



› Driving the economic development of Queensland ‹

# Manage an effective work team

## Effective team leadership

Most workplaces say they *work in teams* - but very few know how to *make teams work*. We're constantly inundated with token sentiments of good teamwork - they're a '*team-player*', we want a '*team effort*', we're all '*part of the same team here*'. The irony, Katzenbach points out, is that teamwork '*...helps teams succeed; but teamwork alone never makes a team...*' (1993 p.21)

Our focus on sport in Australia leads us to believe we're all experts on teams - that forming effective teams comes naturally, given the right set of conditions. *The reality is very different.*

One of the greatest hurdles we face is that few of us have ever really learned how to work in a team, far less design or form one. As many organisations find out the hard way, you can't just switch to teams overnight. Many teams succeed. But many more attempts fail. Why?

Here are some reasons why many teams fail:

- The actual concept of workteams isn't properly understood in the first place.
- Old ideas get in the way. Our culture prizes individualism not collectivity, competition not collaboration, management control not shared leadership, and independence rather than *interdependence*.
- Change to mindsets, systems, structures and operating principles to support teams are never made.
- Team skills aren't learnt - things like group decision-making, goal-setting, information-sharing, problem-solving and conversational competencies to maintain effective teams. Many businesses want the benefits of teams without investing in the learning.
- Managers neglect to model the new styles of managing and working together and new leadership roles and behaviours needed.
- Managers overlook the need to develop a shared vision of what they want teams to do differently. They often don't know what type of teams they've got now or what kind of team they want to have in the future.

It takes a radical re-think of these and other fundamental concepts to make teams really work.

## Team management skills

Teamworking skills come into play any time a group of people work together to achieve a common goal.

The supremacy of teams in modern workplaces puts a premium on you as a business manager developing the right skills to get the best out of them. Most managers need to:

- Know how to form a team that functions well.
- Facilitate teams to work better together (eg. set goals, make decisions, keep focused).
- Adapt a collaborative leadership style that suits and supports a teamworking style.
- Maintain and improve teams - to help them rethink and re-invent how to work together.



› Driving the economic development of Queensland ‹

You also need to know how to help new or existing workgroups make the transition to teams that are high-performing, broadly-skilled and self-managing - taking them through the key steps, issues and choices that are critical to forming and sustaining successful teams that can become more self-directing over time.

Finally you'll need to find ways to re-skill your team once it's formed. When you do, remember to emphasise team and self-management skills just as much as any new technical, task-specific ones. To be effective, your team needs a range of new team-based skills in addition to work-specific skills - for example:

- **Team Communication Skills:** Interpersonal and group communication skills to conduct effective team meetings, discussions and other team interactions.
- **Team Facilitation Skills:** Common group facilitation tools and techniques to engage constructively in team interactions and enhance how teams work together.
- **Teamwork-Based Design Skills:** To apply tools to continuously re-evaluate, redesign and renew the team's approach to work.
- **Team Management Skills:** To tackle new responsibilities for coordinating/managing work systems/procedures (eg. planning, scheduling, work allocation).
- **Team-Maintenance Skills:** To use effective patterns of personal/group behaviour to identify and correct teamworking problems and maintain good team relationships.
- **Team Formation Skills:** To be able to apply principles/concepts for how to form self-directed teams and work through various stages and steps in team formation.

Team-based work is now part of every business leader's landscape. As well as providing environments that encourage people to make suggestions, think creatively and innovate, workteams are a continuous improvement tool. They're a vehicle for tapping a broader range of knowledge, expertise, innovation and initiative that can widen your viewpoint about what can be done differently and better in your business.

## Further information

The following fact sheets provide further information on these issues:

- Effective work teams
- Help groups make decisions
- Set achievable goals