chapter SIX

Building Successful Teams and Organizations

Learning Objectives

- Describe the main elements in successful team building.
- Identify and determine how to proactively manage those who do not work well in teams.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the unique conflicts that are likely to occur during mergers and acquisitions as well as how to navigate them successfully.
- Describe how to manage in difficult economic circumstances.

JOHN AT THE BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

When John Smith took over as the head of his agency, the first thing he did was meet individually with each member of his inherited team. He wanted to get to know them better, build rapport, and understand their strengths and career goals. He asked each manager about the dynamics within their own work teams: about morale, employee turnover, and perceptions about any obstacles to the fullest achievement of the organization's mission.

What he learned did not surprise him. John has five managers, each heading departments of ten to twenty-five employees. Although resources seem perennially short, some of the teams exhibit camaraderie, low turnover, and success in the accomplishment of their missions. Two of the five departments seem plagued with poor productivity, high turnover, and even occasional litigation.

John's first step is to work with his managers on the skills and practices found in Chapter Five. Visible improvements were seen in all departments after each one implemented processes to track employee satisfaction and morale, began using exit surveys to learn from mistakes, strengthened their employee recognition program (the previous one was solely built on years of service), and to provide developmental feedback to all employees. Turnover is down and productivity is up. In fact, some of his seasoned employees have decided to stay on after having reached the years of service needed for full retirement—this was unheard of in the past. Yet those two departments continue to perform at lower levels than the others in the organization. John now believes the root cause of this problem lies in the nature of their teamwork or lack thereof. He is looking for ideas to improve team functioning within these two departments but some of what he learns will be helpful for the other departments as well.

At its core, managing means the ability to create and sustain productive teams. Whether you control who plays on your team or not, there are actions you can take to improve the functioning of your team(s) in order to enhance morale, improve productivity, build trust, and reduce unproductive conflict, even during difficult transitions such as mergers and acquisitions.

DO WE STILL NEED TEAMWORK?

It is clear that young entrants into the workforce are at least as comfortable communicating through technological interfaces as with face-to-face discussions, maybe even more so. Families are smaller, so many people under thirty were raised as only children, often geographically distant from extended families. This increasing tendency toward individualism has important consequences for the workplace and for teamwork. Yet research clearly indicates that collaboration nearly always yields superior outcomes compared to individual efforts (DeCusatis, 2008; Deutsch & Coleman, 2000). Many people have a love-hate relationship with teamwork — they know it is necessary but feel they would rather work alone.

Board Dysfunction and Corporate Profitability

> In 1999, Coca-Cola Co.'s CEO, Douglas Ivester, was surprised in a Chicago airport by two members of the flagging company's board of directors. According to the directors, Ivester's hard-handed tactics with local bottlers and European regulators had alienated business partners and shareholders, leaving him with a reputation for not listening to the board. Mistakenly believing that the two directors spoke for the entire board, Ivester abruptly resigned. Shares of Coke fell 12 percent in two days as the board and investors struggled to make sense of what had happened. The incident would affect the company for years, and Coca-Cola would have three CEOs from 1997 to 2004. Certainly conflict is inevitable in any organization, but, with the right approach in place, boards can greatly increase the opportunity to resolve disagreements before they get a chance to get out of control. (Hasson, 2006, p. 77)

Teamwork and clear communication are indispensable in modern, global organizations. The work products of teams typically surpass those created through individual effort. This is particularly true when one's customers, vendors, and the audience are highly diverse. Diverse work teams are more able than homogenous teams to generate creative ideas and proposals. In this case, **diversity** refers to all the ways in which individuals may differ: gender, race, ethnicity, age, technical abilities and backgrounds, sexual orientation, religiosity and religious affiliation, social class, work style, worldview, and so on.

BEST PRACTICES FOR TEAM BUILDING

Rajagopal and Rajagopal (2006) state that well-developed teams "include clear identification of goals, clarity of roles, common feeling, motivation, commitment and collaborative attitude" (p. 5). Do these words describe your team?

If not, this chapter will help you learn how to bring needed change to your group's functioning. Experts on team building usually focus on several key areas, including methods for creating and building a team, how teams think and communicate, the role of trust building and repair in teams, team conflict, and dysfunction.

Consider the Team's Purpose

When creating teams, consider their primary purpose. Teams tasked with creative duties will need to have maximum diversity, including diverse demographic characteristics as well as educational backgrounds and life experiences. Teams tasked with implementing policies or changes will need good communication, flexibility, empathy, and social-emotional skills. In some teams, you may want people who are as similar as possible to work together but in others you may want the opposite. A team's composition should be well matched to its purpose. As mentioned Chapter Five, Rohlander (1999) suggests that it helps to explicitly define the team's goals and to remind the team of its goals often. Managers should consider the team's purpose when deciding who should be chosen for that team (DeCusatis, 2008).

Teams need a little shaking up now and then. For example, a study by Skilton and Dooley (2010) provided evidence that teams who have worked together on previous projects may find it difficult to match their success on subsequent projects. The researchers suggest that a possible solution for this is to integrate a new person into the team on projects in which the production of highly creative ideas is important.

Team-Building Assessment Tools

There are a plethora of assessment tools that may be of help when hiring and creating teams. They can also be helpful to assess the underlying causes of an underperforming team. Such tools include the traditional Myers-Briggs personality assessment, the conflict styles inventory covered in Chapter One, the Hogan Development Survey, and many more. Your HR department may be able to assist you in choosing the best tools for your particular purposes depending on the internal expertise. When selecting assessment tools, remember to keep in mind the group's purpose. Different tools will highlight different aspects of the team and of individual team members.

TEAM TYPOLOGIES

So what is a good place to start when it comes to team building? A wide variety of advice is available in the management literature. A good first step is to decide which kind of team you need to build (or need to reshape from your current team). As the purpose of the team changes, it may be important to exchange team members with other teams in the organization, hire new team members, or retrain existing team members.

In a 2008 study, DeCusatis lists the following types of teams: genius teams, improv teams, virtual teams, and FourSight teams. **Genius teams** are small teams of brilliant employees who benefit from lots of close contact while working with each other. **Improv teams** are highly adaptable and adjust well to rapidly changing circumstances. Team members are interchangeable and can tag team as necessary. **Virtual teams** are Internet based and therefore may come from anywhere on the globe but can never or infrequently meet in person. Finally, **FourSight teams** are those that take a specific four-step approach to decision making that is somewhat similar to the four steps of the negotiation process covered in Chapter Three: they define the problem, brainstorm solutions, sift out the best solution, and carry out their plan. Of course, teams may shift from one type to another as their deadlines, needs, or focus change.

Although managers may not always be able to build teams from scratch for each project, it will be helpful for managers and team members to take the time to learn how each member communicates best and how the team prefers to work. This metacommunication will help teams gain shared understandings of one another's personality types and how their communication styles affect the team and its members (Gevers & Peeters, 2009). **Metacommunication** occurs when people communicate about how they communicate. This information can avoid misunderstandings and attribution biases that often occur when one communicates with someone whose preferred patterns or methods of communication differ from his or her own. Personality and communication assessment tools can be helpful in this effort: which team member is an auditory learner and which is more visual? Knowing how your team members scored on the conflict styles inventory (see Chapter One) will help you to know how best to approach them when a problem arises. It also provides an opportunity to discuss the division of tasks, shared expectations related to performance, and how problems will be addressed when they inevitably arise because they nearly always do. Learning each other's modalities and expectations will help minimize miscommunication and maximize synergy, and metacommunication will help speed up this learning curve.

WHAT IF I CAN'T CHOOSE MY TEAM?

Many, if not most, managers do not have the luxury of building a team from scratch or changing teams each time a new project comes along. Yet the information covered in the chapter thus far still can be helpful as you seek to assign tasks to team members based on their individual strengths and personalities, engage in team-building metacommunication and activities to enhance rapport and improve teamwork, and thoughtfully negotiate team tasks and timelines.

When employees seem to lack the skills or knowledge needed to accomplish shared tasks, then it falls to the manager to engage them in a problem-solving negotiation to determine whether one or more members should pursue additional training or professional development or if a new team member should be hired. Managers may wish to share some information about teamwork and team types and then engage employees in a discussion about the type of team they seek to be and how these goals line up with the tasks and mission of the organization.

HOW TEAMS THINK AND COMMUNICATE

How does your team think and communicate? According to Cooke, Gorman, Duran, and Taylor (2007), one of the most important factors in team functioning is the ability to think like a team, which is called ***team cognition***. In their metastudy of the literature on team cognition, DeChurch and Mesmer-Magnus (2010) state that "team cognition has strong positive relationships to team behavioral process, motivational states, and team performance . . . team cognition explains significant incremental variance in team performance after the effects of behavioral and motivational dynamics have been controlled" (p. 32). The ability to think as a group may in fact be a prerequisite to the team's ability to act as a group.

There are two key concepts relating to team cognition: **team mental models (TMMs)** and **transactive memory systems (TMSs)** (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). According to Austin (2003), a TMM is a set of jointly held information within a group and the TMS is like a mental map disseminating the information held by individual members. Those aspects of knowledge known by each team member are collectively known as the ***shared mental model (SMM)*** (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006).

So the TMM is a broad construct representing a wide variety of what the team knows collectively, the SMM is a construct representing the knowledge that all the team members share, and the TMS is an intricate web of who knows what in the team (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). This information helps us understand what has long been called *institutional memory* as well as the role of individually held knowledge within teams. According to Beng-Chong and Klein (2006), the overall key to having a team mental model likely to increase performance is to focus on team members having similar, shared, and accurate concepts of who knows what in the team.

Good, clear, planned communication is the key to having institutionally and individually held information or expertise. Gillespie, Chaboyer, and Murray (2010) writes that "in surgery, up to 70% of adverse events are attributable to failures in communication" (p. 642). Most organizations do not measure the impact of poor communication as well as the health care industry but we can assume that poor communication is to blame for many lost customers, contract disputes, and general inefficiencies. "Disagreements thrive from ambiguity: around the boundaries of job roles or functional teams, the relative importance of organizational priorities, or the ownership of resources" (Haynes, 2009, p. 10).

Research by Langan-Fox (2004) shows that teams with well-developed and functional TMM share information more quickly and efficiently as well as synchronize their efforts more effectively. The improved efficiency is due to being in sync rather than spending lots of time debating the assignment of tasks out of a lack of knowledge of each other's strengths. This can only happen when team members know each other well. This finding echoes those of Patrick Lencioni (2002). In *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* he writes that well-functioning groups have five common characteristics: they trust one another, they engage in unfiltered positive conflict about ideas and strategic directions, they commit to decisions and action plans even if some members disagree with them, they hold one another accountable for delivering their commitments, and they focus on the achievement of collective results (i.e., they are team players). Under Lencioni's model, it is the primary duty of organizational leaders to hire individuals who will fit in well with the organization's cultural norms, support its mission, and engage in these five practices. Leaders need not engage in the day-to-day work of the organization. In fact, this becomes nearly impossible in large organizations. Instead, they maintain a role in screening, hiring, promoting, and maintaining a constructive culture and make strategic decisions after extensive consultations with others in the organization.

Ensuring that your work group thinks and communicates like a team is a crucial task for managers and supervisors at every level.

CULTURAL PREFERENCES FOR TIME MANAGEMENT

Be careful about pairing monochronic and polychronic team members unless they are able to work relatively autonomously. Each cultural group develops unique understandings about how time works and how one should think about time. For example, if I invite you to a cocktail party at my house at 7:00 PM, what time would you arrive? If you come from Kansas, you might arrive any time between 7:15 PM and 7:45 PM. If you are in Korea, you would know to come at 6:50 PM as a sign of respect. In Haiti you might come at 9:00 PM or later. Cultural knowledge about time is learned through observation and most of us reach the incorrect assumption that our way of viewing time is universally shared.

A **monochronic time orientation** indicates that one prefers to adhere to strict schedules and deadlines. Time is viewed as something tangible that can be saved, spent, or wasted and the inherent assumption is that individuals control when they get work done. This orientation toward time is most common in countries such as Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland, the United States, Australia, and other cultures of Western European origin. People with this orientation may be somewhat less flexible and more driven by deadlines. They may also prefer to get right down to the task at hand rather than spend time building relationships. They tend to believe there is a right time for specific activities (e.g., arrive at work by 8:30 AM, take no more than a one-hour lunch, and so on). A **polychronic time orientation** means one believes there are many right times to do different activities (e.g., arrive at work anytime between 8:30 AM and 10:00 AM, take a flexible lunch break, etc.). Those with polychromic orientations tend to build personal relationships before attempting to accomplish tasks as a group. They tend to view time as beyond their control, a force of nature. When speaking of the future they tend not to plan six months or more in advance because to do so would be to tempt fate (e.g., "We make plans and God laughs").

Polychronic time orientations tend to develop in cultures nearer the equator, where seasonal differences are smaller (e.g., many Latino and Island cultures). Monochronic time orientations developed in cultures with four clear seasons. In these societies, if one did not engage in specific activities at specific times, such as sowing in spring and harvesting in the fall, then winter could be very long and hungry. By contrast, more equatorial countries did not need to attend so carefully to time, and as a result they have developed more flexible orientations toward time. Additionally, in countries with chaotic political and economic histories, cultures tend to develop polychronic time orientations. When buses don't run on time or when people must queue for hours to buy necessities, they develop flexible attitudes toward time because its management is in fact often beyond their control.

People with different time orientations may be able to work well together but it will be helpful for them to discuss their preferred work styles so as to be respectful of differences. Developing shared norms related to the definition of on time and the negotiability or flexibility of deadlines is also important. When corporations from monochronic cultures open branches in countries with polychronic cultures, challenges relating to conflicting norms of time management are to be expected and should be addressed proactively. Each culture believes their orientation toward time is the correct one. This reveals a form of **ethnocentrism**, which is the belief that one's cultural practices are inherently superior to those from other cultures. Recognizing this tendency will be helpful for a constructive dialogue between those of different time orientations.

PHASES OF TEAMWORK

It is helpful to understand the natural phases that most groups experience as they form, get to know one another, and seek to accomplish shared tasks. These phases have been termed: *forming, storming, norming*, and *performing* (Tuchman & Jensen, 1977). In the first phase, forming, the group comes together either spontaneously or by design. The group members hardly know one another and are in the honeymoon phase of the relationship. Individually, they strive to hide any flaws and behave more formally until they slowly get to know one another. In this phase, there is little structure to group interactions and the group is not working at maximum efficiency, if at all. Next, the group goes through a storming phase. In this phase hostility arises between members and subgroups often form. Lack of clarity among roles, differences in communication structure, as well as personality conflicts can worsen this difficult period. This phase is characterized by negativity, aggression, and rivalry. Some members may leave the group if this phase lasts too long. The third phase, norming, occurs as the group develops shared behavioral norms and expectations. They exhibit higher levels of trust and affection than in the previous two stages and the group membership stabilizes. During the fourth stage, performing, the group reaches its peak performance levels. Group members are clear about their roles, shared expectations exist, and group members collaborate effectively. Because they know one another well, they are able to communicate effectively, distribute tasks based on team member strengths, and solve problems proactively. Eventually, most groups go through a fifth stage, adjourning. In this stage, the task has been finished or the group disbands for other reasons. This phase can be quick, with all the members disbanding at once, or they can leave slowly, one at a time. This phase is often accompanied with some form of grieving, either collectively or separately, depending on the way the group disbanded. Remember, if one or more new members join the team, they may get temporarily thrown back into an earlier phase as they strive to incorporate this member into their midst.

As a manager, your goal is to help the group get to the performing stage and stay there. This can be accomplished in a number of ways. First, be sure to structure time for relationship building into the team's initial interactions. Let them get to know one another as people, share their interests, their preferred communication styles, and their strengths and weaknesses (to the extent they wish to share these). Ask them to develop group norms together—how would they like to structure their time together? What behavioral expectations can they agree on? Revisit these norms periodically as the group settles in together. Are they working or do they need to be changed? Help the group to clarify roles and responsibilities. Check in periodically to see if these need to be changed to reflect the deeper understandings that will develop concerning individual strengths and preferences. When problems erupt between team members or between subgroups, do not pretend you don't notice. Speak to individuals one-on-one, keeping a friendly and helpful tone. Ask them what is happening and how you can help. Use the coaching skills covered in Chapter Four to assist each employee as he or she develops plans to address the problems. If necessary, mediate agreements between individuals or groups and check to ensure these agreements are being followed. When problems arise in teams, proactive action can prevent small problems from becoming large ones. Remember, conflict is an opportunity to improve a relationship.

ROLES AND DUTIES WITHIN TEAMS

When creating or changing teams, managers may wish to consider the specific roles or duties of each team member. Some employees may be good at part but not all of the group's tasks, so it is useful to know their strengths and ensure that all the needed skills and knowledge for a task can be found among the team members collectively. For example, law firms have long divided the roles held by employees into four common categories: finders, minders, binders, and grinders (Lee, 2010). Although these terms were developed to explain the division of roles within law firms, they can apply to many other types of private and nonprofit organizations. Finders are the rainmakers who find new work and bring in contracts and customers. Minders are those who look after the relationships with existing clients in order to keep them happy and with the firm. Binders are the administrative and support staff who keep the team working well together. Grinders are the lawyers who actually do the bulk of the legal work of the firm. Each of these tasks requires different skill sets. For example, one must be a competent lawyer to be a grinder but it may not be necessary to have large networks of professional contacts and highly developed social skills, as it is for the finders. Some grinders may rise to the tasks of minding or finding and others never will. For the team to be successful, all of these roles must be covered. So, too, it is with most teams: each player brings his or her own skill set but collectively their skills must be enough to get the job done. Balancing the skills sets and experience levels of team members is important for any manager.

TEAMS AND TRUST

Teams do not function well in the absence of trust. Building and maintaining an atmosphere of trust are important functions for managers and supervisors. The work of Klimoski and Karol (1976) provided early evidence that teams displaying higher trust perform better than teams that are lower in trust. Although many researchers have shown that trust has important implications for teamwork and organizational groups, it is helpful to get more specific in terms of understanding the links between trust and teamwork as well as methods for building trust in teams (Friedlander, 1970; Hempel, Zhang, & Tjosvold, 2009; Lencioni, 2002).

Individual characteristics can play an important role in determining whether one individual trusts another or whether one team trusts another team. Dirks (1999) found that "perceptions of risk and vulnerability" cause trust to vary (p. 449). When an individual or team feels vulnerable, then feelings of caution are likely to lead to either less trusting behaviors or trust that grows only slowly. According to Dirks, "liking, cohesion, familiarity, and reciprocating behaviors" are all co-present with trust, so it is sometimes difficult to discern a difference between one of these variables and trust itself (p. 450). Although this makes research difficult, it helps us better understand that by working on these factors we also increase trust. In his study of trust in teams, Dirks found that decreased trust on the part of team members reduced individual members' motivation, and this is why groups with low levels of trust see reduced productivity.

Trust leads to specific behaviors that improve group outcomes. Moye and Langfred (2004) investigated the role that information sharing has in group conflict and team efficiency. The authors indicate that information sharing leads to better group outcomes, but more specifically, they predicted that information sharing in existing groups will prevent two kinds of conflict: "task conflict and relationship conflict" (p. 384). Similarly, Lencioni (2002) lists trust building as a precursor to successful team functioning. Teams without trust do not fully share their ideas, feedback, and criticisms with one another. Due to the presence of attribution bias (Chapter Two) they misinterpret one another's intentions and are more likely to take adversarial rather than collaborative positions when problems arise. To avoid this pitfall it is helpful to invest time up front, when the team comes together for the first time. Be sure to build in opportunities for group members to get to know one another as people before launching into the task at hand. Throughout the collaboration, which may be permanent in many cases, build in team-building activities and events. Sharing meals, social events attended by family members, and shared group experiences (e.g., fieldtrips, movies, games) can build rapport and enhance the ability of teams to function successfully. Managers can play a key role in building trust and repairing damaged trust within and between teams. For more on trust building and repair, see Chapter Three.

CONFLICT VERSUS DYSFUNCTION IN TEAMS

Conflicting viewpoints are inevitably present in teams. Conflict itself need not result in reduced trust or decreased group efficiency. Instead, it is the way conflict is handled rather than its mere existence that determines the impact on trust and team outputs (Hempel, Zhang, & Tjosvold, 2009). A study by Farh, Lee, and Farh (2010) found that moderate levels of conflict within teams are correlated with maximum levels of team creativity.

It seems almost a cliché that in groups you frequently see an unequal division of labor that can result in feelings of resentment by some team members against others and, eventually, against those managers who allow this to go on too long. One way to address this problem is through the use of rewards for individual and group productivity. When organizations wish to encourage more teamwork they often switch to team-based incentives and reward programs. Yet, this can lead to social loafing, also known as **shirking** or presenteeism, as mentioned in Chapter Five. Social loafing occurs when an employee chooses not to do his share of the collective workload. As a result, other members of the team have to work harder to make up for the employee(s) who is not doing his fair share. Shirkers lead others in the organization to feel disgruntled, overworked, and taken advantage of. In their study of teams and work-load distribution, Pearsall, Christian, and Ellis (2010) note the importance of rewarding individual and group achievement in order to reduce the incidence of this problem. Building in a 360-degree-evaluation tool will also help in this regard.

Tjosvold (2008) argues that positive conflict is important for the health of teams and organizations. **Positive conflict**, also called *cooperative conflict*, is the healthy sharing of differences of opinion and negotiation necessary to make tough decisions. In conflict-positive organizations, team members do not hold back their ideas or concerns out of a worry that to share them will cause conflict or disharmony. Team members will frequently debate and discuss different solutions, approaches, or ways forward for the organization, without fearing this will be taken personally or harm relationships. Through this discussion and debate, either a consensus will emerge or it will become clear that the team members see pros and cons to the multiple options under discussion. In these situations, it will be necessary for the organizational or unit leader to make an executive decision and ask all members to stand behind that decision. Lencioni (2002) calls this strategy *disagree and commit*.

Tjosvold (2008) and Lencioni (2002) speak to the positive changes produced as a result of cooperative interactions: when individuals of an organization engage one another, understand issues, and find solutions, a better relationship is formed, which results in better decision making and collaboration (Tjosvold, 2008). According to Tjosvold, conflict management is a necessary ingredient for performance improvement. Tjosvold's research points out that regular team interaction and communication are necessary for increasing collaboration and efficacy. Building rapport and getting to know each team member as a colleague helps group members have the confidence to engage in difficult decisions and come out of them without hostility and resentment.

Although positive conflict is crucial to optimal team performance, conflict avoidance can result in costly failures. When team members find problems or have ideas they aren't sure will work, they will keep them to themselves. By doing so, opportunities for positive change may be missed as well as the chance to solve problems early before they grow to threaten the bottom line or endanger the organization's brand (Tjosvold, 2008). A study by DeChurch and Marks (2001) found that groups who actively used conflict management techniques to manage conflict had more positive outcomes than those who passively managed conflict. With this in mind, it seems worthwhile to spend some time at the beginning of a group endeavor to normalize conflict (due to the fact that conflict will occur in any group project) and share tools for positive conflict management.

How do managers and teams encourage a conflict-positive environment? First, they ensure team members have time and space to build strong interpersonal relationships through shared experiences and social interactions. Second, managers and team members should explicitly create norms or ground rules to address conflict positively. The following box provides some examples of ground rules to consider. Although it may be tempting to adopt this list, it is always better to get the group to brainstorm their own ground rules so they will have better buy-in and adherence to the rules than if the manager imposes them (*hint*: remember the tenets of procedural justice). Occasionally revisit the norms, if necessary, to see how they are working or if changes need to be made.

Sample Ground Rules for Positive Conflict in Teams

- If you won't be able to meet an agreed-on deadline, communicate this with as much notice as possible.
- Avoid e-mail when complicated concepts or issues need to be discussed.
- Problems will arise. When they do, we will adopt a problem-solving approach.
- We will share our ideas and concerns openly, respecting all input.
- Once an idea has been thoroughly discussed, we will commit to the decision reached.

There are two primary sources of conflict in work teams: relationship conflict and task conflict. **Relationship conflict** occurs when two or more people experience nonstructural conflict stemming from a lack of rapport or personality conflicts between team members. Relationship conflict is associated with negative effects on the team's ability to accomplish its tasks (Farh, Lee, & Farh, 2010). **Task conflict** occurs when the group disagrees about the best ways to accomplish its tasks. Moderate levels of task conflict are associated with greater creativity and better outcomes, and relationship conflicts are associated with reduced productivity and morale. Interestingly, teams with high levels of gender and ethnic diversity exhibit more conflict but the effect of that conflict can be good or bad depending on the way those conflicts are managed (King, Hebl, & Beal, 2009).

Some authors convincingly argue that task integration should only begin once relationship integration has been well addressed; otherwise, the tasks will not be done well and damage may result to the organization's brand or customer relationships (Birkinshaw, Bresman, & Hakanson, 2000). This is the cultural norm in much of the non-Western world. These findings indicate that managers should be quicker to intervene in relationship conflicts by seeking to mediate solutions between the parties and by taking affirmative steps to improve rapport among team members (Jehn, Greer, Levine, & Szulanski, 2008).

How do you know when conflict has become dysfunctional for the group? Cole, Walter, and Bruch (2008) state that conflict becomes dysfunctional when team dysfunction is pervasive and disrupts the work environment.

The most important implications about team dysfunction are that a single disruptive member can ultimately cause a downward spiral of overall team dysfunction. This happens because the behavior of team members can be negatively influenced by observing dysfunctional behaviors of one or more members (Bandura, 1973; Cole, Walter, & Bruch, 2008). When Bandura's (1973) social learning theory is applied to team settings it is sometimes termed *the spillover effect* (Cole, Walter, & Bruch, 2008; Keyton, 1999). Hardworking, productive employees who observe others shirking without any negative consequences may reach the obvious conclusion that their hard work is not only unrecognized, but also that they would fare equally well by shirking, too. The impact on morale and productivity can be catastrophic when it grows to the point of negatively affecting organizational culture.

CONFLICT AND TEAMS DURING MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS

Building and sustaining successful teams can be challenging tasks for managers in the best of times. During mergers and acquisitions it becomes much more complicated. A **merger** is a process through which two or more companies come together, with one retaining its corporate existence and the others losing theirs. The remaining company acquires all the assets and debts of the company it has acquired. An **acquisition** occurs when a large company acquires a much smaller company, although the terms *merger* and *acquisition* are often used in imprecise ways. From a conflict management perspective, mergers and acquisitions present myriad challenges related to organizational culture, change management, and communication that require proactive behaviors on the part of organizational leaders in order to achieve success. Whether it is a merger or acquisition (technical legal terms that do not much affect the conflict management side of things), the result is a conflict minefield that can explode the chances for success if poorly managed. The success of a merger or acquisition can be measured in terms of increased profitability, higher share prices, access to new markets or technologies that will yield greater profits down the road, and so on. During the merger and acquisition (M&A) process, leaders of the purchasing company, meaning the one that will remain after the merger or acquisition, set out specific goals by which the success of the M&A process will be judged. According to Maden (2011), when the human side of M&As is ignored, the financial side nearly always fails to meet expectations as well. "Negative behavioral outcomes associated with these events, such as high voluntary attrition rates, absenteeism, employee stress, and unprecedented acts of sabotage are proposed to affect M&As' performance negatively and subsequently deteriorate 'bottom line' figures" (p. 188). The success rate for corporate mergers is poor: 75 percent of corporate mergers fail yet their popularity has not declined (Marks & Mirvis, 2010). Why not? Because decisions about M&As are made on paper, by looking at assets, synergies, and the potential financial gains to be made via joining forces. Yet many mergers are doomed before they start due to vast differences in corporate cultures, the clash of different management styles, and poorly communicated changes that defeat many of these promising unions (Meyer & Altenborg, 2008). Often, merger implementation results in severe cultural conflict "characterized by a high level of management turnover, market-share shrinkage, and difficulty in achieving or even failure to achieve the desired operational synergy and strategic objective sought after" (Haynes, 2009, p. 7). In a study of CEOs of *Fortune* 500 companies, the ability or competence to manage human integration was rated as a more important factor to success than financial or strategic factors (Schweiger & Goulet, 2000). Organizational leaders are beginning to tune in to the deep yet manageable challenges that accompany mergers and acquisitions.

During M&A processes some of the best employees will leave the organization because of uncertainty related to their future with the organization and their ability to find a more stable environment elsewhere (Maden, 2011). Those employees who stay may engage in behaviors focused on their survival within the organization but these behaviors can be counterproductive to a positive team environment, including making political allies who can protect them in the event of likely layoffs; increased task orientation to the detriment of relationships among team members; calling attention to their power, prestige, and accomplishments to show how they excel beyond their peers (Cartwright & Cooper, 1994); and otherwise creating a competitive rather than cooperative dynamic among team members. Individual survival becomes more important than the accomplishment of the organizational mission.

Although a variety of factors surely affect the success or failure of any M&A, nearly all scholarly articles and postmortem analyses cite frequent problems with the integration of corporate culture and HR. M&As fail because of a perfect storm of factors. Interestingly, four out of six of these deal specifically with corporate culture challenges or problems with conflict management:

1. The business and/or deal were complicated. Complexity alone is not enough to predict a failure but it does provide a necessary precondition.
2. Flexibility was at a minimum. Problems in one part of the business system would radiate to other parts; trouble travels. Leveraging the firm can create incentives for management to run a tight ship, but it can also asphyxiate the company.
3. Deliberately or inadvertently management made some choices that elevated the risk exposure of the new firm. In the failed mergers studied, decisions were made that worsened the probability of success instead of improving it.
4. The thinking of decision makers was biased by recent successes, sunk costs, pride, and so forth. Due to cognitive biases, management and employees often disregard or deny risks and the crisis. Most of the failed deals started with over-optimism.
5. Business was not as usual. Something in the business environment departed from expectation. The turbulence in the business environment caused errors or problems.

6. The operation team broke down. Cultural differences between the buyer and target, unresolved political issues, and generally overwhelming stress prevented the team from responding appropriately to the unfolding crisis. (Haynes, 2009, p. 5)

Although change can be difficult and cause anxiety, employees are more challenged by the poor communication and conflict management that often surround the changes experienced during mergers and acquisitions than the changes themselves (Fedor & Herold, 2008). Employees are told, "Just do your job and don't worry about the merger," instead of receiving adequate information about what to expect or the reasons behind policy changes. Information becomes a valued commodity during M&A processes, with leaders doling it out on a need-to-know basis. This lack of transparency and fear of an uncertain future leads some talented employees to flee the organization unnecessarily. This increases the costs of the merger and reduces the strength of the resulting organization. Without frequent, clear communication about the expected changes, rumors and fear mongering will rule the day, thereby stacking the deck against successful integration of the organizations.

In addition to sharing information with employees and managers throughout the M&A process, it is important to purposefully engage in knowledge transfers between groups and work units on both sides of the merger. This knowledge transfer helps reduce miscommunications, build understandings of organizational capabilities, and create positive rapport between new team members. When employees lack knowledge of the work and capabilities of the other company, they often fall prey to attribution biases (Chapter Two) and assume the worst about the motivations of those on the other side.

Another factor in the success of M&As is the acquisition of a group identity and mission that all employees, old and new, can adopt as part of their reformed corporate identity (Ullrich & Van Dick, 2007). Subunits within the merged organization may have their own mission and objectives, which feed into the broader organizational mission and vision. Yet everyone in the reformed organization needs to understand and buy in to the broad mission, vision, and identity of the organization so as to know where they fit within that mission.

It is only natural for employees to be more loyal to their original company and to doubt the qualifications, abilities, and motives of those coming from the other side of the merger or acquisition. It takes time, diplomacy, and strong attention to relationship building before this will change. For long-time employees, part of their social identity was bound up in their association with their company. When this association changes there can be a period of grieving, as occurs in other kinds of losses such as death or divorce. It may take time before employees move from denial to acceptance—with bargaining, depression, and anger steps often occurring on the way. "The prospect of a merger intensifies many negative human emotions throughout both companies: These emotions include anxiety, loss of attachments, loss of identity, cultural conflicts, and hypersensitivity to issues of fairness" (Cox, 2010, p. 9).

Managers should not take these concerns and related behaviors personally or behave defensively—these are normal reactions to an environment perceived as uncertain and potentially threatening. The best way to combat these fears is with frequent, proactive communication that addresses concerns. Consider using a question or suggestion drop box, online bulletin board, and town hall meetings where employees can ask questions and all employees can view or hear the responses. Set a trustworthy, transparent, positive tone that builds trust in the new organization. Rarely do employees feel they were given enough information during an M&A process. Even when downsizing is likely to occur, transparency and frequent communication can make a difficult time less difficult. Some corporations have turned to hiring integration managers who are charged with managing the human side of M&As. These are specialists in organizational conflict management who assist with team building, information sharing, cultural reformation, and the integration of policies and procedures to smooth the process of change. These positions represent a relatively new and potentially lucrative specialty within the field of conflict management.

BUILDING AND REBUILDING CORPORATE CULTURE: BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER MERGERS

In an organizational setting, culture tells us which norms, behaviors, and attitudes are expected from in-group and out-group members. Organizational culture is developed over time and often enforced informally. For example, when one talks too loudly in the boardroom or lunchroom, the speaker may realize she has transgressed against cultural expectations through the looks she receives from others. Organizational culture is at the root of unwritten policies, which are known by all or nearly all long-time employees, so they need not be written down as official policy. For example, an employee receives three weeks of vacation per year but the organization's cultural norms indicate one should not take all three weeks in a row. Similarly, an organization may not have a written dress code but new employees reach a basic understanding about how they should dress based on their observations of the dress of other employees. Individuals learn cultural expectations primarily through observation over time, usually without conscious thought. When someone violates a cultural norm, the most common response is anger and the feeling that "everyone knows you shouldn't do that." Attribution bias leads to assumptions that transgressors are selfish, rude, oblivious, and so forth. Because most organizational cultural norms are unwritten, they are likely to cause consternation when two or more organizations merge, with each having different cultural expectations about everything from dress codes, break times, and how formally or informally employees at different levels within the hierarchy communicate with one another.

It is important to remember that organizations will have subcultures as well, within departments, units, or offices that are geographically separated from one another. Managers may need to interact differently in various subcultural groups and take the time to learn the culture of each unit she or he manages. Managers should be thoughtful about which managerial and communication techniques they use in different cultural settings because one size does not fit all. Similarly, different cultures tend to occur within different types of organizations. For example, organizations seeking to maximize creativity and intellectual freedom (such as high tech companies) tend to have less hierarchical structure and value informality and autonomy in their work. Manufacturing organizations tend to have more rigid hierarchies and less personal freedom in terms of control over break times or other policies.

The concept of relatedness is important in predicting success in M&As. When an organization merges with a similar organization in a similar industry, then they have a high degree of relatedness and the end product of the M&A process may require a high degree of integration of the two (or more) organizations. However, sometimes an organization merges or acquires an organization in an unrelated industry, in which case they may decide that less integration is necessary.

Four conflict styles of acculturation are described by Nahavavandi and Malekzadeh (1988): integration, assimilation, separation, and deculturation. Using these definitions, **integration** occurs when neither group involved in the merger or acquisition dominates the other. Although both cultures change because of their interactions, the resulting cultures are not dominated by either organization and both retain some distinct cultural aspects. **Assimilation** occurs when the culture of one organization dominates and replaces the original culture of the other organization. Larger or more powerful organizations are more likely to try to force assimilation on smaller, less powerful organizations. **Separation** occurs when little or no culture change comes to either organization, with each having little interaction with the other and no significant cultural changes resulting from the M&A process. An argument can be made for any of these three forms of cultural impact, depending on the type of M&A process, the relative size or function of the premerger organizations, and the nature of organizational culture prior to the merger. This cannot be said for the fourth type of culture change. **Deculturation** occurs when employees in one of the organizations or within some subunit of an organization reject the culture of the acquiring company but realize their old cultural behaviors and beliefs no longer work well in the new organizational environment. They are literally stuck between worlds. Berry (1983) suggested that deculturation "is accompanied by a great deal of collective and individual confusion . . . and by feelings of alienation, loss of identity, and what has been termed *acculturative stress*" (p. 69).

When cultural issues are ignored, differences in organizational cultures can lead to competition between groups and hostile us-them attitudes (Pikula, 1999). These differences can lead to sabotage between groups, biased decision making as to whom to retain during downsizing, and other negative behaviors.

It is often assumed that the objectives of the acquiring company in an M&A process are those that deserve attention but it is clear by the active resistance mounted by some employees in the acquired organization that some attention needs to be paid to their needs as well. Depending on the functionality of the preexisting organizational cultures, the acquired and acquiring organizations will likely have specific preferences as to which kind of acculturation should occur (see the following box). **Acculturative stress** occurs when culture change causes confusion and frustration, accidental transgressions, and then disharmony between workers. Acculturative stress is likely to be highest in new employees as they learn the cultural norms of the organization or during the process of mergers and acquisitions because cultural norms and expectations are in flux.

Propositions Concerning Acculturation in Mergers and Acquisitions

Preferred Style of Acculturation for the Acquired Company

- When members of an acquired organization value their culture and organizational practices and want to preserve them, and they perceive an acquirer as attractive, integration will be their preferred style of acculturation.
- When members of an acquired organization do not value their culture and practices and do not want to preserve them, and they perceive an acquirer as attractive, assimilation will be their preferred style of acculturation.
- When members of an acquired organization value their culture and practices and want to preserve them, and they do not perceive an acquirer as attractive, separation will be their preferred style of acculturation.
- When members of the acquired organization do not value their culture and practices and do not want to preserve them, and they do not perceive an acquirer as attractive, deculturation will be their preferred style of acculturation.

Preferred Style of Acculturation for the Acquirer

- When an acquirer is multicultural and the merger is with a related company, integration will be the most likely style of acculturation.
- When an acquirer is unicultural and the merger is with a related company, assimilation will be the most likely style of acculturation.
- When an acquirer is multicultural and the merger is with an unrelated company, separation will be the most likely style of acculturation.
- When an acquirer is unicultural and the merger is with an unrelated company, deculturation will be the most likely style of acculturation.

Congruence and Successful Implementation

- If there is congruence between the two companies regarding the preferred style of acculturation, minimal acculturative stress will result and the style of acculturation triggered by the contact between the two companies will facilitate the implementation of the merger.
- If there is incongruence between the two companies regarding the preferred style of acculturation, a high degree of acculturative stress will result and the style of acculturation triggered by the contact between the two companies will hinder the implementation of the merger.

When dealing with culture change, managers need to be thoughtful about assessing the current culture and mapping proposed or needed changes. Culture change needs to come from the top down but must receive buy-in from employees at all levels in order to be truly successful. Organizational leaders might consider the use of employee focus groups to discuss the ways in which the current cultural practices and norms help or hinder the organization's mission and then discuss changes that would bring needed change. Alternatively, leaders should clearly and repeatedly communicate the reasons for any change in direction and seek feedback from employees at all levels about any potential obstacles or concerns regarding the implementation of those changes. It is difficult to communicate too much in regards to these changes, especially during M&As.

As this discussion has shown, for M&As to be successful, the organizations do not need to become "cultural clones" (Marks & Mirvis, 2010). Leaders in the merged organization must determine the cultural values they wish to see throughout their reformed organization. In most cases, there are positive cultural aspects at work in each individual company. Leaders need to ascertain how much change is needed in each part of the new organization and create an action plan to bring about the planned cultural changes. The larger the organization, the slower its culture will likely be to change. It is certainly possible to turn a highly dysfunctional organizational culture around—but it must come from the top and the employees must see the reasons behind the desired change. If these culture change efforts seems like the fad of the year, then employees will be jaded and resistant to change. The change must be sincere, backed up by incentives, measured by objective indicators, and backsliding must be caught quickly. The vast majority of employees will likely be supportive of changes they see as positive, empowering, and those that enhance their ability to fulfill the organizational mission.

There may be some, let's hope a small number, of employees who simply remain hostile to culture change within the organization. If this seems to be a relatively large number of employees rather than an isolated case, then it is best to engage in active listening through one-on-one interviews or small focus groups to determine the source of resistance. This is a great way to gather information about the source of the problems and learn where the obstacles to implementation lie. By addressing these concerns whenever possible, the organizational culture will be positively affected by the airing of these concerns. If the problem lies with one or just a few employees who seem to be resistant to change but are unwilling to offer constructive suggestions or specific reasons why the changes will be counterproductive, then it is possible that some employees simply will not fit in well in the new organizational structure. Firing employees should remain a last resort, not a first one. Especially during an M&A process, employee terminations can have an adverse effort on attempts at culture change if they are not supported by the remaining employees.

Differences in national cultures make mergers harder (Kim, 2011). It is easy enough for two people from the same culture to have a miscommunication or misunderstanding, adding different cultural backgrounds to the challenges of human relationships creates an additional layer of complexity for organizations (Brannen, Gómez, Peterson, Romani, Sagiv, & Wu, 2004). When companies from starkly different national cultures go through M&As their leaders need to be attuned to the cultural values held in the home countries of their employees. For example, Confucian values are highly important to understand when operating in East Asia. Without this cultural knowledge, non-Asian corporate partners may transgress against group norms and make collaboration extremely difficult.

To proactively manage the human aspect and organizational cultural needs during an M&A process, consider the use of an **integration manager** (Ashkenas & Francis, 2000). The authors argue that integration managers help the M&A process in four ways: they speed it up, create a structure for it, forge social connections between the two organizations, and engineer short-term successes. This person must be able to adapt to complex environments quickly, relate well with employees at all levels of an organization, and bridge gaps in culture and perception. In addition, this leader must understand the technical side of the organization's work in order to garner the respect of the organization's members and to understand the problems that arise during the M&A process. This person must be calm and levelheaded even when working with employees who may be highly emotional. In some ways, this person can be thought of as an M&A ombudsman — managing conflicts and problems that arise during the M&A process and proactively working to minimize those conflicts.

DOWNSIZING, RIGHTSIZING, AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Economic downturns, mechanization, and overall industry trends can lead to the need to restructure operations, including a reduction in the number of people employed. It is nearly impossible to go through these periods conflict free but even these difficult situations can be handled better with some foresight and proactive management strategies. Downsizing should never be done without a thorough analysis to indicate those changes most likely to strengthen rather than weaken the organization. "Strengthening the organization and creating an environment that acknowledges conflict can be productive during periods of downsizing of a corporation. Conflicts arise when people are downsized from a crisis" (Haynes, 2009, p. 9).

The most common mistake made during organizational downsizing occurs when leaders settle on a predetermined head count targeted for payoffs. Instead, organizational leaders should consider asking themselves, "How can we restructure in ways that will maximize efficiency and the accomplishment of our mission?" Employees and managers at all levels of the organization should provide suggestions and input in order to answer this question. In nearly all cases, a simple elimination of positions will not achieve the positive change leaders seek. Instead, a deeper restructuring of job duties, processes, and policies will more likely result in productivity and profitability gains.

Poorly managed restructuring leads to increased litigation, claims of unfair or discriminatory treatment, high levels of resentment, and anxiety in those employees who remain. Hickok (1998) discusses the importance of reviewing how the process is announced, of ensuring the lines of communication are open and truthful, and of understanding the full consequences to the employees.

Although a great deal is heard about organizations being lean and mean, the importance of fair treatment cannot be overemphasized as a means of gaining employee commitment (Fedor & Herold, 2008). If restructuring will indeed result in job losses, organizational leaders need to determine what kind of services, if any, will be provided to employees including résumé preparation, severance, career coaching sessions, assistance with job placement, and so forth. Employees who have been consulted during the restructuring phase and are treated humanely during their exit phase leave with less ill will and those employees who remain will not suffer as much damage to their loyalty and commitment.

The following box summarizes some of the lessons for managers contained within this chapter.

Team-Building Lessons for Managers

- Attack the problem, not the person (Fisher & Ury, 1981). Remember, we all work toward the same mission, even if we disagree about the best way to get there.
- Focus on relationship building prior to working on shared tasks.
- Define roles and responsibilities clearly.
- Be sure the team members collectively have the skills to get the job done.
- Metacommunicate. Share information among team members about how to communicate. Develop norms.
- Reward individual and team efforts.
- "Disagree and commit" (Lencioni, 2002). Sometimes difficult decisions need to be made. When the team cannot agree on the best path forward, management will make an executive decision and all will agree to its implementation.
- Managers should facilitate early resolution of intrateam conflicts, especially when they are relationship-based conflicts.
- During mergers and acquisitions pay attention to organizational culture and repeatedly share information about expected changes. Communicate frequently with employees to minimize anxiety levels.

WHEN ONE PERSON WON'T PLAY ON THE TEAM

As a manager, what do you do when one employee refuses to "play well" with others on the team? Chapter Five discussed techniques for dealing with difficult employees and those lessons apply when you have an employee who is not a good team player. Your first strategy should be to work with that employee, one-on-one, to diagnose the source of the problem and collectively develop a plan for improvement. Develop benchmarks or some objective criteria that can be used to track progress toward goals. For example, the number of complaints from employees will go down or the group morale will increase as measured by a survey and so forth. Multiple measures are best. Consider bringing in an executive coach to help this employee set goals, track progress, and spur change. Alternatively, if coaching is not in the budget, assign a mentor from within the company, preferably a manager who is universally considered accomplished and effective.

And if that doesn't work? One truly terrible employee can drive away ten fabulous employees. An employee or manager who shows little regard for the company or work team, who lacks adequate people skills, or who is not committed to the mission will poison the well, thereby making the whole team dysfunctional. When this happens, organizational leaders need to find ways to help this person realize that his or her best career path lies outside of the current organization—either through dismissal or, preferably, through the employee's decision to voluntarily leave the organization.

In addition to the obvious reasons why some employees or managers don't play well with others, be on the lookout for "snakes in suits" (Babiak & Hare, 2006). According to research shared by Babiak and Hare, about 1 to 2 percent of people match the profile of a psychopath. Although psychopaths are commonly portrayed in the media as murderers, and indeed some are, most are able to function at some level in society and in the workplace, at least for a while. In the workplace, this type of personality can wreak serious havoc, turning high-functioning teams into disasters. The following box lists some of the characteristics common to psychopaths. Babiak and Hare caution that although only a specially trained psychologist or psychiatrist can accurately diagnose psychopathy, it remains instructive to know the warning signs. Whether the employee meets the full definition or not, these behaviors and traits signal trouble in the workplace. It should be noted here that the terms *psychopath* and *sociopath* are frequently used interchangeably and there is some debate as to their specific meanings in the psychiatric community. In general, it is believed that psychopaths are born with psychiatric anomalies that prevent them from empathizing with others, so they do not feel guilt for behaviors others would find deplorable. Sociopaths are more likely to have been exposed to environmental factors, such as abusive parents, that account for their behaviors. Both groups pursue their own goals at the expense of others and cannot maintain socially appropriate behaviors indefinitely.

Characteristics of Psychopaths

Interpersonal Characteristics

- Is superficial
- Is grandiose
- Is deceitful

Affective

- Lacks remorse
- Lacks empathy
- Doesn't accept responsibility

Lifestyle

- Is impulsive
- Lacks goals
- Is irresponsible

Antisocial

- Has poor behavioral controls
- Displays adolescent antisocial behavior
- Displays adult antisocial behavior

Source: Adapted from Babiak and Hare (2006, p. 27).

Any person may exhibit a few of these traits to a mild degree. The cause for concern arises when an individual exhibits most of them to a strong degree.

In addition to these traits, how can you spot a psychopath at work? The best chance of doing so is during the application stage. If you see a résumé that is almost too good to believe, then you need to do a deep verification check to ensure that the degrees and experiences listed are true rather than fictitious or highly inflated. Psychopaths tend to brag about their accomplishments from the past as well as overpromise about what they can accomplish on the job. Verify, verify, verify. Psychopaths may be quite friendly initially, great salespeople, and smooth talkers. They might ingratiate themselves with the organizational leaders from the outset by feigning knowledge and interest in the hobbies and passions of their superiors. Once hired, they may continue this behavior with superiors and then act mercilessly autocratic with their subordinates. They claim credit for the work of others and may claim accomplishments that don't exist. If a psychopath has control over or sole access to financial records, he may actually engage in fraud in order to skim for himself or to create the appearance of gains for the organization that do not exist. Psychopaths tend to work in one place for two to four years at the most and then move on to the next employer once they wear out their welcome. When it comes to snakes in suits, it is better to screen them out or identify them early before they drive away good employees or ruin the good name of the organization.

CONCLUSION

Managers are often expected to create, change, and inspire teams to reach their full potential. Even in difficult economic times or during M&As, a thoughtful approach to team management can enhance productivity and reduce destructive conflict. By attending to individual differences, aligning team members with team tasks, and screening out the worst team players (e.g., psychopaths), managers can reap gains for their organizations and also reduce the time they are called on to intervene in dysfunctional teams.

JOHN AT THE BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

John asked employees in the underfunctioning teams to complete a team assessment questionnaire (see online resources). This questionnaire asked about levels of trust, collegiality, rapport, and willingness to collaborate. From this questionnaire he realized that these team members spent little time outside (or inside) of work getting to know one another and building rapport. There was little trust between them. Team members exhibited a desire to claim accomplishments as individual accomplishments rather than as the result of team efforts, partially because of the existing reward structures that failed to acknowledge the team rather than individual accomplishments. Some members of the team felt their contribution to the work of the team was unrecognized and that they were doing more than their share of the work. Some tasks weren't getting addressed at all.

Based on this information, John decided to work on rebuilding these teams. He assessed each person's technical and social strengths and preferred conflict styles of communication. He used two full workdays to hold mini-retreats, which included activities designed to help the employees get to know one another as people, share their strengths and preferred communication conflict styles, and analyze ways to make the team function more smoothly. The groups crafted a list of expected norms and behaviors. They agreed to meet more frequently and set measurable goals for their projects and deliverables. They clarified overlapping job duties and responsibilities so there were fewer turf battles. They agreed that when problems arose, they would try to work them out through direct, problem-solving discussions. If these discussions failed, they agreed to seek John's help to facilitate a fair resolution to these problems. They talked about the kind of workplace culture they wanted to create in their units and how to go about achieving it. John created institutional rewards that recognized teamwork and team accomplishments. This latter change required collaboration with union leaders, who feared that individual employees might suffer harm if their individual performance reviews were unfairly influenced by the poor work of other team members. He also had to persuade his own bosses that time spent in team building would yield cost savings down the line rather than be viewed as a waste of taxpayer money.

During the next two months, John checked in to see how these agreements were being implemented. He offered some coaching to a couple of employees who were struggling with their ability to frame concerns constructively and address them proactively. The number of formal complaints decreased 80 percent and productivity improved significantly. Morale has increased and these departments are now on par with the others in his bureau.

KEY TERMS

Acculturative stress
Acquisition
Assimilation
Deculturation
Diversity
Ethnocentrism
FourSight teams
Genius teams
Improv teams
Integration
Integration manager
Merger
Metacommunication
Monochronic time orientation
Polychronic time orientation
Positive conflict
Relationship conflict
Separation
Shared mental model (SMM)
Shirking
Task conflict
Team cognition
Team mental models (TMMs)
Transactive memory systems (TMSs)
Virtual teams

SUGGESTED SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Cohen, C. F., Birkin, S. J., Cohen, M. E., Garfield, M. J., & Webb, H. W. (2006). Managing conflict during an organizational acquisition. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, *23*, 317–331.

Miles, S. A., & Bennett, N. (2008). 6 steps to (re)building a top management team. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, *50*(1), 60–64.

Mohammed, S., & Angell, L. C. (2004). Surface- and deep-level diversity in workgroups: Examining the moderating effects of team orientation and team process on relationship conflict. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *25*(8), 1015–1039.

Mohammed, S., & Dumville, B. C. (2001). Team mental models in a team knowledge framework: Expanding theory and measurement across disciplinary boundaries. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *22*(2), 89–106.

Tzeng, J.-Y. (2006). Developing and sharing team mental models in a profession-driven and value-laden organization: A case study. *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, *19*(2), 155–172.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Think back to the most successful team of which you have been a member. This can be a sports team, a work team, or a team in your civic life. Why was

that team so successful and enjoyable? Which factors from this chapter can explain its success? Now do the opposite: think of a dysfunctional team. What was it lacking? Why was it unsuccessful? How does this analysis match up to the material covered in this chapter?

2. Using your current organization or one from a previous job, think about how the teams are built and maintained. What kind of planning, if any, goes into the creation and maintenance of teams there? Is teamwork rewarded or recognized? What can be done to make the teams more successful? What can you do as a manager in your current organization to strengthen your team(s)?

EXERCISES

1. Work in teams or singly to create a list of interview questions you might use to help ascertain how well an applicant will fit into your ideal work team. What traits or behaviors are you looking for and how would you measure them? What questions would you ask of their references?
2. Use the following assessment tool to get a picture of how well teams are functioning in your work environment.

Team Assessment

Instructions: Use the following scale to indicate how each statement applies to your team. It is important to evaluate the statements honestly and without overthinking your answers.

3 = Usually   2 = Sometimes   1 = Rarely

____ Team members are passionate and unguarded in their discussion of issues.

____ Team members call out one another's deficiencies or unproductive behaviors.

____ Team members know what their peers are working on and how they contribute to the collective good of the team.

____ Team members quickly and genuinely apologize to one another when they say or do something inappropriate or possibly damaging to the team.

____ Team members willingly make sacrifices (such as budget, turf, head count) in their departments or areas of expertise for the good of the team.

____ Team members openly admit their weaknesses and mistakes.

____ Team meetings are compelling and not boring.

____ Team members leave meetings confident that their peers are completely committed to the decisions that were agreed on, even if there was initial disagreement.

____ Morale is significantly affected by the failure to achieve team goals.

____ During team meetings, the most important and difficult issues are put on the table to be resolved.

____ Team members are deeply concerned about the prospect of letting down their peers.

____ Team members know about one another's personal lives and are comfortable discussing them.

____ Team members end discussions with clear and specific resolutions and calls to action.

____ Team members challenge one another about their plans and approaches.

____ Team members are slow to seek credit for their own contributions but quick to point out those of others.

GOAL SETTING

Use the assessment above to select at least one team behavior you will work to improve during the next two weeks. Then come back, answer the assessment questions again, and see if scores have increased.