

Effective work teams

Business has seen a significant switch from traditional top-down, 'boss-worker' models to a participative one based on more flexible and self-managing work teams. Teams magnify performance and enhance work and management practices, which leads to better staff satisfaction, commitment and improved customer service.

Groups vs teams

There is a significant difference between a work team and a work group, as follows:

- A *team* comprises people who have common goals, share responsibility for leading and coordinating, directing themselves and work collectively on things much of the time.
- A work *group* is a collection of individuals who work independently on their own separate activities, often competing or working at cross-purposes, who rarely work collectively on anything.

A team comprises the following qualities:

- A common performance need or challenge.
- Joint commitment to shared goals/visions.
- Agreed ways to make decisions together.
- Defined degrees of self-management.
- Shared responsibility and work collectively.
- Have a sense of ownership over the work.
- Redesigned their jobs and integrated their work roles to support more flexible working.
- Ways of learning and innovating together.
- A say in how work is planned and done.
- Share information/ideas without reservation.
- Broader skills to handle more of the work.
- Agreed operating principles for handling more collective work arrangements.
- Constructive conversations characterised by open, honest and skillful discussions.
- Real teamwork – they pull together and help each other out. *There's no 'i' in team.*

Types of teams

There are 3 common types of teams:

1. Directed Teams

Direct teams are driven by management. Imagine a team of horses pulling a wagon. This is your traditional workgroup. It doesn't provide opportunities for individuals to work collectively, and little is expected from the individuals. People are told to keep pulling and if the work doesn't get done, a whip is cracked!



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2. Managed Teams

Managed teams see the manager direct daily work, make the major decisions and do most of the problem-solving. It's hierarchical and management-centred - the sort of arrangement that easily turns into the *over-managed* team - constricting autonomy, creativity and commitment.

3. Self-Directed Teams

Self-directed teams share leadership and co-ordination roles supervisors traditionally carry out. They work collectively, manage their own everyday planning, organising and problem-solving, set common goals and often have work roles that enable them to handle whole work processes.

Further information

The following fact sheets provide further information on managing people:

- Business vision – introduction
- Help groups make decisions
- Leadership – introduction
- Manage an effective work team
- Set achievable goals
- Verbal communication