

The Environment of a Team

Purpose: To create in the student the desire to be part of team by showing him the difference between a workgroup and a team and explaining the values a team holds.

Objectives: By the end of this lesson the student will:

1. Be able to explain the difference between a team and a workgroup and the benefits of each.
2. Be able to explain the six disciplines of an effective team and how to implement them.
3. Be willing to commit to being a team player.

Key Verse: Mark 3:14

I. Introduction

Think about teams you have been on in the past. Have you ever been on a team that you would consider a great team? If so, what made the team great? If you haven't been on a great team, or at least do not think so, imagine what would characterize one. Before reading on, write down several characteristics of great teams.



Few of us have had the opportunity to be part of that kind of a team. Though we've been on things called "teams," they certainly didn't function like one. Probably, they weren't really a team at all, just a group of people doing parallel work in close proximity to one another. What is a team? Sometimes, one of the best ways to understand what something is, we first need to appreciate what it is not. Let's look at what a team is not, before we move on to what it is.

II. What a Team Is Not

A. Workgroup

Look at the chart on page 6.

There are three facets to a team: Achievement, Interpersonal Relationships and Personal Development. Teams achieve greater results than do workgroups. They bond together, enjoy one another, and trust each other. They foster growth in one another. Workgroups achieve

varied results. Members do their individual jobs, often indifferent to the success of another member or they see the other member's success as a threat. When they punch out for the day, they are gone. Their friends are elsewhere.

B. Teamwork

Teamwork is a positive set of values that encourages such things as:

- listening and constructively responding to points of view expressed by others;
- giving others the benefit of the doubt;
- providing support to those who need it;
- recognizing the interests and achievements of others.

This is a vital part of a team, but these values alone do not make a group into a team.

C. A Social Group

Though socialization is a major part of team life, groups that put primary emphasis on relationships never become a team. Socialization is an outcome, not the means to becoming a team. Teams develop around meaningful performance.

“No team arises without a performance challenge that is meaningful to those involved. . . . a common set of demanding performance goals that a group considers important to achieve will lead, most of the time, to both performance and a team. Performance however, is the primary objective, while a team remains the means, not the end” (pg 12, Wisdom of Teams).

So, if a team is not a workgroup, a social group or being involved in teamwork, what then, is a team? When is a group a team? Think through this and write down your thoughts before continuing on.

III. What a Team is

Effective teams are not an accident. Groups become teams through disciplined action. Let's define what we mean by team:

A team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable. (Pg 45, Wisdom of Teams)

In other words, a team is small group of individuals who shape a common purpose, agreeing on particular performance outcomes and a common working approach, whose skills round out or complete what is lacking in the others, and who mutually hold themselves accountable for achieving their objectives.

Let's look at these actions, or better yet, disciplines, a little closer.

IV. Disciplines of Effective Teams

Why call them disciplines? The pulse of an effective team is its quest to achieve. To achieve, certain factors must be present. They are best thought of as disciplines, rather than elements, for when we choose to follow them rigorously, as in a diet, they produce the desired result. What are these disciplines?

A. Small enough to work together.

Pragmatic! Move faster and work through issues quicker. Two to twenty five members is acceptable, but less than 10 is probably the best.

B. A Mix of Complementary Skills

Teams must have the right mix of skills in three areas:

- Technical or functional expertise;
- Problem-solving and decision-making;
- Interpersonal.

You don't need all of the skills at the outset; therefore, don't overemphasize the skill set at the beginning. Teams provide the incentive for learning the skills that are lacking. If the skill potential exists, the team will develop it.

C. Commitment to a common purpose

A common, meaningful purpose sets the tone and aspiration. The team develops this, most often, from a general mandate from management. It builds ownership and commitment to team purpose.

- The best teams invest a tremendous amount of time and effort exploring, shaping and agreeing on a purpose that belongs to them both collectively and individually. Real teams never stop this activity because it continually clarifies the purpose for them.
- The best teams treat their purpose like an offspring that needs constant care and nurturing. It's theirs! They take pride in it and responsibility for it.
- When challenges arise, teams unite around the need, rather than pawn it off and give up.

D. Specific Performance Goals

Specific performance goals are an integral part of the purpose. Purpose and performance always go together. Performance goals should be stair-stepped, or else the team loses motivation.

- They define a **team** work-product whose specific purpose and objectives differ from (yet still support) the **organization's** overall mission and individual job objectives.
- They facilitate clear communication and constructive conflict within the team.
- Real goals help the team to maintain focus.
- They produce a leveling effect on the team as a whole. Team members pull together

as a unit, not as individuals with turf to protect.

- They produce small wins. Small wins build believability in the purpose and commitment to press on.
- Performance goals compel team members to excel.

E. Commitment to a common approach

The team needs to spend as much time working out how they will work together as they do defining the work they will do. It must include three areas: economic, administrative and social.

- Each person must do “equivalent” amounts of real work.
- The members must agree on:
 - Responsibilities;
 - How schedules will be set and adhered to;
 - What skills are to be developed;
 - How continuing membership is earned and how the group will make and modify decisions, including when and how to modify its approach to getting the job done.

F. Mutual Accountability

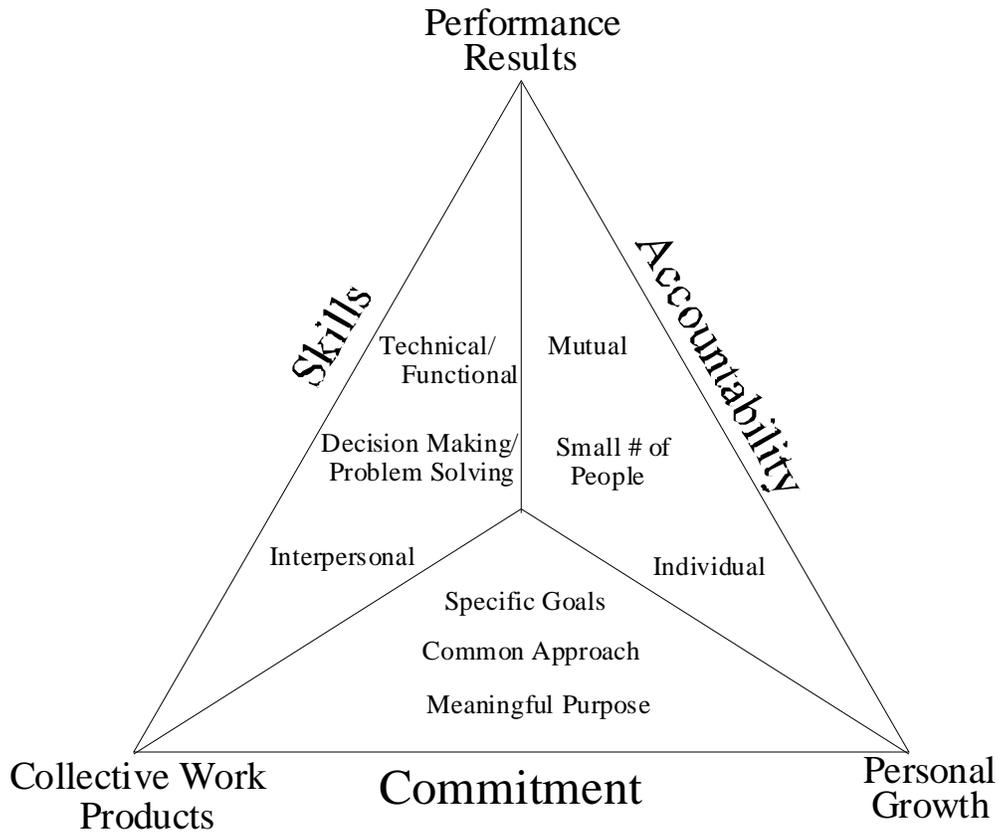
- Accountability deals with commitment and trust. Thus, it forms the bedrock on which a team is built.
- Accountability is built as team members work together toward their goals and purpose.
- Accountability provides a useful litmus test for the quality of a team’s purpose and approach. Groups that fail here have not formed a common purpose and approach that can keep the team together.

V. Summary

Let’s tie all this together by studying the diagram on the next page. Teams are built upon a foundation of commitment and move toward specific performance results. To achieve these results they need accountability and skills. As they move toward their performance results two supporting benefits occur: personal growth and collective work products. Collective work products is short for products which can only be obtained when **sympiosis** (in biology, this is the intimate living together of two dissimilar organisms in a **mutually beneficial** relationship. For this example, it means the different parts work together) occur between the parties involved, the process of which knits the workers together.

The Wisdom of Teams

Jon R. Katzenbach & Douglas K. Smith



The Wisdom of Teams. 1993. Harper Business Books

Teams and Workgroups

adapted from *The Wisdom of Teams* by Katzenbach and Smith

Teams	Workgroups
Achievement	
Consistently better results	Temperamental results
Sum of collective bests	Sum of individual bests
Takes risks of interpersonal conflict, joint work projects and collective action	Personal risk in a competitive manner against other workgroup members
Flexible and responsive to changing events	Slow to respond to change
Interpersonal Relationships & Responsibilities	
Ownership of group purpose, goals, approach	Ownership of personal responsibility
Deep commitment to each other's success	Commitment to own success
Group wins/fails	Individual wins/fails
Develop deep social relationships	Functional relationships
Have fun together; Socialize together	Fun outside of group
Personal Development	
Maximizes the individual	Individual stands on own
Produces significant personal growth in members	Little personal growth due to the team

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the differences between a team and a workgroup and what are the benefits of each?
2. What are the six disciplines of an effective team and how would you implement them?
3. How has this talk helped you to commit to being a team player?