

## Team Working

### INTRODUCTION

When asked to consider what a team is, most people will provide an example based on sport - a football, hockey or rugby team. But what is it that makes some teams successful? How does the concept of teams in sports translate into other organisations?

### WHAT IS A TEAM?

'A Team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to working to meet a common purpose'.

Would you be able to identify any teams in your organisation that could meet the simple definition above? If so great! It is a wonderful experience to be part of an effective team.

### BENEFITS OF TEAM WORKING

- Teams can achieve better results than individuals working alone, through 'synergy'
- Team members support and encourage each other's growth and development
- Teams tend to be more creative and take greater risks
- Teams demonstrate commitment to the task, the organisation and each other
- In a team there is a sense of belonging, leading to improved motivation

### TEAMS VERSUS GROUPS

Effective Team Working is the goal; however, there is a difference between people working as a team and those who are part of a group.

Groups:

- Often do not have clear or unified goals and targets
- Often ignore or accommodate conflict
- Do not display high levels of trust or openness
- Often do not support each other

So what does a team have that groups do not?

Teams:

### SHARE A COMMON PURPOSE

A team may be set up for a specific purpose, to achieve a set objective, project or outcome. Teams may also be formed to support business processes. What is common to all teams is that they possess an understanding of what they have to achieve.

### HAVE CLEAR GOALS

The purpose should be shared with the team in the form of team goals, which can be further cascaded into individual targets. It is important that individuals can see how their contribution supports the achievement of the team's goals and the purpose for which the team was established.

### ARE INTERDEPENDENT

Effective teams are interdependent. The achievement of the team's purpose should drive cooperation and support, and individual success should not inhibit the team's ability to achieve a successful outcome.

### HAVE CLEAR ROLES

It is important that each member of a team has a clear understanding of the role they can play in the team's success. Everyone will have something to contribute. In effective teams there is an acknowledgment that people have different complementary skills which, if used well, will ensure that 'the sum of the parts will be greater than the whole'.

### HAVE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Active and regular listening, feedback and sharing of information will help the team to foster a culture of openness, trust and interdependence. Effective teams develop processes and behaviours that ensure everyone is kept informed.

## USING THE NATIONAL STANDARDS TO SUPPORT TEAM WORKING AND TEAM DEVELOPMENT

### USING THE NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL STANDARDS TO AUDIT TEAM PERFORMANCE

The National Occupational Standards (NOS) have been written to help ensure that Managers and Leaders perform effectively as members and leaders of teams.

Unit D9 of the NOS - Build and Manage Teams - has been written specifically to support managers who want to create a new team or reflect on the performance of an existing team. The unit's outcomes focus on managers being able to:

1. Articulate the purpose of the team
2. Identify expertise, knowledge, skills and attitudes
3. Establish roles
4. Select team members
5. Agree behaviours
6. Help team members understand their contribution
7. Share knowledge of strengths and weaknesses within the team
8. Allow time for team growth
9. Introduce new members when needed
10. Share problems within the team
11. Encourage open communication
12. Review performance of the team
13. Celebrate success
14. Disband the team when necessary

This unit can be used to audit effective team performance and as tool for ensuring that when forming a new team the key issues are considered.

With the growth of technology there is a need to consider not only what a team does but also how the team operates.

A team may not always be located at the same location; a team may be 'virtual' or work remotely all or some of the time. It is important to consider teams that are not always centrally located and how to support and motivate them if this is the case.

### IDEAS ON TEAMS

The concept of developing an effective team has been examined at length by numerous management thinkers and psychologists. This has led to the development of key theories and models. Examples include:

### TUCKMAN – TEAM DEVELOPMENT

Psychologist B.W. Tuckman defined a process of team development which has five stages:

#### Forming

Team comes together, members may be anxious, and spend time finding out about each other.

#### Storming

Arguments develop on priorities; value of the task; working responsibilities and ways of doing the job.

#### Norming

Team starts to cooperate, members recognise each other's strengths, establish norms of behaviour, standards of performance and support required.

#### Performing

Team works effectively, members focus on tasks and outputs. Members work together to solve problems.

#### Adjourning

This is the final stage, the disbandment of the team once it has met its stated purpose.

### BELBIN TEAM ROLES

Another theory propounded in the 1970's but still used today was developed by Meredith Belbin. This looked at the complementary roles of people in teams. See [www.belbin.com](http://www.belbin.com) for further information.

### TASK V PERSON – BLAKE/ MOUTON (1961)

This theory looks at the team and whether the concern is mainly about production or people. Extensive links to their theories can be found online.