

ON TEAMS & TEAMWORK

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ON TUTORIAL | *In this tutorial we cover the following topics:*

- ☞ *common definitions of team and teamwork and what it is not*
- ☞ *Tuckman theory*
- ☞ *relevance of teamwork beyond workplace*
- ☞ *benefits and challenges of individual and teamwork*
- ☞ *quick guidance on how to do well on teams*

Rarely in life do we accomplish great things entirely on our own. In life as well as at work, people inevitably do things together with others to achieve desired, common goals. But whether we do it as a group of people or as a team makes a big difference. Some of us who prefer doing things alone many a times end up being trapped in teamwork so being part of one is never an easy task. If we are coming from different culture than the employer, or our coworkers, teamwork may be even more challenging. Regardless of whether we like doing things together or avoid it, some of the traits have identified as quite important when working together. And these often are being tested when it comes to getting a job position.



“If you want to go fast, go alone! But if you want to go far, go together!”

Unknown author

But, how truthfully do we present ourselves when it comes to playing on a team? Do we understand our own position, values, motivation and efficacy when doing it together? Also for the employers this may be a pivotal issue. Employers often need good team players to avoid problems in communication and human resources conflicts.

TERMINOLOGY



Question for discussion:

What is a team, and what is considered teamwork?

A plethora of life and business related definitions for the noun team are available and often used to actually mean two or more people working together in order to achieve something. Some of the commonly used definitions include:

Team is any group of people involved in the same activity, especially referring to sports and work.

(Merriam Webster)

Team refers to a number of persons associated together in any work.

(Business online dictionary)

Often a **TEAM** is equal to a **GROUP** in these definitions, which is somewhat misleading. To understand better what a team is, the concept of teamwork is introduced as much more complex phenomena, indicating:

Teamwork is the process of working collaboratively with a group of people in order to achieve a goal.

Teamwork is when a group of people work together cohesively, towards a common goal, creating a positive working atmosphere, and supporting each other to combine individual strengths to enhance team performance.
(Business online dictionary)

Teamwork is the ability of a group of people to work well together.
(Cambridge online dictionary)

Teamwork thus involves some characteristics that people need to have and sustain. In a nutshell successful teamwork is based on **3 C principle**:

Good communication + collaboration + coordination.

So not every group of people working together is necessary presentable as a team.

BASIS FOR COMPARISON	GROUP	TEAM
Meaning	A collection of individuals who work together in completing a task.	A group of persons having collective identity joined together, to accomplish a goal.
Leadership	Only one leader	More than one
Members	Independent	Interdependent
Process	Discuss, Decide and Delegate.	Discuss, Decide and Do.
Work Products	Individual	Collective
Focus on	Accomplishing individual goals.	Accomplishing team goals.
Accountability	Individually	Either individually or mutually

TUCKMAN

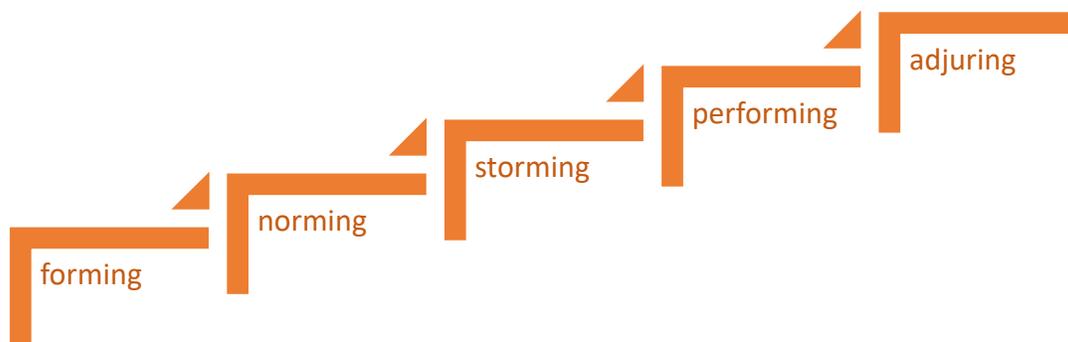


Question for discussion:

So how a group of people becomes a team?

Bruce Wayne Tuckman an US psychology professor, identified four stages of development – forming, storming, norming and performing - that every team experiences, and suggested that all teams go through a relatively unproductive initial stage before becoming a self-reliant unit. The team growth model also suggests that unless the issues of processes and feelings have been satisfactorily addressed, it is unlikely that the team will reach the most productive final stage. Tuckman noted that there are three issues which determine how well teams perform: • content • process • feelings In short, content relates to what the team does, process relates to how the team works towards its objectives and feelings applies to how team members relate to one another. Tuckman’s research suggests that most teams concentrate almost exclusively on content, to the detriment of process and feelings, which explains why teams which are strong on paper can under-perform.

According to one of the most relevant theorist in the field Bruce W. Tuckman every team must have 4 stages of development (explained in theory as team development model) with specific doings involved around each stage enabling a team to grow. These include forming, storming, norming, performing. In recent theory also 5th stage of adjuring has been added as a final stage in a life of a team. This final stage involves the disengagement of relationships between team members and a short period of recognition for the team’s achievements. Sometimes, concluding the operations of a team is disturbing for members, especially if they have worked together for long periods of time. This is how *a life cycle of a team* is being closed.



STAGE 1: FORMING

During the forming stage members of a group remain ancient, confused, in need of outside guidance (team leaders/coordinators). Team roles are not yet clearly defined, and in terms of the content – some vague defining of the job to be done may exist. According to Tuckman’s research, many teams in fact never get to the next stage of norming.

STAGE 2: STORMING

Teams getting to storming stage experience greater trust among team members, and thus outside authority is neglected. Process wise this phase presents a *fighting* phase for team members’ position often leading to refusals connected to content development/task delivery. Hierarchy in the team becomes a topic of concern. A majority of teams is said to be operating in this stage, never getting to the norming one.

STAGE 3: NORMING

In this stage team members start feeling comfortable on it, often recognizing different roles assigned. They openly debate issues, while in terms of processes the prevailing one deals with setting up proper procedures and rules to follow.

STAGE 4: PERFORMING

In the 4th stage team members deal with the actual job to be done. Effectiveness, efficiency, flexibility are of main importance during the stage. All the resources available are put into use in an efficient manner. Problems may now be overcome.

STAGE 5: ADJURING

In the final stage teams usually disaggregate, only some stay together pursuing another goal. Team members on individual level think about their future engagement, while group discussion evolve around the possibility of staying together for yet another round of tasks. Team members and teamwork is being prized.

Tuckman theory dating back to 1965 is very much applied in team development dynamics in modern day enterprises.



Question for discussion:

But apart from work, how important Tuckman is in modern day life?

In order to get inspired and discuss this question in your group, use a video materials available on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fUXdrl9ch_Q to differentiate what teamwork means in life, and why it is in fact many a times a highly relevant matter.

Conclude this part with a sentence that even though teamwork pays off, it should always be kept in mind, at work as in life, that actual need/task may be more efficiently done if we work alone. The trick is to match our traits and features of a particular task in order to know which is more efficient.

INDIVIDUAL VS. TEAMWORK



Task:

Discuss what benefits/challenges your group see in working alone and in working together. Right down group ideas on both. Now explain that both arrangements certainly imply both benefits and challenges. For instance working alone is useful when a task requires high focus, and quite specific knowledge/skill/competence. Teamwork is important in brainstorming, motivation building and new ideas generating tasks.

Now, use tables below to present most commonly stated benefits/challenges of both arrangements.

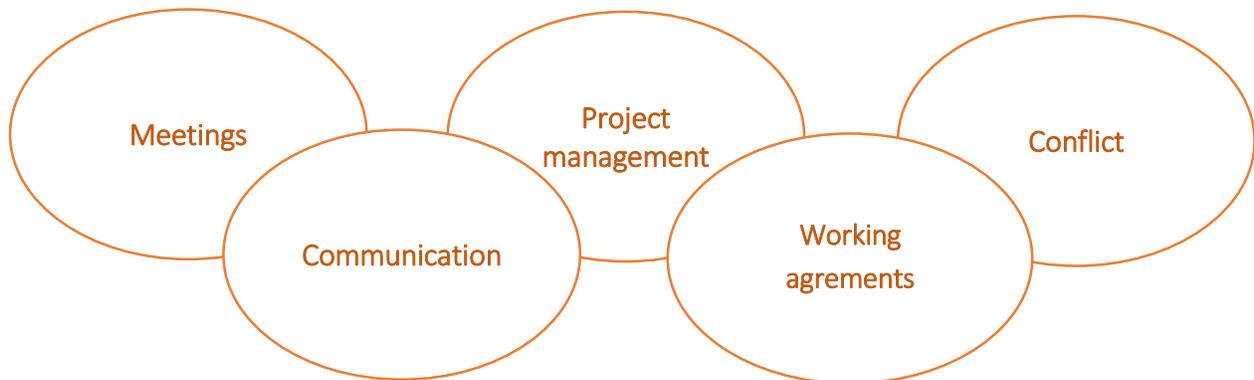
Individual work – benefits	Individual work – challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Non-hectic work place <input type="checkbox"/> Free-flowing work style <input type="checkbox"/> Self-awareness <input type="checkbox"/> Productivity <input type="checkbox"/> Cast off “group think” and present unique solutions – innovators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Limited ideas – no brainstorming <input type="checkbox"/> Motivation <input type="checkbox"/> No one to consult with
Teamwork benefits	Teamwork challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Fosters Creativity and Learning. <input type="checkbox"/> Blends Complementary Strengths <input type="checkbox"/> Builds Trust <input type="checkbox"/> Teaches Conflict Resolution Skills <input type="checkbox"/> Wider Sense of ownership <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity <input type="checkbox"/> Efficiency <input type="checkbox"/> Networking opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of efficiency <input type="checkbox"/> Miss(sing)communication <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Diverse Skills and Interests <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Leadership <input type="checkbox"/> Role Confusion <input type="checkbox"/> Poor Work Environment

Smart managers will always know their workers aspirations, abilities, zones of comfort and thus will be able to match tasks with appropriate work arrangement, embracing benefits from both. They often emphasize some traits and transversal skills in individuals that underpin successful teamwork. Some of these on interpersonal level include: trust and acceptance, communication, collaborative problem solving, conflict resolution; on a self-level these are: goal setting, planning/prioritizing tasks, task coordination, and performance management.



A QUICK GUIDE TO EASY TEAMWORK

Even though managers over the world agree there is no one recipe for ensuring successful teamwork, vast literature available in the field provides inputs as to which areas are key in generating efficient teamwork. These areas that make a difference and are perceived pivotal for teamwork easy flow can be summed up as follows:



#Communication

In every stand of life, good communication makes tasks easier to be done, and interpersonal relations more constructive and appealing. Good communication in teamwork is primarily based on the level of openness among team members – whether they can freely state their opinion, share a new idea, or innovative approach. This creates trust among team members but also triggers motivation to contribute to the common goal. Sometimes team members should know how to interpret the untold, so that they do not jeopardize their position. Giving constructive feedback (peer reviews) on others work and accomplishment and knowing how to receive one – makes a good communicator in a team. Active listening is a technique many should learn in order to protect themselves and understand better the positions of others to the benefit of a group.

#Working agreement

Success of teamwork depends upon working agreement to a large extent. Here we ask ourselves what are we there to work on together, and how we are going to get there; what is our role in the process, and what the roles of others are; how decisions are made etc. Understanding different positions, needs and expectations of each team member makes a difference in between efficient and unattached teamwork. Regular face to face meeting and virtual talks help in understanding working arrangement.

#Project management

More and more teams in working environment are organized to support implementation of a particular project (project organizational structures). Here project teams' efficacy is dictated by their ability to follow the scope of work towards the set goal in a given time and on budget. Quality of delivery is particularly relevant, so monitoring and evaluation tasks become teams' primary concern. Project management is always a teamwork driven process.

#Conflict

Being part of a team will inevitably at some point raise conflicts among team members. Accept it, as it is a natural way teams' dynamics is formed, yet also think of the ways how to mitigate and come up with resolutions in accordance with approved strategies at workplace or life. On certain occasion, even though you cannot avoid them and they are quite stressful to deal with, conflicts may actually bring value to the teams in which they are nested in, e.g. conflict over the use of new methodology would normally provide for the best solution to be approved, etc. It is generally not advised to put conflicting situations under the rug, but rather face them. Early warning signs of silent conflict (unnatural quietness, rolling eyes, tone of voice, etc.) should thus not be neglected.

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