

# Managing through Teamwork for Maximum Performance

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GWIMS Toolkit

# What is a Team?



# Objectives:

1. To differentiate between “teams” and other types of work groups
2. To characterize the advantages and disadvantages of working in a “teamwork” setting and how disadvantages can be either neutralized or changed into at least partial advantages
3. To discuss how teams maximize performance of the entire group while promoting a positive environment

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

**Katzenbach J, Smith D. 1993.  
The Discipline of Teams. The  
Harvard Business Review.**

# Not All Groups Are Teams: How to Tell the Difference

## Working Group

- Strong, clearly focused leader
- Individual accountability
- The group's purpose is the same as the broader organizational mission
- Individual work-products
- Runs efficient meetings
- Measures its effectiveness indirectly by its influence on others (e.g., financial performance of the business)
- Discusses, decides, and delegates

## Team

- Shared leadership roles
- Individual and mutual accountability
- Specific team purpose that the team itself delivers
- Collective work-products
- Encourages open-ended discussion and active problem-solving meetings
- Measures performance directly by assessing collective work-products
- Discusses, decides and does real work together

The first step in developing a disciplined approach to team management is to think of teams as discrete units of performance.

The essence of a team is  
commitment → productivity  
by translation into specific goals.

# Characteristics of Specific Goals of Teams

- Differ from organization and individual goals
- Just meeting to make decisions will not sustain team performance
- Specificity of goals facilitate clear communication and constructive conflict



# Characteristics of Specific Goals of Teams, cont'd

- Attainability of goals helps teams maintain focus on getting results
- Have a leveling effect conducive to team behavior
- Achieve small wins as team pursues broader purpose
- Compelling symbols of accomplishment that motivate and energize teams

# What Size?

**Ideally, a team should include more than two, but less than 25, members. Most effective teams include 10 members or less.**

# Technical or Functional Expertise

- Heterogeneity of experiences and abilities (need representation from all relevant sectors to enhance potential for success)
- Skill potential (teams need members with a variety of problem-solving, decision-making and interpersonal skills)

# Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Skills

- Consensus decision-making
- Solution-focused approach

# Consensus: A Tool for Team Decision-Making

- A process by which an entire group of people can come to agreement
- Input and ideas of all participants synthesized to arrive at a final decision acceptable to all

Adapted from: L. Thorndyke. Using Teams and Tools to create High Performance Work Groups, AAMC Mid-Career Women Faculty PDS, Scottsdale, AZ. Dec 16-19 2006.

# Through Consensus:

A sense of community and trust can be developed to:

- Achieve better solutions
- Achieve “mutuality”
- Value every member’s input
- Ensure that ideas are not lost

# Consensus vs. Voting

- Voting is a method to choose one alternative from several
- Consensus is a process of synthesizing many diverse elements together
- Consensus works through differences to reach a mutually satisfactory position (“mutuality”)

# Teams Committed to a Consensus Model

- May utilize other forms of decision making (compromise, majority rules) when appropriate
- May use a “straw poll” as a tool to help to identify the degree of disagreement
- Are not forbidden from voting
  - Voting may be the best alternative in gridlock
  - May be important to record the specific numbers



# Coming to Consensus Requires

- Patience
- The ability to tolerate ambiguity
- Accepting and working with dissent, disagreement, or controversy
- Additional tools may include
  - “straw poll”
  - Compromise
  - Majority rules
- Remaining solution focused

# Interpersonal Skills

- Risk taking
- Helpful criticism
- Constructive conflict
- Objectivity
- Active listening
- Giving benefit of the doubt
- Recognizing interests and achievements of others

# Teams that Recommend Things

- Almost always have pre-determined completion dates
- Need to start quickly and constructively
- Need to deal with the ultimate hand-off for implementation
- Involve non-team members early and often

The more involvement team members have in implementing their recommendations, the more likely they are to get implemented.

# Teams That Make or Do Things

- Activities are on-going
- Responsible for basic services and operations

# Teams That Run Things

- Oversees some business, ongoing program, or significant functional activity- most of us!
- Is the sum of individual bests enough, or is substantial incremental performance requiring real joint work-products better?

# Advantages and Disadvantages

- Common purpose
- Potential for superior work products/outcomes
- Motivating work climate
- Increase ways a problem can be solved
- Same people make and implement decisions
- Improved communication
- Increased flexibility
- Frustration with time spent in meetings
- Division of individual goals
- Potential for conflict
- Risk if not everyone on the team “buys-in”

# Teams as the primary unit of performance (i.e. productivity) in high-performance organizations:

- Not intended to diminish individual opportunity or formal hierarchy and process
- Should enhance existing structures without replacing them (or maybe sometimes replace them, e.g. Penn State's failed merger)
- Opportunity exists anywhere hierarchy or organizational boundaries inhibit skills and perspectives needed for optimal productivity

# References

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2. Nielsen, T. M.(2007). The Evolving Nature of Work Teams: Changing to Meet the Requirements of the Future. *21st Century Management: A Reference Handbook*. Ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 3-14. *SAGE Reference Online*. Accessed May 2013.



# Author's Brief Biography

Judith L. Weber, PhD, RD, is co-director of the Childhood Obesity Prevention Research Program at Arkansas Children's Hospital Research Institute, and an associate professor of Pediatrics in the Colleges of Medicine and Public Health at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. She is a childhood obesity prevention researcher focusing on individual and environmental risk factors for obesity and related chronic diseases through food systems and sustainable agriculture-based strategies. She is PI of the USDA Agricultural Research Service-funded Delta Garden Study ([www.arteengarden.com](http://www.arteengarden.com)), the largest school garden-based childhood obesity prevention research study in the country. She is also Co-PI of a National Institute of Food and Agriculture study utilizing farm-to-school programs to address childhood obesity. Through funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service (AmeriCorps), Dr. Weber developed and launched Arkansas GardenCorps, a mechanism for placing service members at school and community garden sites to promote and support increased access to healthy food and physical activity. Dr. Weber obtained her Ph.D. in Nutritional Sciences in 1994, and completed her postdoctoral training in Physiology in 1999, from the University of Arizona.





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