



Teams in the workplace can be highly productive and can lead to more profits and a higher quality of work product.

What Constitutes a Team?

There is clearly not a single, widely-accepted definition for the word “team.” The entry on Wikipedia.com has the following first sentence:

“A team comprises a group of people or animals linked in a common purpose.”

If we accept this, the primary components of a team are twofold:

1. A group
2. Linked in a common purpose

This would meet the expectations of most people with respect to a general definition. If we accept the fact that teams are an extremely positive force in the workplace, then it makes sense to discuss the various ways to facilitate teamwork on the job.

To enhance and facilitate a teamwork-enabled culture:

- Create performance-measurement systems for all levels of employees. These systems should not only measure the performance of the individual, but also they should link individual performance to the performance of the team(s) the individual is a member of.
- Hold regular meetings for management and for employees.
- Executives and business leaders must make an explicit, highly-visible statement that they have a clear expectation for increased teamwork in the workplace.
- Business leaders—and senior management in particular—should form a highly visible team of their own as a model for the organization.
- Create an effective feedback system.

- Increase the availability of technology systems that facilitate teamwork functions. Software systems should be available to make it easier for team members to communicate and collaborate. To illustrate, suppose a team is geographically dispersed: one member in each of ten major US cities. You certainly would not expect these people to communicate via US mail. They should have software and hardware to support their activities effectively.

- Organizationally, teams should be both “deep” and “wide.” Teams should not only be comprised of members at the same levels of the organization; they should also span various levels vertically. For example, a team of first-line managers can exist along with one that contains members from different levels of management.

“Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.” - Andrew Carnegie

Empowering questions to ask yourself:

- Does your business currently use teams?
- Does the senior management currently work as a team, and if so, what formal structures are in place to facilitate this?
- What structures are in place to facilitate a more general teamwork-enabled culture?
- Is there much infighting within your organization?
- Does your organization have employee performance-measurement systems that are biased toward personal performance rather than team-based performance?
- What functions or organizational gatherings exist that would strengthen a team-enabled approach to the organizational culture?