveness. Team members who are part of an offshore group may experience difficulties caused by differences in culture, time and language. Whether essential information gets lost in translation or time lags delay time-critical action, problems can become crises and misunderstandings can sidetrack projects.

Outsourcing

Outsourcing can add additional layers of complication to team work. The biggest issue relating to outsourcing is the communication between permanent team members and those who are outsourced workers. Outsourcing reduces the personal and day-to-day interaction that sustains a team's cohesiveness. The reliance on external experts to fill knowledge and skills gaps may result in essential capability never being transferred into the permanent team, reducing the possibility for growing internal organisational expertise.

READING LIST

- Castka, P., Bamber, C.J., Sharp, J.M. and Belohoubek, P. (2001) "Factors affecting successful implementation of high performance teams", *Team Performance Management: An International Journal*, Vol. 7 Iss: 7/8, pp.123–134.

- Henttonen, Kaisa, Johanson, Jan-Erik and Janhonen, Minna (2014) "Work-team bonding and bridging social networks, team identity and performance effectiveness", *Personnel Review*, Vol. 43 Iss: 3, pp.330–349.

- Piña, María Isabel Delgado, Martínez, Ana María Romero and Martínez, Luis Gómez, (2008) "Teams in organizations: a review on team effectiveness", *Team Performance Management: An International Journal*, Vol. 14 Iss: 1/2, pp.7–21.

Summary

A team is a group of people who work together to achieve a common purpose whereas a group consists of people who depend on each other in order to complete a task or achieve a goal.

Teams are an essential component of the organisational environment and exist at all levels, from the most senior to the most junior employees. Regardless of the work environment, teams enable work to be organised.

Modern organisational structures introduce dimensions to team working such as flexible and remote working, virtual teams and embracing different working and cultural practices. These practices help deliver opportunities for teams to be more flexible and agile. However, increased levels of globalisation, a fast-moving competitive environment and technological advances present specific challenges to team working.

Chapter 2

The Principles and Benefits of Effective Team Working

Introduction

There are many benefits to team working, both commercially and personally, but working in teams does not in itself equate to success; as a minimum, effective team work requires a balanced selection of members, careful planning, ongoing participation and collaboration, tenacity and the mutual support of each other, in order for the team to achieve its desired goals and to contribute to those of the organisation.

Modern organisations present additional challenges to team work including flexible and remote working, operating across time-zones and embracing different working and cultural practices. While diversity is generally enriching, it can introduce dimensions to team working that require open-mindedness on the part of all concerned to find the best solutions.

This chapter will address how to build effective working relationships within different types of teams and business structures, including virtual environments.

Learning outcomes

On completing the chapter, you will be able to:

2   **Describe the principles and benefits of effective team working and how collaborative working can be fostered**

Assessment criteria

2   **Describe the principles and benefits of effective team working and how collaborative working can be fostered**

2.1   Explain the commercial and social benefits of effective team working

2.2   Recommend how collaborative working could be fostered to overcome the potential difficulties that teams face working in modern organisational structures, including virtual environments

Level 4 Dynamic and Collaborative Teams

Background

For an organisation to achieve its goals and objectives, it is essential that individual employees are bought together in order to develop a coherent, aligned response to the competitive environment. The sum of the individual parts mean that a team is able to provide a more comprehensive, efficient and effective response to organisation challenges and opportunities than can be achieved when individuals operate alone. It is the combination of team member skills, knowledge and experience that is beneficial.

Human co-operation and group effort is valuable to individuals, teams, organisations and society at large. Individuals benefit from being a member of an effective team, contributing to feelings of satisfaction and achievement. The team as a whole benefits from positive interaction, sharing work and workload, and the positivity gained from the development of team spirit. Finally, organisations benefit from increased levels of creativity, innovation and a supportive environment.

> *I have no question that when you have a team, the possibility exists that it will generate magic, producing something extraordinary, a collective creation of previously unimagined quality and beauty. But don't count on it.*
>
> *Richard Hackman*

However, the modern organisational structure can reduce team performance by developing barriers to the effective deployment of group dynamics and team behaviour. Being aware of the common mistakes made when building a team and taking steps to confront issues will ensure that effective team working can be nurtured within the organisational setting.

> ✏️ **OVER TO YOU**
>
> **Activity 1: Part of an orchestra or a soloist**
>
> **Consider the role of the soloist in the orchestra. How important is the orchestra to the soloist's performance? Based on your answer, what parallels can you draw between individual and team performance?**

2.1 The commercial and social benefits of effective team working

Both formal and informal groups contribute to the social interaction required to support the commercial success of an organisation. From an organisational perspective, teams provide the backbone of co-operative working to complete tasks and reach organisation goals.

Commercial benefits

The commercial benefits of teams are many and varied. Wickens (1995)[1] stated that the strength of an organisation is in its people, declaring that if an organisation values its people, people will bring the organisation value. When team working is part of the organisational culture, individuals have shared values, and a strong sense of purpose, which is clearly communicated and grasped by employees. Likert (1967)[2] noted the importance of participation in decision-making, which is evident when the strength of teams is used fully. This in turn contributes to organisation productivity and profitability.

By effectively organising their people, organisations can ensure in turn an effective use of organisation resources – resulting in higher levels of efficiency. Increased responsiveness and flexibility is achieved by focusing teams on problem solving leading to a cycle of continuous improvement, harnessing the energy of the enterprise.

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1 Wickens, P.D., (1995). *The Ascendant Organisation: Combining Commitment and Control for Long term, Sustainable Business Success*, Macmillan, Basingstoke.
2 Likert, R., (1967). *The Human Organization: its management and values*, McGraw Hill.

Increased levels of group loyalty result in more responsiveness and flexibility, allowing the organisation to respond positively to competitive pressures and changes in the market place. Katzenbach and Smith (1993)[3] noted that shared commitment from groups results in a powerful unit of collective performance, helping teams to achieve specific performance goals.

The significance of personal relationships as recognised by Maslow (1970)[4] is captured in the idea of **self-actualisation** which is the ideal of human fulfilment. This results in reduced absenteeism and staff turnover and has the double benefit of reducing the costs of the organisation and increasing engagement. The greater levels of innovation that result contribute to increased revenue for the organisation.

Katzenbach and Smith (1993) noted that the difference between teams and other groups is performance. Collaborative decision-making is a consequence of performance challenges and takes place when individuals are provided with opportunities by the team to make a distinctive contribution. Therefore it could be argued that team working contributes to higher levels of individual performance, collaborative working and consequently organisational performance, leading to commercial success for the organisation.

✎ OVER TO YOU

Activity 2: Team work and work performance

It is contended that effective teams are essential for delivering organisational performance. Reflect upon your own experience. Are you able to present a counter argument to this assertion? Make your notes below.

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3 Katzenbach, J.R. and Smith, D.K., (1993). *The Wisdom of Teams: Creating the high-performance organization*. Harvard Business Press.
4 Maslow, A. H. (1970). *Motivation and Personality*. New York: Harper & Row

📄 CASE STUDY: HARNESSING THE POWER OF TEAMS

Guoliang collaborates to deliver business improvement

In order to support its growth ambitions, the supermarket chain that Guoliang worked for as a customer assistant required its employees to be motivated, flexible and well trained. The management team recognised that a motivated workforce would work harder, be more productive and reduce labour costs. They also wanted to instil a culture of collaborative working, self-monitoring teams and customer service.

The supermarket chain had discovered that it was important to create an environment of trust and respect and that in order to motivate their employees, individuals will need to work together with others to achieve individual and team performance goals. The manager emphasised the need to focus on customers, treat people fairly and be open to receiving feedback from others.

The supermarket worked to create a good work environment by:

- Valuing staff through an improved reward programme.
- Developing team as well as individual performance goals.
- Investing in employees through training and development, especially in developing the individual's understanding of their impact on others.
- Investing in team-building activities to improve communication and cooperation.
- Improve communication through the company intranet, newsletters and formal communication structures such as appraisals and team briefings.
- Delegating decision making to a team level.

The result

The focus on creating an environment where the team could work together on their performance goals resulted in Guoliang and his team members, making a genuine effort to build trust and support each other to meet the team goals. There was a real interest in how the team was progressing and the emphasis on rewarding good performance meant that every individual in the team was committed to delivering his or her best. The team was able to highlight work practices which could be done more efficiently and also recommended areas where the organisation could save money, which resulted in reductions in costly inventory levels and resolving longstanding issues with a particular supplier.

Social benefits

The social benefits of effective team work can be linked to the commercial benefits enjoyed by organisations in that they result in greater levels of motivation among team members to achieve goals.

Likert's System 4 Management Model (1967) highlights the importance of group participation on satisfying the **psychological** and **social needs** of employees. The **participative system** contributes to team decision-making and problem solving; however, it is the non-economic motives that Likert (1967) highlighted as contributing to team support and motivation. These include the individual's sense of responsibility, personal worth and importance as their contribution

is recognised. A sense of belonging results from combining the needs and desires of both the individual and the team. This leads to increased levels of trust, sharing influence and effective and efficient communication.

✏️ OVER TO YOU

Activity 3: Team work meets human needs

Conduct your own research into motivation and social identity theories. What evidence can you provide that supports the assertion by Likert that group participation satisfies the psychological and social needs of employees?

For example: Guirdham (2002)[5] argues that we categorise ourselves as a member of specific groups based on our own concept of self. Acceptance by the groups develops our own concept of self, influencing our behaviour at work.

Maslow (1970) developed the hierarchical pyramid of human needs to demonstrate the necessity of physical needs being met and the significance of personal relationships. His theory of self-actualisation demonstrated how important human relationships are in helping individuals to develop confidence and release their full potential. He emphasised how personal relationships resulted in creativity in things that are done, said or acted. Acceptance within a team contributes to the individual having their psychological needs of safety being met, resulting in the individual feeling confident and realising they have unlimited room for growth. Maslow (1970) used the term self-actualising to describe the point where an individual is able to make full use of their talents and capacities to become all that they are capable of doing and being.

Therefore the social benefits of team work have links to motivation and the creation of an environment where individuals can experience fulfilment of their potential.

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5 Guirdham, M. (2002). *Interactive Behaviour at Work.* Pearson Education.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Self-actualisation:
achieving full use of talent and capacities

Psychological needs:
self esteem and feelings of belonging

Physiological needs:
basic needs of food, water and shelter

Figure 2.1: Maslow's hierarchy of needs

REVISION on the go

✏ OVER TO YOU

Activity 4: Working together

Think about a team you have been part of. How effectively did the team work together and did it manage to achieve its objectives?

2.2 Fostering collaborative working to overcome difficulties

Taking advantage of the power of effective teams in the workplace does not happen without effort. Fostering collaborative work requires individuals to combine their talent towards the achievement of a common team goal. Collaborative working can deliver both commercial and social benefits but it requires a change of focus from individual accomplishment to team accomplishment to encourage co-operative behaviours.

Getting to know each other

Bringing together different individuals and personalities and calling them a team does not automatically create cohesion or the climate for collaboration. During the forming stage of a team's development, team members can benefit greatly from putting effort into and taking time to get to know each other. Discussing where individual strengths and weaknesses are may not be the easiest of tasks but will help people understand the skills that everyone has to offer, moving the team quickly through the storming stage into norming. Communication and personal insight into each individual is an integral part of the collaborative process, helping teams to leverage team member strengths for the benefit of the team and therefore transitioning into the performing stage.

✏️ OVER TO YOU

Activity 5: A great question to get to know someone

If you search online you can find lots of web pages offering lists of questions to 'get to know your team better'. The truth is that no single question will work for everyone. Finding a good question to really get to know someone means avoiding general, broad or philosophical questions. Instead you need to do your homework and ask a question, which is simple and specific to that person. The purpose of this activity is to craft a question that will help illuminate a person's real self.

- Think about your team members and decide which member you know least well; they will be the subject of your inquiry.
- Write down what you already know about that individual and also perhaps areas where you are curious to know more.
- Based on what you understand now, what question would help you get to know this person better?

Clearly defined goals

Getting a team to work together means that you need to set clearly defined and measurable goals on a regular basis. It is necessary to keep team members aligned so that team efforts lead to the desired outcomes; you therefore have to ensure that individuals are clear about their role responsibilities and are held accountable for contributing to team objectives. This includes getting agreement from team members on task priorities and developing transparent timelines for delivery. It is important to make it clear that each team member has accountability for delivering what is required; this responsibility for good outcomes will keep performance goals at the front of everyone's minds.

Communication

Regular communications and meetings are essential for collaboration to become a reality. In addition to communicating about team roles and goals, it is necessary to communicate about organisation and team expectations. **Communication** can take place virtually, using any number of information technologies, or the team can meet face to face periodically or in daily **team huddles**. Where members are part of remote or virtual teams, meetings may have to take place at rotating times to respect different time zones. The essential element of communication is that team members are clear on what needs to be accomplished, have information regarding current work flows and that they are given a forum to collaborate with each other.

Using technology

Technology can help teams to overcome the difficulties of differing locations and time zones. As well as aiding the sharing of information, such as the use of shared drives to enable access to documentation, technology can remove barriers of time and geography. The advent of teleconferencing and **video-conferencing** has opened the doors to real-time meetings which can take place regardless of where in the world the participants are located. Technology enables team members to improve communication and freely exchange ideas, which can contribute to knowledge development, innovation and creativity within the team.

Fostering collaborative working

Clearly defined goals:
Ensuring team efforts result in desired outcomes

Communication:
Creating the forum for collaboration

Getting to know each other:
Leveraging team member strengths

Using technology:
Exchanging information and ideas

Fostering collaborative working

Figure 2.2: Fostering collaborative working
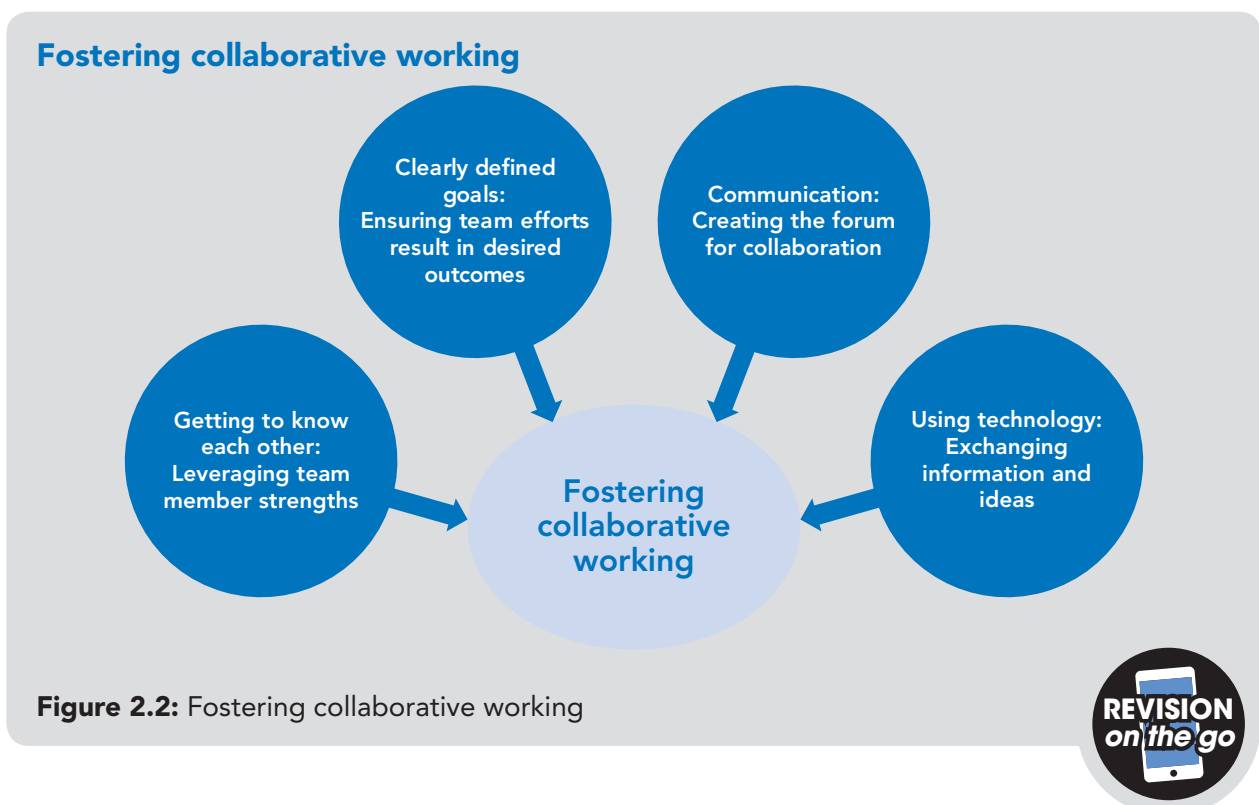
📄 CASE STUDY: DEVELOPING COLLABORATIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Jamie drives the business forward

Jamie was working on a large-scale project for a construction company which required cross-functional teams to work collaboratively in order to drive the business forward and overcome challenges in the supply chain.

There was a requirement for the project teams to build trust, foster reliability and create understanding between team members. The project was seeking to deliver commercial benefits, such as improved customer satisfaction, lean processes, innovative solutions and time efficiencies.

Members of the project team were chosen, based on those who were identified as highly motivated and had the best skills suited to the job that needed doing. Skilled individuals were pulled from across the organisation and worked together to identify and align the team performance goals.

The team agreed to regular meetings to help increase engagement and ensure decision making took account of all the parties involved across different functions.

The result

Jamie's team created several innovative solutions to procurement problems, designed new processes and designed and delivered a shared procurement strategy.

READING LIST

- Daspit, Josh, Tillman, C. Justice, Boyd, Nancy G. and Mckee, Victoria (2013) "Cross-functional team effectiveness: An examination of internal team environment, shared leadership, and cohesion influences", *Team Performance Management: An International Journal*, Vol. 19 Iss: 1/2, pp.34–56.

- Gohil, Udityasinh, Carrillo, Patricia, Ruikar, Kirti and Anumba, Chimay (2011) "Value-enhanced collaborative working: case study of a small management advisory firm", *Construction Innovation*, Vol. 11 Iss: 1, pp.43–60.

- Palethorpe, Rob (2014) "Collaborating for Results: Silo Working and Relationships that Work", *Development and Learning in Organizations: An International Journal*, Vol. 28 Iss: 3, pp.39–40.

Summary

Effective team work can deliver both commercial and social benefits, but working in teams does not in itself equate with success. As a minimum, effective team work requires a balanced selection of members, planning, ongoing participation and collaboration, tenacity and the mutual support of each other, in order for the team to achieve its desired goals and to contribute to those of the organisation.

Co-operative ways of working can be used to complete tasks and reach organisation goals. Leveraging the power of effective teams in the workplace does not happen without effort. Fostering collaborative work requires individuals to combine their talent towards the achievement of a clearly defined team goal by getting to know each other, regular communication and the use of technology to remove barriers of time and geography.

The Principles of Effective team Management

Introduction

Managers play an important role in ensuring that teams deliver high performance outcomes. Effective team management requires the manager to bring together the strengths of each team member and ensure that they are able to contribute to delivering the team's goals. Whether a team manager is building a new team or managing an existing team, they need to help team members develop challenging team goals, define team roles and ensure that obstacles to performance are removed so that the team members can operate effectively.

This chapter will explore how teams need to be led, motivated, managed and monitored in order to be maximally effective.

Learning outcomes

On completing the chapter, you will be able to:

3   **Explain the principles of effective team management and why it is important for the work of teams to be led, organised and monitored**

Assessment criteria

3   **Explain the principles of effective team management and why it is important for the work of teams to be led, organised and monitored**

   3.1   Identify the advantages and limitations of different approaches to the management of teams

   3.2   Recommend practical ways that teams working in modern organisations should be managed so that they work collaboratively to achieve team objectives

Background

The principles of effective team management rely on more than hard work and the determination of team members. Effectiveness can be linked to the approach that a manager takes to a given team and the management style employed in managing the team.

Watson (1986)[1] said that management has been characterised as Art, Science, Magic and Politics. Management has been described as art – suggesting that some individuals are able to manage teams effectively and can develop their management talent over time.

> *Managing is the art of getting things done through and with people in formally organized groups.*
> *It is the art of creating an environment in which people can perform as individuals and yet cooperate towards the attainment of group goals. It is the art of removing blocks to such performance.*
>
> *Koontz (1964)*

Management has also been described as magic, suggesting that it is less about skill and ability and more about a potent power, which enables some managers to successfully manage a team by some unknown force. Furthermore, management is presented as science, which can be learnt, by building upon a body of knowledge and specific techniques and skills which when correctly applied result in effective teams.

> *Management is an activity concerned with the orchestration of people, work and systems in pursuit of organisation goals*
>
> *Follett (1949)*

Finally, it has been suggested that management requires political cunning: a game to be played whereby the winners are effective and the losers fail to perform.

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1 Watson, T. (1986). *Management, Organisation and Employment Strategy: New directions in theory and practice.* Routledge.

Activity 1: Describing approaches to management

Management has been described as an art, a science and the politics of magic. Which of these perspectives do you consider to be true and why?

3.1 Different approaches to management

The basis of any successful organisation is the interaction of people focused on achieving objectives. This requires direction and control to provide some form of structure and process to channel and co-ordinate the work of individuals and teams. How effective an organisation is will depend on the management of its people, clarity of goals and the resources available.

Management theories and approaches

The primary function of management is to get individuals and teams to work together to achieve the organisation's goals and objectives. There are many different management theories and approaches, which are impacted by the context and the activities of the organisation.

Scientific management

The industrialisation of the economy at the beginning of the twentieth century led to new innovations in production techniques such as Henry Ford's automotive assembly line. Frederick Taylor's (1917)[2] principles of scientific management offered an approach to management, which breaks down work tasks into different parts of the production process. Every job was analysed, tasks were standardised and workers were selected and trained to fit specific requirements in order to co-ordinate the production process. The process was designed to ensure that barriers to efficient working were removed and workers themselves were rewarded for productivity.

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2 Taylor, F.W. (1917). *The Principles of Scientific Management*. Harper.

The bureaucratic approach

Based on a consideration that the organisation was a segment of society as a whole, Weber (1947)[3] developed a concept of formal organisation based on a number of principles including:

- **Structure** – the arrangement of management positions within a hierarchy of responsibility and authority.
- **Specialisation** – separation of tasks and chain of command based on specialisation.
- **Predictability and stability** – the establishment of formal rules to regulate organisation operations
- **Rationality** – impartial recruitment and selection of individuals.
- **Democracy** – role being the determinant of responsibility and authority as opposed to the person.

🖉 OVER TO YOU

Activity 2: The bureaucratic approach

What are the advantages and disadvantages of the bureaucratic approach? Consider how management would be practised using this approach.

Principles of management

Fayol[4] proposed an administrative theory of management (published in English in 1949), which offered a more flexible approach to the principles of organisation. Offering 14 principles of management, Fayol (1841 to 1925) suggested that managers could use their intuition and discretion to adapt the way the principles were used to support managerial planning. The 14 principles are described in Table 1.

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3 Gerth, H.H. ed. (1947). *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology.* Translated, edited and with an introduction by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. Kegan Paul.
4 Fayol, H., (1949). Industrial and General Management. Pitman, London.

Division of work	Efficiency and productivity is achieved by allocating tasks to employees based upon specialisation of skills in order to increase accuracy and speed.
Authority and responsibility	Managers need authority to give order to employees, but that authority must come with responsibility.
Discipline	Discipline, in this model, is a result of obedience to ensure that employees conduct themselves well and with respect.
Unity of command	Employees will be given orders and will be answerable to one manager to avoid confusion and conflict.
Unity of direction	Plans of action must be owned by one manager and must be delivered by one team who are responsible for delivering the associated activities.
Subordination of individual interest	Regardless of where an individual resides in the organisation, organisational objectives always have primacy over that of personal interests.
Remuneration	Satisfactory levels of remuneration must be offered to employees to maintain the link between motivation and productivity.
The degree of centralisation	There should be a balance between concentrating decision-making authority with senior managers and decentralising decision-making processes lower down the organisation.
Scalar chain	Management structures should provide a clear line of authority from the top of the organisation to lower levels so that hierarchy remains in place even in emergency situations.
Order	Based on the idea that safe, clean and tidy work environments represent social order, organisations must ensure that adequate resources are available to ensure an ordered functioning of the organisation.
Equity	A core value of any organisation should be to treat employees fairly, equally and with kindness.
Stability of tenure of personnel	Management should seek to reduce employee turnover to ensure personnel with the right skills are available to deliver the product and/or services of the organisation.
Initiative	Employees should be encouraged to convey new ideas and be interested and involved in the creative value of the organisation.
Esprit de corps	Developing the idea of employee involvement and unity among employees to increase morale.

Table 1: Fayol's 14 principles of management

Principles of management (Fayol, 1949)
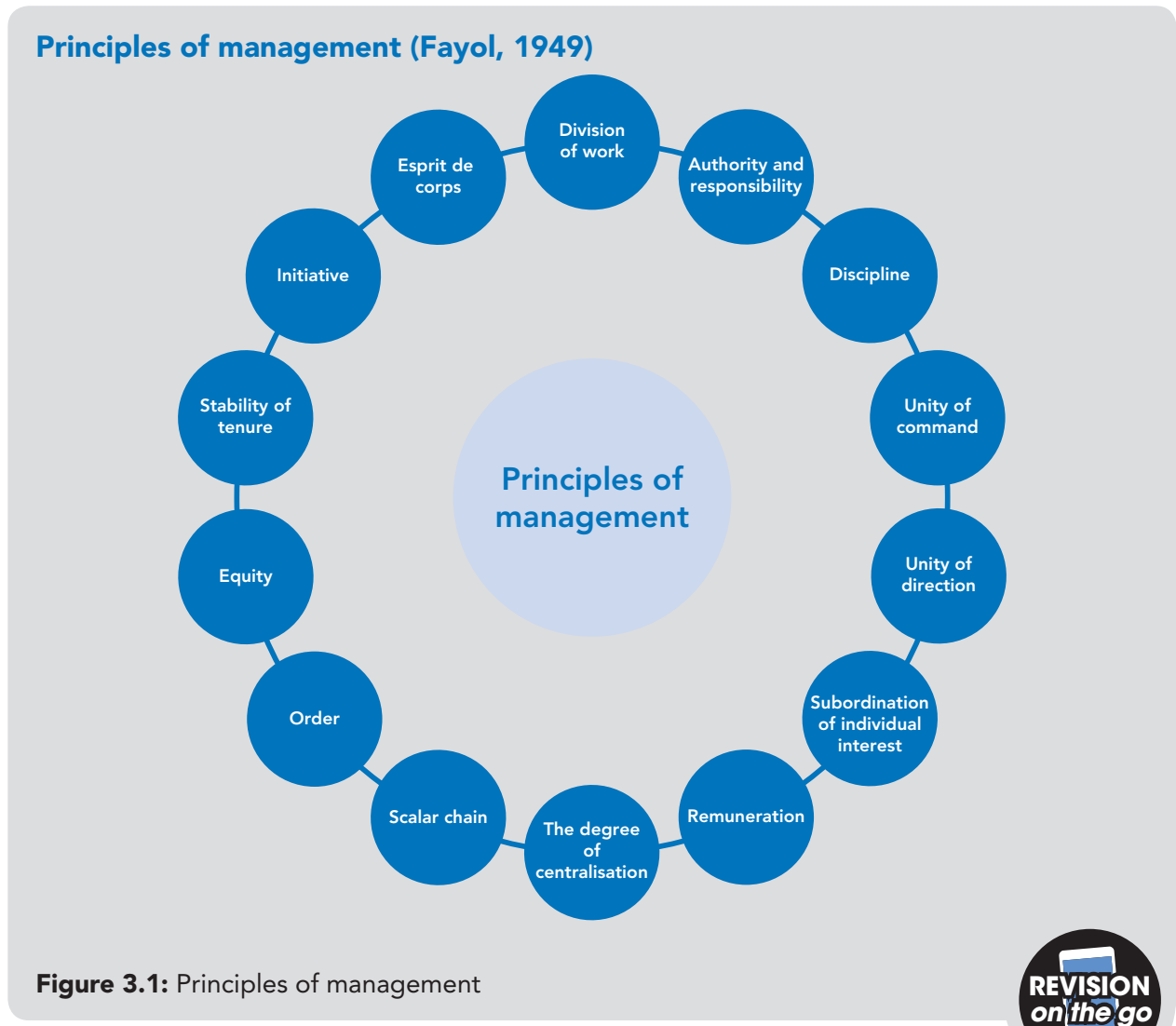
Figure 3.1: Principles of management

The 14 principles of management are still likely to be recognisable in management practices today. They are in many ways a common sense approach to the management of people within organisations. However, although many of these principles appear to be common sense in traditional organisation structures, it could be argued that they perhaps are out of touch with the needs of modern organisation structures.

✏ OVER TO YOU

Activity 3: Principles of management for today

What principles of management would you develop for a modern organisation structure (see Chapter 1, section 1.1)? What does this tell you about how context impacts approaches to management?

Functional approach

Adair (1997)[5] argues that a healthy team requires a shared purpose and clear goals and that management has a functional approach, which is related to the efficient use of resources, great communication and developing an open environment. He also argues that the monitoring of performance and learning from experience are important characteristics of a team manager. With regard to effective team management, Adair identified several functions that a team manager must execute while also being aware of team needs, including the understanding of what function must be applied when, and being skilful in exercising each function when required; these functions are shown in Table 2.

Objectives	The manager is responsible for identifying team objectives. Adair acknowledged that this can be achieved through group consensus.
Planning	Developing a plan from current reality to desired future goals requires the manager to set key milestones and track team progress.
Communication	Communicating why team actions, goals and objectives are important and how they should be achieved.
Organisation	Organising the team through task assignment, supervision, coaching support and the management of resources to ensure efficient deployment of team members.
Evaluation	Developing metrics and reporting these to assess the progress of the team towards the achievement of team goals.
Standards	Setting expectations in relation to team behaviour and enforcing these standards where required.

Table 2: Adair's functional approach to management

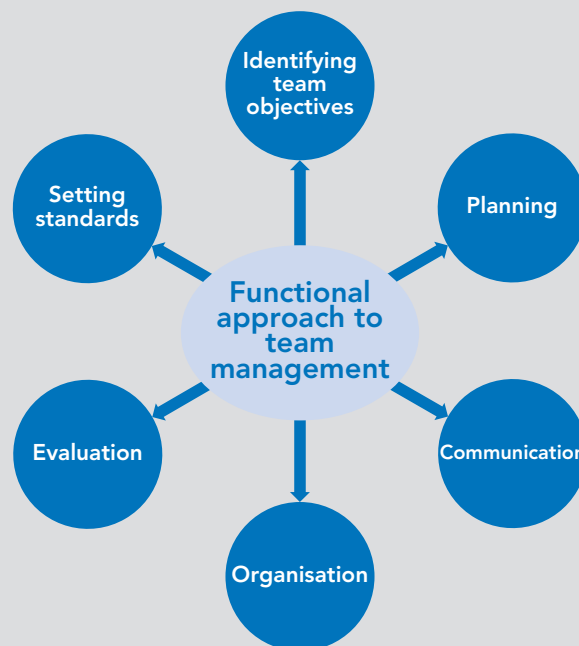Functional approach to team management (Adair, 1997)

Figure 3.2: Functional approach to team management (after Adair, 1997)

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5 Adair, J. (1997). *Effective Leadership Masterclass*. Pan.

©ABE

Different team management approaches

Team management approaches are often presented as a form of continuum between extremes. In reality, most managers will naturally fall into patterns of behaviour that are consistent with one approach. It is however, recommended that managers flex their management approach based upon circumstances. For example, if a fire breaks out, taking a **democratic** approach and discussing what the team should do next is inappropriate. Some approaches that can be found in business management literature include those shown in Table 3.

Autocratic	The team manager makes a decision without any consultation with the team. Often perceived as the team manager having control.
Democratic	Team members participate in discussions and contribute to the final decision when a consensus is reached. The manager is seen as supportive of the team's decisions.
Directional	The team manager directs the team with regard to the right things to do, plans next steps and concentrates on how to take action. The team's actions are monitored against set targets and measures.
Facilitation	Team members are given support in exploring possible solutions and answers. The team manager helps to engage the team members in deciding what they are going to do next.

Table 3: Different team management approaches

REVISION on the go

✎ OVER TO YOU

Activity 4: An appropriate team management approach

It is argued that for a team to be effective, a team manager will need to be able to flex their approach based upon the situation. In the table below consider and note down in what situations different team management approaches might be thought appropriate.

Approach	Appropriate when:
For example: Autocratic	*When the manager identifies a situation to be dangerous, for example a fire.*
Autocratic	
Democratic	
Directional	
Facilitation	

The effectiveness of team management approaches

Debates in business management literature rage about what impact different team management approaches have on the effectiveness of a team. The links between managerial approaches, motivation and job satisfaction are worth further exploration in your own studies. For example, Mayo (1949)[6] argues that workplace problems are best solved through human rather than technical means. If team members are given freedom over decision making and problem solving then job satisfaction, co-operation and group cohesion result. Modern management theory is therefore shaped by what Follett (1920) described as **coactive power**. This is where team managers need to share genuine power with team members as opposed to **coercive power** where the line manager has power over team members. This approach pushes power for decision making away from team managers to increase empowerment.

Quinn (1980)[8] adopts a coactive approach to the strategy development process. He argues that although managers need to adopt a rational strategy process they also need to recognise that they must act as a guide to gain consensus for action. Since decision making and external factors evolve in a messy emergence of strategy, managers need to co-ordinate feedback in a process of **logical incrementalism**.

The Hawthorne studies (conducted in the 1920s in the USA) led Mayo to conclude in 1949 that formality and the strict rules advocated by scientific management approaches failed to take into account the importance of human behaviour and interpersonal skills in managing effective teams. Developing informal approaches to drive human relations, alongside technical efficiencies, will increase job satisfaction, standards of output and communication, with resulting performance outcomes.

📄 CASE STUDY: TEAM OWNERSHIP OF STRATEGY

Andrea wants a strategy that doesn't gather dust

Andrea was the managing director of the national division of a global manufacturing company. When she began in her role she had worked on developing a strategy for the national business. Her approach to developing the strategy was directional. Although she involved the team, asking them to write sections of the strategy, she provided the template, the plan for action and the targets that needed to be hit. Twelve months later the strategy was not a living document. It sat on the desks of the senior team but was rarely referred to and Andrea felt there was no ownership of the strategy.

A new approach

Andrea invited an organisation development consultant to work with the team to facilitate their journey toward a shared strategy. This required Andrea to take a democratic approach to strategy development, and being part of the team rather than having the final say on any decisions being agreed.

Over a period of couple of months the team worked together on 'their' strategy, developing a shared mission statement, strategic pillars and a strategic plan.

6 Mayo, E. (1949) 'Hawthorne and the western electric company'. *Public Administration: Concepts and Cases*, pp.149–158.
7 Follett, M.P. (1920) *The New State: Group organization the solution of popular government*. Penn State Press.
8 Quinn, J.B., (1980). *Strategies for Change: Logical incrementalism*. Irwin Professional Publishing.

The result

To begin with the senior team carried copies of the mission statement and pillars with them. Andrea reported that time and again the strategic plan was referred to when decisions need to be made, meaning that a number of decisions that would have once been agreed to were rejected because the action would have taken the team away from the strategic plan. The team self-reported higher levels of satisfaction and were highly motivated to achieve the plan to which they had agreed.

✎ OVER TO YOU

Activity 5: Advantages and limitations of different management styles

Use your own research to investigate different management styles, then analyse the advantages and limitations of different management styles in relation to team working. You can use the chart below to record your findings.

Management style	Advantages	Limitations
For example – Directional	Gives clarity over expectations and outcomes. Ensures that the team is focused on organisational priorities.	Power is retained by manager, lacks consensus from the team which means the team members may not be motivated to achieve the goal. Also you get what you measure, so metrics may drive the wrong type of behaviour

3.2 Recommendations for managing teams to work collaboratively and achieve team objectives

In a fast-moving global economy, organisations rely heavily on teams to work collaboratively and achieve performance goals. Teams are required to work together, often remotely and over long distances in order to successfully tackle complex tasks and ensure that the right knowledge and skills are deployed at the right time to achieve organisational aims. But effective teams do not just happen by accident and even successful teams can sometimes end in failure. Of the 33 teams studied in his book *Groups that Work (and Those That Don't)* Hackman (1990) identified that probably only four teams were actually effective teams. There are, however, a number of recommendations that team managers can implement in order to improve the likelihood of teams working collaboratively and achieving team objectives.

Goals and plans

It is apparent from the literature that the establishment of clear team goals, which are mutually owned by the team members, is a critical component of team effectiveness. It makes sense that having stated **objectives** means that the team has clarity on what it is trying to achieve. However, it goes beyond just setting a vision for where the team wants to be in the future. A clear plan of how the goal will be achieved, allocating responsibilities with agreed timelines and milestones, will help the team manager to measure progress.

Hackman (1990) argued that specifying challenging team objectives can lead to successful collaborative working, but this can falter if key organisational support systems are not in place. For example, if teams do not have the training and development that they need or lack access to the expertise and knowledge required to complete tasks, then team performance suffers. Furthermore, the **reward system** needs to support collaboration and team work not just focus on rewarding individual contribution.

Finally, the manager must maintain a balance between support in engaging the team in the direction of travel and **empowerment**. If the manager sets no direction the team effectiveness may suffer from uncertainty about what is expected. At the same time, if the manager exerts too much authority in how a task is completed the team can feel suffocated and lose motivation to progress.

Openness

Once a group begins operating as a team, a team manager can sometimes assume that the team building work has been done. However, team effectiveness is not linear and at times the team as a whole, or individuals within the team, may experience performance issues. Team managers and team members must remain open to discussing difficulties that may be occurring either in regard to the way the team is working, or the performance of individual team members. At different times within the lifecycle of the team, individuals may benefit from more experienced members providing support or **mentorship**, especially where individuals are new to the team or less experienced in the task that needs to be achieved. Collaborating on improving team capability through team coaching interventions can result in greater performance effectiveness.

Regular reviews

Regular reviews provide the context to provide support and reinforce effective collaborative working. Regular review meetings enable the team to manage accountability for different tasks and priorities to be delivered in line with key milestones within the plan. This requires the team manager to plan and prepare effectively for team meetings. Turning up to a team meeting and expecting people to give an update will be seen as a waste of time. A clear agenda which focuses on ongoing actions, tasks and key milestones allows the team to spend the time pooling their resources and sharing key information to keep the team plan moving forward. It is also important for the manager to update the plan based upon the new information so that every team member has a clear line of sight as to where the team is performing against the agreed team goal. Where teams operate remotely and rely on virtual meetings as their main form of contact, it is important to include some face-to-face meetings to ensure that team relationships are maintained and remain strong.

Celebrating success

A business environment moves so quickly on to the next problem or task to be achieved, that managers often miss taking the time to celebrate achievements, which is essential in keeping motivation levels high and to recognise the progress that the team is making. Noting the personal progress of individuals as well as celebrating the achievement of key milestones must be seen as essential ingredients in celebrating success. There are different ways that success can be celebrated, including those shown in Table 4.

Food and drink	At the end of a long project or having achieved an important outcome, invite the team together for a meal. If getting people together after work is difficult, consider a team lunch.
Wall of pride	Document the work of the team and publicly share the story of success either on a physical board or on the organisation's intranet.
A minute of appreciation	Start a team meeting by congratulating the team for the work they have done and the extra effort put in. Recognising where people have gone beyond what is expected will help them know their efforts are appreciated.
Perks	Provide rewards that are tailored to the team. Gift cards, vouchers or being able to leave work early are all perks which can be offered.
Thank you	Some individuals get embarrassed if a big fuss is made but, whatever the success, remembering to say thank you for a job well done is essential.

Table 4: Different ways to celebrate success

REVISION
on the go

📄 CASE STUDY: WELL DONE AND NO BUTS ABOUT IT

Conor learns to celebrate success

Conor was taking part in a leadership development programme. The programme utilised a 360 degree feedback tool, which include a question about celebrating success. Conor's feedback was generally quite positive, but one of his areas of development was about celebrating success, which scored lowest of all his feedback scores.

In discussing his feedback with his team he discovered that although he would acknowledge work that had be done well, he always followed his positive comments with "but…" and move onto the problems or issues that required attention.

From that point on he promised to celebrate success and when highlighting something that had been done well by the team would follow up by saying "…and no buts about it" leaving discussion of next steps and issue resolution for a different section of the team meeting.

✏️ OVER TO YOU

Activity 6: Managing for collaboration

Reflect back on the team that you thought about in Activity 4: Working together on page 28. Recommend how the team could have been selected, developed and managed differently to improve collaboration and productivity.

READING LIST

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- Harung, Harald S. (1996) "Total management: integrating manager, managing and managed", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 11 Iss: 2, pp.4–21.

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Summary

The basis of any successful organisation is that of effective teams working collaboratively to achieve objectives. Regardless of whether a team manager is building a new team or managing an existing team they need to help team members develop challenging team performance goals, define roles, responsibilities and accountability and ensure that obstacles to performance are removed so that the team members can operate effectively.

Although there are many different management theories and a continuum of management approaches, the primary focus of management is to support individuals and teams in reaching their objectives. Modern management theory argues that workplace problems are best solved through human rather than technical means. If team members are given freedom over decision making and problem solving then job satisfaction, co-operation and group cohesion should result.

Why Team Working can Become Dysfunctional

Introduction

As a minimum, effective team work requires a balanced selection of members, planning, ongoing participation and collaboration, tenacity and the mutual support of each other, in order for the team to achieve its desired goals and to contribute to those of the organisation. However, team working is not always easy or successful.

This chapter explores the difficulties that might be faced in different settings, and how to recognise and diffuse the conflict that may arise.

Learning outcomes

On completing the chapter, you will be able to:

4   Outline the main reasons why team working can become dysfunctional and what can be done to re-establish collaborative working

Assessment criteria

4   Outline the main reasons why team working can become dysfunctional and what can be done to re-establish collaborative working

   4.1   Identify the main reasons why team working breaks down and the early signs that can indicate this is happening

   4.2   Recommend practical ways that collaborative work can be re-established given the additional challenges of modern organisations

Background

Enhancing team performance and team building is big business. You can search for team-building activities, social bonding or team training, but there is a wealth of organisations and consultants offering solutions to help your team develop their interpersonal relations, improve efficiency and increase operational success. There are thousands of books, websites and courses offering advice, tools and techniques to create a happy and productive team.

> " *Research evidence about team performance shows that teams usually do less well – not better – than the sum of their members' individual contributions.* "
>
> *Richard Hackman*

It could be argued that knowing what helps to make teams effective and work collaboratively is just one piece of the puzzle. The other piece is having an understanding about what makes teams break down and become ineffective. Why is it that a team can go from achieving performance goals one year and descend into farce the next? What causes team members to go from working together synergistically to falling into opposing camps who refuse to work with each other? Perhaps most mystifying of all are those groups made up of seemingly highly qualified, capable individuals who fail to come together, are unable to collaborate and end up performing significantly worse than the individuals performing on their own.

✎ OVER TO YOU

Activity 1: Signs that all may not be well

Think about experiences you have had working in teams. What signs can you identify that indicated that the team was not effective or was becoming dysfunctional?

For example – certain team members not being given access to information that they needed to do their job.

4.1 Why team working breaks down

Teams have the potential to perform significantly better than the sum of individuals working on their own. But, despite most organisations operating on the basis that team work is preferable to individuals working solo, the research evidence and experience of many employees is that teams regularly encounter obstacles to teams working well. Ineffective, dysfunctional and broken teams can be found in most organisations. Teams get stuck, lack purpose and seem incapable of working together.

Lack of clarity

Not knowing what is expected of you is detrimental to individual performance. In a team environment, a lack of clearly defined allocation of tasks and responsibility amplifies confusion and lack of action. The poem "Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody" perhaps sums up the confusion of lack of clarity in this respect: "It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody, when Nobody did what Anybody could have done". It may be that an individual is not clear on what tasks they are supposed to have responsibility for; perhaps one individual assumes that another team member is getting on with a task, while the other team member is assuming the first individual is responsible.

Disunity can arise if team members do not understand what others contribute to the overall task. This may lead some team members to think that particular individuals are not contributing enough, due to a misunderstanding about the work an individual is doing. Also, because some activities may be behind the scenes or take a while to show tangible outcomes, team members may assume that nothing is happening.

Perhaps the biggest complaint from team members is if there is a belief that someone in the team is not working as hard as the other team members. If there is a lack of planning, expectations in terms of key milestones and failure to enforce delivery standards, then projects can begin to slip and individuals may fail to meet the needs of other team members who may be more disciplined or be focused on different priorities. For example, if an individual is delivering work of a poor standard or is missing a deadline the whole team may suffer as a result. This can lead to friction, frustration and conflict if team members begin to feel that their reputation is being damaged because of the actions of one person.

When individuals are drawn into a group and told that they are a team, it does not mean that they instantly get on well and everyone becomes good friends. Sometimes personality clashes can happen and interpersonal relationships can become fraught. If the team manager does not deal with interpersonal friction, and provide clarity on expected norms of behaviour, the result can be disastrous for the team health in the long run. Conflict can occur, with individuals fighting to get other team members to be on their side of the argument. Battle lines are drawn and squabbles can escalate quickly, especially if they become serious or personal.

Therefore, a lack of clarity in different areas can result in loss of efficiency for team members as meetings and team processes can drag on and become more time consuming than if individuals were allowed to work independently.

Group think

Janis (1972)[1] suggested that team decision making can be negatively impacted by **group think** which is where a group fails to test the reality upon which they are basing group decisions. This can result in teams failing to weigh decisions based upon what is acceptable morally or ethically

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1 Janis, I.L. (1972, rev. 1982). Victims of groupthink: a psychological study of foreign-policy decisions and fiascoes. Houghton Mifflin

because of group pressure, which can lead to individuals relying on others to make important decisions without discussion or question. Teams who succumb to group think are prone to down-playing negative feedback, rewarding conformity and suppressing unpopular ideas or information that contradicts the group's perceived truth.

📄 CASE STUDY: GROUP THINK IN BUSINESS

Petrov feels honoured

The chief executive of a mining company wanted to implement a new pattern of work shifts for the organisation and formed a work committee to investigate the idea. Membership on the committee was by invitation only, and receiving an invitation directly from the chief executive was seen as prestigious. Therefore when Petrov received his invitation he felt valued and honoured to be part of the select group.

A pre-determined outcome?

When the committee met for the first time, the chief executive set out his plan for the new shift patterns. The job of the committee was to investigate possible options but the chief executive made it very clear that he had a preference for a particular shift pattern.

Several members of the committee were sceptical about changing shift patterns, and were uneasy about the effect that the preference highlighted by the chief executive would have on productivity in the mine.

Different options were explored, with the committee analysing advantages and disadvantages of different shift patterns, but despite different viewpoints and opinions being expressed, the committee remained aware that the chief executive's desire meant that independent thinking was discouraged. Petrov found that although the committee was supposed to be empowered to make a decision, the focus tended to be on the group's recommendation aligning to the chief executive's preferred pattern.

The supposed unanimous decision of the committee was in fact a symptom of group think since many members of the committee apologetically expressed reservations privately about the new shift patterns but willingly self-censored themselves in public.

Rogue team members

Not all members of a team are equal and, where particularly strong characters are involved, a team can become a group of followers and mutuality in decision-making can be lost due to domination by one or more individuals. Katzenbach and Smith (1993, see page 28, footnote 3) argue that a group succeeds or fails as a team, not individuals, but an individual can affect the effectiveness of the whole team if they are unable to work cohesively with other members. Sometimes, it could be as simple as team members not having learned how to work together. On other occasions, it can be that a single team member is deliberately behaving badly, in order to exert control or act out his or her own insecurities or issues. Where a team has become dysfunctional, team managers may need to contemplate changing the composition of the team if individual members are not working. This is particularly true of senior leadership teams where it is recognised that senior leaders will often assume dominant positions and attempt to carry this over into the team environment. In short, they cannot, and team members need to understand that hierarchy becomes disrupted in a team environment. The main focus needs to be on skill not title.

✏ OVER TO YOU

Activity 2: Ground rules

What 'ground rules' would you recommend to be put in place for your own team to prevent an individual team member 'going rogue'?

For example – team members should ensure that their communication is clear, accurate, open and honest.

Interdependence versus independence

According to Uhl-Bien and Graen (1995)[2] there is a difference in **self-management** between individuals and teams. When individuals are self-managing they seek to accept a high degree of responsibility relating to their own work tasks and plan, and will make decisions on their own. In team self-management, individuals must act interdependently and collaboratively. Within the team context, problem-solving and decision-making is no longer an exercise in independence; rather the team must work together to agree what approach to take. Therefore, the interdependence between team members conflicts with individual self-managing activity, which may be inappropriate within a team context or have a negative impact on team work.

Taking responsibility therefore is not simply about an individual taking ownership for their own behaviour and actions, but rather a distributed responsibility for the team behaviour and delivery of tasks. Breakdown can therefore occur when team responsibility conflicts with individual responsibility and where an individual's preference for self-management is incompatible with team self-management.

✏ OVER TO YOU

Activity 3: Overcoming barriers to success

Consider any type of team of which you have been a part. What were the main challenges and barriers to success? Were they overcome successfully? How was that achieved?

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2 Graen, G.B. and Uhl-Bien, M. (1995). 'Relationship-based approach to leadership: Development of leader-member exchange (LMX) theory of leadership over 25 years: Applying a multi-level multi-domain perspective'. The Leadership Quarterly, 6(2), pp.219–247.

4.2 Recommendations for re-establishing collaborative work

Team members are likely to have different and mixed reactions to the breakdown of team working. Some individuals will attempt to avoid conflict and hope that things will work out eventually. Others will seek to place blame for the breakdown on a particular individual, situation or external agency, creating a 'them' and 'us' dynamic in an attempt to protect themselves. Neither approach will successfully get back what has been lost. Re-establishing collaborative team working requires the team to take proactive steps to rediscover team cohesion and move forward to manage for effective performance.

Re-establish roles

Giving clarity and transparency in the team dynamic requires the team manager to meet with individuals concerned and the team as a group to re-establish roles, responsibilities, deadlines and effective working. This involves:

- stating the final performance goals of the team;
- setting deadlines for tasks to be completed, and expected standards;
- defining each individual's role and agreeing the tasks they are responsible for.

Over a period of time, a team may not notice that there has been slippage because the original psychological contract of the team has remained static while the situation and circumstances that the team is operating in has moved on. Ideally the conversation about roles and responsibilities remains a dynamic and live conversation within the team. However, speed of change and time pressure may lead to these discussions being put on hold.

Over time, teams will move backwards and forwards along the stages of team development (see Chapter 1, section 1.2) as a result of changes happening within and to the team. Taking notice and taking action will be essential to getting the team working collaboratively again sooner rather than later. Team members themselves may be operating outside their originally agreed roles due to changes in the scope of the task or speed of change, meaning that new tasks have been badly defined. Highlighting communication breakdowns and taking some time to talk, even in the maelstrom of an unrelenting business environment, will quickly enable the team to discuss what people are working on and highlight areas where tasks are unassigned or duplication is taking place. Even if an individual or team performance issue cannot be addressed immediately, it is still possible to get project milestones and deadlines back on track by revisiting plans and revising them in line with the new reality. The important thing is to have a commitment from all team members to achieve team performance goals.

📄 CASE STUDY: MOVING TO A NEW WAY OF WORKING

Mohammed joins a new team

Mohammed had recently joined a multi-professional health care team in a large hospital. The team had been established for almost twelve months when Mohammed had joined and had made many positive changes in working practices. However, despite the new team establishing new roles and responsibilities, team members had begun to revert to their more traditional team roles. As a result, the team was experiencing a clash between the old ways of working with the new ways that the team was expected to deliver the service. This led to an increasing level of conflict within the team.

Team members were reporting a frustration at "running to stay still" and having to work extra hours because there was "too much work to do". This resulted in individual team members feeling that the new ways of working were less effective.

Re-establishing roles

Given the growing conflict in the team, the team manager organised a team event to explore roles and responsibilities and re-establish what was expected of each team member. The team revisited their job descriptions and agreed what tasks fell within their area of responsibility and what they did not do within their role. A review of the day-to-day work of individual team members revealed a number of surprises relating to the assumptions that other team members were making about who was doing what. The team also examined what tasks and service areas each individual member was best suited to deliver for particular aspects of the service.

Mohammed found that the team event was the first time he felt the team had worked collaboratively since he had joined. He left the event with an explicit understanding of what role other members had and where the boundaries of different responsibilities began and ended. The team had also worked through different areas where they felt the team needed to work more efficiently.

✎ OVER TO YOU

Activity 4: What is your role?

Think about the role you play within your team. Write down two or three significant aspects of your own role. Consider whether your team members have an accurate understanding of your role. Who needs to know more about your role?

Team working versus outcome

The Action Centred Leadership model (Adair, 1997, see page 42 footnote 10) identified that there are three interrelated functions of a leader:

- **Task** – setting and achieving the team's performance goal.
- **Team** – building and developing an effective team.
- **Individual** – supporting individuals to achieve their full potential.

Adair (1997, see above) argued that team managers have to balance the need to maintain team working (people) with the process to achieve the outcome (task); this can be achieved by paying attention to all three interdependent variables with an emphasis on managing the needs of each area.
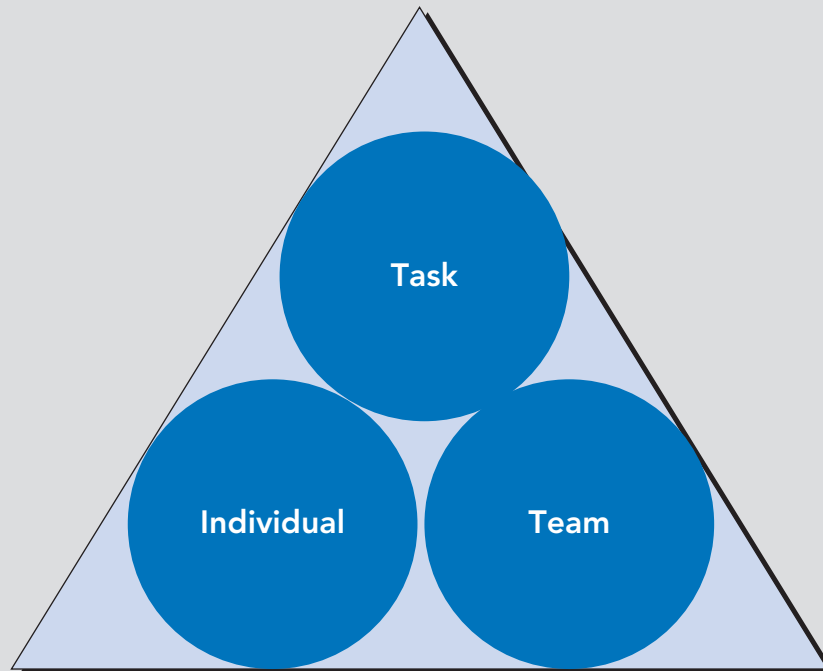
Action Centred Leadership (Adair, 1997)

Figure 4.1: Action centred leadership

Acknowledgement of team member contribution

When teams are struggling to work collaboratively it is important that the team manager reminds the team as a whole the contribution that each team member makes to the team and the importance of that contribution to the successful achievement of the team performance goal. There is a reason why each team member is part of the team: that their skills, knowledge and experience combine to create a dynamic which makes success more likely. Therefore it is essential that the team manager makes time to support and acknowledge all contributions. This is of particular importance for team members who are new to the team or who may be inexperienced. Regardless of rank, it is the sum of the parts that together deliver the extraordinary, and this can be lost if particular team members are struggling to hit their deadlines or manage their task when other members of the team are succeeding.

Furthermore, the team manager must also acknowledge that individual team members may require additional support, either in terms of other team members coming alongside them to provide assistance in hitting a tight deadline or completing a task or ensuring that the individual team members have the skills and training they require to competently accomplish the tasks they have been set. This support requires the team manager to work with each team member on a one-to-one basis to identify any development needs and work on a personal development plan to close any gaps.

Early intervention

Since conflict arises from difference, it is hardly surprising that, from time to time, a group of different individuals working together will experience conflict. Differences, which contribute to conflict, include:

- Differences in views and beliefs with regard to how individual members understand how the world works.

- Personal preferences regarding how information is shared and processed.

- Team members having different priorities.

- Different opinions about how tasks should be done.

These differences can make collaboration complicated. It is essential that team managers address difficulties and signs of conflict at an early stage. Destructive conflict may occur because of an individual member making a power play to exert their priorities above those of their colleagues; this can then lead to a destructive cycle of competition and negativity. It is essential that when difficulties arise they are dealt with quickly and constructively. Recognising that there is a difficulty, and working through and reviewing the differences that are at play, will enable the team to manage criticism, evenly distribute power and harness diversity to make the team stronger and deliver greater levels of performance.

Therefore, it is necessary to monitor team relationships and proactively resolve any conflicts when they arise.

Mediation

Sometimes conflict cannot be resolved within the team, despite attempts to counter any negative behaviours. On occasion, where dysfunction threatens to be destructive, it is advisable to engage specialists temporarily. Involving specialists may include individual coaches for specific team members or a full team intervention, in the form of team building to increase team co-operation and air any grievances that are unresolved.

If the conflict is between two members or factions of the team, mediation may be necessary to find a solution to move the team forward. This is perhaps the most difficult type of conflict to manage, because it requires the team manager to remain impartial and avoid siding with a particular party.

Celebrate progress

In corporate life, celebrating success is often considered to be an activity that would be good if the team had time for it. Furthermore, success is usually left to a celebration at the end of a journey, a future prize to be won but which has little relationship to the day-to-day work of the team. However, an end-of-year bonus will not be a source of motivation when the team is facing difficulties ten months before the end of the project, whereas paying a percentage of the bonus on delivery of key milestones will support ongoing motivation. Hackman (1990, see Reading list) suggests that team managers should plan ways to celebrate progress and maintain **motivation**. This is especially true in the difficult places, where progress is a hard-fought battle and it is easy to lose sight of what the team are working towards.

Creating meaningful rewards at key milestones, and being consistent in recognising the contribution of individual team members with appropriate praise and reward, will ensure that celebrating progress in in line with the team's actions. This might include a celebratory team meal at the end of a key phase of a project or ensuring that all achievements are celebrated and shared in some way by the team as an appreciation of the work they are doing.

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- Braun, Frank C., Avital, Michel, Martz, Ben (2012) "Action-centered team leadership influences more than performance", *Team Performance Management: An International Journal*, Vol. 18 Iss: 3/4, pp.176–195.

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- Hackman, Richard (1990) *Groups That Work (and those that don't)* Wiley.

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Summary

There is a belief that teams have the potential to perform significantly better than the sum of individuals working on their own. However, research evidence and the personal experience of many employees is that teams regularly encounter obstacles to working well. Therefore, team effectiveness not only requires an ability to build teams who can work together collaboratively but also the management of ineffective and broken teams, which can be found in most organisations. Responding appropriately to teams who get stuck, lack purpose and seem incapable of working together is essential if team dysfunction is to be corrected.

The reaction that different team members will have to the dysfunction will be mixed, from attempting to avoid conflict to placing blame. Neither approach will be successful in returning the team to effective team working. Instead, taking steps to re-establish collaborative team working requires a rediscovery of team cohesion and managing for effective performance.

Introduction

As well as needing to be qualified, **soft skills** have become increasingly important as people may be required to work as part of different teams on a variety of projects. Having business awareness, being responsive and having a 'can do' attitude is essential, as is a willingness to work collaboratively with different people.

This concluding chapter will provide tools and techniques for you to evaluate your own skillset in relation to team working in order to optimise your input to the teams in which you work. This will ultimately maximise those teams' contributions to meeting business objectives.

Learning outcomes

On completing the chapter, you will be able to:

5 **Analyse your own skills and team working traits in order to understand how you can contribute effectively to team working**

Assessment criteria

5 **Analyse your own skills and team working traits in order to understand how you can contribute effectively to team working**

5.1 Analyse your own skills and team working traits in order to understand the roles you are likely to be most effective at performing in a team context

5.2 Evaluate the challenges you might face, and present to others, when working as part of a team, and what action you can take to minimise the negative impact of these factors on collaborative working

Level 4 Dynamic and Collaborative Teams

Background

Team work has the potential to contribute strength through a collective effort to be productive and open, providing the environment for which organisational problems and issues can be tackled.

Researchers have discovered that there are a number of complementary skills and team working traits which can contribute to effective team working, Understanding your own team working traits and those of your team members can enable you to utilise the qualities of individuals for the advantage of the team. It is important to remember when exploring human traits that it is not about a specific trait being better or worse than another, rather it is helpful to identify and explore how each trait can be used to deliver the best outcomes for the team. It is worth noting that classifications of different **personality traits** are not without their critics, who argue that it is not possible to quantify something as unique as an individual personality.

By planning work, allocating tasks and reviewing performance it is possible for the team manager to structure the team in a way that will release the full potential of each team member to enhance the performance of the team as a whole. Therefore, delegating responsibilities can be a targeted effort aimed at building and maintaining the team based on who they are, and what they can achieve for the team.

✏ OVER TO YOU

Activity 1: Explore personality traits

You can find a number of personality tests online which will provide you with some information about your personal traits. Search for a personality trait test online.

- **What do the results confirm about what you already know about yourself?**
- **What surprised you about the results?**
- **Based on the results, what one action can you take that will help you to utilise your traits and contribute more to your team?**

For example – http://www.outofservice.com/bigfive/

5.1 Analyse your own skills and team working traits

There are different models that identify team traits and each model will define traits in different ways. However, regardless of the definitions used, what makes a team successful remains the same. First, consider how the team members relate to each other and work with each other in order to complete a task. Secondly, how the team has a sense of belonging to a team, and find meaning in the team performance goals they have set. Finally, those individual team members develop their own capabilities and support each other in improving their skills and knowledge. It is, therefore, important when exploring traits that you go beyond simply being able to describe your traits but also consider how these can be used to develop your contribution to team performance.

Team roles

In 1993, Dr Meredith Belbin, a British researcher and management theorist, identified nine possible team roles that individuals play within a team, based upon different types of behaviour and performance. Understanding and developing the behaviours and team roles within the team can improve a team's performance. Belbin proposed that if a team is constructed of individuals who exhibit all nine types of behaviours then the team will be highly successful. The nine roles identified by Belbin are shown in Table 1.

Resource investigator	Seeks out and finds new ideas, opportunities and resources for the team. Enthusiastic but can lose interest and be over-optimistic.
Team worker	The versatile diplomat of the team, who encourages the team to co-operate and gets work done on behalf of the team. Avoids conflict and can be indecisive.
Co-ordinator	Keeps the team aligned to its goals and delegates tasks to meet objectives. However, might over-delegate and not take their full share of the workload.
Plant	Creative and will find novel solutions to problems. Generates ideas but can be forgetful and fail to communicate effectively.
Monitor evaluator	The impartial judge who is strategic, logical and weighs all options. Dispassionate but can be uninspiring and at times critical of others.
Specialist	The specialist who has expertise in a key area, however their focus is narrow and can produce information overload.
Shaper	Provides the drive to keep team momentum moving forward. Overcomes obstacles but can sometimes offend in pushing to get things done.
Implementer	Practical and strategic, turning ideas into action and organising work. Reliable but can hold tightly to the plan demonstrating inflexibility in the face of change.
Completer finisher	Effective at finishing work off and checking for errors. Conscientious quality controller but can let perfect get in the way of good.

Table 1: Belbin's nine team roles

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✏️ OVER TO YOU

Activity 2: Belbin team roles

What team role(s) do you play? Search online for a free Belbin team role assessment. Completing the test will increase your self-awareness and provide a useful start point for discussing your personal development.

For example: http://testyourself.psychtests.com/testid/3113

📄 CASE STUDY: AN IMBALANCE CAUSES CONFLICT

Franco and Aldo learn to collaborate

Franco and Aldo worked for different teams within an innovative technology company. The company was working on an important new product launch, which was essential to the future growth of the company. Team members had been seconded onto the project from several different teams across the business. The problem was that the product development project had fallen behind schedule because of a conflict between project team members.

Team development

A decision was made to address the issues that the project team was having; part of the development involved the use of the Belbin tool to understand the different team roles. It was discovered that the project team lacked some specific roles in the team but had too many of other team roles. Franco was one of three specialists on the team. A decision was made to restructure the team, swapping some team members to close gaps in team role types in order to make the team more productive and ensure that the working styles of team members were balanced across the team. Aldo, a shaper, was bought into the team at this point.

A balanced team

The introduction of new team members to balance the team roles in the project team was combined with further team development to improve communication. The team began to work productively together which meant the project got back on schedule and led to a successful product launch.
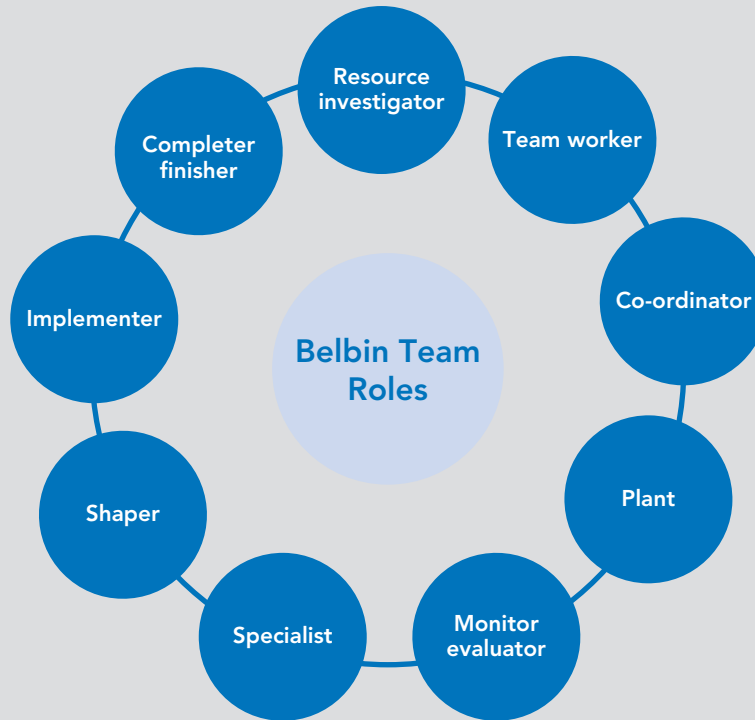
Belbin team roles

Figure 5.1: Belbin team roles

The team context

Hackman (2002)[1] developed the five factor model to describe the team context which could increase the effectiveness of the team. The five factors include those shown in Table 2.

Being a real team	This requires the team members to have a shared task, clearly stated boundaries and stable group membership.
Compelling direction	The team requires clear, challenging goals. Team members need to understand their own contribution to the overall mission of the team.
Enabling structure	Although many of the structural aspects of the team will be determined by the organisation, the team can exercise control over the aspects of task variety, so who will carry out the task and the way in which the task is accomplished.
Supportive context	The framework of support is the result of reward structures, training and development and access to information. These elements require co-operation between team members and guidance from the team manager in order to be a positive influence.
Expert coaching	The day-to-day management of the team will help to identify the support required by individual members with regard to skills, knowledge and capability development. The team manager may also identify what stage of team development in which the team is operating, as discussed in Chapter 1, section 1.2.

Table 2: Five factors of the team context

1 Hackman, J.R. (2002). *Leading Teams: Setting the stage for great performances.* Harvard Business Press.

As an individual team member, the five factor model helps you to ensure that you are contributing your skills and capabilities appropriately to the success of the team. This can be achieved by reviewing the five factors against the current situation of the team, ensuring that an appropriate team structure is in place and that you are contributing to a supportive environment in which your colleagues are able to develop their own skills.

✏️ OVER TO YOU

Activity 3: Five factor model analysis

Consider a team that you are currently part of and think about the following questions. Then add your answers to the third column.		
Being a real team	Who is involved in the team? Do they have complementary skills and experiences?	
Compelling direction	What is the purpose of the team? How well do they achieve team goals and aims?	
Enabling structure	What team processes and activities work well? What does not work so well?	
Supportive context	What are the positive features of the organisational context? What are the negative features of the organisational context?	
Expert coaching	What training and development do the team members engage in?	

Conditions of effective teams (Hackman, 2002)

Figure 5.2: Conditions of effective teams

5.2 Evaluate and minimise challenges to collaborative working

As we have explored previously, the effectiveness of collaborative working in teams as a way of delivering organisation performance is rarely simple. It is important that you research and review the literature for yourself to evaluate and minimise challenges to collaborative working and decide what works for your own team dynamic.

Managing the flip-side

We know that team work can bring out the best in people and help them to achieve more than they would be able to when working on their own. The flip-side of course is that individual personality traits can bring out the worst in people when they try to work with others in a team environment. Managing personality traits and balancing the competing personalities within a team requires a recognition of differences in order to elicit high performance. But that requires considerable understanding and a commitment to learning about other people's personality traits.

Different personality traits highlight that a group of people will all see the world differently. These unique perspectives result in individual **paradigms** being brought into the team environment. This can be both a positive and negative thing: positive because the diversity of perspectives opens up new possibilities and innovative thinking and negative because it increases the opportunity for dysfunction if individual perspectives are suppressed.

Minimising the impact of the flip-side of personality traits means that the team manager and team members must work together to offset bad personality traits and utilise good personality traits in order to achieve **synergy**. Including personality trait analysis as part of the recruitment process can help to increase your understanding of whether a new hire is a good fit for the team. Additionally, personality traits can be used to help team members support each other, by taking into account personalities that are supportive of each other.

> ✏️ OVER TO YOU
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> **Activity 4: Your role in improving team effectiveness**
>
> **Consider the team that you evaluated in Activity 6: Managing for collaboration on page 44. Reflect on your own role in this team in order to identify how you could help improve team effectiveness if the same project was to be repeated.**

Awareness of others

Focusing on issues can become habitual in a team environment, especially if the team is under pressure. It can also be easier to focus on the things that annoy you about someone rather than paying attention to the things that they do well. After all, problems demand our immediate attention a lot more than anything that goes well. But if team members are to minimise challenges to collaborative working it is essential that individuals commit to being aware of what people contribute to the team. This includes placing a spotlight on the strengths and talents that each individual brings to the team and placing a high value on enabling individuals to play to those strengths. High levels of performance are much more likely to occur if individuals are able to be their best, rather than being maligned for the potential issues they might present to others.

📄 CASE STUDY: BUILDING TRUST TO IMPROVE TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

Dana was part of a leadership team in a pharmaceutical business. The business had been going through a change programme and had recently relocated to a new office building. Communication breakdowns had been wasting a significant amount of management time, which in turn was impacting team performance. The managing director recognised that there was an urgent requirement to improve team effectiveness to prevent the costly loss of management time, and the corresponding productivity issues further down the organisation.

Team profiling

The leadership team development programme included the use of team profiling and exploration of team behaviours to increase team members' self-awareness and the awareness of the strengths of others in the team. Dana found the programme challenging as it pushed her and the other members of the leadership team outside their comfort zone. But, however uncomfortable the process, Dana found that getting to know the strengths of other members of the team helped to improve her relationship with them.

Creating opportunities for team work

One of the many outcomes of the programme was a realisation of how the different personality traits of the team members could be used to create opportunities to flex the leadership team's response to different situations. The team began to experiment with utilising the strengths of the team in response to particular environments and situations. The results of the programme were immediate. The team welcomed the enhanced level of self and team awareness, including feedback about performance, key strengths and development areas. The more open environment led to healthier team relationships and led to agile working. The outcome was an effective leadership team, saving time and delivering performance goals.

Maximising team effectiveness

Being able to work within a team environment is essential to your employability. It is a skill and requires you to work to maximise team effectiveness through a commitment to the team's objectives. Whether you are joining a new team, or have been a member of a team for some time, you need to be aware of what your roles and responsibilities are and where you fit in the team, and

the wider organisation. Evaluating your contribution, both in terms of individual performance and in working collaboratively with others in the team, is an essential component of maximising team effectiveness.

You are responsible for identifying gaps in your knowledge, skills and capabilities that affect your ability to contribute to team performance goals. You will need to acknowledge areas where you need support or training and take responsibility for learning and skills development. Openness to giving and receiving feedback is part of this process.

You also need to be accountable for delivering the tasks you have been given, holding other team members accountable for their contributions and working together with the team to deliver performance goals.

Finally, working collaboratively with others requires that you celebrate success: your success, individual team members' success and the success of the team as a whole. Recognising others, giving verbal feedback for a job well done or acknowledging progress are as important as the celebrations that occur when your team finally achieves its goal.

✏️ OVER TO YOU

Activity 5: Personal development plan

- **Construct a self-development plan for the next 6 to 12 months to improve your contribution to team working.**

My goal:

Development goal – What are you going to do?	How? What action will you take?	What resource or support do you need?	When are you going to do it by?

READING LIST

- Manning, Tony, Parker, Richard and Pogson, Graham (2006) "A revised model of team roles and some research findings", *Industrial and Commercial Training*, Vol. 38 Iss: 6, pp.287 –96

- Prichard, Jane S., Stanton, Neville A. (1999) "Testing Belbin's team role theory of effective groups", *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 18 Iss: 8, pp.652 – 665.

- Rao, M.S. (2016) "Collaborate to build effective teams to achieve organizational excellence and effectiveness", *Industrial and Commercial Training*, Vol. 48 Iss: 1, pp.24–28.

Summary

Working collaboratively requires that you evaluate your own skillset in relation to team working in order to optimise your input to the teams of which you are a part, and maximise the team's contribution to meeting business objectives. Developing an awareness of your personality traits, strengths and weaknesses, and understanding the contribution made by your team members, are an essential part of team effectiveness.

There are several different models that identify team traits and each model defines traits in different ways. However, regardless of the definitions used, what makes a team successful remains the same: how the team members relate to complete a task; a sense of belonging; finding meaning in the team performance goals they have set; and individual team members developing their own capabilities.

The effectiveness of collaborative working in teams as a way of delivering organisation performance is rarely simple but it is possible to evaluate and minimise challenges to collaborative working and decide what works best for your own team dynamic.

Glossary

Accountability   Being responsible and accountable for your own actions and decisions.

Agility   The ability of a team to move quickly and respond to changes.

Autocratic   The team manager who makes a decision without any consultation with the team. Often perceived as the team manager having control.

Co-active power   Where genuine power is shared with team members.

Coercive power   Where the team manager has power over the team members.

Collaborate   Join forces with others to work jointly.

Communication   Two-way process to create understanding.

Cross-functionally   Working across a number of different functions to achieve a goal.

Culture   Ideas, customers and behaviour of people in your organisation.

Democratic   Team members participate in discussions and contribute to the final decision when a consensus is reached. The manager is seen as supportive of the team's decisions.

Directional   The team manager directs the team in regards to the right things to do, plans next steps and concentrates on how to take action. The team actions are monitored against set targets and measures.

Diversity   A range of individual differences.

Dysfunctional   A situation where a team is not able to operate effectively.

Empowerment   A situation where power or authority is given to a team to take some action.

Facilitation   Team members are given support in exploring possible solutions and answers. The team manager helps to engage the team members in deciding what they are going to do next.

Flexible working   A work situation where individuals have flexibility on how long, where and when they work.

Formal team   A team identified as part of the organisation design, depicted by an organisational chart.

Functional lines   Organisation structure divided into functional areas such as IT, Finance, HR or Marketing.

Group   Individuals who depend on each other to complete a task, but do not work as a team. Although they may have a common interest they do not share a common purpose.

Group think   Decision-making in a group where thinking is unchallenged and of poor quality.

Hierarchical   A succession or order of rank.

Horizontal teams   A team with a flat structure and few levels of management.

Informal teams   A team not part of the formal organisational structure, but formed due to special interests, talent specialisms, personal relationships or a shared hobby.

Logical incrementalism   An incremental process of strategy development and implementation.

Matrix working   Practice of individuals working across the organisation with more than one management reporting line.

Mentorships   Guidance provided by a trusted adviser.

Motivation   Desire to do something.

Multi-national enterprises (MNEs) Organisation which produces goods and services in more than one country.

Objectives   Specific results that the team seeks to achieve within an agreed time frame.

Offshoring   Where an organisation moves some of its processes overseas.

Outsourcing   Provision of goods or services from an outside supplier.

Paradigms   Pattern or model of thinking or belief.

Participative system   A system where individuals are encouraged to contribute to decision making and problem-solving.

Personality traits In-built tendencies of an individual towards a particular action or inaction.

Productivity Efficiency of an employee population.

Psychological Mental and emotional needs of an individual.

Remote working Working away from the office using technology.

Reward system A system of recognition for work done.

Self-actualisation An individual achieving the fulfilment of their talent potential.

Self-management Application of behaviour in a particular situation.

Silos A situation where different teams do not share information within the organisational setting.

Social needs Human needs, which are met when relating to others. For example, sense of belonging, companionship and acceptance.

Soft skills Interpersonal attributes that help you to interact effectively with other people.

Synergy Co-operation between individuals or teams to produce an effect greater than the individual parts.

Talent Natural skill or ability.

Team A group of people who are motivated to work together in order to achieve a shared purpose.

Team huddles Team gathering to strategise, communicate and celebrate.

Team work A group acting together to achieve a result.

Vertical teams A team with a tall structure with authority being delegated down the organisation.

Video-conferencing Communication via video technology.

Virtual teams A team which is dispersed across different geographic locations and uses information technology to communicate.

Work-life balance Balance between family and work activities.