

## 7. Group & Team

### Understanding Key Concept

- Groups involve two or more people working together regularly to achieve common goals.
- Synergy is the creation of a whole greater than the sum of its parts.
- Social loafing occurs when people work less hard in groups than they would individually.
- Social facilitation is the tendency for one's behavior to be influenced by the presence of others in a group.
- Formal groups are officially designated for a specific organizational purpose.
- Informal groups are unofficial and emerge to serve special interests.
- The diversity-consensus dilemma is the tendency for diversity in groups to create process difficulties even as it offers improved potential for problem solving.
- Status congruence involves consistency between a person's status within and outside of a group.
- Group dynamics are the forces operating in groups that affect the ways members work together.
- Intergroup dynamics are relationships between groups cooperating and competing with one another.
- Teams are groups of people who work actively together to achieve a purpose for which they are all accountable.
- Teamwork occurs when group members work together in ways that utilize their skills well to accomplish a purpose.
- Team building is a collaborative way to gather and analyze data to improve teamwork.
- Distributed leadership is the sharing of responsibility for meeting group task and maintenance needs.
- Task activities directly contribute to the performance of important tasks.
- Maintenance activities support the emotional life of the team as an ongoing social system.
- A role is a set of expectations for a team member or person in a job.
- Role ambiguity occurs when someone is uncertain about what is expected of him or her.
- Role overload occurs when too much work is expected of the individual.
- Role underload occurs when too little work is expected of the individual.
- Role conflict occurs when someone is unable to respond to role expectations that conflict with one another.
- Norms are rules or standards for the behavior of group members.
- Cohesiveness is the degree to which members are attracted to a group and motivated to remain a part of it.
- Members of employee involvement teams meet regularly to examine work-related problems and opportunities.
- Members of a quality circle meet regularly to find ways for continuous improvement of quality operations.
- Cross-functional teams bring together persons from different functions to work on a common task.
- The functional silos problem is when persons working in different functions fail to communicate and interact with one another.
- A virtual team convenes and operates with members linked together electronically via networked computers.
- Self-managing teams are empowered to make decisions about planning, doing, and evaluating their daily

work.

- Multiskilling occurs when team members are trained in skills to perform different jobs.

### Groups in Organizations

A group may be defined as a collection of two or more people who work with one another regularly to achieve common goals. In a true group, members are mutually dependent on one another to achieve common goals, and they interact with one another regularly to pursue those goals over a sustained period of time. Groups are good for both organizations and their members, helping to accomplish important tasks and to maintain a high-quality workforce. Consultant and management scholar Harold J. Leavitt is a well-known advocate for the power and usefulness of groups. Recently, he has described “hot groups” that thrive in conditions of crisis and competition and whose creativity and innovativeness generate extraordinary returns.

### WHAT IS AN EFFECTIVE GROUP?

An effective group is one that achieves high levels of task performance, member satisfaction and team viability. With regard to task performance, this group achieves its performance goals—in the standard sense of quantity, quality, and timeliness of work results. For a permanent work group, such as a manufacturing team, this may mean meeting daily production targets. For a temporary group, such as a new policy task force, this may involve meeting a deadline for submitting a new organizational policy to the company president. With regard to member satisfaction, an effective group is one whose members believe that their participation and experiences are positive and meet important personal needs. They are satisfied with their tasks, accomplishments, and interpersonal relationships. With regard to team viability, the members are sufficiently satisfied to continue working well together on an ongoing basis and/or to look forward to working together again at some future point in time. The group in this way has all-important long-term performance potential.

### UNIQUE CONTRIBUTIONS OF GROUPS

Effective groups help organizations accomplish important tasks. In particular, they offer the potential for synergy—the creation of a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. When synergy occurs, groups accomplish more than the total of their members’ individual capabilities. Group synergy is necessary for organizations to become competitive and achieve longterm high performance in today’s dynamic times.

The Effective Manager 2.2 lists in general the benefits groups can bring to organizations. More specifically, groups often have three performance advantages over individuals acting alone. First, when there is no clear “expert” in a particular task or problem, groups seem to make better judgments than does the average individual alone. Second, when problem solving can be handled by a division of labor and the sharing of information, groups are typically more successful than

individuals. And third, because of their tendencies to make riskier decisions, groups can be more creative and innovative than individuals.

In addition, groups are important settings where people learn from one another and share job skills and knowledge.<sup>51</sup> The learning environment and the pool of experience within a group can be used to solve difficult and unique problems. This is especially helpful to newcomers who often need help in their jobs. When group members support and help each other in acquiring and improving job competencies, they may even make up for deficiencies in organizational training systems.

Groups are also able to satisfy the needs of members. They offer opportunities for social interaction and can provide individuals with a sense of security in available work assistance and technical advice. They can provide emotional support in times of special crisis or pressure, and allow for ego involvement in group goals and activities.

At the same time that they have enormous performance potential, groups can also have problems. One concern is social loafing, also known as the Ringelmann effect. It is the tendency of people to work less hard in a group than they would individually. Max Ringelmann, a German psychologist, pinpointed the phenomenon by asking people to pull on a rope as hard as they could, first alone and then in a group. He found that average productivity dropped as more people joined the rope-pulling task. He acknowledged two reasons why people may not work as hard in groups as they would individually: (1) their individual contribution is less noticeable in the context of the group, and (2) they prefer to see others carry the workload. Some considerations in dealing with social loafing or trying to prevent it from occurring include:

How to handle social loafing

- Define member roles and tasks to maximize individual interests
- Link individual rewards to performance contributions to the group
- Raise accountability by identifying individuals' performance contributions to the group

Another issue in group work is social facilitation—the tendency for one's behavior to be influenced by the presence of others in a group or social setting. In general, social facilitation theory indicates that working in the presence of others creates an emotional arousal or excitement that stimulates behavior and therefore affects performance. Arousal tends to work positively when one is proficient with the task. Here, the excitement leads to extra effort at doing something that already comes quite naturally. An example is the play of a world-class athlete in front of an enthusiastic “hometown” crowd. But the effect of social facilitation can be negative when the task is not well learned. You may know this best in the context of public speaking. When asked

to speak in front of a class or larger audience, you may well stumble as you try hard in public to talk about an unfamiliar topic.

## FORMAL GROUPS

There are many ways in the new workplace for groups to be used to great advantage. A formal group is officially designated to serve a specific organizational purpose. An example is the work unit headed by a manager and consisting of one or more direct reports. The organization creates such a group to perform a specific task, which typically involves the use of resources to create a product such as a report, decision, service, or commodity. The head of a formal group is responsible for the group's performance accomplishments, but all members contribute the required work. Also, the head of the group plays a key "linking-pin" role that ties it horizontally and vertically with the rest of the organization.

Formal groups may be permanent or temporary. Permanent work groups, or command groups in the vertical structure, often appear on organization charts as departments (e.g., market research department), divisions (e.g., consumer products division), or teams (e.g., product-assembly team). Such groups can vary in size from very small departments or teams of just a few people to large divisions employing a hundred or more people. In all cases, permanent work groups are officially created to perform a specific function on an ongoing basis. They continue to exist until a decision is made to change or reconfigure the organization for some reason.

In contrast, temporary work groups are task groups specifically created to solve a problem or perform a defined task. They often disband once the assigned purpose or task has been accomplished. Examples are the many temporary committees and task forces that are important components of any organization. Indeed, today's organizations tend to make more use of cross-functional teams or task forces for special problem-solving efforts. The president of a company, for example, might convene a task force to examine the possibility of implementing flexible work hours for non-managerial employees. Usually, such temporary groups appoint chairpersons or heads who are held accountable for results, much as is the manager of a work unit. Another common form is the project team that is formed, often cross-functionally, to complete a specific task with a well-defined end point. Examples include installing a new E-mail system and introducing a new product modification.

Information technology is bringing a new type of group into the workplace. This is the virtual group, a group whose members convene and work together electronically via networked computers. In this new age of the Internet and intranets, and more, virtual groups will become increasingly common in organizations. Facilitated by ever-advancing team-oriented software, or

groupware, members of virtual groups can do the same things as members of face-to-face groups. They can share information, make decisions, and complete tasks. The important role of virtual groups or teams in the high performance workplace is discussed later.

## INFORMAL GROUPS

Informal groups emerge without being officially designated by the organization. They form spontaneously and are based on personal relationships or special interests, and not on any specific organizational endorsement. They are commonly found within most formal groups. Friendship groups, for example, consist of persons with natural affinities for one another. They tend to work together, sit together, take breaks together, and even do things together outside of the workplace. Interest groups consist of persons who share common interests. These may be job-related interests, such as an intense desire to learn more about computers, or nonwork interests, such as community service, sports, or religion.

Informal groups often help people get their jobs done. Through their network of interpersonal relationships, they have the potential to speed up the work flow as people assist each other in ways that formal lines of authority fail to provide. They also help individuals satisfy needs that are thwarted or otherwise left unmet in a formal group. In these and related ways, informal groups can provide their members with social satisfactions, security, and a sense of belonging.

## Stages of Group Development

Whether one is part of a formal work unit, a temporary task force, or a virtual team, the group itself passes through different stages in its life cycle. Furthermore, depending on the stage the group has reached, the leader and members can face very different challenges. Figure 2.5 describes five stages of group development: (1) forming, (2) storming, (3) norming, (4) performing, and (5) adjourning.

### FORMING STAGE

In the forming stage of group development, a primary concern is the initial entry of members to a group. During this stage, individuals ask a number of questions as they begin to identify with other group members and with the group itself. Their concerns may include: “What can the group offer me?” “What will I be asked to contribute?” “Can my needs be met at the same time I contribute to the group?” Members are interested in getting to know each other and discovering what is considered acceptable behavior, in determining the real task of the group, and in defining group rules.

### STORMING STAGE

The storming stage of group development is a period of high emotionality and tension among the group members. During this stage, hostility and infighting may occur, and the group typically experiences many changes. Coalitions or cliques may form as individuals compete to impose their preferences on the group and to achieve a desired status position. Outside demands, including premature expectations for performance results, may create uncomfortable pressures. In the process, membership expectations tend to be clarified, and attention shifts toward obstacles standing in the way of group goals. Individuals begin to understand one another's interpersonal styles, and efforts are made to find ways to accomplish group goals while also satisfying individual needs.

#### NORMING STAGE

The norming stage of group development, sometimes called initial integration, is the point at which the group really begins to come together as a coordinated unit. The turmoil of the storming stage gives way to a precarious balancing of forces. With the pleasures of a new sense of harmony, group members will strive to maintain positive balance. Holding the group together may become more important to some than successfully working on the group's tasks. Minority viewpoints, deviations from group directions, and criticisms may be discouraged as group members experience a preliminary sense of closeness. Some members may mistakenly perceive this stage as one of ultimate maturity. In fact, a premature sense of accomplishment at this point needs to be carefully managed as a "stepping stone" to the next higher level of group development.

#### PERFORMING STAGE

The performing stage of group development, sometimes called total integration, marks the emergence of a mature, organized, and well-functioning group. The group is now able to deal with complex tasks and handle internal disagreements in creative ways. The structure is stable, and members are motivated by group goals and are generally satisfied. The primary challenges are continued efforts to improve relationships and performance. Group members should be able to adapt successfully as opportunities and demands change over time. A group that has achieved the level of total integration typically scores high on the criteria of group maturity shown in Figure 2.6.

#### ADJOURNING STAGE

A well-integrated group is able to disband, if required, when its work is accomplished. The adjourning stage of group development is especially important for the many temporary groups that are increasingly common in the new workplace, including task forces, committees, project teams and the like. Members of these groups must be able to convene quickly, do their jobs on

a tight schedule, and then adjourn—often to reconvene later if needed. The members' willingness to disband when the job is done and to work well together in future responsibilities, group or otherwise, is an important long-run test of group success.

#### Input Foundations of Group Effectiveness

An organization's success depends largely on the performance of its internal networks of formal and informal groups. Groups in this sense are an important component of the human resources and intellectual capital of organizations. Like individuals, group contributions are essential if the organization is to prosper through high performance over the long run. The systems model in Figure 2.7 shows how groups, like organizations, pursue effectiveness by interacting with their environments to transform resource inputs into product outputs.<sup>62</sup> The inputs are the initial "givens" in any group situation. They are the foundations for all consequent action. As a general rule-of-thumb, the stronger the input foundations the better the chances for long-term group effectiveness. Key group inputs include the nature of the task, goals, rewards, resources, technology, membership diversity, and group size.

#### TASKS

Tasks place different demands on groups, with varying implications for group effectiveness. The technical demands of a group's task include its routineness, difficulty, and information requirements. The social demands of a task involve relationships, ego involvement, controversies over ends and means, and the like. Tasks that are complex in technical demands require unique solutions and more information processing; those that are complex in social demands involve difficulties reaching agreement on goals or methods for accomplishing them. Naturally, group effectiveness is harder to achieve when the task is highly complex. To master complexity, group members must apply and distribute their efforts broadly and actively cooperate to achieve desired results. When their efforts are successful at mastering complex tasks, however, group members tend to experience high levels of satisfaction with the group and its accomplishments.

#### GOALS, REWARDS, AND RESOURCES

Appropriate goals, well-designed reward systems, and adequate resources are all essential to support long-term performance accomplishments. A group's performance, much as an individual's performance, can suffer when goals are unclear, insufficiently challenging, or arbitrarily imposed. It can also suffer if goals and rewards are focused too much on individual instead of group outcomes. And it can suffer if adequate budgets, the right facilities, good work methods and procedures, and the best technologies are not available. By contrast, having the right goals, rewards, and resources can be a strong launching pad for group success.

## TECHNOLOGY

Technology provides the means to get work accomplished. It is always necessary to have the right technology available for the task at hand. The nature of the work-flow technology can also influence the way group members interact with one another while performing their tasks. It is one thing to be part of a group that crafts products to specific customer requests; it is quite another to be part of a group whose members staff one section of a machine-paced assembly line. The former technology permits greater interaction among group members. It will probably create a closer knit group with a stronger sense of identity than the one formed around one small segment of an assembly line.

## MEMBERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

To achieve success a group must have the right skills and competencies available for group problem solving. Although talents alone cannot guarantee desired results, they establish an important baseline of performance potential. When the input competencies are insufficient, a group's performance limits will be difficult to overcome.

In homogeneous groups where members are very similar to one another, members may find it very easy to work together. But they may also suffer performance limitations if their collective skills, experiences and perspectives are not a good match for complex tasks. In heterogeneous groups whose members vary in age, gender, race, ethnicity, experience, culture, and the like, a wide pool of talent and viewpoints is available for problem-solving. But this diversity may also create difficulties as members try to define problems, share information, and handle interpersonal conflicts. These difficulties may be quite pronounced in the short run, but once members learn how to work together, the diversity can be turned into enhanced performance potential.

Researchers identify what is called the diversity-consensus dilemma—the tendency for increasing diversity among group members to make it harder for group members to work together, even though the diversity itself expands the skills and perspectives available for problem solving.<sup>65</sup> The challenge to group effectiveness in a multinational team, for example, is to take advantage of the diversity without suffering process disadvantages.

The mix of personalities is also important in a group or team. The FIRO-B theory (with “FIRO” standing for fundamental interpersonal orientation) helps to identify differences in how people relate to one another based on their needs to express and receive feelings of inclusion, control, and affection. Developed by William Schutz, the theory points out that groups whose members are compatible on these needs are likely to be more effective than groups whose members are more incompatible on them. Symptoms of incompatibilities in a group include withdrawn

members, open hostilities, struggles over control, and domination of the group by a few members. Schutz states the management implications of the FIRO-B theory this way: “If at the outset we can choose a group of people who can work together harmoniously, we shall go far toward avoiding situations where a group’s efforts are wasted in interpersonal conflicts.”

Another source of diversity in group membership is status—a person’s relative rank, prestige, or standing in a group. Status within a group can be based on any number of factors, including age, work seniority, occupation, education, performance, or standing in other groups. Status congruence occurs when a person’s position within the group is equivalent to ones held outside of the group. Problems are to be expected when status incongruence is present and someone’s position in the group does not reflect the outside status. In high-power distance cultures such as Malaysia, for example, the chair of a committee is expected to be the highest-ranking member of the group. When such status congruity is present, members can feel comfortable for the group to proceed with its work. If the senior member is not appointed to head the committee, discomfort will ensue and difficulties in group performance are likely. Similar problems might occur, for example, when a young college graduate is appointed to chair a project group composed of senior and more experienced workers.

#### GROUP SIZE

The size of a group, as measured by the number of its members, can make a difference in a group’s effectiveness. As a group becomes larger, more people are available to divide up the work and accomplish needed tasks. This can boost performance and member satisfaction, but only up to a point. As a group continues to grow in size, communication and coordination problems often set in. Satisfaction may dip, and turnover, absenteeism, and social loafing may increase. Even logistical matters, such as finding time and locations for meetings, become more difficult for larger groups and can affect performance negatively.

A good size for problem-solving groups is between five and seven members. A group with fewer than five may be too small to adequately share responsibilities. With more than seven, individuals may find it harder to participate and offer ideas. Larger groups are also more prone to possible domination by aggressive members and have tendencies to split into coalitions or subgroups. Groups with an odd number of members find it easier to use majority voting rules to resolve disagreements. When speed is required, this form of conflict management is useful, and odd-numbered groups may be preferred. But when careful deliberations are required and the emphasis is more on consensus, such as in jury duty or very complex problem solving, even-numbered groups may be more effective unless an irreconcilable deadlock occurs.

## Group and Intergroup Dynamics

The effectiveness of any group, as previously depicted in Figure 2.7, requires more than the correct inputs. It always depends in part on how well members work together to utilize these inputs to produce the desired outputs. When we speak about people “working together” in groups, we are dealing with issues of group dynamics—the forces operating in groups that affect the way members relate to and work with one another. From the perspective of an open system, group dynamics are the processes through which inputs are transformed into outputs.

### WHAT GOES ON WITHIN GROUPS

George Homans described a classic model of group dynamics involving two sets of behaviors—required and emergent. In a work group, required behaviors are those formally defined and expected by the organization. For example, they may include such behaviors as punctuality, customer respect, and assistance to co-workers. Emergent behaviors are those that group members display in addition to what the organization asks of them. They derive not from outside expectations but from personal initiative. Emergent behaviors often include things that people do beyond formal job requirements and that help get the job done in the best ways possible. Rarely can required behaviors be specified so perfectly that they meet all the demands that arise in a work situation. This makes emergent behaviors so essential. An example might be someone taking the time to send an E-mail to an absent member to keep her informed about what happened during a group meeting. The concept of empowerment, often discussed in this book as essential to the high performance workplace, relies strongly on unlocking this positive aspect of emergent behaviors.

Homans’ model of group dynamics also describes member relationships in terms of activities, interactions, and sentiments, all of which have their required and emergent forms. Activities are the things people do or the actions they take in groups while working on tasks. Interactions are interpersonal communications and contacts. Sentiments are the feelings, attitudes, beliefs, or values held by group members.

### WHAT GOES ON BETWEEN GROUPS

The term intergroup dynamics refers to the dynamics that take place between two or more groups. Organizations ideally operate as cooperative systems in which the various components support one another. In the real world, however, competition and intergroup problems often develop within an organization and have mixed consequences. On the negative side—such as when manufacturing and sales units don’t get along, intergroup dynamics may divert energies as members focus more on their animosities toward the other group than on the performance of important tasks. On the positive side, competition among groups can stimulate them to work

harder, become more focused on key tasks, develop more internal loyalty and satisfaction, or achieve a higher level of creativity in problem solving. Japanese companies, for example, often use competitive themes to motivate their organization-wide workforces. At Sony, it has been said that the slogan “BMW” stands for “Beat Matsushita Whatsoever.”

Organizations and their managers go to great lengths to avoid the negative and achieve the positive aspects of intergroup dynamics. Groups engaged in destructive competition, for example, can be refocused on a common enemy or a common goal. Direct negotiations can be held among the groups, and members can be trained to work more cooperatively. It is important to avoid win-lose reward systems in which one group must lose something in order for the other to gain. Rewards can be refocused on contributions to the total organization and on how much groups help one another. Also, cooperation tends to increase as interaction between groups increases.

#### High Performance Teams

When we think of the word “teams,” a variety of popular sporting teams usually comes to mind. Work groups can also be considered as teams to the extent that they meet the demands of this definition. A team is a small group of people with complementary skills, who work actively together to achieve a common purpose for which they hold themselves collectively accountable.

Teams are one of the major forces behind today’s revolutionary changes in organizations. Management scholar Jay Conger calls the team-based organization the management system of the future, the business world’s response to the need for speed in an ever more competitive environment. He cites the example of an American jet engine manufacturer that switched to cross-functional teams instead of traditional functional work units. The firm cut the time required to design and produce new engines by 50 percent. Conger says: “Cross-functional teams are speed machines.” Clearly, we need to know more about such teams and teamwork in organizations.

#### TYPES OF TEAMS

A major challenge in any organization is to turn formal groups into true high performance teams in any of the following settings.<sup>89</sup> First, there are teams that recommend things. Established to study specific problems and recommend solutions to them, these teams typically work with a target completion date and disband once their purpose has been fulfilled. They are temporary groups including task forces, ad hoc committees, project teams, and the like. Members of these teams must be able to learn quickly how to work well together, accomplish the assigned task,

and make good action recommendations for followup work by other people.

Second, there are teams that run things. These management teams consist of people with the formal responsibility for leading other groups. These teams may exist at all levels of responsibility, from the individual work unit composed of a team leader and team members to the top management team composed of a CEO and other senior executives. Teams can add value to work processes at any level and offer special opportunities for dealing with complex problems and uncertain situations. Key issues addressed by top management teams, for example, include identifying overall organizational purposes, goals, and values, crafting strategies, and persuading others to support them.

Third, there are teams that make or do things. These are functional groups and work units that perform ongoing tasks, such as marketing or manufacturing. Members of these teams must have good long-term working relationships with one another, solid operating systems, and the external support needed to achieve effectiveness over a sustained period of time. And they need energy to keep up the pace and meet the day-to-day challenges of sustained high performance.

#### THE NATURE OF TEAMWORK

All teams need members who believe in team goals and are motivated to work with others actively to accomplish important tasks—whether those tasks involve recommending things, making or doing things, or running things. Indeed, an essential criterion of a true team is that the members feel “collectively accountable” for what they accomplish.

This sense of collective accountability sets the stage for real teamwork, where team members actively working together in such a way that all their respective skills are well utilized to achieve a common purpose. A commitment to teamwork is found in the willingness of every member to “listen and respond constructively to views expressed by others, give others the benefit of the doubt, provide support, and recognize the interests and achievements of others.”<sup>93</sup> Teamwork of this type is the central foundation of any high performance team. But developing it is a challenging leadership task, regardless of the setting. It takes a lot more work to build a well-functioning team, than to simply assign members to the same group and then expect them to do a great job. See for example, *The Effective Manager* 2.5.

High performance teams have specific characteristics that allow them to excel at teamwork and achieve special performance advantages. First, high performance teams have strong core values that help guide their attitudes and behaviors in directions consistent with the team’s purpose. Such values act as an internal control system for a group or team and can substitute for much

of the outside direction that a supervisor might otherwise provide. Second, high performance teams turn a general sense of purpose into specific performance objectives. Whereas a shared sense of purpose gives general direction to a team, commitment to specific performance results—such as reducing the time of getting the product to market by half, makes this purpose truly meaningful. Specific objectives provide a focus for solving problems and resolving conflicts, and they set standards for measuring results and obtaining performance feedback. They also help group members understand the need for “collective” versus purely individual efforts. Third, members of high performance teams have the right mix of skills, including technical skills, problem-solving and decision-making skills, and interpersonal skills. Finally, high performance teams possess creativity. In the new workplace, teams must use their creativity to assist organizations in continuous improvement of operations—including productivity and customer service—and in continuous development of new products, services, and markets.

#### DIVERSITY AND TEAM PERFORMANCE

In order to create and maintain high performance teams, all of the various elements of group effectiveness must be addressed and successfully managed. Among them, membership diversity as an important input to group and team dynamics carries special significance in today’s workplace. When team members are homogeneous, that is, when members are alike in respect to such things as age, gender, race, ethnicity, experience, ethnicity and culture, there are certain potential benefits. It will probably be easy for them to quickly build social relationships and begin the interactions needed to work harmoniously together. On the other hand, the homogeneity may be limiting in terms of ideas, viewpoints, and creativity. With team diversity in terms of demography, experiences, and cultures, by contrast, comes a rich pool of information, talent, and varied perspectives that can help improve problem solving and increase creativity. These assets are especially valuable when the team is working on complex and very demanding tasks.

Research indicates that diversity among team members may create performance difficulties early in the team’s life or stage of development. This occurs when interpersonal stresses and conflicts relating to diversity slow down group processes such as relationship building, problem definition, and information sharing. But even though diverse teams may struggle in the short run to resolve these issues, they are also likely to develop enhanced performance potential once things are worked out.<sup>97</sup> Although it may take a bit more time and effort to create teamwork from foundations of diversity, longer-term gains in creativity and performance can make it all worthwhile. Teamwork rich in diversity is one of the great advantages of high performance organizations.

## Team Building

Teamwork doesn't always happen naturally in a group. It is something that team members and leaders must work hard to achieve. In the sports world, for example, coaches and managers focus on teamwork when building new teams at the start of each season. And as you are aware, even experienced teams often run into problems as a season progresses. Members slack off or become disgruntled; some have performance "slumps;" some are traded to other teams. Even world champion teams have losing streaks, and the most talented players can lose motivation at times, quibble among themselves, and end up contributing little to team success. When these things happen, the owners, managers, and players are apt to examine their problems, take corrective action to rebuild the team, and restore the teamwork needed to achieve high performance results.

Work groups and teams have similar difficulties. When newly formed, they must master challenges in the early stages of group development. Even when they are mature, most work teams encounter problems of insufficient teamwork at different points in time. When difficulties occur, or as a means of preventing them from occurring, a systematic process of team building can help. This is a sequence of planned activities designed to gather and analyze data on the functioning of a group and to initiate changes designed to improve teamwork and increase group effectiveness.

### HOW TEAM BUILDING WORKS

The action steps and continuous improvement theme highlighted in Figure 2.8 are typical of most team-building approaches. The process begins when someone notices that a problem exists or may develop with team effectiveness. Members then work together to gather data relating to the problem, analyze these data, plan for improvements, and implement the action plans. The entire team-building process is highly collaborative. Everyone is expected to participate actively as group operations are evaluated and decisions are made on what needs to be done to improve the team's functioning in the future. This process can and should become an ongoing part of any team's work agenda. It is an approach to continuous improvement that can be very beneficial to long-term team effectiveness.

Team-building is participatory, and it is data based. Whether the data are gathered by questionnaire, interview, nominal group meeting, or other creative methods, the goal is to get good answers to such questions as: "How well are we doing in terms of task accomplishment?"... "How satisfied are we as individual members with the group and the way it operates?" There are a variety of ways for such questions to be asked and answered in a collaborative and motivating manner.

## APPROACHES TO TEAM BUILDING

In the formal retreat approach, team building takes place during an off-site “retreat.” During this retreat, which may last from one to several days, group members work intensively on a variety of assessment and planning tasks. They are initiated by a review of team functioning using data gathered through survey, interviews, or other means. Formal retreats are often held with the assistance of a consultant, who is either hired from the outside or made available from in-house staff. Team-building retreats are quite common and offer opportunities for intense and concentrated efforts to examine group accomplishments and operations.

Not all team building is done in a formal retreat format or with the assistance of consultants. In a continuous improvement approach, the manager, team leader, or group members themselves take responsibility for regularly engaging in the team-building process. This method can be as simple as periodic meetings that implement the team-building steps; it can also include self-managed formal retreats. In all cases, the team members commit themselves to monitoring group development and accomplishments continuously and making the day-to-day changes needed to ensure team effectiveness. Such continuous improvement of teamwork is essential to the total quality and total service management themes so important to organizations today.

In addition, the outdoor experience approach is an increasingly popular team-building activity that may be done on its own or in combination with other approaches. The outdoor experience places group members in a variety of physically challenging situations that must be mastered through teamwork, not individual work. By having to work together in the face of difficult obstacles, team members are supposed to experience increased self-confidence, more respect for others’ capabilities, and a greater commitment to teamwork. A popular sponsor of team building through outdoor experience is the Outward Bound Leadership School, but many others exist. For a group that has never done team building before, outdoor experience can be an exciting way to begin; for groups familiar with team building, it can be a way of further enriching the experience.

### Improving Team Processes

Like many changes in the new workplace, the increased emphasis on teams and teamwork is a major challenge for people used to more traditional ways of working. As more and more jobs are turned over to teams and as more and more traditional supervisors are asked to function as team leaders, special problems relating to team processes may arise. As teams become more integral to organizations, multiple and shifting memberships can cause complications. Team leaders and members alike must be prepared to deal positively with such issues as introducing

new members, handling disagreements on goals and responsibilities, resolving delays and disputes when making decisions, and reducing friction and interpersonal conflicts. Given the complex nature of group dynamics, team building in a sense is never done. Something is always happening that creates the need for further leadership efforts to help improve team processes.

#### NEW MEMBER PROBLEMS

Special difficulties are likely to occur when members first get together in a new group or work team, or when new members join an existing one. Problems often arise as new members try to understand what is expected of them while dealing with anxiety and discomfort in a new social setting. New members, for example, may worry about: Participation—"Will I be allowed to participate?" Goals—"Do I share the same goals as others?" Control—"Will I be able to influence what takes place?" Relationships—"How close do people get?" Processes—"Are conflicts likely to be upsetting?"

Edgar Schein points out that people may try to cope with individual entry problems in self-serving ways that may hinder group operations. He identifies three behavior profiles that are common in such situations. The tough battler is frustrated by a lack of identity in the new group and may act aggressively or reject authority. This person wants answers to the question: "Who am I in this group?" The friendly helper is insecure, suffering uncertainties of intimacy and control. This person may show extraordinary support for others, behave in a dependent way, and seek alliances in subgroups or cliques. The friendly helper needs to know whether she or he will be liked. The objective thinker is anxious about how personal needs will be met in the group. This person may act in a passive, reflective, and even single-minded manner while struggling with the fit between individual goals and group directions.

#### TASK AND MAINTENANCE LEADERSHIP

Research in social psychology suggests that the achievement of sustained high performance by groups requires that both "task needs" and "maintenance needs" be met. Although anyone formally appointed as group leader should help fulfill these needs, all members should also contribute. This responsibility for distributed leadership in group dynamics is an important requirement of any high performance team.

Figure 2.9 describes group task activities as the various things members do that directly contribute to the performance of important group tasks. They include activities such as initiating discussion, sharing information, asking information of others, clarifying something that has been said, and summarizing the status of a deliberation. If these task activities are not adequate, the group will have difficulty accomplishing its objectives. By contrast, in an effective group,

members contribute important task activities as needed and as building blocks for performance success.

Maintenance activities support the group's social and interpersonal relationships. They help the group stay intact and healthy as an ongoing social system. A member contributes maintenance leadership, for example, by encouraging the participation of others, trying to harmonize differences of opinion, praising the contributions of others, and agreeing to go along with a popular course of action. When maintenance leadership is poor, members become dissatisfied with one another and their group membership. This sets the stage for conflicts that can drain energies otherwise needed for task performance. In an effective group, by contrast, maintenance activities help sustain the relationships needed for group members to work well together over time.

In addition to helping meet a group's task and maintenance needs, group members share the additional responsibility of avoiding disruptive behaviors—behaviors that harm the group process. Full participation in distributed leadership means taking individual responsibility for avoiding the following types of behaviors, and helping others do the same:

Disruptive behaviors that harm teams

1. Being overly aggressive toward other members.
2. Withdrawing and refusing to cooperate with others.
3. Horsing around when there is work to be done.
4. Using the group as a forum for self-confession.
5. Talking too much about irrelevant matters.
6. Trying to compete for attention and recognition.

## ROLES AND ROLE DYNAMICS

In groups and teams, new and old members alike need to know what others expect of them and what they can expect from others. A role is a set of expectations associated with a job or position on a team. When roles are unclear or conflictive, performance problems can occur. Groups and work teams sometimes experience problems that are caused by difficulties in defining and managing the roles of members.

Role ambiguity occurs when a person is uncertain about his or her role. To do any job well, people need to know what is expected of them. In new group or team situations, role ambiguities may create problems as members find that their work efforts are wasted or unappreciated by others. Even on mature groups and teams, the failure of members to share expectations and listen to one another may at times create a similar lack of understanding. Being

asked to do too much or too little can also create problems. Role overload occurs when too much is expected and the individual feels overwhelmed with work. Role underload occurs when too little is expected and the individual feels underutilized. Any group benefits from clear and realistic expectations regarding the contributions of each member.

Role conflict occurs when a person is unable to meet the expectations of others. The individual understands what needs to be done but for some reason cannot comply. The resulting tension can reduce job satisfaction and affect both work performance and relationships with other group members. Four common forms of role conflict are: (1) Intrasender role conflict occurs when the same person sends conflicting expectations. (2) Intersender role conflict occurs when different people send conflicting and mutually exclusive expectations. (3) Person-role conflict occurs when one's personal values and needs come into conflict with role expectations. (4) Interrole conflict occurs when the expectations of two or more roles held by the same individual become incompatible, such as the conflict between work and family demands.

One way of managing role dynamics in any group or work setting is by role negotiation. This is a process through which individuals negotiate to clarify the role expectations each holds for the other. Sample results from an actual role negotiation are shown in Figure 2.10. Note the “give and take” between negotiators.

#### POSITIVE NORMS

The norms of a group or team represent ideas or beliefs about how members are expected to behave. They can be considered as “rules” or “standards” of conduct. Norms help clarify the expectations associated with a person's membership in a group. They allow members to structure their own behavior and to predict what others will do; they help members gain a common sense of direction; and they reinforce a desired group or team culture. When someone violates a group norm, other members typically respond in ways that are aimed at enforcing the norm. These responses may include direct criticisms, reprimands, expulsion, and social ostracism.

Managers, task force heads, committee chairs, and team leaders must all try to help their groups adopt positive norms that support organizational goals (see *The Effective Manager* 2.6). A key norm in any setting is the performance norm, which conveys expectations about how hard group members should work. Other norms are important too. In order for a task force or a committee to operate effectively, for example, norms regarding attendance at meetings, punctuality, preparedness, criticism, and social behaviors are needed. Groups also commonly have norms regarding how to deal with supervisors, colleagues, and customers, as well as norms establishing guidelines for honesty and ethical behaviors. The following list shows how everyday

conversations can lend insight into the various types of norms that operate with positive and negative implications for groups and organizations.

#### Types of group norms

- Organizational and personal pride norms—“It is a tradition around here for people to stand up for the company when others criticize it unfairly” (positive); In our company, they are always trying to take advantage of us” (negative).
- High-achievement norms—“On our team, people always try to work hard” (positive); “There’s no point in trying harder on our team, nobody else does” (negative).
- Support and helpfulness norms—“People on this committee are good listeners and actively seek out the ideas and opinions of others” (positive); “On this committee it’s dog-eat-dog and save your own skin” (negative).
- Improvement and change norms—“In our department people are always looking for better ways of doing things” (positive); “Around here, people hang on to the old ways even after they have outlived their usefulness” (negative).

#### TEAM COHESIVENESS

Group or team cohesiveness is the degree to which members are attracted to and motivated to remain part of it.<sup>105</sup> Cohesiveness tends to be high when members are similar in age, attitudes, needs, and backgrounds. It is also high in groups of small size, where members respect one another’s competencies, agree on common goals, and work on interdependent tasks. Cohesiveness tends to increase when groups are physically isolated from others and when they experience performance success or crisis.

Persons in a highly cohesive group value their membership and strive to maintain positive relationships with other group members. In this sense, cohesive groups and teams are good for their members. In contrast to less cohesive groups, members of highly cohesive ones tend to be more energetic when working on group activities, less likely to be absent, and more likely to be happy about performance success and sad about failures. Cohesive groups generally have low turnover and satisfy a broad range of individual needs, often providing a source of loyalty, security, and esteem for their members.

Conformity to Norms Even though cohesive groups are good for their members, they may or may not be good for the organization. Figure 2.11 demonstrates the performance implications for a basic rule of conformity in group dynamics: the more cohesive the group, the greater the conformity of members to group norms.

When the performance norms are positive in a highly cohesive work group or team, the resulting conformity to the norm should have a positive effect on task performance as well as member satisfaction. This is a “best-case” situation for everyone. When the performance norms are negative in a highly cohesive group, however, the same power of conformity can have undesirable results. As shown in the figure, this creates a “worst-case” situation for the organization. Although team members are highly motivated to support group norms, the organization suffers from poor performance results. In between these two extremes are mixed-case situations in which a lack of cohesion fails to rally strong conformity to the norm. With its strength reduced, the outcome of the norm is somewhat unpredictable and performance will most likely fall on the moderate or low side.

**Influencing Cohesiveness** Team leaders and managers must be aware of the steps they can take to build cohesiveness, such as in a group that has positive norms but suffers from low cohesiveness. They must also be ready to deal with situations when cohesiveness adds to the problems of negative and hard-to-change performance norms. Figure 2.12 shows how group cohesiveness can be increased or decreased by making changes in group goals, membership composition, interactions, size, rewards, competition, location, and duration.

#### Teams and the High Performance Workplace

When it was time to re-engineer its order-to-delivery process to eliminate an uncompetitive and costly 26-day cycle time, Hewlett-Packard turned to a team. In just nine months they slashed the time to eight days, improved service, and cut costs. How did they do it? Team leader Julie Anderson says: “We took things away: no supervisors, no hierarchy, no titles, no job description s...the idea was to create a sense of personal ownership.” Says a team member: “...no individual is going to have the best idea, that’s not the way it works—the best ideas come from the collective intelligence of the team.”

Just like this example from Hewlett-Packard, organizations everywhere in the new workplace are finding creative ways of using teams to solve problems and make changes to improve performance. The watchwords of these new approaches to teamwork are empowerment, participation, and involvement, and the setting is increasingly described as an organization that looks and acts much more “lateral” or “horizontal” than vertical.

#### **PROBLEM-SOLVING TEAMS**

One way organizations can use teams is in creative problem solving. The term employee involvement team applies to a wide variety of teams whose members meet regularly to

collectively examine important workplace issues. They discuss ways to enhance quality, better satisfy customers, raise productivity, and improve the quality of work life. In this way, employee involvement teams mobilize the full extent of workers' know-how and gain the commitment needed to fully implement solutions.

A special type of employee involvement group is the quality circle, or QC for short. It is a small group of persons who meet periodically (e.g., an hour or so, once a week) to discuss and develop solutions for problems relating to quality, productivity, or cost. QCs are popular in organizations around the world, but cannot be seen as panaceas for all of an organization's ills. To be successful, members of QCs should receive special training in group dynamics, information gathering, and problem analysis techniques. Leaders of quality circles should also be trained in participation and team building. Any solutions to problems should be jointly pursued by QC members and organizational management. QCs work best in organizations that place a clear emphasis on quality in their mission and goals, promote a culture that supports participation and empowerment, encourage trust and willingness to share important information, and develop a "team spirit."

#### CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAMS

In today's organizations, teams are essential components in the achievement of more horizontal integration and better lateral relations. The cross-functional team, consisting of members representing different functional departments or work units, plays an important role in this regard. Traditionally, many organizations have suffered from what is often called the functional silos problem. This problem occurs when members of functional units stay focused on matters internal to the function and minimize their interactions with members of other functions. In this sense, the functional departments or work units create artificial boundaries or "silos" that discourage rather than encourage more integrative thinking and active coordination with other parts of the organization.

The new team-based organizations are designed to help break down this problem and improve lateral communication. Members of cross-functional teams can solve problems with a positive combination of functional expertise and integrative or total systems thinking. They do so with the great advantages of better information and more speed. Boeing, for example, used this concept to great advantage in designing and bringing to market the 777 passenger jet. A complex network of cross-functional teams brought together design engineers, mechanics, pilots, suppliers, and even customers to manage the "design/build" processes.

#### VIRTUAL TEAMS

Until recently, teamwork was confined in concept and practice to those circumstances in which members could meet face-to-face. Now, the advent of new technologies and sophisticated computer programs known as groupware have changed all that. Virtual teams, introduced in the last chapter as ones whose members meet at least part of the time electronically and with computer support, are a fact of life. The real world of work in businesses and other organizations today involves a variety of electronic communications that allow people to work together through computer mediation, and often separated by vast geographical space. Groupware, in popular forms such as Lotus Domino, Microsoft Exchange and Netscape Suite Spot, allows for virtual meetings and group decision making in a variety of forms and situations. This is further supported by advancements in conferencing and collaboration, including audio, data, and video conferencing alternatives.

Virtual teams offer a number of potential advantages. They bring cost-effectiveness and speed to teamwork where members are unable to meet easily face-to-face. They also bring the power of the computer to bear on typical team needs for information processing and decision making. With the computer as the “go-between” for virtual team members, however, group dynamics can emerge with a slightly different form than found in face-to-face settings. Although technology can help to overcome great distance in making communication possible among a group of people, it may also create teams whose members do not share much, if any, direct “personal” contact. Whereas this may have an advantage of focusing interaction and decision making on facts and objective information rather than emotional considerations, it also may increase risks as decisions are made in a limited social context. Virtual teams may suffer from less social rapport and less direct interaction among members.

Just as with any form of teamwork, virtual teams rely on the efforts and contributions of their members as well as organizational support to achieve effectiveness. Teamwork in any form always takes work. The same stages of development, the same input considerations, and same process requirements are likely to apply in a virtual team as with any team. Where possible, the advantages of face-to-face and virtual teamwork should be combined for maximum benefit. The computer technology should also be appropriate and team members should be well trained in using it.

#### SELF-MANAGING TEAMS

A high-involvement work group design that is increasingly well-established today is known as the self-managing team. These are small groups empowered to make the decisions needed to manage themselves on a day-to-day basis. Although there are different variations of this theme, members of a true selfmanaging work team make decisions on scheduling work, allocating tasks, training

for job skills, evaluating performance, selecting new team members, and controlling quality of work. Members are collectively held accountable for the team's overall performance results.

**How Self-Managing Teams Work** Self-managing teams, also called self-directed teams or empowered teams, are permanent and formal elements in the organizational structure. They replace the traditional work group headed by a supervisor. What differentiates self-managing teams from the more traditional work group is that the team members assume duties otherwise performed by a manager or first-line supervisor. The team members, not a supervisor, perform and are collectively accountable for such activities as planning and work scheduling, performance evaluation, and quality control.

A self-managing team should probably include between 5 and 15 members. The teams must be large enough to provide a good mix of skills and resources, but small enough to function efficiently.

Members must have substantial discretion in determining work pace and in distributing tasks. This is made possible, in part, by multi-skilling, whereby team members are trained in performing more than one job on the team. In self-managing teams, each person is expected to perform many different jobs—even all of the team's jobs, as needed. The more skills someone masters, the higher the base pay. Team members themselves conduct the job training and certify one another as having mastered the required skills.

**Operational Implications of Self-Managing Teams** The expected benefits of self-managing teams include productivity and quality improvements, production flexibility and faster response to technological change, reduced absenteeism and turnover, and improved work attitudes and quality of work life. But these results are not guaranteed. Like all organizational changes, the shift to self-managing teams can encounter difficulties. Structural changes in job classifications and management levels will have consequent implications for supervisors and others used to more traditional ways. Simply put, with a self-managing team you don't need the formal first-line supervisor anymore. The possible extent of this change is shown in Figure 2.13, where the first level of supervisory management has been eliminated and replaced by self-managing teams. Note also that many of the supervisor's traditional tasks are reallocated to the team.

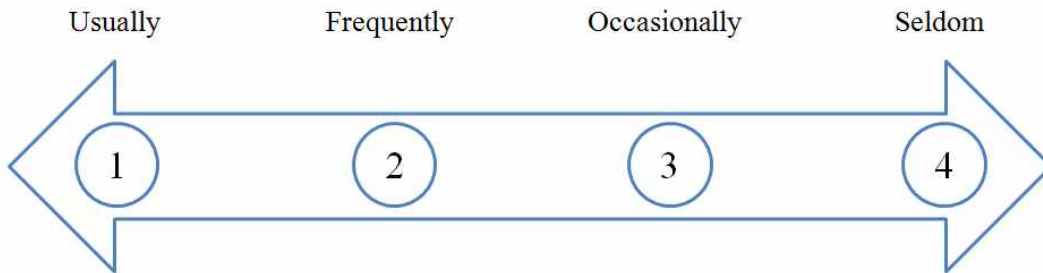
For persons used to more traditional work, the new arrangement can be challenging; for managers learning to deal with self-managing teams rather than individual workers, the changeover can be difficult; for any supervisors displaced by self-managing teams, the implications are even more personal and threatening.

Given this situation, a question must be asked: Should all work groups operate as self-managing teams? The best answer is “No.” Self-managing teams are probably not right for all organizations, work situations, and people. They have great potential, but they also require a proper setting and support. At a minimum, the essence of any self-managing team—high involvement, participation, and empowerment, must be consistent with the values and culture of the organization.

Self Assessment on 'Group Effectiveness'

Instructions

For this assessment, select a specific group you work with or have worked with; it can be a college or work group. For each of the eight statements below, select how often each statement



describes the group' behavior. Place the number 1, 2, 3, or 4 on the line next to each of the 8 numbers.

- \_\_\_ 1. The members are loyal to one another and to the group leader.
- \_\_\_ 2. The members and leader have a high degree of confidence and trust in each other.
- \_\_\_ 3. Group values and goals express relevant values and needs of members.
- \_\_\_ 4. Activities of the group occur in a supportive atmosphere.
- \_\_\_ 5. The group is eager to help members develop to their full potential.
- \_\_\_ 6. The group knows the value of constructive conformity and knows when to use it and for what purpose.
- \_\_\_ 7. The members communicate all information relevant to the group' activity fully and frankly.
- \_\_\_ 8. The members feel secure in making decisions that seem appropriate to them.

Scoring

\_\_\_ Total. Add up the eight numbers and place an X on the continuum below that represents the score.

Effective group 8 . . . 16 . . . 24 . . . 32 Ineffective group

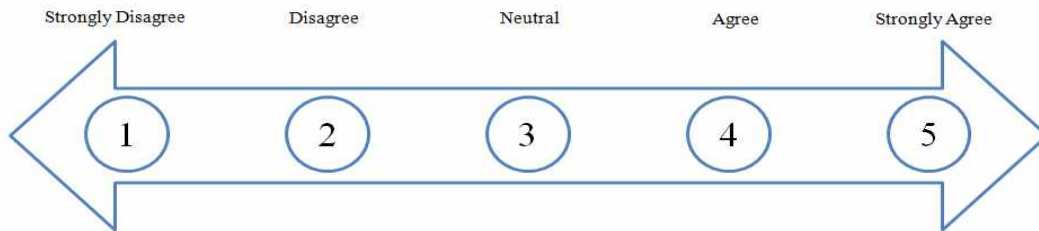
Interpretation

The lower the score, the more effective the group. What can you do to help the group become more effective? What can the group do to become more effective?

Self Assessment on 'Empowering Others'<sup>1)</sup>

Instructions

Think of times when you have been in charge of a group—this could be a full-time or part-time work situation, a student work group, or whatever. Complete the following questionnaire by recording how you feel about each statement according to this five scale below.



When in charge of a group I find:

- \_\_\_ 1. Most of the time other people are too inexperienced to do things, so I prefer to do them myself.
- \_\_\_ 2. It often takes more time to explain things to others than just to do them myself.
- \_\_\_ 3. Mistakes made by others are costly, so I don't assign much work to them.
- \_\_\_ 4. Some things simply should not be delegated to others.
- \_\_\_ 5. I often get quicker action by doing a job myself.
- \_\_\_ 6. Many people are good only at very specific tasks, and thus can't be assigned additional responsibilities.
- \_\_\_ 7. Many people are too busy to take on additional work.
- \_\_\_ 8. Most people just aren't ready to handle additional responsibilities.
- \_\_\_ 9. In my position, I should be entitled to make my own decisions.

Scoring

Total your responses; enter the score here [\_\_\_].

Interpretation

This instrument gives an impression of your willingness to delegate. Possible scores range from 9 to 45. The higher your score, the more willing you appear to be to delegate to others. Willingness to delegate is an important managerial characteristic. It is essential if you're a manager—re to "mpower"others and give them opportunities to assume responsibility and exercise self-control in their work. With the growing importance of empowerment in the new workplace,

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1) Source: *Questionnaire adapted from L. Steinmetz and R. Todd, First Line Management, Fourth Edition (Homewood, IL: BPI/Irwin, 1986), pp. 64-7.*

your willingness to delegate is well worth thinking about seriously.