5

CHANGE

Devising More Effective Ways of Working Together

The last "C" refers to change, the key meta-competency in our model. High-performing teams not only understand what is impeding their performance but are able to take corrective action to achieve their goals. Team building refers to the activities a team can engage in to change its context, composition, or team competencies to improve performance.

In this chapter, we discuss the common problems found in teams and how to diagnose them, how to determine whether the team itself can solve its problems or whether a consultant is needed, and the basic elements of a team-building program.

Common Problems Found in Teams

Usually a team-building program is undertaken when a concern, problem, issue, or set of symptoms leads the manager or other members of the team to believe that the effectiveness of the team is not up to par. The following symptoms or conditions usually provoke serious thought or remedial action:

- Loss of production or team output
- A continued unexplained increase in costs
- Increases in grievances or complaints from the team
- Complaints from users or customers about quality of service
- Evidence of conflict or hostility among team members

- Confusion about assignments, missed signals, and unclear relationships
- Misunderstood decisions or decisions not carried out properly
- Apathy and general lack of interest or involvement of team members
- Lack of initiative, imagination, or innovation
- Ineffective meetings, low participation, or poor decision making
- High dependence on or negative reactions to the team leader

Most of these symptoms are consequence symptoms; that is, they result from or are caused by other factors that are the root causes of the problems. Loss of production, for example, might be caused by such factors as conflicts between team members or problems with the team leader. Indeed, after years of studying and working with teams, we have found that the underlying causes of poor team performance can typically be attributed to differences between team members and the team leader and differences among team members.

Differences Between Team Members and the Team Leader

Usually this cause of team ineffectiveness is obvious to the subordinates on the team and an outside observer. Unfortunately, it often is not so apparent to the team leader. The problem is not that the leader and team members have differences of opinion with regard to how the team should function but rather how they deal with the differences. One common consequence of these differences is a condition of conformity. Team members may feel that the best way to get along with the team leader is just to go along with what they are told to do. They find that the easiest way to manage the relationship with the leader is to fall in line, which is less stressful than the alternative of ongoing conflict.

At times conformity may represent true acceptance of the leader's position. But at other times, it may simply represent avoidance of conflict. A leader who is surrounded by people who are dependent on him or her eliminates any possible conflict but also eliminates the richness of diverse opinion; or team members may have learned over time that conformity is the best strategy and automatically go along with whatever the leader suggests instead of making their own suggestions. At other times, conformity may represent passive resistance. People may agree with the leader publicly but privately resent and resist. Resistance may take subtle forms, such as avoiding the leader or ignoring or never fully implementing the leader's decisions.

Another type of consequence is overt resistance—openly fighting or resisting what the leader wants. In this situation, ordinary problem-solving procedures have been abandoned, and a struggle ensues whenever the leader gets together with team members. Or the struggle may go underground, and although on the surface the interaction seems compatible, heavy infighting is going on behind the scenes.

Some superiors try to manage subordinates and the possibility of resistance by assuming a strong authoritarian stance. The authoritarian leader demands obedience and uses a variety of control methods, formal and informal, to influence behavior. People who are threatened by authority or are used to high controls tend to become conforming. Those who do not accept authoritarian processes become resistant, either openly or under cover.

Other difficulties arise from a lack of trust. Team members may not trust the leader to give them honest information, represent them honestly, keep confidences, or carry through on promises. When trust is low, team members try to protect themselves. They are guarded in what they say and are suspicious of decisions and promises of action. Lack of trust between the leader and team members was a core problem in John Smith's team described in chapter 1. In fact, the trust level was so low between John and his team that team members refused to meet with him one-on-one. Because they believed John was lying to them, they wanted witnesses to all their conversations with him.

Differences Among Team Members

Differences among team members are one of the most widely observed symptoms of a team in trouble. These difficulties are described in different ways: people fight all of the time; they don't trust one another; there are personality conflicts; people have different philosophies, goals, or values. Usually the signals of team member problems are strong statements of disagreement, with no attempt to reach agreement; complaints to the leader, indicating an unwillingness or inability to work out differences; avoidance of one another except when interaction is absolutely required; missed meetings or deadlines; poor-quality work; building of cliques or subgroups to protect against the other side; and minimal or guarded communication.

Not surprisingly, most team leaders initiate team building when they discover serious problems among team members and the team members don't seem to be willing or able to work through their differences. Usually it is the manager who identifies one or more of the consequences or causal factors, although any unit member may share personal observations and diagnosis.

WEB www.josseybass.com/go/dyerteamassessments

Figure 5.1 is a checklist for identifying whether a team-building program is needed and whether an outside facilitator or consultant should be hired for such a program. Teams should develop metrics such as those listed in the figure that they regu-

Figure 5.1 Team-Building Checklist

Problem identification: To what extent is there evidence of the following problems in your team? Circle the number that best represents your opinion.

	Low Evidence		Some Evidence		High Evidence
1. Loss of production or output	1	2	3	4	5
2. Grievances or complaints within the team	1	2	3	4	5
3. Conflict or hostility among team members	1	2	3	4	5
4. Confusion about assignments or unclear relationships among people on the team	1	2	3	4	5
5. Lack of clear goals or low commitment to goals	1	2	3	4	5
6. Apathy or general lack of interest or involvement of team members	1	2	3	4	5
7. Lack of innovation, risk taking, imagination, or initiative	1	2	3	4	5
8. Ineffective meetings	1	2	3	4	5
9. Problems in working with the boss	1	2	3	4	5
10. Poor communications: people afraid to speak up, not listening to one another, or not talking together	1	2	3	4	5
11. Lack of trust between leader and members or among team members	1	2	3	4	5
12. People not understanding or agreeing with decisions	1	2	3	4	5
13. People feeling that good work is not recognized or rewarded	1	2	3	4	5
14. People not encouraged to work together in better team effort	1	2	3	4	5

Scoring: Add up the score for the fourteen items. If your score is between 14 and 28, there is little evidence that your unit needs team building. If your score is between 29 and 42, there is some evidence but no immediate pressure unless two or three items are very high. If your score is between 43 and 56, you should seriously think about planning a team-building program. If your score is over 56, team building should be a top priority for your work unit.

Figure 5.2 Checklist for Determining the Need for Outside Help

Directions: Answer the following questions by responding either "yes," "no," or "don't know." Circle the appropriate response.

1. Does the manager/team leader feel comfortable in trying out something new and different with the team?	Yes	No	Don't know
2. Does the team have prior positive experiences working through difficult issues when team members have different perspectives?	Yes	No	Don't know
3. Will group members speak up and give honest information ?	Yes	No	Don't know
4. Does your group generally work together without a lot of conflict or apathy?	Yes	No	Don't know
5. Are you reasonably sure that the manager/team leader is not a major source of difficulty?	Yes	No	Don't know
6. Is there high commitment by the manager and team members to achieve more effective team functioning?	Yes	No	Don't know
7. Is the personal style of the manager and his or her management philosophy consistent with a team approach?	Yes	No	Don't know
8. Do you feel you know enough about team building to begin a program without help?	Yes	No	Don't know
9. Would your staff feel confident enough to begin a team-building program without outside help?	Yes	No	Don't know

Scoring: If you have circled six or more "yes" responses, you probably do not need an outside consultant. If you have four or more "no" responses, you probably do need a consultant. If you have a mixture of "yes," "no," and "don't know" responses, you should probably invite a consultant to talk over the situation and make a joint decision.

larly monitor so that the team can determine quickly if it is not performing up to its standards and needs to take corrective action, which generally requires team-building activities.

The checklist in figure 5.2 provides some guidance concerning whether an outside facilitator or consultant might be needed to help the team improve its performance. The checklist should be filled out by all team members and aggregated to determine the need for outside help.

Team Building as a Process

Team building should be thought of as an ongoing process, not as a single event. Indeed, as described in chapter 3, Bain & Company does team building on a monthly basis to ensure that team problems are quickly identified and resolved. People who want to get away for a couple of days and "do team building" but then return to doing business as usual have an incorrect notion of the purpose of team building.

Team building is a meta-competency that great teams develop that allows them to systematically evaluate and change the way the team functions. This means changing team processes, values, team-member skill sets, reward systems, or even the resources available to get teamwork done. These changes are initiated at a kickoff meeting and continue through the next several months or years while the group learns to function effectively as a team. The philosophy one should have about team building is the same as the philosophy behind *kaizen*, or continuous improvement: the job is never done because there are always new bottlenecks to improved team performance.

The team development process often starts with a block of time devoted to helping the group look at its current level of functioning and devise more effective ways of working together. This initial sequence of data sharing, diagnosis, and action planning takes time and should not be crammed into a couple of hours. Ideally the members of the work group should plan to meet for at least one full day, and preferably two days, for the initial program. A common format is to meet for dinner, have an evening session, and then meet all the next day or for whatever length of time has been set aside.

Most team-building facilitators prefer to have a longer block of time (up to three days) to begin a team development program.

This may not be practical in some situations, and modifications must be made. Since we are thinking of team development as an ongoing process, it is possible to start with shorter amounts of time regularly scheduled over a period of several weeks. Some teams have successfully conducted a program that opened with an evening meeting followed by a two- to four-hour meeting each week for the next several weeks. Commitment to the process, regular attendance, high involvement, and good use of time are all more important than length of time.

It is customary to hold the initial team development program away from the work site. The argument for this is that if people meet at the work location, they will find it difficult to ignore their day-to-day concerns in order to concentrate fully on the goals of the program. This argument is compelling, though there is little research evidence about the effect of the location on learning and change. Most practitioners do prefer to have development programs at a location where they can have people's full time and attention.

Use of an Outside Facilitator or Consultant

Managers commonly ask, "Should I conduct the team development effort on my own, or should I get an outside person to help us?" As we noted previously, "outside person" can mean a consultant from outside the organization or an internal consultant who is employed by the organization, often in human resources or organization development and with a background in team development.

Ultimately the manager should be responsible for team development. The consultant's job is to get the process started. The use of a consultant is generally advisable if a manager is aware of problems, feels that he or she may be one of those problems, and is not sure exactly what to do or how to do it but feels strongly enough that some positive action is necessary to pull the work group together to improve performance.

The Roles of Manager and Consultant

Ultimately the manager or team leader is responsible to develop a productive team and develop processes that will allow the team to regularly stop and critique itself and plan for its improvement. It is the manager's responsibility to keep a finger on the pulse of his or her team and plan appropriate actions if the team shows signs of stress, ineffectiveness, or operating difficulty.

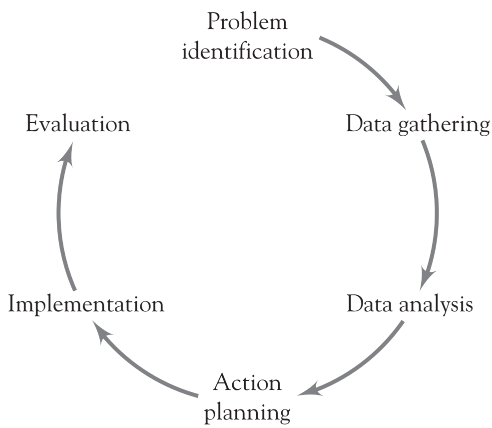
Unfortunately, many managers have not yet been trained to do the data gathering, diagnosis, and planning and take the actions required to maintain and improve their teams. The role of the consultant is to work with the manager until the manager is capable of incorporating team development activities as a regular part of his or her managerial responsibilities. The manager and the consultant (whether external or internal) should form their own two-person team in working through the initial team-building program. In all cases, the manager will be responsible for all team-building activities, although he or she may use the consultant as a resource. The goal of the consultant's work is to leave the manager capable of continuing team development without the assistance of the consultant or with minimal help.

The Team-Building Cycle

Problem Identification

Ordinarily a team-building program follows a cycle similar to that depicted in figure 5.3. The program begins because someone recognizes one or more problems. Either before or during the team-building effort, data are gathered to determine the root causes of the problem. The data are then analyzed, and a diagnosis is made of what is wrong and what is causing the problem. After the diagnosis, the team engages in appropriate planning and problem solving. Actions are planned and assignments

Figure 5.3 Team-Building Cycle



made. The plans are put into action and the results honestly evaluated.

Sometimes there is no clear, obvious problem. The concern is then to identify or find the problems that are present but hidden and their underlying causes. One still gathers and analyzes the data, identifies the problems and the causes, and then moves to action planning. The manager and the consultant work together in carrying out the program from the time the problem has been identified through some form of evaluation.

Data Gathering

Because team building encourages a team to do its own problem solving and given that a critical condition for effective problem solving is accurate data, a major concern is to gather clear data on the causes behind the symptoms or problems originally identified. A consultant initially may assist in the data gathering, but eventually a team should develop the ability to collect its own data as a basis for working on its own problems. The following are some common data-gathering methods.

Surveys One of the most common approaches to gathering data is to conduct a survey of all team members. Surveys are helpful when there are relatively large numbers of team members or members would be more open in responding to an anonymous survey. It also can be helpful to use a survey if you want to compare the issues and problems facing different teams in an organization.

There are two general types of surveys: open- and closed-ended surveys. An open-ended survey asks questions such as: What do you like about your team? What problems does your team need to address? and What suggestions do you have to improve the team? Team members can give their responses in writing. The team leader or consultant summarizes these responses and presents them to the team in a team-building session. It may be somewhat messy to summarize such raw data, but it often helps to read the actual views of the team members to better understand the issues and how the members are feeling.

Closed-ended surveys force the person responding to choose a specific response. Most of the surveys in this book are closed-ended. Closed-ended surveys make tabulating the results easy and statistical comparisons possible. However, they may miss some of the important dynamics and problems of a team. Closed-ended surveys are a useful starting point, however, to create awareness of the problems facing a team and begin a discussion of how to solve those problems. We have found that the team-building checklist in this chapter and the Team Competencies Scale (figure 4.2) are helpful surveys to gather data about a team (the complete team assessment survey and report can be accessed online).

WEB www.josseybass.com/go/dyerteamassessments

Interviews At times a consultant can perform a useful service by interviewing the members of the team. The manager or team leader could conduct such interviews, but in most cases, team members will be more open in sharing data with someone from outside the team. The consultant tries to determine the causes behind the problem in order to pinpoint those conditions that may need to be changed or improved. In these interviews the consultant often asks the following questions:

1. Why is this team having the kinds of problems it has?
2. What keeps you personally from being as effective as you would like to be?
3. What things do you like best about the team?
4. What changes would make the team more effective?
5. How could this team begin to work more effectively together?

Following the interviews, the consultant frequently does a content analysis of the interviews, identifies the major themes or suggestions that emerge, and prepares a summary presentation. At the team-building meeting, the consultant presents the summary, and the team, under the manager's direction, analyzes the data and plans actions to deal with the major concerns.

Some consultants prefer not to conduct interviews prior to the team-building meeting and do not want to present a data summary. They have found that information shared in a private interview with a consultant is not as readily discussed in the open, with all other team members present, especially if some of those members have been the object of some of the interview information. Consultants have painfully discovered that people often deny what they said in the interview, fight the data, and refuse to use what they said as a basis for discussion and planning. At times it may be appropriate for the consultant to interview people privately to understand some of the deeply rooted issues but still have people present their own definitions of the problems in an open session.

One question often arises about interviewing: Should the interviews be kept anonymous so that no one will be identified? We have found that if data are gathered from a team and those data are then presented to that team, team members often can figure out who said what. Keeping sources anonymous is often difficult, if not impossible. Thus, we typically say to a team member before starting an interview: "You will not be personally identified in the summary we present back to the team, but you must be aware that people might recognize you as the source of certain data. Thus, you should respond to the questions with information that you'd be willing to discuss in the team and might possibly be identified with. However, if you have some information that is important for us to know but you don't want it to be reported back, you can give such information off the record. This won't be reported, but it might prove useful to us to better understand the team's problems." We have found this approach helpful in getting team members to open up and share information with us about the team. It also encourages team members to own their own feelings and be willing to discuss them in the team.

Team Data Gathering An alternative to surveys and interviewing is open data sharing in a team setting. With this method, each person in the team is asked to share data publicly with the other team members. The data shared may not be as inclusive as data revealed in an interview, but each person feels responsible to own up to the information he or she presents to the group and to deal with the issue raised. To prevent forced disclosure, one good ground rule is to tell people that they should raise only those issues they feel they can honestly discuss with the others. They then generally present only the information they feel comfortable discussing; thus, the open sharing of data may result in less information but more willingness to "work the data." It may be helpful to systematically discuss barriers to effective team functioning that may exist in the other three Cs: team context, team composition, or team relationship and task competencies.

The kinds of questions suggested for the interview format are the same ones that people share openly at the beginning of the team-building session. Each presents his or her views on what keeps the team from being as effective as it could be or suggests reasons for a particular problem. Each person also describes the things he or she likes about the team, hindrances to personal effectiveness, and the changes he or she feels would be helpful. All of the data are compiled on a flip chart or whiteboard. (In another variation, data for a large team could be gathered and shared in subgroups.) Then the group moves on to the next stage of the team-building cycle, data analysis.

Diagnosis and Analysis of Data

With all of the data now available, the manager and the consultant work with the team to summarize the data and put the information into a priority listing. The following summary categories could be used:

A. Issues that we can work on in this meeting
B. Issues that someone else must work on (and identify who the others would be)
C. Issues that apparently are not open to change; that is, things we must learn to accept or live with

Category A items become the top agenda items for the rest of the team-building session. Category B items are those for which strategies must be developed by involving others. For category C items, the group must develop coping mechanisms. If the manager is prepared, he or she can handle the summary and sort the data into these three categories. If the manager feels uneasy about this, the consultant may function as a role model to show how this is done.

The next important step is to review all of the data and try to identify underlying factors that may be related to several problems. A careful analysis of the data may show that certain procedures, rules, or job assignments are causing several disruptive conditions.

Action Planning

After the agenda has been developed out of the data, the roles of the manager and the consultant diverge. The manager should move directly into the customary managerial role of group leader. The issues identified should become problems to solve, and plans for action should be developed.

While the manager is conducting the meeting, the consultant functions as a group observer and facilitator. Schein has referred to this activity as "process consulting," a function that others in the group also can learn to perform.[1] In this role, the consultant helps the group look at its problem-solving and work processes. He or she may stop the group if certain task functions or relationship functions are missing or being performed poorly. If the group gets bogged down or steamrolled into uncommitted decisions, the consultant helps look at these processes, why they occur, and how to avoid them in the future. In this role, the consultant trains the group to develop better problem-solving skills.

Implementation and Evaluation

If the actions planned at the team-building session are to make any difference, they must be put into practice. Ensuring that plans are implemented has always been a major function of management. The manager must be committed to the team plans; without commitment, it is unlikely that a manager can effectively hold people responsible for assignments agreed on in the team-building meeting.

The consultant's role is to observe the degree of action during the implementation phase and be particularly active during the evaluation period. Another data-gathering process now begins, for that is the basis of evaluation. It is important to see if the actions planned or the goals developed during the team-building sessions have been achieved. This again ultimately should be the responsibility of the manager, but the consultant can help train the manager to carry out good program evaluation.

The manager and the consultant should work closely together in any team development effort. It is ineffective for the manager to turn the whole effort over to the consultant with the plea, "You're the expert. Why don't you do it for me?" Such action leads to a great deal of dependence on the consultant, and if the consultant is highly effective, it can cause the manager to feel inadequate or even more dependent. If the consultant is ineffective, the manager can then reject the plans developed as being unworkable or useless, and the failure of the team-building program is blamed on the consultant. Managers must take responsibility for the team-building program, and consultants must work with managers to help them plan and take action in unfamiliar areas in which the manager may need to develop the skills required to be successful.

The consultant must be honest, aggressively forthright, and sensitive. He or she must be able to help the manager look at his or her own leadership style and its impact in facilitating or hindering team effectiveness. The consultant needs to help group members get important data out in the open and keep them from feeling threatened for sharing with others. The consultant's role involves helping the group develop skills in group problem solving and planning. To do this, the consultant must have a good understanding of group processes and be able to help the group look at its own dynamics. Finally, the consultant must feel a sense of pride and accomplishment when the manager and the team demonstrate their ability to solve problems independently and no longer need a consultant's services.

In Summary

The ability of a team to diagnose its own problems and initiate change is perhaps the distinguishing feature of high-performing teams. In this chapter, we have suggested that managing effective change in teams requires the following:

- The team must be able to accurately diagnose its problems and the underlying causes to those problems. The team-building checklist in Figure 5.1 can be used to do such an assessment.
- The team leader must recognize whether he or she will need the assistance of a consultant, set out in figure 5.2 or can manage the team-building cycle, set out in figure 5.3, alone.
- The manager (and the consultant if needed) should determine the most effective way to gather data about the team, whether through surveys, interviews, or open data sharing. The method used is often determined by the size of the team, the level of trust in the team, and what kinds of information are needed.
- Teams must have the ability to generate useful data with regard to team skills, processes, and performance; to determine what the data mean for the team; and to identify and prioritize the issues and problems that need to be addressed.
- Teams must be able to develop and implement their action plans, as well as evaluate the results. A process for assigning accountability and following through is also important.