Team Building

Why teams?

- Higher customer expectations
- More complex markets and products
- Greater commercial uncertainty
- Increased pressure from competition, legislation and environmental issues

Definitions

- 'A number of people who co-operate in such a way that it achieves more than the sum total of the individuals' achievements'
- 'A group of people united by a common purpose'
- 'An energetic group of people committed to achieving common objectives, who work well together and enjoy doing so, and who produce high quality results' (improving Work Groups by Francis & Young)

Team potential

Teams of people working effectively together can:

- Achieve better results than individuals
- Be more flexible than larger groups
- Take more risks & explore areas that individuals may avoid
- Generate a wider range of ideas than individuals
- Help each other grow in skill and confidence
- Demonstrate commitment to the task and each other
- Motivate themselves

Teams vs groups

- Whilst groups can achieve success, they may not be as effective as people working as a team
- Most of our time is spent in groups at work, at home and in our leisure time, as opposed to teams
- The differences between the two are subtle yet significant.

In co-operative groups:

- People work together
- Feelings aren't part of work
- Conflict is accommodated
- Trust and openness are measured
- Information is given on a 'needs to know basis'
- Goals/objectives are either personal or unclear

In effective teams:

- People trust each other
- Feelings are expressed openly
- Conflict is worked through
- People support one another
- Information is shared freely
- Objectives are common to all

Teambuilding vs teamworking

Example:

- A financial services company re-organised and set up customer service teams.
- In the early stages teambuilding was a major feature of the training.
- This involved staff taking on larger jobs, learning new processes and skills, and developing a new set of relationships with each other.
- The emphasis then shifted to teamworking skills, ie sharing ideas, co-operating, being open and supporting one another.

Understand the differences

- Teambuilding and teamworking are not the same; the former is often asked for when the latter is required.
- Teambuilding is used to create new teams or review the performance of existing ones
- Teamworking encourages and helps teams succeed, but teamworking by itself never makes a team
- Teamworking is a process, not a goal

When do you need a team?

- When you are attempting to deal with genuine problems where nobody knows the answer, if indeed an answer exists
- When there is uncertainty about the task
- When you are experiencing rapid change
- When people need to work closely together on real tasks

If you do not fulfil these criteria, you don't need a team

Only when necessary

Remember ….

- Teams are NOT the answer to every organisational need and situation.
- What's more, wrongly applied, they can be WASTEFUL of time and energy.

Lack of role models

- There are poor examples of teams
- Without role models there is nobody to follow
- Often, those at the top will just talk about teams

Recognise that:

- Teams are the top of organisations are the most difficult to create
- People at this level often spend their time on long-term issues and challenges
- Getting to the top often involves single-minded dedication
- People may work by themselves, setting up deals and operating within their own network
- Certainly top teams do not always set the best examples of how to work together

What can you do?

- Recognise that teambuilding is not an easy process, but it is possible as long as you recognise what is happening
- A team leader needs to be aware that skilful use of political skills can bring rewards and progress

No performance measurement

Why is it a problem?

- To be effective, teams need a demanding performance challenge that is meaningful to all those involved
- Teams need to deliver results
- Without such a challenge, where does a team start to get itself organised and how is success measured?

What can you do?

- Frankly, very little
- Potential teams operating in such a culture will more than likely be a group with no focus

Too many teams

Why is it a problem?

If, every time a problem or new challenge arises, the answer is 'let's put together a team', the result will be:

- an expectation that the situation will be sorted out
- loss of credibility because teams are being used wrongly

What can you do?

Try to remind people that:

- teams are only needed when you have real problems to tackle, to which nobody knows the answer

Emphasis on individuals

Teams are often set up as a unit of performance but:

- the appraisal scheme is geared to individual performance
- rewards/salary increases are linked to individual contributions
- individuals can be responsible to a functional manager whilst working as part of a team in a matrix organisation

As a result individuals may fear that their input will not be recognised or acknowledged

What can you do?

In the absence of a reward system for teams, a leader can:

- actively work to see that individuals are recognised
- have an input to individuals' appraisals by ensuring that your views are included

Culture of competition

Teamworking is about encouraging co-operation and harmony; this will be impossible to achieve if your:

- structure and systems encourage internal competition and conflict
- organisation is not built on trust
- culture is risk averse
- culture is one where taking risks is not promoted

What can you do?

- Very little
- Individuals by themselves can rarely change the culture

Too many people

Teams of 15-20 people are too big to manage.

The larger they are:

- the more difficult they are to communicate with and control
- the greater the danger that sub-groups will form, increasing the potential for conflict

What can you do?

- Bear in mind how size can affect a team's performance
- As a leader try to influence the numbers of people you have