

Team Design

Team design affects how a group of individuals interact as a unit and serves as a key determinant of success. This chapter will describe the major components that make up team design, including member roles and responsibilities and team culture. In order to build a successful team, leaders need to be well versed in the specific goals and tasks that need to be completed, as well as the levels of interdependence needed among members. Once team members have been selected, work can begin. The first few meetings in the life of a team strongly influence its ongoing structure, so planning *how* to launch a project and *how* to conduct those first few meetings is an important consideration in developing an effective and efficient team structure. Thoughtful planning and active participation increase the chances for outstanding team performance.

CASE 2.1: JOINING THE STARBUCKS TEAM

Jennifer is like many college students. She enjoys her classes and the whole college experience—but she's broke. It's only November, and the money she saved from her summer job as a retail clerk is almost depleted. As she withdraws the last of her final paycheck, she can't help but recount how the hours in the clothing store seemed to drag on and on while the workers continuously engaged in petty bickering and complaining. Jennifer stayed to herself that summer in an attempt to avoid the store drama. She hated going to work and often felt irritated by her demeaning customers or demanding bosses. Now that the hard-earned money she made during those months was gone, she knew she would have to find another part-time job, but she couldn't bear the thought of having another experience like the one she had over the summer.

One of Jennifer's favorite places to study had always been the local Starbucks. She loved to drink her coffee and enjoy the atmosphere of the shop—particularly the friendly and helpful staff who worked there. The obvious enjoyment the employees seemed to get from their jobs soon convinced Jennifer to apply for a position. After an interview that went pretty well, she got the job. When Jennifer arrived for her first of several days of training, she was encouraged by the store manager's kind words of introduction to the rest of the team. He named several of the achievements that he remembered from her résumé and assured them that she would be a great asset to the team.

Her training program allowed Jennifer to acquire new knowledge and to learn new skills. She was taught a host of information about the coffee industry and the Starbucks philosophy, while simultaneously gaining

experience in every area from drink mixing to cashiering and inventory logging. Her coworkers were patient, helpful, and kind to her during her training process, and she soon began to build meaningful relationships with them. She even went out to dinner a few times with them and genuinely enjoyed their company.

Jennifer was both surprised and pleased with the positive environment at Starbucks and soon became loyal to the company's mission. Instead of simply putting in her time and counting down the hours, Jennifer saw herself as part of a group of people working toward a common goal. This job proved to be nothing like the experience she had over the summer. Working at Starbucks began as a simple solution to her financial woes, but it quickly became something much more.

Case Study Discussion Questions

1. What was Jennifer's primary reason for working at Starbucks? What kind of environment was she looking for?
 2. What are some of the typical problems in working with others in a team environment?
 3. List some characteristics of successful team experiences.
 4. What is the primary mission of each Starbucks location? How does each store maintain high levels of commitment to that mission?
 5. Field experiment: Next time you find yourself inside a Starbucks, observe the employees. What do you see? Ask them if they enjoy working there, and why. Ask them how their performance is measured as individual employees and as a team.
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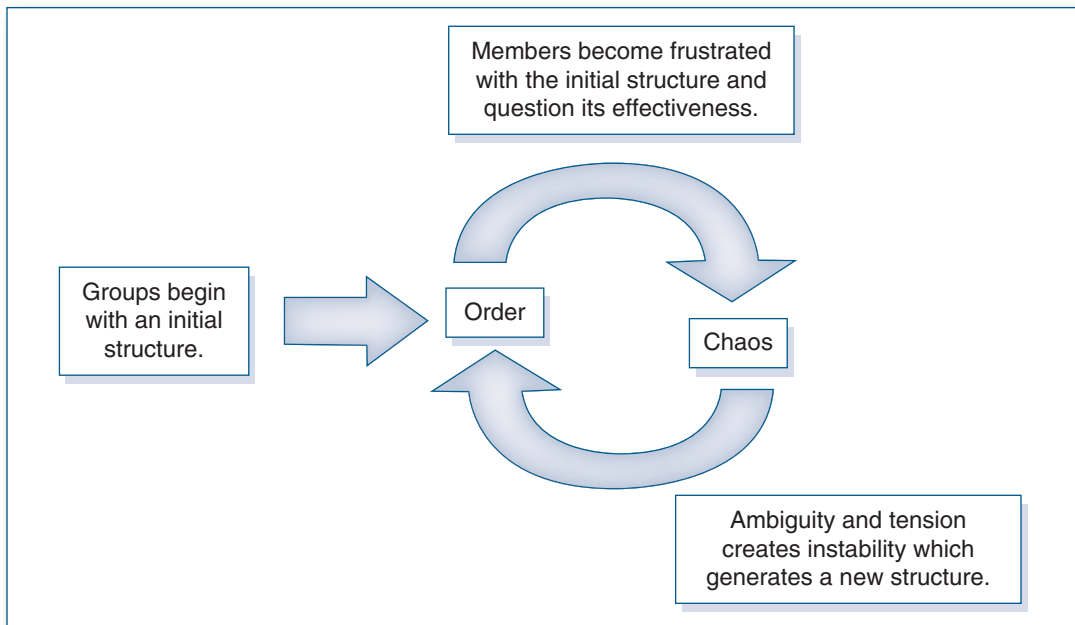
Jennifer's experiences as a team member at the clothing store and then at Starbucks were very different. When people join new teams, they eagerly observe the way team members communicate with one another and the way they work in order to figure out how they are supposed to act and what they are supposed to do. These observed "operating procedures" can be understood as the group's structure. As expectations, roles, and relationships become clear, team members find their place on the team and attempt to fit in. A well-conceived team design provides (a) **predictability**, by reducing ambiguity and, thereby, lowering anxiety; (b) **efficiency**, by maximizing resources and reducing coordination losses; and (c) **member satisfaction**, through improved relationships and task achievement. Unfortunately, work environments like the one Jennifer experienced at the clothing store are not uncommon. Much of the frustration and inefficiencies can be linked back to a faulty or ill-defined structure.

Team design can be imposed from an external source, or it can emerge organically from within the team itself. In a democratically oriented group, structure is mutually decided upon by members and emerges from the bottom up. Team members might volunteer for specific jobs and have the freedom to vote on when and where they will meet. For example, a group of community volunteers who have come together to address rising property taxes in their town will likely decide for themselves what they want to accomplish and how they will do it. This kind of empowerment and shared decision making can be an adjustment

for many (Thoms, Pinto, Parente, & Druskat, 2002). Members who are conscientious, open to new ideas, and emotionally stable will be most successful and satisfied with self-structured groups (Molleman, Nuata, & Jehn, 2004).

Conversely, teams that operate in strict, hierarchical social systems, organizations, or cultures will have their structure defined from the top down. Some institutions have stringent regulations about the behavior and expectations of their members in terms of dress code, rules about communication, and policies regarding attendance, to name just a few. Employee handbooks and office protocol can take a lot of the guesswork out of knowing what is expected of members. Though individuals tend to experience higher levels of satisfaction when teams function more democratically in nature (Foels, Driskell, Mullen, & Salas, 2000), teams that are defined by the larger organizations within which they operate may be more efficient. In some cases, it may be more effective to be told exactly what to do and how to do it instead of spending a lot of time creating the right set of rules, roles, and interpersonal dynamics that satisfy the particular tastes of any given team. Furthermore, teams that need to respond quickly in crisis situations require strong autocratic leadership in order to maximize efficiency and minimize coordination losses. For example, the military requires a highly structured, top-down hierarchy of authority in order to accomplish tasks in potentially confusing and life-threatening situations. Surgical teams and cockpit crews are other groups in high-intensity situations where rules and roles are dictated by strict institutional policies and predetermined task assignments.

Figure 2.1 The Search for Stability



While initial structure provides security and stability for teams, it is important to note that social systems don't remain stable for very long. They frequently oscillate from stability (order) to instability (chaos) and back again (order). This fluid dynamic makes groups unpredictable, yet it also provides the potential for learning and development. Because of the diversity of opinion and experience within teams, members bring multiple perspectives regarding how they should operate; as a result, they often challenge the existing structure. The "storming" and "norming" stages of group development are necessary to move the team into "performing." In this way, ongoing reorganization and restructuring can be seen as a creative force that has the potential to maximize group effectiveness.

For example, imagine a fraternity that has just elected a new set of officers. Not surprisingly, the brothers were elected on the basis of popularity and not necessarily on their administrative experience or skills. After the "chaos" of elections, the new executive board is in the forming stage and the members settle into their roles and responsibilities according to their positions. Unfortunately, the new treasurer is not a detail person, and bills from outside vendors start to fall through the cracks. Things get so bad that the president gets a letter from the local electric company threatening to turn off the house's electricity if it is not paid immediately. The president confronts the treasurer, but he gets defensive and blames the secretary for not delivering the bills to his mailbox. The rest of the officers are briefed on the situation and there is full-blown "storming" between those loyal to the treasurer and those critical of him. How can this team pull out of the downward spiral? The executive committee needs to have a "norming" session to get all the issues on the table and redefine procedures or reassign responsibilities to ensure the board is able to "perform" its function properly. These types of meetings can be messy, but they are necessary. After this, things will settle down as the leadership team stabilizes and members learn to work together more effectively.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As teams work on common goals, members fill various roles and responsibilities to contribute to the group effort. Roles are a "set of prescriptions that define the behaviors required of an individual member who occupies a certain position" (Bray & Brawley, 2002, p. 234). These roles can be assigned by the leader, decided by the team, or volunteered for by specific members. For example, the leader of a team working to raise money for a worthy cause might ask a certain member to contact various agencies with whom they might partner. Presumably, the leader perceives that the member to whom he or she gives the assignment either has the skills, commitment, or appropriate attitude to carry out the task. Other, less formal roles evolve through the group's process. After a few meetings, the service team mentioned above might realize that it would be advantageous to partner with other organizations and suggest that a particular member who has strong community ties explore that possibility.

Finally, members will often volunteer for those tasks that they feel most comfortable, confident, and competent doing (Bray & Brawley, 2002). For example, a member who has a lot of experience working for nonprofit organizations might be quick to volunteer to make initial contact with other groups.

As individuals consistently take on similar tasks and functions, other members will come to expect to see them in those roles. This is one way groups become predictable and



stable. When roles are ambiguous and unclear, members experience frustration and group performance suffers. But when everyone understands their role within the group, misunderstandings and process losses can be minimized. Consistent patterns of behavior from individual members can be associated with one or more of the three major categories of group roles: **task roles**, **relationship roles**, and **individual roles** (Forsyth, 2006).

Task roles are roles that contribute to the ultimate goal of the group. Members who primarily fill these

roles provide critical thinking and strong organizational skills. They are able to analyze problems and overcome obstacles to success. These roles include the ability to make plans and create accountability structures. Sometimes perceived as driven, those immersed in task roles are goal-oriented and keep the group focused and on track. Productivity, efficiency, and achievement are important values to those who are in task roles, causing them to become frustrated if the group wastes time or becomes inefficient.

Relationship roles, on the other hand, are roles that build cohesion in the group. They fulfill the important functions of creating trust and increasing member satisfaction (Ilgen, Hollenbeck, Johnson, & Jundt, 2005). Members who fulfill relationship roles are aware of the interpersonal dynamics of the group and strive to encourage and validate others. While some may perceive these roles as overly concerned with non-task-related issues, both task and relationship roles are needed to balance the group experience and increase the chance for success.

The third type of role describes behavior patterns that are not often beneficial to the group. Individual roles work against the group's goals and distract the group from its mission. People who are playing individual roles are often frustrating to other members, as they passively or actively resist the work of the group. While they may serve a function by challenging and thereby establishing boundaries, individual roles are generally seen as more of a hindrance than a help to performance. The following list of team roles is adapted from a larger list of functional group roles originally developed by Benne and Sheats (1948).

At times, roles can become overly rigid to the point where members either get stuck in less than optimal roles or they become stagnant. This not only hurts their own development but can also prevent others from having the opportunity to experience that role. Family systems theory suggests that the healthiest families allow members to try different roles at different times. For example, the "rebel" of the family does not always have to be the rebel. Likewise, the family "hero" does not always have to be perfect. Applied to groups, the person who has played the role of "recorder" does not always have to be the one who takes notes. He or she may like a break, and someone else may want to take on that task for a while. Members who previously served as negative forces in the group should also be

Table 2.1

Task Roles	Function
Information seeker	Asks for facts, opinions, and ideas from the group, and for clarification and elaboration about existing concepts
Information giver	Contributes facts, opinions, and novel ideas to the group
Discussion facilitator	Facilitates the discussion by engaging the group
Task manager	Keeps the group on task and focuses on practical details
Skeptic	Challenges ideas and evaluates potential solutions
Recorder	Takes notes and records the decisions of the group

Table 2.2

Relationship Roles	Function
Encourager	Validates, affirms, and supports others
Harmonizer	Mediates conflict among group members
Process observer	Observes and periodically comments on the groups progress
Advocate	Helps quieter members to speak up and be heard in the group

Table 2.3

Individual Roles	Function
Resister	Opposes the group by being negative and passive-aggressive
Dominator	Dominates discussions and intimidates others
Avoider	Tries to do as little work as possible
Attention seeker	Calls attention to self to meet personal needs

given the opportunity to participate in more productive roles. However, groups often make it challenging, even for members playing negative roles, to change roles. Once initial impressions have been formed, it can be difficult to change them.

Interestingly, a given role can change the typical behavior of the role carrier. Commonly held beliefs about how a particular role should be carried out can determine an individual's

behavior regardless of whether or not that behavior had previously been characteristic of that individual. The classic Stanford Prison Experiment is an example of the strength and influence of role expectations. In 1971 social psychologists at Stanford University enlisted 24 male students to participate in an experiment conducted in the psychology building on campus. Each was assigned, by the flip of a coin, to act as either a prisoner or a guard in a convincing mock prison that was constructed in the basement.

On the first day of the experiment, prisoners were “arrested” by local law enforcement officers, taken to the Palo Alto police station, and charged with armed robbery. They were booked, fingerprinted, had their mug shots taken, and then placed in a holding cell. When they were transported to the mock prison, their individual identity was largely taken from them; they were given ill-fitting muslin smocks to wear and were no longer referred to by name, but by number. The guards were dressed in military-style uniforms and wore mirrored sunglasses to prevent eye contact. They wore whistles around their necks and carried billy clubs borrowed from the local police department. Although the guards were forbidden to use physical force, they were otherwise encouraged to use any means possible to control the prisoners and maintain order in the prison.

By the second day of the experiment, the prisoners had already become weary of the humiliating environment and attempted to stage a rebellion. They ripped off their numbers, barricaded themselves in their cells, and began taunting the guards. The guards responded with anger and hostility, using a fire extinguisher to force prisoners back as they entered their cells. The guards then stripped the prisoners naked, put the leaders into solitary confinement, and began to harass and intimidate them. As they strongly identified with their arbitrarily assigned roles, the guards became abusive and the prisoners became passive and depressed. The entire experiment had to be stopped prematurely after only six days into the projected two-week timetable. The power of roles in conjunction with the power of peer influence ensured that everyone knew their place and were expected to behave accordingly. After a short time, the roles were no longer roles—they became identities.

In the case of the Stanford Prison Experiment, roles were exaggerated and, ultimately, dysfunctional. But well-defined roles can also be used in a very positive way. Members with clear roles know what they are expected to do and can execute their responsibilities with efficiency. Little time is wasted in confusion about which responsibilities belong to whom. In contrast, without clearly defined roles and agreed-upon division of responsibilities, teams sacrifice productivity and potentially even induce chaos. This would certainly be the case during the morning rush at Starbucks if the employees didn’t have clearly defined roles for cashiers, baristas, backroom staff, and supervisors. Over time, standard operating procedures and interpersonal patterns are established and become part of the culture. These patterns of interaction create stability, predictability, and efficiency.

TEAM CULTURE

Culture is the learned set of shared beliefs, values, customs, and history that unifies a group of people, helps them make sense of their world, and influences their behavior. Southwest Airlines has been proactive and deliberate about creating a corporate culture that fosters mutual respect and a commitment to customer service. It devotes significant time and

resources transmitting these particular values to new and existing employees. The culture of a group or organization can be communicated in many ways and through many symbolic mediums (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Organizational developers and team leaders often pay close attention to how these messages are communicated.

Myths, folklore, and stories represent and perpetuate the values and shared beliefs that tie a group of people together. For example, the hallways of Southwest Airlines' corporate headquarters are lined with pictures of the early days; these images of heroes, heroines, and milestones reinforce the company's shared set of beliefs and values. They are reminders of what is important to the organization. Group and organizational histories are rich with clues about the development of their cultures.

Company logos, team names, performance measures, and job titles all communicate distinct messages. The way people dress, the physical layout of offices and meeting rooms, and the way people talk to one another impact the overall environment. These symbolic messages are always present to influence what people are to believe and how they are to behave. Some team leaders are very deliberate about the kind of culture they want to create, while others let the group culture emerge organically. In either case, a team culture takes shape.

Rituals and ceremonies celebrate important moments in the life of the team (Martin, 2002). For example, initiation rituals indoctrinate new members, enhancement rituals recognize exemplary conduct, and degradation rituals publicly reprimand or remove poorly performing members from the group. Ending rituals signal the time when a member



transitions out of a group. Whether they operate within a prison gang or on a corporate executive board, rituals reinforce the identity and structure of groups. This is because rituals are explicit ways that groups communicate and reinforce group culture. Walmart's founder, Sam Walton, conducted the following ritual with over 100,000 employees over TV satellite in the mid-1980s: "Now, I want you to raise your right hand—and remember what we say at Walmart, that a promise we make is a promise we keep—and I want you to repeat after me: From this day forward,

I solemnly promise and declare that every time a customer comes within ten feet of me, I will smile, look him in the eye, and greet him. So help me, Sam" (Walton and Huey, 1992, p. 223.) This ritual helped create a culture that is reinforced every time a customer walks past a Walmart greeter. When customers walk into a Walmart store, they are welcomed with a warm, friendly greeting that is distinctly personal and engaging.

As individuals work together and form relationships, they develop a shared identity that distinguishes their group from others. According to social identity theory, this happens when individuals "identify themselves in the same way and have the same definition of

who they are, what attributes they have, and how they relate to and differ from specific out-groups or from people who are simply not in-group members” (Hogg, 2005, p. 136). As people experience various groups, either as members or outsiders, they create categories with which to associate individuals of that group. Thus, if a person has created an internal definition, or schema, that describes “chess players,” then all new people who describe themselves as chess players are ascribed those attributes (Hogg & Reid, 2006).

Characteristics and attitudes that define a group’s identity can have a strong influence on its members (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Social identity theory suggests that members adopt a common set of beliefs and behaviors when they associate with a certain group. Those that



are strongly associated with a particular group will readily adopt the beliefs and goals that define that group (Christensen, Rothgerber, Wood, & Matz, 2004). Social norms that are integrated into personal identity then become standards against which to evaluate one’s own beliefs and behavior. For example, in the highly polarized world of national politics, those who identify as either Democrats, Republicans, or independents are prone to having an overly optimistic assessment of their own party’s views while discounting any ideas or proposals coming from a different group. When this happens, meaningful dialogue is compromised, as groups

engage primarily in offensive and defensive posturing to gain or maintain power.

In the same way that individuals construct internal working models that include beliefs, goals, and strategies for daily functioning, groups create a shared working model or mental model to define the life and structure of the group (Ilgen, Hollenbeck, Johnson, & Jundt, 2005). Internal working models are cognitive roadmaps that provide a framework for understanding experiences (what is) and for defining ideals (what should be). They are established from previous group experiences and influenced by the larger sociocultural context within which they exist. Because groups establish unique and distinct mental models, two groups might perceive the same event in very different ways. For example, a group of homebuilders might be very enthusiastic about a large, highly desirable piece of land that was rezoned for residential building and put up for sale. But a neighboring homeowners’ association might be upset due to potential problems with overcrowded schools or additional traffic. The local school administration could interpret this event in an altogether different way, seeing it as a way to increase funding and visibility in the district. But then, a group of conservation enthusiasts might be concerned about the potential impact on the environment. Each group has a unique set of shared beliefs, goals, and strategies that influence the way it interprets and evaluates new information.

Shared mental models include a common set of beliefs, attitudes, and values that guide group thinking and decisions. They define beliefs about the team in terms of group description, collective self-esteem, and group efficacy. As a result, an assessment of one's team can create a sense of pride and confidence. Individual members experience increased personal self-esteem when they are affiliated with a highly desirable and successful group (Aberson, Healy, & Romero, 2000). Because of these benefits, groups have a tendency to view their own group in overly inflated ways while viewing other groups, especially competing groups, in an overly negative way. This tendency is called the **ingroup/outgroup bias**, whereby individuals consider their group as better than other groups.

Members are not only influenced by the culture, but they also impact the culture in a reciprocal fashion. The personality of individual members contributes to the personality and identity of the larger group. The personalities of leaders, especially, can have a ripple effect upon a social context. Because of their stature and influence, they have the ability to establish and enforce policies that reflect their own values. For better or worse, charismatic leaders such as Herb Kelleher, CEO of Southwest Airlines, have tremendous influence over their organizational cultures. But it is not only top leaders that have influence; leaders and influential members (i.e., culture carriers) at all levels contribute to the collective atmosphere and often set the tone for group meetings. For example, skilled facilitators can create warm, inviting environments, where discussion is vibrant and engaging in contrast to ineffective facilitators, who can shut down conversations and discourage members from speaking up.

Have you ever wondered while you're placing an order for a vanilla latte or caramel macchiato at Starbucks, why the baristas are so friendly and helpful? They seem to enjoy their jobs and seem to be enjoying the camaraderie of their fellow teammates. In his autobiography, Howard Schultz, chair and CEO of Starbucks (Schultz & Yang, 1997), describes the passion and devotion of his employees as their "number one competitive advantage. Lose it, and we've lost the game" (p. 138).

By harnessing the power of teams, Starbucks grew from a single Seattle location in 1971 to 20,000 stores in 59 countries by 2012—and its success is not just numerical. Starbucks has won a multitude of awards including the "Ten Most Admired Companies in America" by *Fortune* magazine in 2003, 2004, and 2005, a trend that continues to date. In fact, Starbucks is one of the most admired companies in the world. It is frequently listed by the press and business literature in categories such as "most admired," "most influential," "top performers," and "best companies to work for." This last distinction deserves further discussion. What makes Starbucks so effective, and why is it such a great place to work?

One reason may be the shared culture that the company works to inspire among its employees. New Starbucks baristas receive a full 24 hours of in-store training that informs them not only about how to mix drinks and operate a cash register, but also about the coffee industry and the Starbucks franchise itself. And note that the term is always *barista* or *partner*, and not merely *worker* or *counter help*, thus further individuating Starbucks employees from other standard coffee shop workers. And finally, the company accepts and responds to an average of 200 mission review queries per month from employees with concerns or suggestions regarding the company mission. The care that Starbucks takes to institute both a unique training and team environment, coupled with the empowering feedback-oriented relationship established around the company's mission, help to make employees feel as though they are a valued part of a greater shared vision. It comes as little

surprise to learn that the first of Starbucks' six-point mission statement is to "provide a great work environment and treat each other with respect and dignity."

With the shift away from hierarchal authority structures in recent decades, organizations have relied upon self-managed groups to establish their own unique ground rules and operating procedures that produce results (Pfeffer, 1992). This popular management strategy of empowerment utilizes the dynamics of group conformity to hold members accountable to high standards. High-performance standards and "cult-like cultures" often exist in the most successful organizations (Collins & Porras, 2002). A concrete ideology reinforced by strong methods of indoctrination can create cohesive group environments that socialize members into proven strategies for success.

However, it is important to note that a strong team culture can have negative consequences as well. **Groupthink** is a condition that occurs when teams are overly cohesive or when one or more members have too much power and influence over the group as a whole. For example, the Senate Intelligence Committee (2004), which assessed the U.S. intelligence systems' conclusion in falsely identifying Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction, identified groupthink as one of the contributing factors to the error. Apparently, the general presumption that Iraq had such weapons was so strongly felt by top members of the administration that individuals were reluctant to question what they perceived as the majority position. When a single dominant member or small group of members have enough influence to make judgments that others in the group are reluctant to question, the checks and balances of group decision making are compromised. The process and potential pitfalls of team decision making is discussed in length in Chapter 7.

BUILDING A TEAM

Team design begins with a clear understanding of the task that the team is being asked to accomplish. After that has been established, it is time to begin identifying and enlisting the members that will give the team the best opportunity to fulfill its purpose. Some important and highly interrelated aspects to consider are the complexity of the task; the amount and type of interaction that will be required of members; and, finally, the number and type of members to enlist. Not all teams have a discreet beginning. In fact, most group memberships evolve over time. In those cases, existing teams can regularly evaluate their performance to determine if they have the right mix of people along with an enabling structure and positive culture that lead to results. If not, the following concepts can help improve performance.

Task Complexity

Groups that engage in complex tasks require greater levels of coordination, participation, and decentralized communication (Brown & Miller, 2000; Lafond, Jobidon, Aubé, & Tremblay, 2011). There are simply more details and interdependencies to monitor and manage. Task complexity increases with the following:

- Task unfamiliarity (lack of previous experience)
- Task ambiguity (absence of clear mission or goals)

- The volume of information required to understand the task
- The number of alternatives available in reaching the desired outcome
- The number of subordinate tasks to be defined and coordinated

For example, restructuring a student organization would be a more complex task than collaboratively writing a research paper. Imagine yourself as an executive council member of a fraternity that has had repeated alcohol violations and must either restructure the house or face possible expulsion from campus. The leadership team is likely to have had little or no previous experience with the task before it. In addition, the students will be challenged by the relative ambiguity of the goal of “restructuring.” In contrast, writing a group research paper for a history class does not have this same level of complexity. The desired outcome is fairly straightforward, as students will have had plenty of experience writing papers by the time they have reached college.

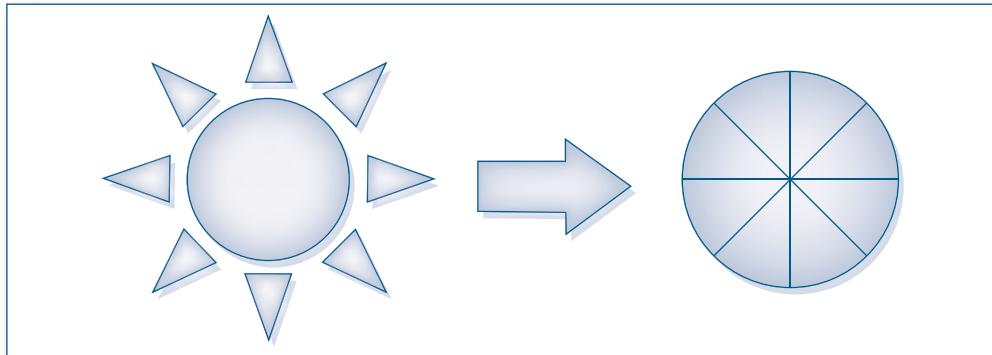
Group members performing highly complex tasks need to work together closely to determine their best options for success. These higher levels of interdependence and cooperation mean that, depending on the type of interdependence required (see next section), extra attention may need to be paid to selecting team members with superior communication skills. When task complexity stems from a lack of familiarity or background information, teams will benefit from the advice of experts in the field. If a team doesn’t have the expertise within its ranks, it must find it outside the team. Finally, regardless of the source of complexity, teams performing complex tasks must clearly define their vision, create detailed action plans, and have regular status updates to ensure that members are informed of the team’s progress.

Types of Interdependence

As stated in the previous section, the amount of cooperation needed for success is strongly related to the type and complexity of the tasks being undertaken. When high levels of interdependence are required, clearly defined roles must be in place in order for teams to be successful (Allen, Sargent, & Bradley, 2003). The nature of these roles will largely be determined by the type of interdependence needed to accomplish the task. Thompson (2004) identifies three distinct types of interdependence within groups: pooled, sequential, and reciprocal interdependence.

Pooled interdependence refers to group work that may simply be divided among members in order to be compiled into a finished product at a later time. For example, a group of workers cleaning up after a big football game might each take a section of the stadium from which to pick up trash and sweep. Though they work independently of one another, the workers collectively clean the entire stadium. These types of tasks require the least amount of cooperation and communication.

Pooled interdependence is more effective when teams have the following structural procedures in place: (a) a reporting structure in which a supervisor or leader can hold members accountable for their part of the project, (b) regular team meetings where members can discuss potential problems and improve policies and procedures, and

Figure 2.2 Pooled Interdependence

(c) a way to keep members committed to the overall task by reinforcing and updating each member's understanding of how their part will be integrated into the finished product.

Other tasks require more coordination among members. **Sequential interdependence** occurs when group members are dependent on the completed work of other members prior to being able to complete their own part. As one person finishes a portion of the task, he or she hands it off to the next person. The "hand off" can be a bottleneck in the process, so it requires thoughtful attention. In the case of a relay team, track and field athletes will rehearse the simple act of handing the baton to the next runner countless times before competing in an actual race. Efficiency in the handing of the baton could be the difference between victory and defeat, especially in a sport that is decided by milliseconds.

In another example, before a Starbucks barista can make a coffee drink, he or she is dependent upon someone else to order and then to stock the ingredients that are needed to brew the coffee. Thus, each member's work is dependent on other members fulfilling their portion of the task. Therefore, sequentially interdependent groups must pay close attention to the transition points between each member's portion of the task. Groups may want to establish a routine for notifying the next member in sequence when a task has been completed. It may also be beneficial to create a procedure for informing the next member of delays or changes that will affect their segment of the work. High-performance teams identify mistakes or problems early on and learn from them as opposed to hiding them or covering them up.

Reciprocal interdependence requires the greatest level of interaction among members as they work together simultaneously. Members influence one another as tasks are accomplished simultaneously with input from others. For example, sailing teams in the America's Cup races have a highly defined structure that dictates who does what and when. Every member is needed to successfully complete the task, and there is little room for role negotiation.

Figure 2.3 Sequential Interdependence

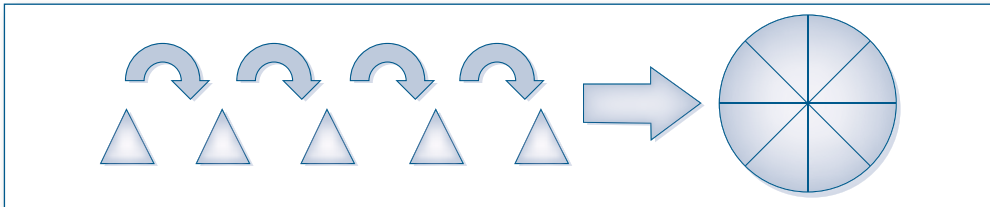
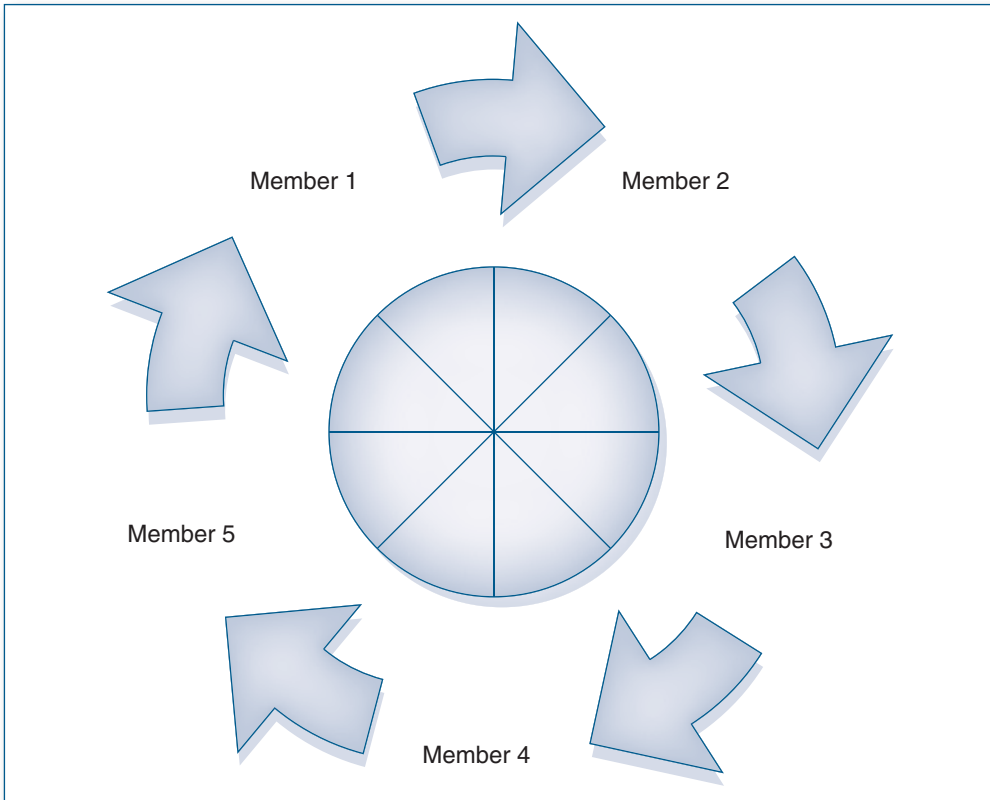


Figure 2.4 Reciprocal Interdependence



Examples of this type of interdependence include zone defenses in football, marching bands, and Broadway plays. Each member is required to do his or her part according to well-defined protocols in order for the whole group to be successful.

Team Composition

The success or failure of a team is strongly related to the quality of its membership. Collins's (2001) popular book, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . and Others Don't*, stresses the importance of finding the best people possible. Metaphorically speaking, he suggests that "getting the right people on the bus" is even more important than deciding where the bus is going, because high-caliber individuals will be able to figure out where the bus needs to go and determine the best route for getting there. Research on sports teams suggests that "the best individuals make the best team" (Gill, 1984, p. 325). This correlation between individual talent and team performance is strongest in sports such as baseball (.94) and football (.91). However, it is entirely possible for a group of highly skilled players to be a poorly performing team. For example, though a soccer team of eleven all-star goalies may boast an extraordinary amount of individual talent, their performance as a team may suffer because their one-dimensional level of expertise does not encompass all of the skills required to play a well-rounded game of soccer. Thus, not only do teams need to have talented members, those members need to have skills that complement one another.

Ideally, each member will possess **task-related knowledge and skills** along with **interpersonal skills** that enable them to work with others. The relative amount of each type of skill that a given member should possess will depend on the complexity of the task and the level of interdependence required to achieve the desired outcome. More specifically, task-related knowledge and skills are especially important on tasks that are complex and that require highly specialized knowledge and skills to achieve results. On the other hand, members of reciprocally interdependent teams will need stronger interpersonal skills than do members of groups that use sequential or pooled methods. Regardless, group work will always call upon some mixture of both sets of skills; thus, it is important to be aware of each when building a team.

While task-related competence is important to consider in choosing potential members, ideal members also possess strong interpersonal skills. Members who are considered "team players" are enthusiastic, optimistic, collegial, cooperative, and flexible (Rousseau, Aubé, & Savoie, 2006). Furthermore, they are self-motivated and conscientious, and have strong communication skills. Communication skills such as active listening and assertiveness are used both to support and to challenge other team members. Yet individuals who have strong interpersonal skills are self-aware enough to know that they are not being overly assertive, derogatory, or offensive. In addition, they are able to accept negative feedback from others and respond in a nondefensive manner. Of course, those with strong interpersonal skills also know how to give critical feedback in a way that is motivated by a desire to help others, not tear them down. Spirited banter through which members challenge one another's assumptions is often the hallmark of high-performing teams; it is described in detail in Chapter 6, on communication.

Stevens and Campion (1999) have developed the Teamwork-KSA Test to measure team knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs). After reviewing the research, they determined five specific areas associated with effective participation in groups:

Interpersonal Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

Conflict resolution: Recognizing types and sources of conflict; encouraging desirable conflict but discouraging undesirable conflict; and employing integrative (win-win) negotiation strategies rather than distributive (win-lose) strategies.

Collaborative problem-solving: Identifying situations requiring participative group problem-solving and using the proper degree of participation; recognizing obstacles to collaborative group problem-solving and implementing appropriate corrective actions.

Communication: Understanding effective communication networks using decentralized networks where possible; recognizing open and supportive communication methods; maximizing the consistency between nonverbal and verbal messages; recognizing and interpreting the nonverbal messages of others; and engaging in and understanding the importance of small talk and ritual greetings.

Self-Management Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

Goal-setting and performance management: Establishing specific, challenging, and accepted team goals, and monitoring, evaluating, and providing feedback on both overall team performance and individual team member performance.

Planning and task coordination: Coordinating and synchronizing activities, information, and tasks among team members, as well as aiding the team in establishing individual task and role assignments that ensure the proper balance of workload among members.

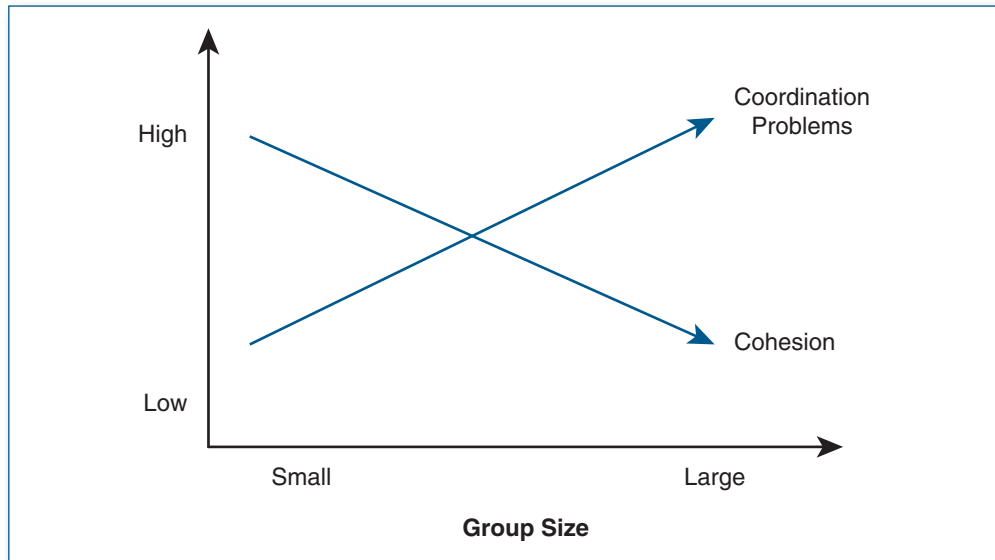
Sources: Miller (2001, p. 748); Stevens and Campion (1994, p. 505).

The Teamwork-KSA Test is just one of many assessment tools available commercially for assessing current and potential members, and its results are often used for member selection or staff development.

Team Size

After team designers clarify the team's task, predict the level of interdependence that will be required for success, and identify potential members, they must decide how many members to enlist. In smaller groups of three or four, members may have to take on multiple roles and responsibilities. But in groups of more than eight or ten members, coordination can become cumbersome. The complexity and breadth of the task to be completed will help to inform the minimum number of members required to complete the task. In other words, the number of specializations or fields that the task will call upon, added to the human capital that will be required in order to carry out the job, will yield an estimate as to the number of individuals that should be called to the team. Noted team expert J. Richard Hackman (2002) emphasizes the importance of team size and specifically warns against the common error of placing too many members on a team.

What are the risks associated with oversized teams? Coordination losses increase as the number of people involved on any given task increases and relational bonds weaken (Mueller, 2012). As group size grows, individual members may also become passive due to a diffusion of responsibility, a lack of accountability, and ultimately a reduction in commitment

Figure 2.5 Effects of Group Size on Cohesion and Coordination Problems

(Wagner, 1995). In a study of group performance on a decision-making task, three-person groups consistently outperformed seven-person groups (Seijts & Latham, 2000). This means that not only did having an extra four people fail to contribute positively to the outcome of the group, the additional members actually hindered performance. One reason for this is that smaller groups tend to have higher levels of commitment among their membership. Similarly, they have fewer members who engage in **social loafing**, which is the desire to do as little work as possible. Smaller groups simply cannot afford to have members slacking off. It's also harder for members to fly under the radar in smaller groups. Laughlin, Hatch, Silver, and Boh (2006) found that three-, four-, or five-member groups outperformed individuals and dyads on a problem-solving task but did not differ from one another.

As groups increase in size, it is also more difficult to maintain a sense of connection with fellow group members. Individuals have a limited capacity for the number of people with whom they may feel reasonably close. As groups get larger, it is increasingly difficult to establish and maintain high levels of cohesion (Gammage, Carron, & Estabrooks, 2001). Hackman (2002) suggests that the optimal size for a group is the fewest number of members who can feasibly accomplish the tasks assigned to them. The **ideal size** for most groups is typically between four and eight members, once again depending upon the complexity and breadth of the task.

LAUNCHING A TEAM

Once team membership is determined, team builders must give thought to how they will introduce team members to their task, and to one another. The first face-to-face meeting is

a critical event in the life of a team. Patterns of relating and general operating procedures can become established in the opening minutes of the first meeting. Various components such as the physical setting, seating arrangements, task description, and introductions forge a lasting impression on the members of the team. In addition, interpersonal dynamics such as communication patterns and status hierarchies will influence the emerging structure of the group. Thus, it is important to conduct a well-structured and thoughtfully planned launch meeting, since it is generally much easier to establish effective team processes at the beginning of a team's development than to correct faulty ones later (Polzer, 2003). This first meeting sets the foundation upon which the group and its work will be built, so consistency, foresight, transparency, and candor must be used throughout the following four preliminary steps.

Introductions

One of the first tasks of running a successful launch is taking the time to make thorough and thoughtful introductions. Introductions help begin the process of forging bonds and developing trust. Tasks that are highly interdependent require significant amounts of mutual trust, and it is difficult for members to trust those they do not know. Members often come into new teams with some measure of anxiety and uncertainty because they don't know how they will compare to other members. For teams with individuals who have never worked together before, it can be very helpful to share brief biographies of each member to familiarize the team with one another. This allows members to become aware of the unique value and expertise each member will bring to the team, including their own potential contribution. Take, for example, the introduction that Jennifer's manager at Starbucks made on her first day of work. Not only did his kind words infuse a feeling of initial respect from her new coworkers, they helped contribute to her own self-confidence in that new and unfamiliar work setting.

Since introductions can be stressful, leaders might want to consider ways to minimize the need for members to try to prove themselves or promote their own superiority. Thus, leaders can use a prepared description of each member so that the members themselves do not feel put on the spot. In this way, the team designer or leader can highlight the strengths that each team member brings to the team in order to establish the norm that all members have been carefully selected and are important for the team's success. Another strategy is for members to pair up, interview one another, and then introduce their partner to the rest of the team. In general, this is a time for members to learn about one another. They should have more confidence in their teammates after going through this exercise.

Ground Rules

The launch meeting is also a prime opportunity to establish initial rules and expectations for members. Setting concrete ground rules is an effective way to reduce uncertainty and establish what will be expected of each member. Ground rules differ from implicit norms. Implicit norms, which we will cover in more depth in a later chapter, are the unstated yet generally accepted rules that are established based on the team members' experiences together. Ground rules, on the other hand, are the specifically stated regulations and standards to which every member is expected to adhere. The launch meeting provides the team

leader with an important opportunity to establish these rules because everyone is likely to be present, attentive, and eager to comply with what is asked of them. Here are some typical ground rules established at the first meeting: (a) meetings will start and end on time, (b) members should let others know if they cannot attend or will be late, (c) texting and cell phones are not appropriate during team meetings, (d) everyone is expected to contribute to discussions, and so on. Publicly stating these guidelines, even those that seem obvious, will eliminate ambiguity and serve as a foundation for other rules and norms that will be added throughout the team members' time together.

Some rules will be established by the leader while others will be left up to team members themselves. In fact, it can be helpful to ask members to describe how they best work in teams or about the types of team dynamics that have worked best for them in the past. This will help them to establish ownership in the functioning of the group and create a collaborative team environment.

Shared Vision

High-performance teams go much further beyond mere compliance or perfunctory obedience to group expectations. The most effective teams are committed to a shared vision. An engaging vision defines the purpose for which the group exists. From that purpose, specific goals emerge that have the potential to motivate members and guide collective efforts (Van Mierlo & Kleingeld, 2010). A compelling direction that captures the hearts and minds of team members separates true teams from mere workgroups (Hackman, 2002). Launching the team in a way that lays out the task in a compelling way can help motivate and jump-start the process.

In the movie *Braveheart*, William Wallace (played by actor Mel Gibson) rode to the battlefield at Stirling, Scotland, to confront a group of Scottish peasants fleeing before a superior British army. In the film, Wallace was faced with the daunting task of inspiring a shared vision of such proportions that the peasants would be willing to give up their own lives to fight the British in order to become a free nation. Much to Wallace's credit, the peasants, who had been nothing more than pawns with which the Scottish nobles bargained for their own personal gain, began to embrace Wallace's vision as they considered the possibilities for their children and grandchildren. Because of their shared vision, the peasants were willing to make great personal sacrifice and commit themselves to battle. According to the Hollywood version of this thirteenth-century historical event, Wallace challenged the enemy to a battle, and with the help of the peasants, nobles, and some clever strategy, managed to defeat the British in a surprising victory.

Motivational speeches alone rarely generate the long-term commitment required for group success. Eventually, motivation must come from within the group itself, not imposed from an outside source (Liu, Zhang, Wang, & Lee, 2011). A shared vision often begins with one or two members and then spreads to the rest of the group. In the case of William Wallace, fighting for a free Scotland was his passion, and he was willing to pay the ultimate price for it. In his petition to the Scottish peasants he offered few extrinsic rewards, yet the vision he inspired regarding the possibility of a better life for future generations was enough to motivate the ragtag army.

A shared vision stimulates the interest, enthusiasm, and creativity of group members (Cohen & Bailey, 1997). More important, it generates commitment. Personal goals are put

aside as members work for the common good of the group and the ultimate mission of the organization. For instance, if a Starbucks employee is only serving coffee and cleaning tables, he or she may feel disengaged or lack motivation. However, if the employee sees his or her job as providing a meaningful service to others and contributing to the success of the team, then pouring coffee and emptying trash cans take on a whole new meaning. This transformation of thinking can be a wonderful benefit of working in teams or groups. Collaborating with a group of friendly, outgoing people on a meaningful task can make an otherwise wearisome 5:00 a.m. shift significantly more enjoyable.

Levels of Commitment



Thompson (2004) suggests that the most common leadership challenge identified by more than half (56%) of the leaders in her study is developing and sustaining high levels of team motivation. Consequently, team leaders should use the launch meeting to set the stage for true commitment from the membership. People are drawn to groups for collective benefits. However, they will also want to preserve personal interests. The result is a tension between conforming to the will of the group and preserving individuality and autonomy. Not all members will be committed to the group's goals; some will resist. This resistance can come in many forms, including a passive response (do nothing to help the group), an aggressive response (actively resist the leader or other members of the group), or a passive-aggressive response (resist indirectly while appearing to be supportive of the group's goals). Leaders can overcome member resistance by creating a shared vision around which members can rally.

Group members can experience various degrees of commitment at different times. The following levels describe the possible ways members might relate to the goals of the team (Senge, 1990):

- *Commitment*: These members are committed to the goal and motivated to achieve it. They are also committed to the group and have interest in and concern for the other group members.
- *Compliance*: Members who are compliant will do what they are asked in spite of not having embraced the importance of the group's mission. While they rarely volunteer or go above and beyond what is expected, they consistently fulfill their responsibilities.
- *Resistance*: Group members who are resistant are working against the group. They are actively trying to sabotage particular members or even the group as a whole for their own personal reasons. If the leadership of the group is fairly authoritarian, these resistant members tend to be passive-aggressive, as they secretly try to enlist other members to join in working against the group.

- *Disengagement*: These members are physically present but are apathetic toward the work of the group. Their clear disinterest and lack of engagement likely render them undependable in the eyes of their colleagues.

One undergraduate student offered the following example of how member commitment affects the team:

My junior year of high school, I played bass and guitar for a band with some friends from church. After performing three songs for a local battle of the bands, we got a call from a guy at the Dallas House of Blues to play in a battle of the bands downtown. The winning band got a recording contract and \$3,000. We had one month to get ready. Immediately, I started writing original songs for the battle of the bands. In the meantime, we asked the other band members to begin learning some cover songs that we would perform as well. When it came time to practice five days later, I asked everyone if they were ready to practice the covers. The female vocalist said she “never got around to it.” The drummer and other guitarist nodded in agreement. “What do you mean ‘you never got around to it?’” the band’s male vocalist asked. “Learning those cover songs was the only thing we told you guys to do. How can we have a productive practice if no one knows their parts?” “Okay, I’m sorry,” the female vocalist said. “Let’s just go to dinner, and practice next weekend.” Reluctantly, TJ and I agreed. “But for next time we need everyone to know those cover songs, because we will really need to practice our original songs as well.” A week passed and I practiced and spent some more time writing with TJ and our other guitarist, Matt. When next week came, once again, no one knew the cover songs. TJ and I cancelled practice and sent everyone home to learn the covers for a practice in the next few days. However, when TJ asked everyone when they could practice, no one could practice until the next weekend. Two weeks from the House of Blues battle of the bands, the band had no songs prepared. By the weekend before the battle of the bands, my band only knew one cover and had half of a song written and rehearsed. After briefly discussing practicing during the weekdays, everyone decided it would be best if we just did not perform at the battle of the bands, and focused on other things. After that the band never played together again.

Each member’s commitment level contributes to the collective strength of the group. Compliant members are loosely connected to the group, while resistant or disengaged members are negative forces that serve to weaken the group. Effective leaders pay attention to group interactions from day one to assess the commitment level of each member and appropriately address those members whose commitment is lacking.

LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

Throughout this chapter, we have provided theories, suggestions, and examples outlining the foundational steps of building a healthy team. However, think back to the last time you

were a part of forming a team. Was it a structured, logical, and effective process? More likely, you found yourself and your team down a road you hadn't planned to take, fumbling along toward a general outcome or product without a formalized system of values, expectations, or shared agreement about how often you would meet, the quality of the ultimate deliverable, and the distribution of responsibilities. At that point, the enthusiasm and optimism of a new team most likely deteriorated into frustration and even dread.

In order to start a new team in the right direction, there are a few key agreements to strike early. Much of this can be achieved by calling the foundational components by name and requiring the group to engage the issues directly and explicitly. For example, in the first meeting of a group of students working together on a class project, members should introduce themselves to one another. Introductions should include each member's name, where they are from, what they are studying, what they like to do in their free time, and what they think their academic strengths are. Leaders should take notes during this round-robin introduction session so they can identify common interests, complementary strengths, and levels of motivation. A discussion about ground rules can easily emerge with the following prompt: "Okay, now that we see how much potential we have, I think we should take a few minutes to set up a few ground rules for how we want to work together."

Ground rules include "rules of engagement" that regulate participation, interaction, conduct, and productivity. One of the ground rules that most teams should adopt is "everyone must offer their full and earnest participation." This bars individuals from holding back, biting their tongue, or "checking out." From those rules and from the shared personal details that emerged from the introductions, trust begins to form. Trust builds upon the safety and consistency provided by the ground rules (and their necessary enforcement). Next, the leader can describe the task and, thus, begin building a vision for success. And from the vision, common ground, shared rules, and trust, the group can achieve an identity. This may seem or feel like a forced or overly intentional approach to building a team, but the best results don't occur by accident. They are the result of an earnest, consistent, and dedicated architecture. Real-world examples include the 1980 U.S. men's Olympic hockey team portrayed in the movie *Miracle*; the 2008 U.S. men's Olympic basketball team; and Ernest Shackleton's Antarctic expeditionary crew that survived against all odds in the face of isolation, starvation, and hopelessness from 1914 to 1917. They are all the products of an effectively and intentionally built team.

The complex challenge of assembling, coordinating, and motivating high-performance teams requires dedication and know-how. By applying the key concepts described in this chapter and building a solid structural foundation, teams are positioned for success.

KEY TERMS

Predictability	20	Individual roles	23
Efficiency	20	Ingroup/outgroup bias	28
Member satisfaction	20	Groupthink	29
Task roles	23	Pooled interdependence	30
Relationship roles	23	Sequential interdependence	31

Reciprocal interdependence	31	Social loafing	35
Task-related knowledge and skills	33	Ideal size	35
Interpersonal skills	33		

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain the difference between task roles, relationship roles, and individual roles.
2. Discuss the importance of rituals in respect to corporations such as Walmart, Southwest Airlines, and Starbucks.
3. Describe the three types of interdependence in groups: pooled interdependence, sequential interdependence, and reciprocal interdependence. Give examples of each.
4. Describe Stevens and Campion's five types of skills associated with ideal team members.
5. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of a large versus a small team. How do you know how many members to place on a new team?
6. Explain the importance of introductions and facilitating a successful launch. How do these contribute to a shared vision?
7. Group members can have any of the following attitudes toward the group's main goal: commitment, compliance, resistance, and disengagement. Describe each of these attitudes and provide examples.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

EXERCISE 2.1 GROUP ANALYSIS

Get into groups of four and complete this task: Compare and contrast two different student groups on campus. Before you begin, assign roles for the discussion. Each person should either be a task leader, recorder, time keeper, or skeptic.

What is the primary objective or goal of the groups? How are members selected to be a part of the groups? Describe the culture of each of the groups. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each of the groups?

You are to submit a written analysis at the end of the prescribed time and present your analysis to the rest of the class.

EXERCISE 2.2 PRESENTATIONS ABOUT GROUP STRUCTURE

Form groups of five to seven people and prepare a three-minute presentation on the three most important concepts in this chapter. Describe the concepts, illustrate the concepts with examples, and apply the concepts to an actual group or team that could benefit from this

information. Assign one of your team members to observe how you accomplish this task. That person will watch and take notes but will not participate in the actual task. After each group presents, the observer will describe how his or her group approached this task.

CASE 2.2 PLANNING A COMMUNITY OUTREACH

It's the first week of your summer internship at Futura Industries, and you've been asked by Jasmine, the company's internship coordinator, to meet with her in the conference room. She lets you know that she is putting together a group of interns to form a team charged with the responsibility of planning a community outreach event for the company to raise money for a local animal shelter. Because you have had a class on teams, she is asking you to be the team leader and to identify potential members. She has given you a deadline and some goals in terms of how many summer associates at the company she would like to have participate and how much money Futura Industries wants to raise.

- What kind of team members would you pick from the other interns? Describe their characteristics.
- How many people would you ideally like to have on your team, and why?
- Create a detailed agenda for your first meeting with the internship coordinator.