

High Performing Teams



Dr. Arlen Leholm
Dr Raymond Vlasin

Dean & Director UW-Extension
Professor Emeritus
Michigan State University Extension

North Central NELD Seminar
Indianapolis, Indiana
July 28-31, 2004

Self-directed Team

Self-directed team: a group of employees who have day to day responsibility for managing themselves with a minimum of supervision

Real Teams

- A real team is “A small number of people with complementary skills who are equally committed to a common purpose, goals and working approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.”

Single-leader Working Group

- ❑ The *single-leader working group* is based on the classic managerial approach where one person is in charge, makes the key decisions, assigns individual tasks and delegates responsibility. The single-leader is accountable and chooses when and how to modify working approaches.
- ❑ If the sum of the individual contributions to a task can best meet the performance challenge; then a single-leader working group will make the most sense and should be used.

High Performance Team

- A real team that performs at unusually high levels
 - Recognized by peers within organization
 - Recognized by professionals beyond organization

Pseudo Team

If organizational leaders are not adept at making the right choice in the two approaches, a low performing pseudo team is likely to emerge lacking the speed and clarity of a single-leader working group and the discipline, creativity and continuity of a real team.

Organizational Basics

Hitchcock's Red Flag Assessment

- ❑ Is top management/leadership committed to involving employees?
- ❑ Will top management be around long enough to see the implementation through (two to five years)?
- ❑ Are employees interdependent? Do they need to work together to complete a process, product, or project or to provide a service?

Organizational Basics

Hitchcock's Red Flag Assessment

- ❑ Are self-directed teams a high enough priority that they will get the time and resources necessary to make them successful?
- ❑ Does the work or the work schedule allow employees time to think, meet, and discuss ideas?
- ❑ Are employees technically competent in their work?

Additional Organizational Basics

- ❑ Is the leadership of the organization prepared to share power, control and leadership?
- ❑ Is the leadership of the organization willing to empower the teams and avoid disempowering them later?
- ❑ Is the leadership of the organization prepared to recognize that a few teams may be problematic, many may be successful, and a few may be far superior to others?

Team Basics

Katzenbach's Six Team Basics

- Are you small enough in number to integrate work efforts effectively?
- Do you have adequate levels of complementary skills and skill potential in functional/technical, problem-solving/decision-making, and interpersonal categories for team performance?
- Do you have a broader, meaningful purpose that all members aspire to?

Team Basics

Katzenbach's Six Team Basics

- ❑ Do you have a specific set of performance goals agreed upon by all?
- ❑ Is the working approach clearly understood and commonly agreed upon?
- ❑ Do you hold yourselves individually and mutually accountable for the group's results?

Katzenbach's Three Litmus Tests for Real Teams Include:

- ❑ Clear collective work products dependent on the joint application of multi-person skills.
- ❑ Shifting leadership roles to be filled by different people at different stages of the effort.
- ❑ Mutual (as well as individual) accountability for the group's overall results.

**Empowerment = f(Authority,
Resources, Information, and
Accountability)**

Empowerment = 0
if Authority, Resources,
Information or Accountability = 0

Traditional versus Shared Leaders

Approaches to Empowerment

Traditional Leader

- ❑ Resources—**restrict and control**
- ❑ Authority—**controlled**
- ❑ Accountability—**centralized**
- ❑ Information—**restrict and managed**

Shared Leader

- ❑ Resources—**enable and share**
- ❑ Authority—**shared**
- ❑ Accountability—**decentralized**
- ❑ Information—**open and shared**

Supported by findings from Fisher,
Leading Self-Directed Work Teams, 2000.

When to Use a Real Team versus a Single Leader Working Group

REAL TEAM

- ❑ **Issue area is broad and complex**
- ❑ **Involves joint products/services for best outcomes**
- ❑ **Need several years to benefit from creativity and innovations**

SLWG

- ❑ **Issue area is specific and defined**
- ❑ **Individual contributions can be combined to achieve efficient outcomes**
- ❑ **Issue/task is short-lived or periodic in nature**

When to Use a Real Team versus a Single Leader Working Group

REAL TEAM

- ❑ **Requires substantial active involvement of citizens**
- ❑ **Requires both mutual (team) and individual accountability**
- ❑ **When synergy of team members and citizens will grow in performance over time**

SLWG

- ❑ **Requires less involvement and/or short-term involvement of citizens**
- ❑ **Can be achieved with individual accountability**
- ❑ **When synergy of group members and citizens is not necessary**

When to Use a Real Team versus a Single Leader Working Group

REAL TEAM

- ❑ **Involves varied client needs, variety of product or service responses, budget and resource entrepreneurship**
- ❑ **Flourishes in organizational context of shared leadership and empowerment**

SLWG

- ❑ **When client are specific, product or service responses are specific, budgets and resources are assigned**
- ❑ **Can accommodate a command and control organizational environment**

Key Lessons Learned

Inhibiting Team Performance

- ❑ **Ignoring Team basics**
- ❑ **Treating organizational support on an ad hoc basis**
- ❑ **Ad hoc treatment of boundary conditions**

Facilitating Team Performance

- ❑ **Understanding of team basics for real teams and their operation**
- ❑ **Understanding organizational basics and empowerment**
- ❑ **Creating helpful boundary conditions**

Key Lessons Learned

Inhibiting Team Performance

- ❑ **Practicing command and control, top-down leadership and accountability**
- ❑ **Failure to establish effective coach or coordinator role**

Facilitating Team Performance

- ❑ **Commitment to and practice of shared leadership and mutual accountability**
- ❑ **Creation and effective use of coach/coordinators for team**

Key Lessons Learned

Inhibiting Team Performance

- ❑ **Viewing citizens as only recipients of programs**
- ❑ **Rewards focused on individual performance**

Facilitating Team Performance

- ❑ **Direct & continuous involvement of citizens**
- ❑ **Rewards and recognition of team performance**