

Team Building

HR can provide you with support for building effective team work.

[Developing Effective Teams Model](#)



Typically we work with the leader or a smaller working group to determine what they would like to get from the teambuilding session and develop an agenda to meet those desires. Depending on the time the group has allotted to the session, they may develop pre-work for members to help them do some thinking prior to the session.

New Teams:

New teams usually start by getting to know each other better and sharing their ideas and expectations for building healthy working relationships. They then work on creating shared vision of their preferred future and making team decisions about the processes and procedures they need to put in place to help them with their work. This can be done by the [Team Charter Process](#).

Existing Teams:

Existing teams may go through a process similar to the one outlined in the [Developing Effective Teams Workbook \(PDF\)](#). This may include profiling the current team and exercising to increase awareness and teamwork. The work of amalgamating teams is often more focused on bringing together existing visions, processes and procedures to help the team create something new.

The Consultant's Role During the Session:

The role of the consultant during the session is:

- to help create a safe environment for people to learn from each other
- manage the time and activities of the session
- equalize the air time of the participants
- ask questions to test for group understanding and agreement
- represent a "different" perspective as needed

Strategies for Building More Effective Teamwork

Goals....

- clarify purpose or objectives
- link purpose to organizational vision, mission, and values

Roles...

- Clarify roles and responsibilities (e.g. what do I do?, what do you do?, what do I need from others to do my job?)

Procedures...

- Change, modify, update procedures and systems, or develop ways to do so
- Improve meetings including: purpose, agendas, minute taking, timing or roles
- Agree on a process for managing conflict
- Agree on how you will solve problems
- Clarify decision making methods and responsibilities (e.g. team vs. small group vs. individual vs. executive decision)
- Agree on some processes/tools for increasing ability to innovate and experiment
- Develop/clarify processes for measuring success

Relationships...

- Enhance skills in:
 - assertive communication
 - conflict resolution
 - problem solving
- Agree on ground rules for working together in order to modify some of our behaviours as agreed
- Take time out to improve relationships, value differences and discover ways to use personal style differences for the good of the team

Initial Staff Interview – Sample Questions

When you first begin as a new supervisor, manager, chair, dean or director it is helpful to spend some time getting to know the staff in your area. Pick 4 or 5 questions below (depending on what you are interested in knowing) and interview each of the staff members in your unit.

1. Tell me about yourself – your education, other places you have worked, what you like to do?
2. Tell me what your job is – what do you do?
3. How do you know if you are successful every day?
4. What does a good (or successful) day look like for you?
5. Where do you see yourself in 5 years – what do you see yourself doing? (or what are your career plans or aspirations?)
6. What is your dream job?
7. What are your top 3 to 5 strengths?
8. What are your top three successes or achievements from the past year or two?
9. What are your learning and development needs? Or what training would you most like to attend this year?
10. If you could change one thing about this office (faculty, department, unit) what would it be?
11. What could I do (or we do in this unit/department/faculty) that would help you do your job better?
12. If I came to you a year from now and I asked you how are things going and you said – “never been better” can you describe for me what would be happening/what that would look like?
13. If you had a concern about me being your chair/director/supervisor what would it be?
14. Looking at the faculty/department/unit as a whole, what do you think we could do differently that would make us more effective and/or make this a better workplace?

THE TEAM EFFECTIVENESS CRITIQUE – Mark Alexander

Most groups exist and persist because (a) the purpose of the group cannot be accomplished by individuals working on their own, and (b) certain needs of individual members can be satisfied by belonging to the group. Of course, the mere existence of a group does not ensure that it will operate effectively; a group is effective only to the degree to which it is able to use its individual and collective resources. The measure of the group's effectiveness is its ability to achieve its objectives and satisfy the needs of the individuals in the group.

An organization is a collection of groups. The success of an organization depends on the ability of the groups within it to work together to attain commonly held objectives. Because organizations are becoming increasingly more complex, their leaders must be concerned with developing more cohesive and cooperative relationships between individuals and groups. Similarly, the development of effective groups or teams within the organization will determine, to a large extent, the ability of the organization to attain its goals.

Factors Contributing to Team Development and Effectiveness

Team development is based on the assumption that any group is able to work more effectively if its members are prepared to confront questions such as: How can this collection of individuals work together more effectively as a team? How can we better use the resources we represent? How can we communicate with one another more effectively to make better decisions? What is impeding our performance?

The answers to these questions may be found by examining the factors that lead to team development and effectiveness. These factors can be measured, or inventoried, by team members with the use of the Team Effectiveness Critique. Before the critique form is administered, however, all team members should understand the terminology used to describe the nine factors. The following descriptions can be presented in a lecturette format to the team members prior to completion of the critique.

1. Shared Goals and Objectives

In order for a team to operate effectively, it must have stated goals and objectives. These goals are not a simple understanding of the immediate task, but an overall understanding of the role of the group in the total organization, its responsibilities, and the things the team wants to accomplish. In addition, the members of the team must be committed to the goals. Such commitment comes from involving *all* team members in defining the goals and relating the goals to

specific problems that are relevant to team members. The time spent on goal definition in the initial stages of a team's life results in less time needed later to resolve problems and misunderstandings.

2. Utilization of Resources

The ultimate purpose of a team is to do things effectively. In order to accomplish this, the team must use effectively all the resources at its disposal. This means establishing an environment that allows individual resources to be used. Team effectiveness is enhanced when every member has the opportunity to contribute and when all opinions are heard and considered. It is the team's responsibility to create an atmosphere in which individuals can state their opinions without fear of ridicule or reprisal. It is each individual's responsibility to contribute information and ideas and to be prepared to support them with rational arguments. Maximum utilization of team members requires full participation and self-regulation.

3. Trust and Conflict Resolution

In any team situation, disagreement is likely to occur. The ability to *openly* recognize conflict and seek to resolve it through discussion is critical to the team's success. People do not automatically work well together just because they happen to belong to the same work group or share the same job function. For a team to become effective, it must deal with the emotional problems and needs of its members and the interpersonal problems that arise in order to build working relationships that are characterized by openness and trust. The creation of a feeling of mutual trust, respect, and understanding and the ability of the team to deal with the inevitable conflicts that occur in any group situation are key factors in team development.

4. Shared Leadership

Individuals will not function as a team if they are brought together simply to "rubber stamp" decisions made by their leader or others not in the group. The development and cohesion of a team occurs only when there is a feeling of shared leadership among all team members. This means that all members accept some responsibility for task functions – those things necessary to do the job – and maintenance functions – those things necessary to keep the group together and interacting effectively. *Task* functions include: initiating discussions or actions, clarifying issues and goals, summarizing points, testing for consensus or agreement, and seeking or giving information. Task leadership helps the group to establish its direction and assists the group in moving toward its goals. *Maintenance* functions include encouraging involvement and participation, sensing and expressing group feelings, harmonizing and facilitating reconciliation of disagreements, setting standards for the group, and "gate keeping" or bringing people into discussions. No one person can be expected to perform all these

required leadership functions effectively all the time. Groups perform better when all members perform both task and maintenance functions.

5. Control and Procedures

A group needs to establish procedures that can be used to guide or regulate its activities. For example, a meeting agenda serves to guide group activities during a meeting. Schedules or when specific actions will be taken also regulate team activities. Team development and team-member commitment is facilitated through maximum involvement in the establishment of agendas, schedules, and other procedures. Of course, the team should determine how it wishes to maintain control. In meeting situations, control most often is achieved through the appointment of a chairperson whose responsibility is to facilitate the procedure established by the team. Some teams find that they do not need a formal leader; each member regulates his or her own contributions and behavior as well as those of others.

6. Effective Interpersonal Communications

Effective team development depends on the ability of team members to communicate with one another in an open and honest manner. Effective interpersonal communications are apparent when team members listen to one another and attempt to build on one another's contributions. Team members achieve effective interpersonal communications through self-regulation, so that everyone in the group has an equal opportunity to participate in discussions.

7. Approach to Problem Solving and Decision Making

Solving problems and making decisions are two critical team functions. If a group is going to improve its ability to function as a team, recognized methods for solving problems and making decisions should be studied and adopted. The lack of agreed-on approaches to problem solving and decision-making can result in wasted time, misunderstandings, frustration, and – more importantly – “bad” decisions.

A generally accepted, step-by-step procedure for problem solving and decision-making is as follows:

1. Identify the problem (being careful to differentiate between the real problem and *symptoms* of the problem).
2. Develop criteria (or goals).
3. Gather relevant data.
4. Identify all feasible, alternative solutions or courses of action.
5. Evaluate the alternatives in light of the data and the objectives of action.
6. Reach a decision.
7. Implement the decision.

Needless to say, there are variations of this procedure. However, whatever method is used, an effective team will have an agreed-on approach to problem solving and decision-making that is shared and supported by all members.

8. Experimentation/Creativity

Just as it is important for a team to have certain structured procedures, it also is important that the team be prepared occasionally to move beyond the boundaries of established procedures and processes in order to experiment with new ways of doing things. Techniques such as “brainstorming” as a means of increasing creativity should be tried periodically to generate new ways to increase the team’s effectiveness. An experimental attitude should be adopted in order to allow the team greater flexibility in dealing with problems and decision-making situations.

9. Evaluation

The team periodically should examine its group processes from both task and maintenance aspects. This examination or “critique” requires the team to stop and look at how well it is doing and what, if anything may be hindering its operation. Problems may result from procedures or methods, or may be caused by individual team members. Such problems should be resolved through discussion before the team attempts further task accomplishment. Effective self-evaluation is probably one of the most critical factors leading to team development.

THE TEAM EFFECTIVENESS CRITIQUE - Survey

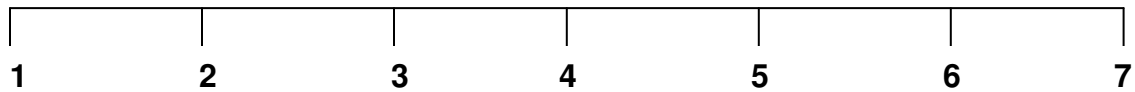
Mark Alexander

Instructions: Indicate on the scales that follow your assessment of your team and the way it functions by circling the number on each scale that you feel is most descriptive of your team.

1. Goals and Objectives

There is a lack of commonly understood goals and objectives.

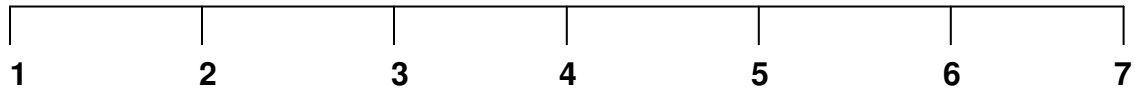
Team members understand and agree on goals and objectives.



2. Utilization of Resources

All member resources are not recognized and/or utilized.

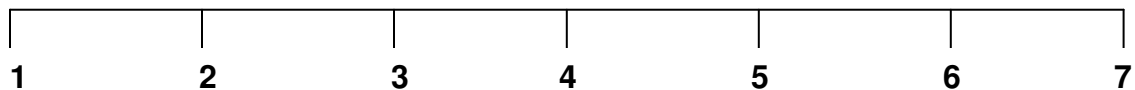
Member resources are fully recognized and utilized.



3. Trust and Conflict

There is little trust among members, and conflict is evident.

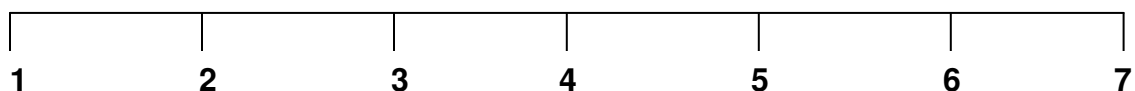
There is a high degree of trust among members, and conflict is dealt with openly and worked through.



4. Leadership

One person dominates, and leadership roles are not carried out or shared.

There is full participation in leadership; leadership roles are shared by members.



5. Control and Procedures

There is little control, and there is a lack of procedures to guide team functioning.

There are effective procedures to guide team functioning; team members support these procedures and regulate



6. Interpersonal Communications

Communications between members are closed and guarded.

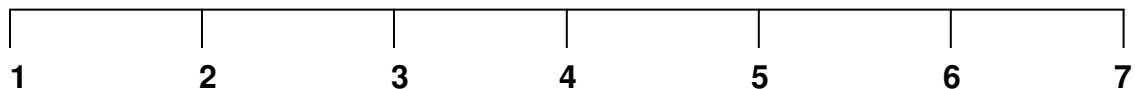
Communications between members are open and participative.



7. Problem Solving/Decision Making

The team has not agreed on approaches to problem solving and decision making.

The team has well-established and agreed upon approaches to problem solving and decision making.



8. Experimentation/Creativity

The team is rigid and does not experiment with how things are done.

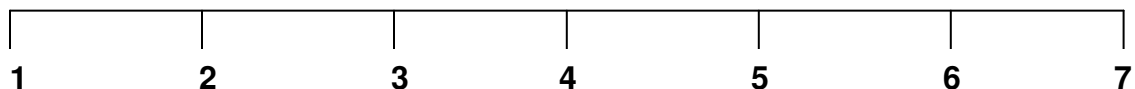
The team experiments with different ways of doing things and is creative in its approach.



9. Evaluation

The group never evaluates its functioning or process.

The group often evaluates its functioning and process.



Gallup 12[®] – Employee Engagement Questions

Excerpt from March 15, 2001 – “**Feedback for Real**”
article by John Thackray

A series of simple workplace questions can spark employee-management action with measurable results. The effects are local and team-based, but they can be repeated across the entire company for bottom-line gains.

To identify the elements of worker engagement, Gallup conducted hundreds of focus groups and many thousands of worker interviews in all kinds of organizations, at all levels, in most industries and in many countries. From these inquiries researchers pinpointed, out of hundreds of variables, 12 key employee expectations that, when satisfied, form the foundation of strong feelings of engagement. The result was a 12-question survey in which employees are asked to rate their response to each question on a scale of one to five.

These are Gallup's 12 questions (Q¹²):

1. Do you know what is expected of you at work?
2. Do you have the materials and equipment you need to do your work right?
3. At work, do you have the opportunity to do what you do best every day?
4. In the last seven days, have you received recognition or praise for doing good work?
5. Does your supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about you as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages your development?
7. At work, do your opinions seem to count?
8. Does the mission/purpose of your company make you feel your job is important?
9. Are your associates (fellow employees) committed to doing quality work?
10. Do you have a best friend at work?
11. In the last six months, has someone at work talked to you about your progress?
12. In the last year, have you had opportunities at work to learn and grow?

Building Accountability

What: Effective teams demonstrate a high level of leadership and accountability among the individual team members. The Ladder of Accountability describes eight levels of accountability. The top four describe a stance focused on movement toward the future. The bottom four describe a stance generally focused on the past or avoiding discomfort in the present. Choices higher on the ladder tend to increase anxiety in the short-term and decrease it in the long-term.

Why: This tool provides staff members and groups with an effective way to look objectively at an issue(s) that they are dealing with and make some deliberate choices about how they want to handle it. The further up the ladder the team can move, typically the more choices they will make available to themselves. The greater the percentage of team members who choose stances in the top portion of the Ladder, the greater the chance the team has of collaborating and successfully attaining its goals.

When: When the work group, team or individuals on the team are:

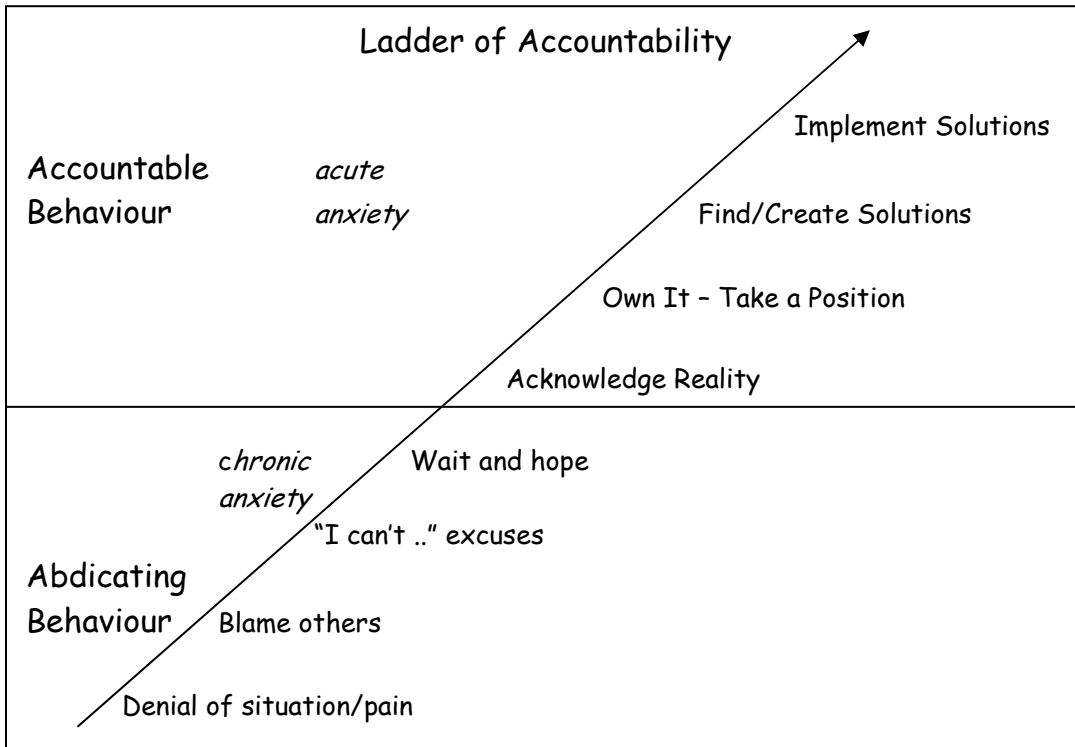
- Dealing with an issue
- Wanting to build more effective relationships both internal and externally to the team
- Blaming others for their circumstances

How:

1. Give staff members a copy of the Ladder of Accountability and explain what it is and why you want them to use it.
2. Have the staff group identify an issue or challenge that they are currently dealing with.
3. Have the staff group evaluate their current stance by applying the descriptions of the various levels to their own behavior in the issue or situation. Where are they?
4. Have the staff group choose where they want to be.
5. Ask the staff group to identify what they need to do differently if they want to take a stance on a different rung of the Ladder of Accountability.

(Option: Handout copies of the Ladder of Accountability to each of the staff members and have them individually work through an issue they are dealing with. Have them debrief their work with a partner)

Handout



Think:

...of an issue or challenge you are currently dealing with.

Evaluate:

Identify your current stance. Apply the descriptions of the various levels to your own behaviour in a given situation. Where are you?

Choose:

Where do you want to be? Practice making distinctions between why you would choose one level over another.

Act:

What do you need to do differently if you want to take a stance on a different rung of the Ladder of Accountability? Talk to your partner about the actions needed to be consistent with your choices.