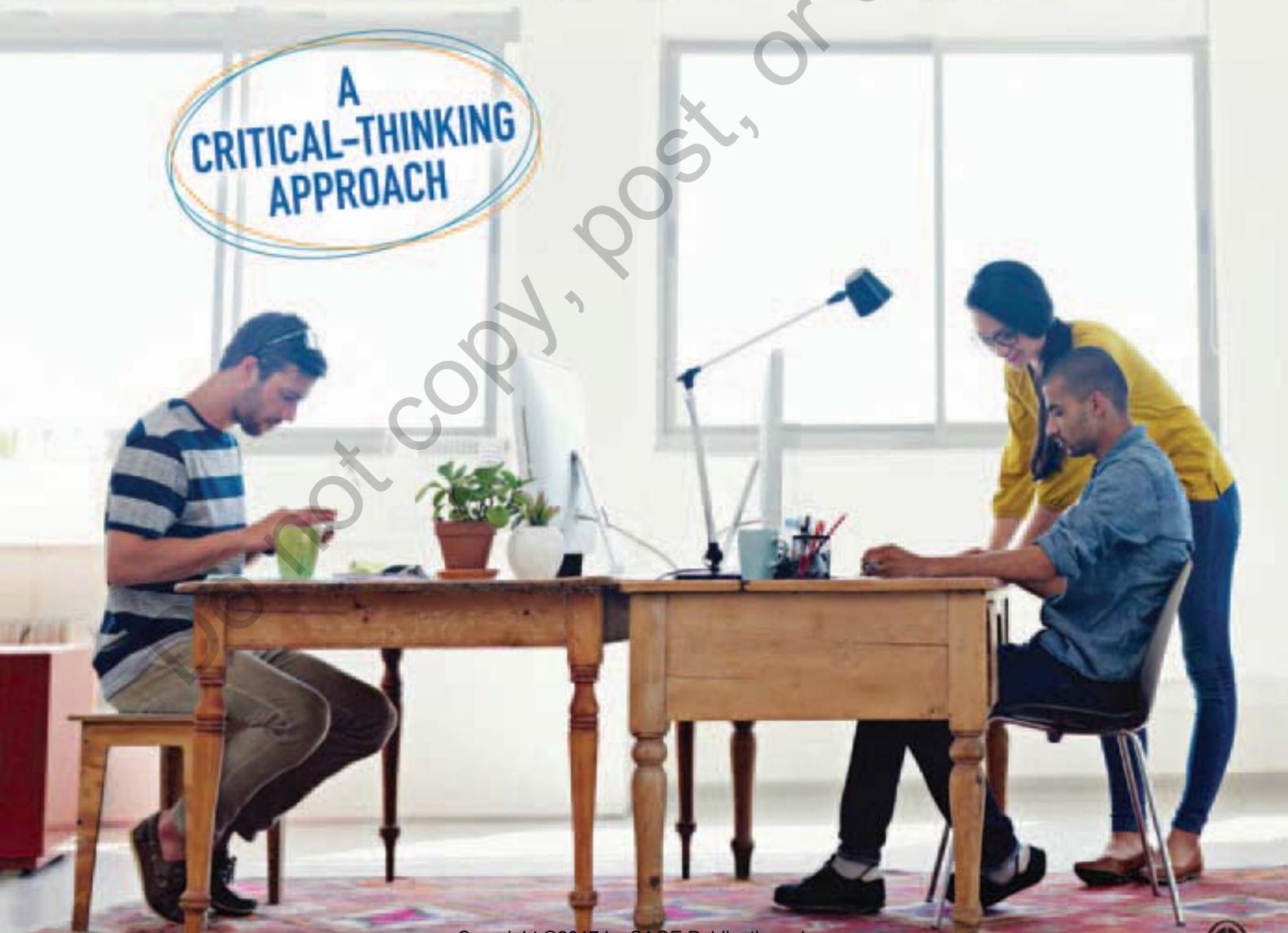


CHRISTOPHER P. NECK • JEFFERY D. HOUGHTON • EMMA L. MURRAY

# ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

A  
CRITICAL-THINKING  
APPROACH



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# 7

# Teams



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*I am a member of a team, and I rely on the team,  
I defer to it and sacrifice for it, because the team, not  
the individual, is the ultimate champion.*

—Mia Hamm, American professional soccer player

## TEAMS AND TEAMWORK IN CONTEMPORARY ORGANIZATIONS

7.1

Distinguish between a team and a group

There is no doubt that teams and teamwork play a critical role in the success of 21st century organizations. The most successful organizations value and understand the nature of teams and create a productive environment in which teams flourish. A **team** is a collection of people brought together to apply their individual skills to a common project or goal.<sup>1</sup>

Regardless of the type of organization, most employees work in some form of a team in today's workplace. Compared to a few decades ago, teamwork has become commonplace in contemporary organizations. But what has caused this dramatic shift to team structures? Global competition means that organizations need to respond quickly to competitive pressures. Efficient, collaborative teams are one way for organizations to meet the growing demands of their customers and stay ahead of the competition. Some organizations take collaboration so seriously that they are changing the traditional office layout and replacing cubicles with low walls or no walls between desks. Many are creating small, informal areas designed to encourage spontaneous discussion and problem solving.<sup>2</sup>

Organizational restructuring and downsizing have brought leaner, more efficient and more productive structures to many companies. Rather than viewing layoffs as a negative, some companies perceive a trimmer organization as an optimal way for employees to collaborate more intensely, to become more engaged in the decision-making processes, and to contribute their own ideas and initiatives. In addition, employees have become more empowered through **decentralization**, the distribution of power across all levels of the organization.<sup>3</sup> Employees are encouraged to be creative and innovative and given more freedom to make decisions.

Finally, many employees, especially in the United States and Europe, are working in high technology or knowledge information industries where close collaboration is viewed as a positive forum for innovation and creativity. Take Taco Bell, for instance. Its efforts to reinvent the taco as the DLT (Doritos Locos Taco) called on the knowledge, creative input, and close collaboration of members of the development team to come up with the flavor and seasoning, the engineering team to find a way to make the shells bend without cracking, and manufacturing teams to make the shells as quickly as possible. The result of this teamwork was such a success that 450 million DLTs have been sold since launching, in 2012.<sup>4</sup>

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this chapter,  
you will be able to:

7.1

Distinguish between  
a team and a group

7.2

Compare the various  
types of teams in  
organizations today

7.3

Apply the model of team  
effectiveness to evaluate  
team performance

7.4

Explain how team  
processes affect  
team outcomes

7.5

Identify the advantages  
and disadvantages of  
different team decision-  
making approaches



Decentralization

**Team:** A group of people brought together to use their individual skills on a common project or goal

**Decentralization:** The distribution of power across all levels of the organization

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Teams and Groups

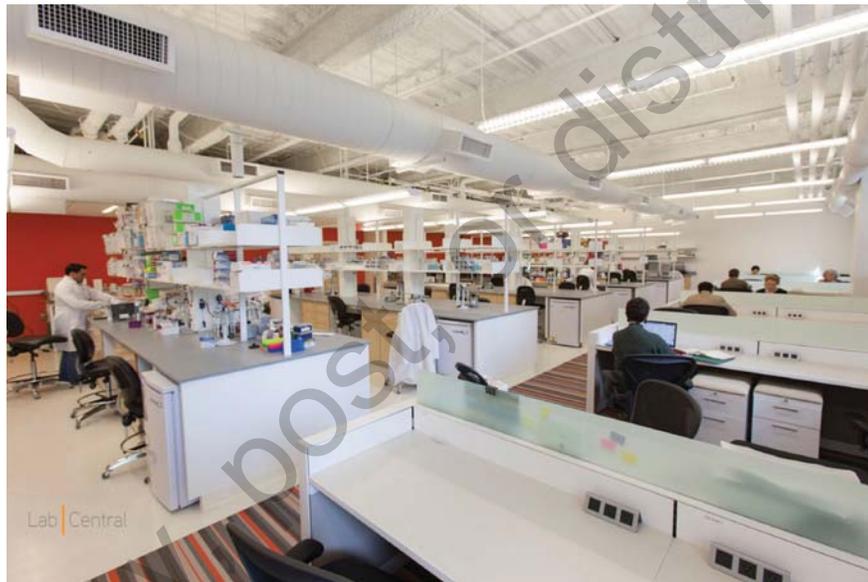
**Group:** Three or more people who work independently to attain organizational goals

LabCentral in Cambridge, MA is a unique shared lab space for up-and-coming life science startups, specifically designed to spark innovation and foster collaboration.

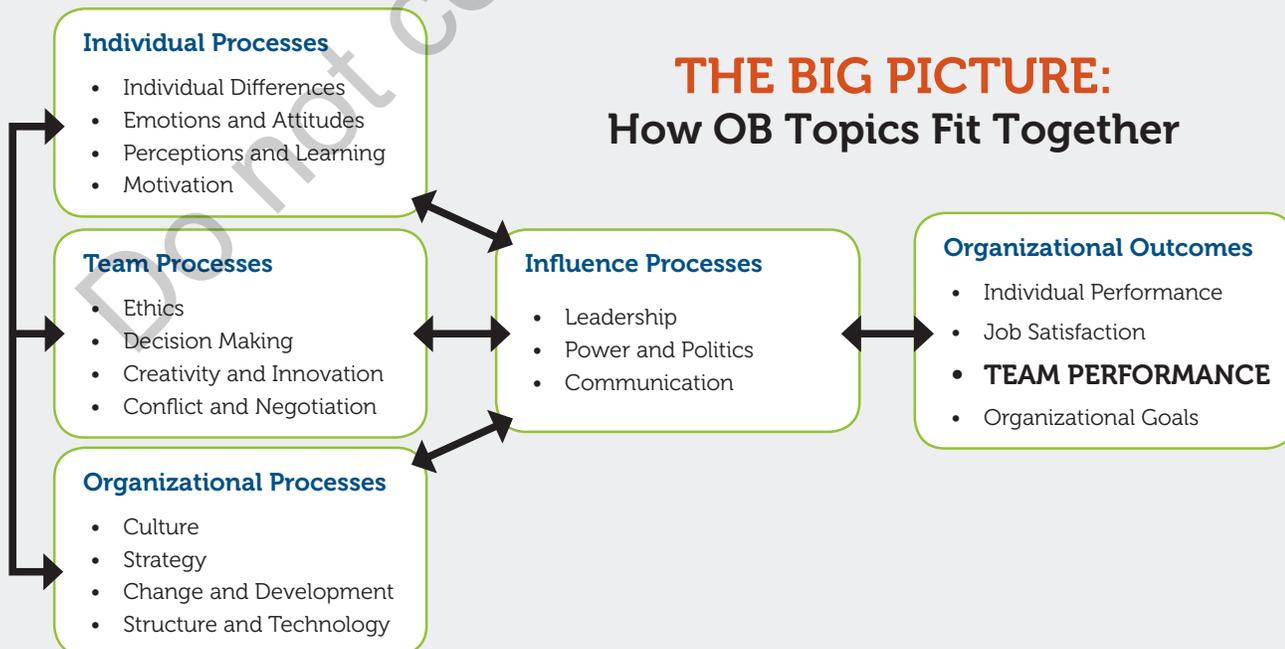
**Teams Versus Groups**

The terms *teams* and *groups* are often used interchangeably, but there are subtle differences between them.<sup>5</sup>

A **group** usually consists of three or more people who work independently to attain organizational goals.<sup>6</sup> For example, in a small business, there might be three people in the marketing department; one might be focused on sales, another on branding, and a third on the administration associated with those tasks. In contrast, teams consist of a number of people, usually between three and seven, who use their complementary skills to collaborate in a joint effort. Teams with fewer than three people tend not to derive the benefits of a collaborative team, and teams with more than seven tend to have communication and control issues. In this chapter we focus on teams.



PRNewsFoto/LabCentral





Jim R. Bounds/AP Images for Taco Bell

Taco Bell COO Rob Savage poses for a photo with the winner of a social media contest promoting Doritos Locos Tacos.

## Are Teams Effective?

The effectiveness of work teams depends on how well they are managed and treated within the organization. A well-run team is usually productive, innovative, loyal, and adaptable. Organizations that consistently nurture teams tend to experience reduced turnover and absenteeism. However, teams can fail if they are mismanaged; if they are not implemented properly, they can cause more harm than good. Explore the concept of teams further from the point of view of Tanya Faidley, former curriculum coordinator at the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind (VSDB) in the OB in the Real World feature.



### THINKING CRITICALLY

1. What types of tasks are best suited to a group? What types of tasks are best suited to a team? **[Understand/Apply]**
2. Which of the four aspects of a well-run team (productive, innovative, loyal, adaptable) do you think is the most important? Which do you think is least important? Explain your response. **[Analyze/Evaluate]**

## TYPES OF TEAMS

7.2

Compare the various types of teams in organizations today

The technological revolution has turned the original concept of what a team means on its head. Many global companies now operate in **virtual teams**, whose members are in different locations and work together through email, video conferencing, instant messaging, and other electronic media.<sup>7</sup> Virtual team members have great flexibility because they are able to work anywhere, including their own homes. Organizations value the virtual team model because it saves on travel costs by eliminating in-person meetings and allows for greater sharing of information between employees from different countries. However, there are a few disadvantages to working in a virtual team. Time differences between countries can cause confusion, lack of face-to-face contact



Virtual Teams

**Virtual teams:** Groups of individuals from different locations work together through e-mail, video conferencing, instant messaging, and other electronic media



## TANYA FAIDLEY, curriculum coordinator, the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind (VSDB)

### OB in the Real World



© Tanya Faidley

The Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind is one of the oldest schools in Virginia and the second of its kind in the world. It was established in 1839 and serves students from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. Residential and day students are deaf/hard

impaired, or deaf and blind, and some have secondary disabilities as well. VSDB strives to create an environment that fosters self-confidence and helps to develop contributing citizens and lifelong learners. The staff consists of 45 teachers and 15 support staff including occupational therapists, speech therapists, audiologists, counselors, and behavioral specialists.

Tanya was the curriculum coordinator at the VSDB for 38 years before retiring in the summer of 2013. During her time at the school, she supervised the teaching assistants, made sure teachers had necessary resources, established budgets, set up new projects, and ensured that blind students had access to Braille textbooks.

At VSDB, the team meets every week to discuss students' progress with standardized tests, schoolwork, language, and writing development. They work hard to ensure that students are integrating into the school, making friends, and if they are residential students, managing being away from their families. "We're all here for the same reason—to provide the best education possible and to raise the bar as high as we can for students with disabilities," Tanya comments. "These children achieve their best when we are supporting them as a team. Communication is paramount in everything we do, and in-person communication trumps e-mail."

Recently, one student was thriving in some of her classes but struggling in others. A meeting was called with all her teachers (science, social studies, English, math, music, daily living skills, orientation and mobility, Braille, and physical education) along with the school psychologist, school counselor, and vice principal.

"By open communication and teamwork, we discovered that specific teaching strategies used in one particular classroom were really effective," Tanya says. They figured out how to implement the successful strategies into all this student's classes and she flourished.

Another student, William, had been attending his public high school and was really struggling. One day he came home and told his mom he just couldn't do it anymore. His parents sent him to VSDB, and the team put together a plan that would allow William to catch up and graduate from high school. Staff members quickly realized that William loved police work. His job coordinator made an arrangement with the local police department and an officer would pick him up from the school, take him on their beats, bring him to the station, and teach him more about the criminal justice system.

Thanks to the team approach and individual attention he received at VSDB, William graduated from high school and is currently studying criminal justice at a local community college. "That's what we're here for. When you see this type of success story you can't help but feel proud of how much work our team did to offer the resources to these kids so they could be successful," Tanya comments.

"It's amazing when you walk into the school and you see the expertise level of the people working there. Everyone is working as a team to meet the goals for the students and it goes beyond just the teachers and support staff. From the employees in the front office to the maintenance crew, everyone cares. We have a security guard named Charlie, who has really taken to the kids, learning sign language so he can communicate with them. When he's not around the kids will always ask, 'Where's Charlie. Where's Charlie!?' That teamwork and connection that we all feel is what makes this place so special."

#### Critical-Thinking Questions

1. In your view, how do members of the VSDB team work together to meet their goals for the students?
2. How would you cultivate a team where "everyone cares"?

SOURCE: Tanya Faidley, personal interview.



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Virtual teams can communicate with each other more easily with video conferencing software like Skype.

can result in miscommunication, and cultural differences can also compound misunderstandings related to distance.

However, in many instances, virtual teams work successfully. Take the author team of this book, for example. Chris Neck lives in Arizona; Jeff Houghton is in West Virginia; and Emma Murray lives in London, United Kingdom. Despite their locations, the team has managed to successfully work together over a number of years thanks to e-mail and Skype.

Other types of teams include self-managing teams, problem-solving teams, and cross-functional teams. A **self-managing team** is a group of workers who manage their own daily duties under little to no supervision.<sup>8</sup> Systems engineering and management company Semco is composed of highly effective self-managing teams, in which team members are expected make decisions without consulting higher management.<sup>9</sup>

A **problem-solving team** consists of a small group of workers who come together for a set amount of time to discuss and resolve specific issues.<sup>10</sup> Small teams at global design firm IDEO use design thinking to solve complex problems.<sup>11</sup> Finally, a **cross-functional team** is comprised of a group of workers from different units with various areas of expertise to work on certain projects.<sup>12</sup> The cross-functional model can be effective in both large and small companies. For example, small business Reprint Management Services of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, successfully uses cross-functional teams to manage special projects.<sup>13</sup>

In the following continuing narrative, we explore these three types of teams in more detail and examine how they commonly operate in the workplace.

### Introducing the Case of Brian Stevens: Trouble at the Tractor Assembly Plant

Human resources (HR) manager Brian Stevens has been working in a tractor engine manufacturing plant in the Midwest. He recently received a promotion to plant manager at the company's tractor assembly plant, located a few miles from his current location, and reports directly to the president of the company, Hans Wagner. Brian is both excited and apprehensive about his new role, which brings added responsibilities. Still, he is looking forward to the challenge and hopes his new colleagues will be supportive.



Self-Managing Teams

**Self-managing team:** A group of workers who manage their daily duties under little to no supervision

**Problem-solving team:** A group of workers coming together for a set amount of time to discuss specific issues

**Cross-functional team:** A group of workers from different units with various areas of expertise, assembled to address certain issues

On his first day on the new job, Brian meets with the plant's HR manager, Maria Gonzalez, to discuss the current situation at the assembly plant.

"We have a problem," Maria begins. "The purchasing department is underperforming and it's costing us a lot of money."

Brian knows how crucial the purchasing department is to the daily operation of the plant. The staff in this department is responsible for buying the parts, materials, and components for the machine assembly. They are also in charge of evaluating the price of the materials to maximize profitability, negotiating with vendors, and shopping around for better rates when necessary. The purchasing department also deals with the necessary paperwork and works closely with the accounts department to ensure orders have been received and paid for on time.

"What's the problem in purchasing?" Brian asks.

"Purchase orders are missing or being sent to the vendors late. The inventory that does show up is either too much or too little for the production line's needs. Sometimes the quality of the components is below our standards, which means we have to return them, yet the team keeps making repeat orders to the same vendors instead of shopping around," Maria says.

"The employees in the warehouses are going crazy because they don't have the space for over-ordered inventory; the assembly line is affected when material is under-ordered or flawed; and the production and planning department is frustrated because of the poor quality of some of the components."

"How long has this been going on?" Brian asks.

"About four months," Maria responds. "Clearly there's a problem within the team but so far we haven't been able to identify it."

When Maria explains that the purchasing department is a *self-managing team*, Brian is skeptical. In his career to date, he has never witnessed a successful self-managing team. He's seen conflict among team members, lack of accountability, and poor commitment, leading to low morale, high absenteeism, and increased turnover.

Maria agrees to some extent but explains that the situation with the purchasing department isn't as clear-cut as Brian suggests. "The team used to work really well together and has been our highest performing team. In fact, their self-managing model has been so successful that we've been thinking of applying it to the rest of the team structures in the plant," she explains.

"But now there are problems with this team . . .," Brian says, thoughtfully. "What did the previous plant manager do to address it?"

"He didn't feel it was appropriate to challenge a self-managing team," Maria replies. Though Brian understands that managers must adopt a "hands-off" policy toward self-managing teams, he is curious to know why his predecessor didn't step in, especially when the team's errors are costing the organization so much money.

"Did Hans Wagner agree with this decision?" Brian says.

"Hans is busy and just wants the problem fixed," Maria says. "He told me and the previous plant manager to do whatever we could to sort out the problem, but it's been difficult."

"What have you done so far?" Brian says.

"Since the team is self-managing, they expect very little interference," Maria explains. "But we did implement one initiative to try and find the source of the problem."

Maria explains that she set up a *problem-solving team*. The group included employees from different areas of the production department.

"The meetings didn't go as planned, however," Maria says. "There was very little talk about the work issues and lots of joking around. Nobody took responsibility for the problems and the meetings went nowhere."

Brian is puzzled. “Have there been any changes to the purchasing team over the last few months?” Brian says.

Maria hesitates. “Six months ago Nathan Jackson joined the team, replacing a long-standing team member who left for health reasons.”

“Is Nathan a poor fit for the team? Do you think that’s why there have been so many problems recently?” Brian asks.

“That’s what I thought initially, but Nathan is one of our most popular employees. Although high performing, the team was a little isolated before, and social communication was lacking between team members and the rest of the department. Since Nathan’s arrival, the team members have become much more social. Morale has really improved!” Maria replies.

Brian frowns. “So morale is up and productivity is down. What is going on?” he wonders.

In his earlier role with the company, Brian had set up a *cross-functional team*. Because the team members had different skills and came from different areas, they were able to contribute a variety of solutions and objectively address the problems with the project. Brian wonders whether Maria’s problem-solving team had too many members from the same area with similar skills who were too friendly with the purchasing team to be objective. He thought a cross-functional team might be able to provide a fresh perspective on the situation.

When he suggests the idea to Maria, she says, “I’m not sure whether the self-managing team will welcome any more outside involvement, but it’s your call.”

Brian agrees she has a point. He needs to learn a lot more about the purchasing team before he forges ahead with any ideas.



### THINKING CRITICALLY

1. Imagine that you are assigned to work with a virtual team. What challenges and drawbacks might you encounter? What technological methods of communication would you use most often to communicate? Why? **[Understand/Apply]**
2. What industries and types of businesses would be most likely to be open to the use of self-managing teams? What industries and types of businesses would be least open to the use of self-managing teams? Explain your answers. **[Analyze/Evaluate]**
3. What criteria would you as a manager use in determining whether a problem-solving team should also be a cross-functional team? In other words, what types of issues would a problem-solving team from the same functional area solve most efficiently and what types of issues would a problem-solving team that is also cross-functional solve most efficiently? **[Analyze/Evaluate]**
4. Review the case about Brian Stevens’ management challenge at the tractor assembly plant. Generate a list of at least five possible explanations for the problems affecting the self-managing team responsible for purchasing. Pick the two explanations and explain what you believe Brian’s next steps should be in each case. **[Evaluate/Create]**

## A MODEL OF TEAM EFFECTIVENESS: CONTEXT AND COMPOSITION

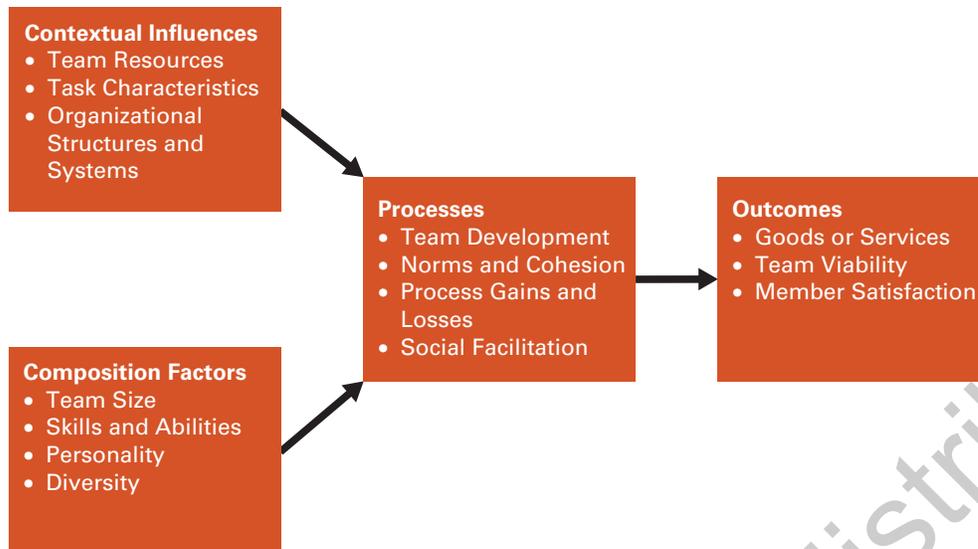
7.3

Apply the model of team effectiveness to evaluate team performance

As the tractor plant case demonstrates, not all teams are effective. Effective teams in an organization are characterized by their ability to improve quality, reach goals, and change processes. One classic way of understanding teams and their effectiveness is to



Team Effectiveness



■ **FIGURE 7.1** A Model of Team Effectiveness

SOURCE: Figure adapted from Hackman, J. R. "The Design of Work Teams." In *Handbook of Organizational Behavior*, edited by J. W. Lorsch, 315–342 (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1987); McGrath, J. E. *Social Psychology: A Brief Introduction* (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1964); Resick, C. J., M. W. Dickson, J. K. Mitchelson, L. K. Allison, and M. A. Clark. "Team Composition, Cognition, and Effectiveness: Examining Mental Model Similarity and Accuracy." *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice* 14, no. 2 (June 2010): 174–191; Doolen, Toni L., Marla E. Hacker, and Eileen M. Van Aken. "The Impact of Organizational Context on Work Team Effectiveness: A Study of Production Team." *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management* 50, no. 3 (August 2003): 285–296.

consider teams in terms of the contextual influences that affect their functioning, their composition, the processes they use, and the outcomes they achieve.<sup>14</sup> Figure 7.1 shows how these factors influence team effectiveness.

In the next section, we explore contextual influences and composition factors through Brian's and Maria's continued discussion about the problems with the purchasing team.

## Team Contextual Influences

Later in the day, Brian and Maria sit down to discuss the extent of team contextual influences on the purchasing group. There are three main contextual influences: team resources, task characteristics, and organizational systems and structures.

Team resources are important for effective teams because they equip the team members with the tools to successfully perform their roles. Resources consist of the equipment, materials, training, information, staffing, and budgets the organization supplies to support the team's goals. The purchasing team has the appropriate amount of materials and training and is fully staffed, thanks to the addition of the new team member, Nathan Jackson.

Tasks are the specific steps the team must perform to achieve its goals. They can be structured or unstructured, complex or simple, and characterized by more or less interdependence among team members. **Interdependence** is the extent to which team members rely on each other to complete their work tasks.<sup>15</sup> There are three levels of interdependence:

- **Pooled interdependence** occurs when each team member produces a piece of work independently of the others. Sandwich fast-food restaurant Subway is an example of pooled interdependence. Though each restaurant unit is a part of the overall Subway organization, the units work independently of each other.<sup>16</sup>

**Interdependence:** The extent to which team members rely on each other to complete their work tasks

**Pooled interdependence:** An organizational model in which each team member produces a piece of work independently of the other members

- **Sequential interdependence** takes place when one team member completes a piece of work and passes it on to the next member for his or her input, as on an assembly line. Car manufacturer Toyota's production system is partly based on sequential interdependence.<sup>17</sup>
- **Reciprocal interdependence** happens when team members work closely together on a piece of work, consulting with each other, providing each other with advice, and exchanging information. For example, the teams at Parkland Memorial Hospital rely on reciprocal interdependence to manage the intense coordination of the different services provided to patients and the movement between those services.<sup>18</sup>

AP Photo/Ted S. Warren

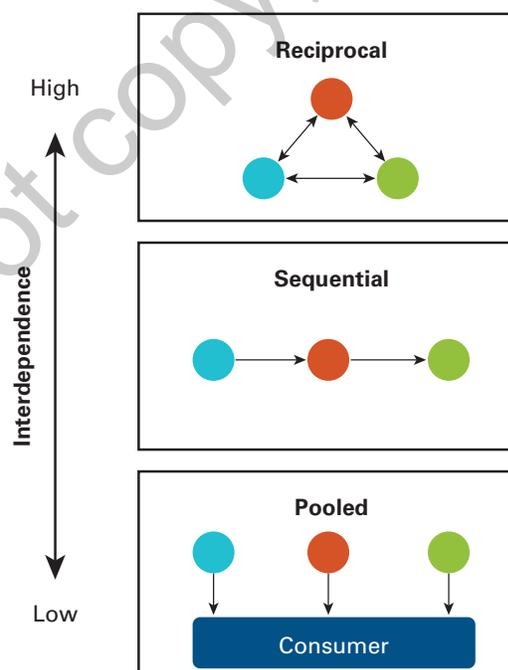


Subway restaurants are an example of pooled interdependence. While all Subway restaurants are part of the larger organization, they operate independently of one another.

When Brian asks Maria how she would describe the purchasing team in terms of interdependence, she describes a system of *sequential interdependence*. One member of the team, Jim O'Neill, sources manufacturing supplies, negotiates with suppliers, and makes purchases. This information is passed on to Nathan Jackson, who ensures the materials are tracked and delivered on time. Chris Hudson then monitors the supplies and assesses them for quality control, and Tim Malik deals with compliance, handles all the paperwork, and works with the accounting department to ensure payments are made.

"Ideally, that's the way it should work," Maria says. "But clearly something isn't right, because there are flaws in each of the areas and yet nobody is willing to take responsibility for the problems."

Brian is determined to find the flaw in the purchasing team's workflow, but he knows there is more analysis to do first. He and Maria move on to the next team contextual influence: organizational systems and structures. Brian knows from his experience as an HR manager that performance management systems, compensation and reward systems, and



■ **FIGURE 7.2** Levels of Task Interdependence

**Sequential interdependence:** An organizational model in which one team member completes a piece of work and passes it on to the next member for their input, similar to an assembly line

**Reciprocal interdependence:** An organizational model in which team members work closely together on a piece of work, consulting with each other, providing each other with advice, and exchanging information

While it may be tempting to congratulate or reward individual employees, this could create conflict or resentment among team members.



organizational and leadership structures must be aligned with team structures to maintain smooth running of operations. If these systems and structures are out of place it could cause problems. For example, rewarding or evaluating one team member for performance rather than the whole team may cause conflict and resentment, and strict hierarchical structures or authoritative leaders can sometimes disempower teams if often decisions are made without consulting them.

Maria tells Brian the purchasing team evaluates performance and rewards on a team basis, recruits and selects new hires, and monitors individual performance of team members. Because they are self-managing, there is no authoritarian leader watching over them or making demands. Satisfied that he has a better understanding of the team's structure and its organization, Brian moves on to team composition.

## Team Composition

Typically, a team is characterized by four qualities: its size as well as the skills and abilities, personalities, and diversity of its members.

The appropriate *size* of a team depends on the task the team needs to perform. In general, teams tend to consist of four to seven members. Maria tells Brian the purchasing team needs only four members to function efficiently.

If all that being a team player meant was having *skills* and *abilities*, professional baseball teams with the highest payrolls (like the New York Yankees) would win the World Series every year. Instead, however, it's the way talent interacts in the context of team processes that brings results. Maria tells Brian she feels all the members of the purchasing team have the right skills for the roles they are performing.

In terms of *personality*, teams typically need a balance between extraverts and introverts.<sup>19</sup> Having too many extraverts can mean too much talking and not enough listening, and having too many introverts can mean very little communication among the team members. Generally, people who are agreeable and conscientious are effective team members.<sup>20</sup>

Brian asks Maria to describe the individual personalities of each team member.

"Nathan is a real extravert, no doubt about that!" she says. "He's always making everyone laugh. He has a real bond with the team. I would say Chris, Jim, and Tim fall into the

introvert category. In fact, the employee Nathan replaced was also an introvert. They were a quiet bunch but they got along well and got the job done.” Brian nods, wondering whether the imbalanced personality types have something to do with the problems within the team. Still, he knows he needs to gather all the facts before he starts making assumptions.

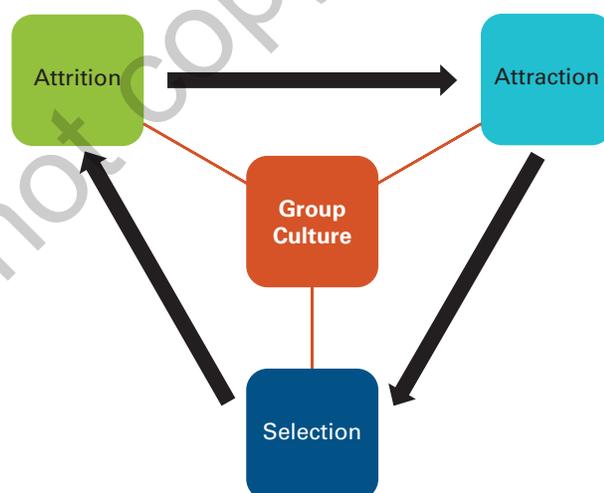
Ensuring *diversity* on a team can be a challenge. Recall from Chapter 2 that diversity include surface-level factors such as race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and age as well as deep-level factors such as personality and beliefs. From a team composition perspective managers are most concerned with the ways that deep-level diversity factors, like introversion and extraversion, affect team functioning. Typically, team members who share similarities in values, personalities, and interests tend to have positive social relationships with each other, which helps the team to be more effective.

Psychologist Benjamin Schneider’s attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) model (see Figure 7.3) states that people are functions of three interrelated dynamic processes: attraction, selection, and attrition, all of which influence organizational culture.<sup>21</sup> For example, new employees are *attracted* to a team because of a perceived similarity in values, interests, and goals. New hires are *selected* based on how well they fit in to an organization. Over time, *attrition* occurs when employees feel they do not fit in, causing them to leave the organization.

This theory explains why team members who are perceived as sharing similarities are selected as a good “fit,” while those who do not fit in tend to leave the team.<sup>22</sup> However, there must be a balance between diversity and similarity, because too many people behaving in a similar way can stunt growth and have a negative effect on insight and creativity due to the lack of unique viewpoints.

Brian asks Maria why she believes Nathan Jackson is a good fit for the team, since she describes him as an outgoing, outspoken individual who does not seem to share the same quiet focus and concentration as the other members.

Maria smiles. “Nathan is the kind of person who fits in anywhere. He has a big personality and he’s really likable. In fact, he seems to find common ground with anyone he meets. The others on the team are definitely a happier bunch when he’s around. I guess you just have to meet the team and decide for yourself.”



■ **FIGURE 7.3** Attraction-Selection-Attrition Model

SOURCE: Based on Schneider, Benjamin. “The People Make the Place.” *Personnel Psychology* 40, no. 3 (September 1987): 437–453; Schneider, Benjamin, Harold W. Goldstein, and D. Brent Smith. “The ASA Framework: An Update.” *Personnel Psychology* 48, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 747–773.



## THINKING CRITICALLY

1. Based on this section and Figure 7.1, the model of team effectiveness, explain how problems in each one of the three contextual influences (team resources, task characteristics, and organizational structure and systems) could affect team success. Provide an example for each of the three influences. **[Apply/Analyze]**
2. Explain how problems in each one of the composition factors (team size, skills and abilities, personality, and diversity) could affect team success. Provide an example for each of the four composition factors. **[Apply/Analyze]**
3. Do you think there are any types of situations where either contextual influences or composition factors would have a bigger influence on successful team functioning? Explain. **[Analyze/Evaluate]**
4. Assume you work in a restaurant that specializes in a broad variety of Chinese-style dumplings and potstickers. Identify the likely level of task interdependence (pooled, sequential, or reciprocal) for each of the groups involved with the operation of the restaurant (dumpling makers, hosts, servers, runners, bartenders). **[Understand/Apply]**
5. Consider diversity as it was discussed in Chapter 2 and its impact on and interplay with the ASA Model. How might a lack of surface-level diversity in a team affect the attraction and selection process discussed in the ASA Model? What are the potential weaknesses of teams that lack diversity in these areas? **[Apply/Analyze]**

## A MODEL OF TEAM EFFECTIVENESS: PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

7.4

Explain how team processes affect team outcomes

When teams first come together they go through a number of stages in the process of becoming a team. In his original model of group development in 1965, psychologist Bruce Tuckman named the stages “forming, norming, storming, and performing” (Figure 7.4).<sup>23</sup> Twelve years later, Tuckman created a fifth stage called “adjourning.”

**Forming:** A process whereby team members meet for the first time, get to know each other, and try to understand where they fit in to the team structure

**Storming:** A phase during which, after a period of time, tension may arise between members and different personalities might clash, leading to tension and conflict in the team

**Norming:** The process by which team members resolve the conflict and begin to work well together and become more cohesive

**Performing:** The way in which a team is invested towards achieving its goals and operates as a unit

**Adjourning:** The stage when individuals either leave the team or have no reason to be in further contact with their teammates

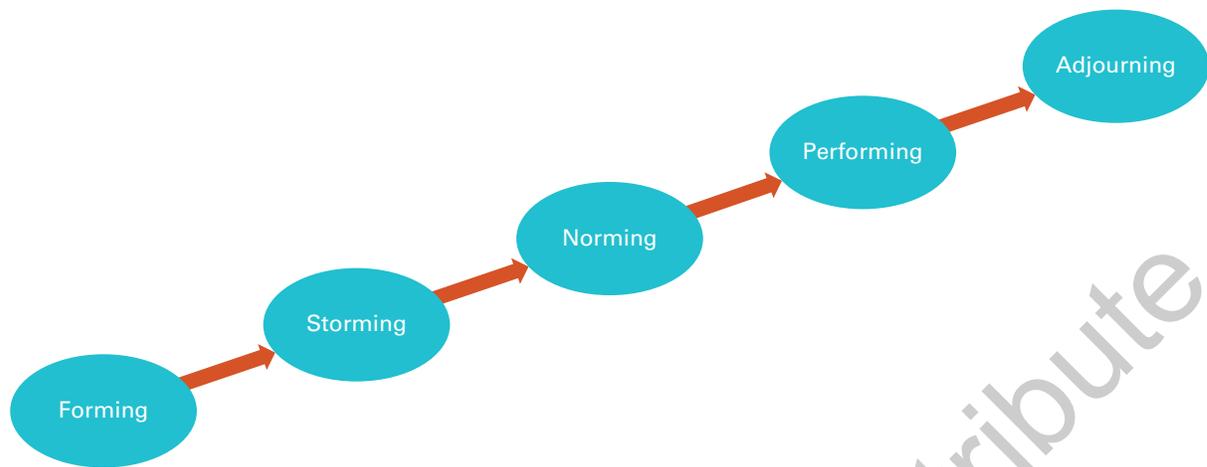
**Forming.** In the first stage of group development the members meet for the first time, get to know each other, and try to understand where they fit within the team structure. During this period, team members are polite to each other and tend to avoid conflict.

**Storming.** After a period of time, tensions may arise between members and different personalities might clash, leading to conflict within the team.

**Norming.** The team members resolve the conflict and begin to work well together and become more cohesive.

**Performing.** The team becomes invested in achieving its goals and operates as a unit. At this stage, there is high loyalty and trust between members.

**Adjourning.** The final stage takes place when individuals either leave the team or have no reason to be in further contact with their teammates—successfully completing a group project, for example.



■ **FIGURE 7.4** The Tuckman Model of Team Development

SOURCE: Tuckman, Bruce. "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups." *Psychological Bulletin* 63 (1965): 384–399.

Maria has told Brian that in the five years she has been HR manager, there has been very little conflict within the team. Although he wasn't there to see it, Brian imagines the team went through a new *forming* stage when Nathan arrived six months ago, treating him politely and taking time to get to know him. But what about the *storming* stage? According to Maria, the other team members clicked instantly with Nathan, and there has never been any tension that she knows of between them.

When he walks over to the purchasing team's bank of desks, Brian notes that three team members are hunched over one computer screen, laughing at a YouTube video, while another sits apart, tapping away at his computer. Brian greets the team and one of the members looks up from the video, holds out his hand and says, "Hi, Brian. I'm Nathan Jackson. Great to meet you!"

Brian firmly shakes Nathan's hand. The team members watching the video with Nathan follow suit, greeting Brian warmly and introducing themselves as Chris Hudson and Tim Malik. The team member working at his computer introduces himself as Jim O'Neill.

Brian asks the group to gather in a meeting room. When everyone is seated, Brian tells the team a little bit about his background and that he is excited to have been named plant manager. He says he would like to get to know them and explore any challenges they have been experiencing in their current roles.

Nathan Jackson is the first to answer. "Hey, my job isn't rocket science but I like it!" he says with a grin. The other three members laugh in response. "I track orders and deliveries, and that's pretty much it," he adds.

When Brian asks him about the missing or late arrival of deliveries, Nathan answers in the same easy manner. "We've had the odd blip as you probably know, but we're sorting it out now."

Brian turns to Chris Hudson, who is responsible for making purchases and negotiating with suppliers. "What about you, Chris? How are things going with you?" Brian asks.

Chris glances at Nathan, then shrugs and says, "What can I say, Brian? As Nathan mentioned, a number of mistakes have been made, but we're taking steps to address them."

It strikes Brian that Chris has given the same response as Nathan. He moves on to Jim O'Neill, who is in charge of paperwork and compliance and was working



Team Development

separately from the rest of the group when Brian first met the team. Jim doesn't seem happy to be put on the spot, and before he can reply, Nathan jumps in. "Hey Brian, we're all human; we all make mistakes. Give the team a chance to address them," he says, reasonably.

Brian looks at Jim, hoping he will speak up, but after glancing gratefully at Nathan, Jim avoids eye contact. Brian is getting frustrated. While he appreciates the team members' loyalty to each other, he is disappointed that nobody seems to want to be accountable or offer an explanation for the recent problems with inventory and billing.

Brian turns to the final member of the team, Tim Malik, who monitors supplies and oversees quality control. Tim replies in a similar way; he is aware of the problems but the team is addressing them.

Brian doesn't feel like he is getting anywhere so he ends the meeting. As the other team members file out, Nathan hangs back and says in a friendly manner, "Brian, we're a self-managing team; we don't really need a boss or someone looking over our shoulders. We work well together and I'm sure any problems are a thing of the past. Each of us knows how to do his job and works very independently; we all do our own thing, and we're happy that way—no worries." Brian smiles noncommittally and thanks Nathan for his and the rest of the team's time.

Nathan is right: the team doesn't have a boss, they seem to be happy working together, and they are not used to outside interference. Yet their lack of accountability with regard to the errors they have made is a major concern. Brian knows that he will have to pursue a solution to the team's underperformance.

## Team Norms and Cohesion

For the rest of the day, Brian mulls over his meeting with the purchasing team and thinks about its **norms**, or the informal rules of behavior that govern the team.<sup>24</sup> He realizes that Nathan Jackson is the team's unofficial spokesperson, and the other members seem to take their cues from him. Nathan is certainly a charismatic character. Maria is right; he's just one of those people you can't help liking, and the other three members clearly feel a strong affiliation to him.

Brian is struck by the high level of **cohesion**, the degree to which team members connect with each other, within the purchasing team.<sup>25</sup> In most cases, cohesiveness is essential for team effectiveness because it encourages members to work together to reach the same goal. However, too much cohesion can lead to lack of accountability and decision making. In Brian's view the purchasing team members are so loyal to each other they are reluctant to monitor each other or point out mistakes, for fear they will be perceived as being critical, controlling, or not a team player.

Brian needs to figure out how the purchasing team can work effectively so that they can perform at optimal levels once again.

## Synergy: Process Gains and Losses

The following day, Brian sits down and looks at the model of process gains and losses, shown in Figure 7.5, to analyze the purchasing team's **synergy**, or the interaction that makes the total amount of work produced by a team greater than the amount of work produced by individual members working independently.<sup>26</sup> From what Maria has told him, the team should be working at a level of sequential interdependence in an assembly line format, but Nathan suggested that each member works independently. This leads Brian to believe the members are working at a lower level of pooled interdependence, and possibly communicating only on a social level.

**Norms:** The informal rules of a team's behavior that govern the team

**Cohesion:** The degree to which team members connect with each other

**Synergy:** The concept that the total amount of work produced by a team is greater than the amount of work produced by individual members working independently

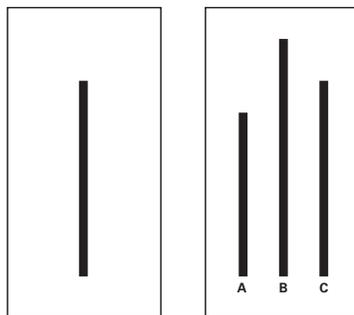
## TEAM COHESION: Is Too Much More Than Enough?



### Examining the Evidence

**T**eam cohesion is a necessary prerequisite for effective team performance, as indicated by the model of team development. But is it possible to have too much team cohesion? The answer is yes!

In 1951, Solomon Asch of Swarthmore College published the results of his now-famous conformity study. In



the study, college students were asked to participate in a perceptual activity. Eight participants were shown a card with a single line, followed by another card with three lines (labeled A, B, and C as shown).

Participants were then asked to state which of the three lines matched the line on the first card in length. In the first couple of trials, all eight participants agreed it was C. However, in the third trial, the first seven participants all gave the same obviously incorrect answer, because they were

actually confederates working in collusion with the researchers. The only true participant was the eighth student, and the real focus of the study was on how this student would react to the confederates' behavior. Remarkably, one of every three true participants responded with an obviously incorrect answer in order to conform to the answers given by the seven confederates! If there is that much pressure to conform in an ad hoc group brought together temporarily for a research study, imagine how much pressure there might be to conform in a permanent and highly cohesive work group. It's certainly possible that too much cohesion could be a bad thing.

#### Critical-Thinking Questions

1. How can managers recognize when there is too much cohesion on their teams?
2. What specific actions can managers take to reduce ineffective levels of team cohesiveness?

SOURCE: Asch, Solomon E. "Effects of Group Pressure upon the Modification and Distortion of Judgments." In *Groups, Leadership and Men: Research in Human Relations*, 177–190 (Oxford: Carnegie Press, 1951).

In his analysis of the purchasing team, Brian looks at **process gains**, which are the degree to which certain factors contribute to team effectiveness.<sup>27</sup> Process gains include a sense of shared purpose, plans, and goals; the confidence team members have in their own abilities to achieve objectives; a shared vision of the way the work should be carried out; and constructive task-focused conflict, which can help teams with their problem solving and decision making. Brian concludes that the purchasing team members have the skills to complete their tasks but do not share a vision of how these tasks should be performed.

Next, Brian looks at **process losses**, the factors that detract from team effectiveness.<sup>28</sup> Process losses include **social loafing**, which is the reduced effort people exert in a group compared to the amount they supply when working independently; personality clashes or unproductive conflict; and the inability to focus on certain tasks. Brian thinks about the social loafing side of the purchasing team. Maria has told him the team likes to joke around, and he saw three members laughing at a YouTube video during working hours. Although there has been no apparent conflict on the team, he wonders whether the explanation is that three members are introverts who avoid confrontation. Brian remembers how uncomfortable Jim appeared in the meeting and how he sat apart from the others when

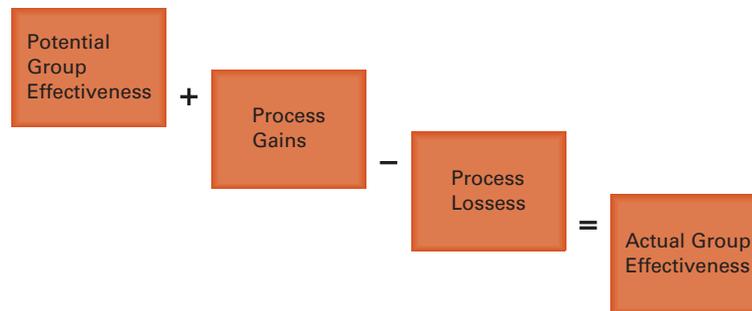


#### Social Loafing

**Process gains:** Factors that contribute to team effectiveness

**Process losses:** Factors that detract from team effectiveness

**Social loafing:** A phenomenon wherein people put forth less effort when they work in teams than when they work alone



■ **FIGURE 7.5** A Model of Process Gains and Losses

SOURCES: Based on Miner, Frederick C. "Group versus Individual Decision Making: An Investigation of Performance Measures, Decision Strategies, and Process Losses/Gains." *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* 33, no. 1 (February 1984): 112–124; Steiner, Ivan D. "Models for Inferring Relationships Between Group Size and Potential Group Productivity." *Behavioral Science* 11, no. 4 (1966): 273–283.

they were watching the video. He wonders whether Jim has a problem with the team but is too loyal to voice his concerns.

Finally, Brian turns to the factors that contribute to group effectiveness. The first factor is **social facilitation**, which occurs when individuals perform tasks better in the presence of others.<sup>29</sup> However, social facilitation applies to simple rather than complex or novel tasks. For example, you may play soccer better when people are watching, but you might not be able to cook a meal as easily in front of an audience!

Another factor that contributes to group effectiveness is the number of favorable outcomes a team engineers. Effective teams usually produce high-quality goods and services, a satisfied customer base, a capacity to consistently work well together, and a high degree of team member satisfaction.

Because the purchasing team members seem to function independently of each other, Brian doesn't think they have experienced the benefits of social facilitation. Furthermore, their inability to perform well has had a negative impact on the quality of materials, as well as the other plant staff. Brian looks at the wealth of information before him. "Whatever happens, I'm not going to ignore this situation like the previous plant manager did," he thinks. "It's time to start making some decisions."

### THINKING CRITICALLY

1. Brian appears to believe that the purchasing team has skipped over the storming stage of Tuckman's Model of Team Development. Do you agree with Brian's assessment? Why or why not? **[Apply/Analyze]**
2. Discuss the ways in which team cohesion can contribute to overall team effectiveness. Discuss the ways in which team cohesion can undermine overall team effectiveness. What questions would you ask to determine whether a team was suffering from too much team cohesiveness? **[Analyze/Evaluate]**
3. Apply the Model of Process Gains and Losses to the purchasing team. What gains and losses has Brian potentially identified? Based on Brian's assessment of the purchasing team, how do you think Brian should proceed in improving the team's performance? **[Analyze/Evaluate]**

**Social facilitation:** The tendency for individuals to perform tasks better when they are in the presence of others



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A group's effectiveness can be attributed to social facilitation, when individuals perform better in the presence of others.

## TEAM DECISION MAKING

7.5

Identify the advantages and disadvantages of different team decision-making approaches

Brian concludes that the purchasing team is too close-knit to make an objective decision about how to resolve their problems. Ideally, they need an opportunity to confront the individual or individuals they feel is responsible for the disruption to the team. He thinks about his idea to gather a cross-functional team together that would include people from across different departments of the plant with a variety of skills to objectively explore issues with the purchasing team and make decisions about what to do next.

### Advantages and Disadvantages of Team Decision Making

Based on his previous experience as HR manager, Brian is a big believer in team decision making and its advantages. He believes that it gives everyone a broader perspective, provides more alternatives, clarifies ambiguities, and brings about team satisfaction and support. However, Brian is also aware of the disadvantages of team decision making. In the past, he has been in meetings in which the process has been time consuming; too much attention has been paid to simple matters; nobody takes responsibility for the decision; and worst of all, team members end up agreeing on a compromise that satisfies nobody.

Brian spends the next week meeting the rest of the plant's employees, getting to know them better, and attempting to get a basic understanding of each of their roles. The following week, he chooses Head of Engineering Joan de Salis, Head of Sales Paul Rahman, and Head of Systems Aidan Murphy for his cross-functional team.

When Brian tells the purchasing team about the meeting, to his surprise, they all express their support. Brian opens the meeting the following morning, explains the reason for the cross-functional group, and discusses the goal of generating decisions to help resolve the challenges the purchasing team has been facing.

Nathan cuts in, “Just to clarify for the folks that don’t know us too well, the purchasing team has a great track record for performance and delivery, but we have made a few missteps that we are trying to rectify.”

Brian has expected this from Nathan and he is prepared for it. “Nathan, the facts show that over the last four months the team has been underperforming, leading to lost orders, poor-quality materials, and inconsistent stock levels. We are all here today to discuss how to resolve those issues.”

“I appreciate that, Brian, but the team knows the right way to handle these issues ourselves,” Nathan replies. Chris and Tim nod in agreement, but Jim simply shrugs. Brian wants to hear from Jim, but when he gestures for him to speak, Jim clams up and looks at the ground.

Brian suspects the team is a victim of **groupthink**, a psychological phenomenon in which people in a cohesive group go along with the group consensus rather than offering their own opinions.<sup>30</sup> Groupthink is a major disadvantage to team decision making, because the team members are more concerned with preserving harmony in the group than with risking opinions that may cause conflict or offense. Being in this kind of group confers an illusion of immunity, an “us against the world” view that the group members know better than outsiders even given evidence to the contrary.

Brian suspects Jim doesn’t want to rock the boat by expressing a conflicting opinion, and he is exasperated. Without any dissenting voices within the purchasing team, nothing will ever change because they will think that every decision they make is the right one. But what can he do? He can’t force Jim to speak up.

## Team Decision Approaches

Before Brian can attempt a different tack, Joan de Salis interjects.

“Over the course of my 20 years at the plant, I have seen a number of issues occur in the engineering department. One team decision-making approach I’ve found useful is the brainstorming technique,” she says.

Brian is grateful for Joan’s suggestion. He likes the idea of **brainstorming**, which is generating creative, spontaneous ideas from all members of a group without making any initial criticism or judgment of them.<sup>31</sup> “I think that’s a great idea!” he says. “What do you think?” he asks the rest of the group, who nod in response. “We’d like to hear all your ideas. The more imaginative and creative, the better. We’re looking for original solutions here.”

The brainstorming gets off to a slow start. The members of the purchasing team are silent, but the departmental heads start to throw out ideas. Joan suggests that the team make a shared checklist of their duties and tick each item off as they accomplish it. Paul suggests implementing a weekly purchasing team discussion group to talk about any challenges they might come across and how to solve them. But it is Aidan’s idea to appoint a team leader or supervisor to the purchasing team that finally gets a reaction.

Jim raises his hand. “I think having an official leader or supervisor is a good idea.”

Nathan, Chris, and Tim turn to look at him with wide eyes.

Jim takes a deep breath and continues, “The team is struggling at the moment. Important stuff is slipping through the net. Personally, I feel I’ve been shouldering a lot of the responsibility.” Brian looks at the three members for their response, but for the first time they are speechless.

“You know what? Jim is right,” Nathan finally says. “There’s too much goofing around. I take responsibility for that. I find my job pretty boring and I guess I’m looking for distractions to make the day go faster. These guys were a pretty serious bunch when I arrived and I suppose I wanted to liven up the team and have a bit of fun. I may have gone a bit overboard in that regard,” Nathan finishes.



Groupthink

**Groupthink:** A psychological phenomenon in which people in a cohesive group go along with the group consensus rather than offering their own opinions

**Brainstorming:** The process of generating creative, spontaneous ideas from all members of a group without any criticism or judgment

“Nobody forced us to joke around or goof off. It’s great having you as part of the team,” Chris says, looking up.

“I agree with Chris,” Tim adds. “It’s been a lot more fun since you arrived, but I do think Jim has taken on more than he should, although he’s never complained about it before.”

“That’s because I didn’t want to be the one to ruin all the fun,” Jim replies.

“Honestly, Jim, if you have a problem, I’d rather you told us. We’re a team—we’re there to support each other,” Nathan says.

Brian is pleased with the honest exchange between the team members. This is what he has hoped the meeting would achieve—a safe, nonjudgmental environment in which team members could confront each other in a nonthreatening way. He is also impressed that Nathan, Chris, and Tim are willing to take responsibility for slacking off on the job.

The group spends more time discussing the problems within the team and how to address them. Eventually, they agree to adopt an assembly line structure with more communication among team members rather than working independently of each other. They also agree that a checklist is a good idea and commit to enforcing it beginning the following day. Brian is pleased, but he hasn’t heard yet whether the team likes the idea of a supervisor.

“But if we have a supervisor, it means that we won’t be a self-managing team anymore,” Nathan says.

Joan replies, “Not exactly. It means you would be semi-autonomous. Basically, a team leader would be appointed to oversee the functioning of the team.”

“Exactly,” says Paul. “This not a typical ‘boss’ role; the team retains a significant amount of autonomy, but the team leader will be in place to supervise and help resolve any conflicts or issues in the team.”

“In a nutshell, you want someone to keep an eye on us!,” Nathan says, half-jokingly.

Joan smiles. “That’s one way of looking at it, but I would think of it as extra support,” she replies.

“I think there’s some merit in knowing that the burden of responsibility doesn’t necessarily fall on anyone’s shoulders,” Aidan adds. “A supervisor can guide you when needed and even offer you advice about your career and the direction it’s taking.”

“I agree with Aidan,” Paul says. “Jim, you’ve told us you’re carrying the team to a certain degree, and Nathan, you said you find your role boring. A team leader or supervisor could help you both address some of these issues and offer guidance.”

After some further discussion, everyone agrees that some level of monitoring is an idea worth exploring further. Brian promises to broach the idea of a team supervisor with Hans Wagner when he returns to the plant. Although there is more work to be done, Brian is glad that, for now, things seem to be heading in the right direction.

The cross-functional team at the tractor assembly plant found brainstorming to be a useful way to make decisions. Many organizations use other team decision-making techniques. The **nominal group technique** is a structured way for team members to generate ideas and identify solutions.<sup>32</sup> Each member is asked the same question in relation to a work issue and requested to write down as many solutions as possible. Answers are read aloud and recorded for discussion. Then the ideas are put to the vote. No criticism or judgment of any ideas is allowed.

The **Delphi technique** is a method of decision making in which information is gathered from a group of respondents within their area of expertise.<sup>33</sup> Questionnaires are sent to a select group of experts, whose responses are collated and reviewed, and then a summary is returned to the group with a follow-up questionnaire. Again, the experts provide their answers. The process continues until the group agrees on a common answer and a

**Nominal group technique:** A structured way for team members to generate ideas and identify solutions in which each member is asked the same question in relation to a work issue and requested to write as many answers as possible. Answers are read aloud and voted upon

**Delphi technique:** A method of decision making in which information is gathered from a group of respondents within their area of expertise



## Nominal Group Technique

decision is reached. Through team models and analysis, Brian has succeeded in getting the team to cooperate and communicate with him and the cross-functional team to come up with some decisions and solutions to make the team work better together. In the next chapter, Brian is forced to make an ethical decision that could put his career at risk.



## THINKING CRITICALLY

1. What aspects of brainstorming as a team decision-making approach helped Jim to voice his concerns about the purchasing group's functioning? Would the Nominal Group Technique have had a similar outcome? Why or why not? **[Analyze/ Evaluate]**
2. Do you think a more authoritarian manager than Brian have had a similar, more effective, or less effective impact on the purchasing group's performance? Explain your response. **[Analyze/ Evaluate]**
3. Discuss the pros and cons of having a team leader for the purchasing group in light of their willingness to institute a checklist and regular meetings to ensure performance levels. What issues could a team leader solve for the group? What problems might the addition of a team leader create for the group? **[Analyze/ Evaluate]**

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## IN REVIEW

## Learning Objectives

- 7.1** Distinguish between a team and a group

A **team** is a group of people brought together to use their individual skills on a common project or goal. Regardless of the type of organization, most employees work in some form of team in today's workplace. A **group** usually consists of three or more people who work independently to attain organizational goals.

- 7.2** Compare the various types of teams in organizations today

Many global companies now operate in **virtual teams**, whose members are from different locations and work together through

e-mail, video conferencing, instant messaging, and other electronic media. A **self-managing team** is a group of workers who manage their own daily duties under little to no supervision. A **problem-solving team** is a group of workers coming together for a set amount of time to discuss and resolve specific issues. A **cross-functional team** is a group of workers from different units with various areas of expertise.

- 7.3** Apply the model of team effectiveness to evaluate team performance

Team contextual influences include team resources, task characteristics, and organizational structures and systems. Team resources are the level of support provided by the organization, such as equipment, materials, training, information, staffing, budgets, and such. Task characteristics can be structured or

unstructured; complex or simple; and measured by a degree of interdependence. Performance management systems, compensation and reward systems, and organizational and leadership structures must be aligned with team structures to maintain smooth running of operations.

Typically, a team has four main elements: team size, skills and abilities, personality of team members, and team diversity. Teams tend to consist of four to seven members. The skills and abilities of the team members are very important, but the way this talent interacts in the context of team processes is also important. Typically, teams need a balance between extraverts and introverts. Team members who share common interests or certain similarities tend to have positive social relationships with each other that help the team to be more effective.

#### 7.4 Explain how team processes affect team outcomes

**Process gains** are factors that contribute to team effectiveness. They include a sense of shared purpose, plans, and goals; the confidence team members have in their own abilities to achieve objectives; a shared vision of how the work should be carried out; and constructive task-focused conflict that can help teams with their problem solving and decision making.

**Process losses** are factors that detract from team effectiveness. They include social loafing, wherein people in a group put in less effort than when working independently; personality clashes or conflict; and the inability to focus on certain tasks.

#### 7.5 Identify the advantages and disadvantages of different team decision-making approaches

**Groupthink** is a psychological phenomenon in which people in a cohesive group go along with the group consensus to preserve harmony rather than offering their own opinions.

**Brainstorming** generates creative, spontaneous ideas from all members of a group without any criticism or judgment.

The **nominal group technique** is a structured way for team members to generate ideas and identify solutions. Each member is asked the same question in relation to a work issue and requested to write as many answers as possible. Answers are read aloud and recorded for discussion. Then the ideas are put to the vote. No criticism or judgment of any ideas is allowed.

**The Delphi technique** is a method of decision-making in which information is gathered from a group of respondents within their area of expertise.

## KEY TERMS

**Adjourning** 176

**Brainstorming** 182

**Cohesion** 178

**Cross-functional team** 169

**Decentralization** 165

**Delphi technique** 183

**Forming** 176

**Group** 166

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**Virtual teams** 167

## THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT THE CASE OF BRIAN STEVENS

Put yourself in Brian Stevens' position as the new manager of the tractor assembly plant and consider the five critical-thinking steps in relation to the purchasing team's underperformance.

### OBSERVE

While Brian speaks directly with Maria Gonzalez, the plant's HR Manager, the purchasing team, and other heads of department, what additional steps might he have taken to better observe and understand the impact of the purchasing team's underperformance at the plant?

### INTERPRET

Consider the purchasing team's interactions and their reaction to Brian's statements about the team's underperformance. What features of Jim's personality and responsibilities likely contribute to his support of the idea of a team leader for the group?

What features of Nathan's personality and responsibilities likely contribute to his emphasis on the team's ability to police itself without outside interference.

### ANALYZE

Consider the two solutions to the team's performance that they agree to implement near the end of the chapter: a shared checklist of team duties and a weekly team discussion group. What aspects of the team's process will each solution improve?

### EVALUATE

Are there any other potential solutions (in addition to the team leader suggestion) that might help this team function more efficiently? Please list them. With regard to the team leader position, what attributes would you look for in selecting the person to fulfill this role?

**EXPLAIN**

How would you, as Brian Stevens, go about broaching the subject of the purchasing team's underperformance, the solutions it

is going to implement, and the possibility of a team leader to Hans Wagner, the company's president? Would you advocate for the team leader position or simply present the option as a possibility?

## EXERCISE 7.1: THE SHOE BOX EXERCISE

This exercise will help you to understand the differences between individual, group, and team performance.

**Instructions:**

**Step 1: Individual Performance.** Your instructor will show each individual in the class the inside of a shoe box filled with 30–40 miscellaneous items. You will have three seconds to observe the items and remember as many of them as you can. The instructor will then ask everyone in the class to say how many of the items they can remember (without actually naming the items). Use the honor system. Your instructor will record the maximum, minimum, and average number of items on the board or screen.

**Step 2: Ad Hoc Group Performance.** Now form a group of three to five people with other members of your class. Talk together and come up with a list of items from the box that you can collectively recall (no duplications). The instructor will then poll the groups

and record their maximum, minimum, and average number of items on the board or screen.

**Step 3: Organized Team Performance.** Groups must put away their list of items. You will be allowed to look in the box for another three seconds, but this time as an organized team. Your team will have a few minutes to create a strategy and organize your efforts. The instructor will once again record the maximum, minimum, and average number of items on the board or screen.

**Reflection Questions**

1. Did performance increase from individual to group to team? If so, why? If not, why not?
2. What strategy did your team implement to take advantage of individual members' skills and increase performance?
3. In what ways can an organized team effort lead to better results than individual effort or simply pooling information and knowledge in a group?

## EXERCISE 7.2: A NOMINAL BRAINSTORM ABOUT THE DELPHI TECHNIQUE

**Objectives:**

This exercise will help you to *identify* the advantages and disadvantages of different team decision-making approaches.

**Instructions:**

Form into a group of six to eight members. Your task is to develop a set of recommendations on using the Delphi Technique and explain its appropriateness for generating management ideas. You will be developing these recommendations using the brainstorming and nominal group methods. To complete this task, complete the following steps:

Step 1. Select a person to write down the ideas generated in this exercise and to tally votes in the later steps. (1 to 2 minutes)

Step 2. Use the brainstorming method to generate ideas about when using the Delphi technique would not be successful. These ideas can either be statements about the general characteristics of a situation or about a specific job situation. (5 minutes)

Step 3. Combine ideas where appropriate. Soliciting feedback from everyone in your group, determine whether an idea is relevant or

not for your guidelines. In order to be considered relevant, an idea must be true (based on chapter concepts) and useful in a business setting. Write down the list of ideas that are voted as being relevant. (1 to 2 minutes)

Step 4. Use the nominal group technique to generate ideas about when the Delphi technique would be successful. These ideas can either be statements about the general characteristics of a situation or a specific job situation. (5 to 10 minutes).

Step 5. Repeat step 3. (1 to 2 minutes).

**Reflection Questions:**

1. Which idea generation method did you prefer? Why?
2. Which idea method generation method generated the most ideas?
3. Which idea generated the most relevant ideas?
4. What new ways of employing the Delphi technique did you discover?

Exercise contributed by Milton R. Mayfield, Professor of Business, Texas A&M International University and Jaqueline R. Mayfield, Professor of Business, Texas A&M International University.

## EXERCISE 7.3: CONSULTING AT BELLA NOTA

**Objective:**

This exercise will help you to *distinguish* between teams and groups, *compare* different types of teams, and *apply* the team effectiveness model.

**Background:**

You are in a consulting group who is working with Bella Nota—a company in Austin, Texas, that provides background and incidental music for commercials and industrial videos. The company has

enough steady business to sustain ten musicians, two composers, two sound engineers, and one conductor as full-time employees. The musicians and conductor usually work together on a regular basis, rotating between the composers and engineers. When business picks up or there is a call for a larger set of musicians, the local talent pool provides an easy source for short-term hires. While many of the same people are hired frequently, none of these people work for Bella Nota on an ongoing basis.

The company president, Natalie Bell, realizes how critically important high-quality team processes is to her business. She has brought in your consulting group to help develop guidelines for developing effective teams. To develop these guidelines, you will need to provide information the following:

- Create a guideline that distinguishes between groups and teams. Include the differences between a team and a group, and when the use of teams would be more appropriate at Bella Nota.
- Develop a guideline for classifying different types of teams. While not all team types will be represented in the musical side of the company, there are other business activities and teams that will find these guidelines useful.

- Develop a guideline for evaluating the musical teams/groups on process. This guideline will be used for developing suggestions for future team/group improvements.

#### Instructions:

Step 1. Form into teams to complete the three tasks outlined in the background section. (20 to 30 minutes)

Step 2. Present your guidelines to the class and be prepared to answer questions from the class and the instructor. (20 to 30 minutes)

#### Reflection Questions:

1. How did using chapter terms and concepts help you to better structure your thinking about teams and team processes?
2. If you have been working in a team in this or another class, how can you use the guidelines in improving team outcomes?
3. How do processes differ in team work situations compared with individual work situations? How do team processes differ between different types of teams?

Exercise contributed by Milton R. Mayfield, Professor of Business, Texas A&M International University and Jaqueline R. Mayfield, Professor of Business, Texas A&M International University.

## CASE STUDY 7.1: INTERNATIONAL GAME TECHNOLOGY (IGT)

You may not know the company by name, but if you've ever been to a casino, chances are you've had an IGT experience. The global powerhouse Nevada-based International Game Technology (IGT) specializes in computerized gaming machines and is the designer and manufacturer of well-known slot machines such as Red White & Blue, Double Diamond, and the ever-popular Wheel of Fortune games. Although IGT was acquired in 2015 by Italy-based GTECH—uniting the world's largest provider of lottery systems (GTECH) with the world's largest slot-machine maker—IGT's manufacturing hub remains stationed in its hometown of more than 40 years, Reno, Nevada. A formidable player in the \$430 billion global gambling business, the combined company retains the iconic IGT name and boasts 13,000+ employees and thousands of gaming machines in casinos all over the world. As longtime GTECH executive and IGT CEO Marco Sala told *Bloomberg Business* at the time of the acquisition, "This is a transaction that we firmly believe will transform the gaming industry. We will have a library of games that will surpass that of any other company in the industry."

But during the Great Recession, IGT had experienced significant cuts in revenue and profit and worrying drops in share price. Competitors like Bally Technologies were eager to step in and grab market share, and grab they did. Like many companies, IGT was struggling to regain its footing in 2009—and its approach to team management on several different fronts is among one of its key strategies for recovery.

### Streamlining Teamwork in "The Shop"

IGT had been focusing on teams since the early 2000s to keep its market position and to stay on top. In 2004, the company invested

in iMaint, which helps IGT's maintenance crew team manage work orders, scheduling, parts and inventory, and purchasing, as well as track costs and budget and project progress with easy-to-use graphs and charts—no small feat in a global company whose maintenance department alone is spread over a 1.2 million-square-foot facility. Although the system cuts out paperwork and streamlines streamlined processes, there is a very human element involved: its users. John Butterfield, facilities maintenance supervisor based in Reno, praised the system but insisted that training is the key. "Investing in training is money well spent for two reasons. First, it helps employees understand how important their data is and thus provides better data and better history. Second, it enhances the mechanics' overall knowledge in the maintenance field. Now they not only know how to turn wrenches, but also have an understanding of how all the maintenance processes are put together (scheduling, parts ordering, contractor work) which in turn increases the entire team's effectiveness." Butterfield dedicated every second Friday of the month to continued training. "At our once a month training the employees learn more and I learn more. It's a win-win."

iMaint gave IGT an additional advantage: what would otherwise be costly and potentially disruptive—the testing of new processes—can occur in the virtual environment first. When Butterfield's crew wants to implement something new—be it changes to parts ordering, inventory management, scheduling, or codes—they could test it in iMaint's training database first. Initiatives are either quashed or implemented, with the added benefit that those rolling it out have already developed a comfort level with the new process, and could anticipate possible challenges.

### Virtual Teams

Enter virtual teams. In 2009, Chris Satchell was hired by as chief technology officer (CTO) to help battle IGT's financial woes. Satchell's job was to keep an eagle eye trained on the competitive marketplace, to make sure IGT-wannabes weren't out-innovating the gaming giant. One of Satchell's strategies was deploying virtual teams throughout the organization. He started small-scale efforts within his information technology (IT) department, perhaps the ideal testing ground, because its members were already accustomed to working on problems remotely and through machines.

Satchell found that the IT experiment proved his case: the benefits of virtual teams were tangible. Beyond the obvious benefits, like the ability to rely on top talent the world over without travel costs (because meetings could take place online), working remotely helped the company realize faster time to market. Satchell also noticed greater innovation, because the online environment, by its very nature, skirts bureaucratic interference, allowing employees a level of semi-autonomy.

Yet Satchell found that, as in the face-to-face workplace—and perhaps more so—building relationships among team members was vital. “We’re always pushing employees to understand that people in other groups have different perspectives. They have something you need, and you have something they can use.” And even as virtual teams move beyond the IT department, traveling for occasional “face time” is still necessary, although not as frequently, and not for the whole team. “It’s a misconception to think that you can do away with your travel budget,” Satchell noted.

### Teamwork and Emergenetics

IGT has implemented technology to help with its human resources strategy as well. Emergenetics Solutions utilizes research in brain science, psychometric evaluation, and organizational development to help analyze the way people think and behave, providing actionable solutions and suggestions for better teamwork. Specifically, Emergenetics' ESP System helps companies match candidate profiles against the job description, while the Emergenetics Profile offers companies (and individuals) a portrait of individual strengths and weaknesses, predicting how these might play out in different team arrangements.

Emergenetics helped IGT generate a “picture” of who they were as an organization—and, with deeper analysis, “extract performance

themes, identify strengths and opportunities across the organization and formulate groups to better meet specific business needs.” Although not a requirement, many IGT employees displayed their Emergenetics profiles in their workspaces, which IGT says helps create a feeling of openness, stimulate dialogue, and encourage collaboration.

IGT also used Emergenetics tools during the hiring on-boarding process, helping potential team members and leaders recognize strengths and potential pitfalls in the team the former may be joining. “Specific practices are then developed based on the team’s overall Emergenetics make-up and the team’s objectives,” Emergenetics authors noted in a case study on their work with IGT. Goals and benchmarks can be developed, and tracked, accordingly.

The IGT of today is far removed from its struggles of the mid- and late 2000s. IGT's official headquarters have shifted to London. Asked how the new IGT will compare to the “IGT as Reno knew it,” CEO Marco Sala responded, “[It] will be a combination of the two companies. We’re putting in teams of different experiences, and some guys will join Nevada. I think these combinations will bring new ideas for future innovation. That is what we intend to pursue.”

### Case Questions

1. What role did competition play in IGT's decision to implement stronger team management for recovery?
2. Describe the benefits as well as shortcomings that IGT saw after implementing virtual teams.
3. Explain how IGT used systems like iMaint and Emergenetics to increase team effectiveness.

### Sources

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## SELF-ASSESSMENT 7.1

### Communicating with a Problem Team Member

What do you do when a team member arrives late for or misses meetings, does not contribute a fair share toward the team's effort, is offensive or disruptive, or has some other problem? The following self-assessment will provide you with some feedback that may help you improve your ability to communicate with a difficult team member.

For each statement, circle the number that best describes how you would talk to a problem team member based on the following scale:

	Not at all Accurate	Somewhat Accurate	A Little Accurate	Mostly Accurate	Completely Accurate
1. I am specific rather than general, giving good, clear, and recent examples of the problem behavior.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I present the situation as a problem that disrupts the whole team not just one individual.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My comments focus on things that the team member has control over and can actually do something about.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I try to provide constructive criticism at a time when the team member is prepared to receive it, rather when they are busy doing something else.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I don't try to embarrass or put my team member on the spot, but remember that the purpose of my comments is to improve the team member's behavior.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I try to keep feedback professional, avoiding labels such as <i>stupid</i> or <i>incompetent</i> .	1	2	3	4	5
7. I make sure that my criticisms are concise and complete enough that the team member understands the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I talk to the team member as an equal, not as a controlling parent, supervisor, or boss.	1	2	3	4	5

#### Scoring

Add the numbers circled above and write your score in the blank \_\_\_\_\_

#### Interpretation

32 and above = You have very strong skills for communicating with a problem team member. You are likely to be naturally effective at constructively influencing the behaviors of your problem team member.

24–31 = You have a moderate level of skills for communicating with a problem team member. You

may want to consider reshaping your approach to communicating with a difficult team member based on the previous statements.

23 and below = You have room to improve your team communication skills. You and your team will be more effective if you can successfully reshape your communication approaches based on the previous statements.

SOURCE: Adapted from Manz, C. C., C. P. Neck, J. Mancuso, and K. P. Manz. *For Team Members Only: Making Your Workplace Team Productive and Hassle-Free* (New York: AMACOM, 1997).