7

Teams

Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.

—Helen Keller
Learning Objectives

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

7.1 Distinguish between teams and groups
7.2 Explain how team processes affect team outcomes
7.3 Compare the various types of teams in organizations today
7.4 Apply the model of team effectiveness to evaluate team performance
7.5 Identify the advantages and disadvantages of different team decision-making approaches

CASE STUDY: THE TEAM AT THOMAS JEFFERSON UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

Have you ever made a trip to the emergency room? If so, how long was your wait? Often times, patients will go to the emergency room with a legitimate emergency medical condition but wait up to an hour to be seen by a physician. Many people choose not to wait and simply walk out the door. Hospitals around the country have adopted a metric to keep track of patients who leave, called “left-without-being-seen” rates or LWBS. Naturally, high LWBS rates correspond directly to an overcrowded emergency room and a poorly functioning staff of nurses and physicians. When patients leave without being seen, they put themselves in a situation where their health can decline further by not being treated.

Additionally, the nursing teams at hospitals with high LWBS rates typically perform sub-par due to the excessive sense of urgency they have when treating patients. Currently, it is not uncommon for the public to keep track of individual LWBS rates to avoid hospitals that have a history of long waits and poor service. In fact, Medicaid Services and the Centers for Medicare require hospitals to report the LWBS rates to the public on a quarterly basis. According to the quarterly reports for Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in the first quarter of 2015, it has a door-to-provider time of 43 minutes and an LWBS of 5.7 percent, among the worst in the country. However, those numbers are a significant improvement in comparison to the numbers that the hospital saw in 2008 to 2009 when the door-to-provider time was averaging around 122 minutes and the LWBS rate was between 6 percent and 8 percent.

Thomas Jefferson University Hospital Emergency Department is located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and sees around 65,000 patients per year with its busiest time between 2 p.m. and 10 p.m. The emergency department is made up of a team of physicians and nurses who run the day-to-day operations. The team at Thomas Jefferson Hospital decided to make it a goal of theirs to bring down LWBS rates below the national average of 2 percent along with decreasing the door-to-provider times, and improving overall service. This led to the creation of the “Emergency Department 2.0” initiative at Thomas Jefferson.

Stephen McDonald, manager of the emergency department, said of the initiative, “We adopted it as our mantra and challenged ourselves to become a more patient—and
family-centric emergency department. Jefferson wants to be the best in all areas. It is a privilege to care for 65,000 people in the Philadelphia area, and we don’t take that lightly.”

With a strong mission, the emergency department had the foundation it needed to make positive changes; however, without proper management, the team would likely fail. The nature of this change called for increased interdependence between team members within the department, meaning teams would need to rely on each other, work closely together on a piece of work, consult with each other, provide each other with advice, and exchange information, during the process of implementing the new process improvement strategies. The executive physicians stepped up to the plate and engaged deeply in the redesign and processes of the operations in the department alongside the nurses and technicians. McDonald acknowledges, “The support (from leadership) was the only way we could institute such radical change.”

While the leadership played a huge role in the ultimate success of the project, it was the integration of the nurse’s perspectives that were the key factor in determining the best strategy moving forward. When it comes down to it, the nurses in the emergency department know the operations better than anyone and have a much more useful perspective on how it can be improved than anyone else. The department leadership employed the Delphi Technique, which is a method of decision making in which information is gathered from a group of respondents within their area of expertise. Stephen McDonald recalls, “We wanted to leverage the amazing nursing staff and we really worked hard to engage them throughout the process. They were at the table and their voices were heard.” This is by far one of the most important aspects of a successful team.

Management that opens the floor to the perspective of all the team members is much more likely to make better decisions when they have their hands on the perspectives of the people that make up the backbone of their team. Silencing and excluding team members from discussion will only cause harm to the team and the operation as a whole. By being inclusive to all team members, everyone has access to more knowledge and learning opportunities. Also, empowering team members to contribute in their own special ways is sure to help any team succeed in accomplishing its goals. Teamwork has benefits that are both morale boosting and psychological: team members will be happier, more motivated, and more likely to contribute ideas that can improve productivity when they feel empowered.

A cohesive team with a strong mission, like the team at Thomas Jefferson, is a force to be reckoned with. Susan Cissone, administrative supervisor of the department, describes the instant benefits that including the nurses in decision making had for the company as it pushed toward its goal. “Anyone looking to change their intake model needs to be bold; including our nursing staff in decisions led to our success.” In the first week of ED 2.0’s implementation, Thomas Jefferson’s Emergency Department saw a 0.42 percent LWBS rate, a number that far exceeded original expectations. The team at Thomas Jefferson has been able to sustain their early success with an LWBS rate under 1 percent and an average door-to-provider time hovering around ten minutes which is among the best in the nation. Joseph Anton, VP of clinical support and services, explains, “We are extremely proud of what the team has accomplished. While ED 2.0 was a call to action to ensure we were putting the patients and their families at the center of all we do, it was also a tremendous example of the power of teamwork and staff engagement.”
Critical-Thinking Questions

1. What types of problems might the hospital have encountered had it not included the nursing staff in decision making?

2. What was so valuable about seeing management engage in the new initiative alongside their subordinates?

Sources:
Thomas Jefferson University Hospital. (n.d.). Improving ED flow through the UMLN II. Retrieved from http://www.hpoe.org/Case_Studies/ThomasJeffersonUniversityHospital_EDFlow_UMLNIIPDF

The Difference between Teams and Groups

**LO 7.1** Distinguish between teams and groups

Teams and teamwork play a critical role in the success of 21st-century organizations. In the Thomas Jefferson Hospital case study, the team was empowered to contribute to the initiative to reduce the amount of time patients spent waiting for practitioners, which led to the team successfully accomplishing its goals. 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.

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.

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. 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. However, collaboration in today’s working world doesn’t necessarily mean physically sitting...
together in the same office. Thanks to increasing technology, people are more connected than ever before. Take global design company IDEO for instance. While employees often meet in person in order to conduct field research, there are times when teams agree to work remotely using agreed methods of communication (email, Slack, group messaging) to share information and ideas.\(^4\)

**Teams versus Groups**

The terms *teams* and *groups* are often used interchangeably, but there are subtle differences between them.\(^5\)

A **group** usually consists of three or more people who work independently to attain organizational goals.\(^6\) In other words, it focuses on achieving individual goals. 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. Each employee will work independently and produce individual projects but all group members will still work toward the organization’s common goals. Outside work, friends who come together to watch a football game on television would be classified as a group.

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 engage in interdependent, collaborative, and cooperative work to achieve purposeful goals. For example, players playing on a game of football would be classified as a team.

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.
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. Over a period of two years, researchers at technology giant Google carried out a study of over 180 teams at the company in an effort to discover the components of an effective team. The results were surprising. It turned out that it didn’t matter so much about who was on the team, but rather how team members interacted with each other, structured their work, and viewed their contributions.

The researchers found that most highly effective teams shared the same team dynamics. Teams were made up of dependable members who were clear about their roles and goals, attached personal meaning to their work, and understood the impact of their work. Interestingly, the findings showed that the most important component of an effective team was psychological safety, which is a shared belief held by team members whether it is safe enough to trust each other well enough to take risks. When people feel psychologically safe in a working environment, they will feel more inclined toward open communication, voicing their concerns and actively seeking feedback.

A psychologically safe environment produces a number of positive outcomes on both the individual and team levels, such as better communication, knowledge sharing, greater reporting of errors, improved learning behaviors, and a higher ability to learn from failure. Research also shows a positive link between creativity and employees’ perceptions of psychological safety, particularly in R&D teams where innovation performance is high.

While psychological safety may sound similar to trust, there is an important difference. Trust focuses on how one person might perceive another, but psychological safety is more focused on how team members perceive the behaviors of the team as a whole (see Figure 7.1).

**FIGURE 7.1**

The Impact of Psychological Safety

1. **Psychological Safety**
   - Team members feel safe to take risks and be vulnerable in front of each other.
2. **Dependability**
   - Team members get things done on time and meet Google’s high bar for excellence.
3. **Structure and Clarity**
   - Team members have clear roles, plans, and goals.
4. **Meaning**
   - Work is personally important to team members.
5. **Impact**
   - Team members think their work matters and creates change.


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Psychological safety: A shared belief held by team members that the team trusts each other enough to take risks.
How to Build an Effective Team

All teams have the potential to be high-performing when they have the right leader. Here are a few tips that help leaders get the most out of their teams:

1. Nurture relationships

It’s not always easy to get along with everybody on the team, but investing in relationships builds trust and loyalty—both of which are key to a high-performing team.

2. Honest feedback

Some leaders tend to shy away from giving “bad news” or negative feedback. Learning how to give honest feedback is a skill, but one that must be adopted to cultivate a culture of openness.

3. Identify common goals

Effective leaders identify and prioritize common goals to solidify the team—the message being that the team will only succeed if everyone works together.

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 Derrick Hall, president and CEO of the Arizona Diamondbacks 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?

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.

A Model of Team Effectiveness: Processes and Outcomes

**LO 7.2 Explain how team processes affect team outcomes**

A high-performing team does not happen overnight. It takes time for team members to build rapport and trust. 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 7.2). Tuckman believed that these stages are essential for teams in order to grow together to confront challenges, solve complex problems, find solutions, make decisions, meet goals, and deliver results. Twelve years later, Tuckman created a fifth stage called “adjourning.”

**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 in to the team structure.
comfortable enough to raise difficult topics. During this period, team members focus on learning about each other, 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. For instance, team members might question the actions of a team leader, perceive the leader as too weak or dominant, or feel annoyed with another team member for being frequently late or shirking responsibility. Tension and arguments may result when these opinions are voiced. However, if a team has any chance of being successful, the team members must find a way to manage these conflicts in order to resolve their differences and move past the issues. Some teams do not survive the storming stage, but the ones that do become all the stronger for it. By openly discussing and resolving issues, the team can put its differences aside and focus instead on the work at hand.

**Norming.** The team members resolve the conflict and begin to work well together and become more cohesive. Members become more tolerant and understanding of each other’s differences and begin to appreciate different strengths. During this stage, team members may start to socialize together and make more of an effort to get to know each other. When rapport starts to build, team members feel more comfortable asking each other for help, or providing constructive feedback. Because the team is becoming more cohesive, reaching goals, hitting milestones, and achieving deadlines becomes more realistic. However, it is not all smooth sailing during the norming stage. It is very common for the team to revert to the storming stage especially when new tasks are assigned.

**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. Team members are motivated on achieving common goals and can make decisions without supervision. Any dissent that occurs is handled easily and members work in harmony in order to successfully complete common goals. Despite this congenial

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**FIGURE 7.2**

*The Tuckman Model of Team Development*

![Image of the Tuckman Model](https://example.com/figure7.2)


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work environment, it is still possible for high-performing teams to lapse back into the storming stage, particularly if there is a change in leadership which challenges the team dynamics.

**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. Even long-standing teams may be forced to disband in the event of an organizational restructure. Although adjourning is usually inevitable, this can be a difficult stage for some team members who have built relationships with fellow colleagues and grown used to the routine and norms of the team itself. When teams lose members which are then replaced by new members, the whole team development cycle is likely to start again.

**Punctuated equilibrium.** While Tuckman’s model is a popular theory for team formation, the punctuated equilibrium model developed by Connie Gersick suggests that teams do not develop in this sequence (see Figure 7.3). Punctuated equilibrium is a method of understanding organizational change by illustrating where change is relatively stable and where it becomes more volatile.

For instance, when teams first come together they tend to perform at a low level for a period of time that is more or less equal to half the time until the deadline or due date. At some point, the team transitions upward to a higher level of performance when the team task(s) are really accomplished. Within the context of the Tuckman model, this means that groups tend to start off by combining the forming and norming stages, before going through a period of low performance, followed by storming, a period of high performance, and then finally adjourning.

Tuckman’s model is the most commonly used framework for team development today. It illustrates that team development is not always a linear process and provides a useful way for organizations to identify the reasons behind team behaviors in order to find ways to resolve issues in order to optimize team performance and productivity.

### Team Norms and Cohesion

The effectiveness of many teams depends on it norms, or the informal rules of behavior that govern the team. Team norms are ground rules that impact the functioning of the team, for example, how team members communicate, agree on email response times, how decisions are made, expected work hours, timekeeping, and so on. Teams that adhere to norms tend to perform better and are more cohesive. Here are some other examples of norms:

- Treat each other with dignity and respect.
- Avoid hidden agendas.
- Be genuine with each other about ideas, challenges, and feelings.
- Have confidence that issues discussed will be kept in confidence.
- Listen to understand.
• Practice being open minded.
• Don’t be defensive with your colleagues.
• Give your colleagues the benefit of the doubt.
• Support each other; don’t throw each other under the bus.
• It’s okay to not know the right answer and to admit it.
• Present problems in a way that promotes mutual discussion and resolution.
• Practice and experience humility.
• If you commit to doing something, do it.
• Respect the time and convenience of others.

A recent study called Project Aristotle carried out by Google showed that team norms were more important than team smarts when it came to successfully completing an assignment. Researchers found that dysfunctional teams failed more often because of wrong norms in spite of how many smart people were on it; whereas teams with healthy norms tended to succeed on every assignment. In sum, the right norms can increase a team’s intelligence whereas the wrong norms can hamper it.

As Tuckman’s team development model shows, teams need to be cohesive in order to perform well. Cohesion is the degree to which team members connect with each other. In most cases, cohesiveness is essential for team effectiveness because it encourages members to work together to reach the same goal. Social and emotional bonds between members help to maintain consistent work efforts, steering everyone toward the same objective. A cohesive team is more motivated, communicates better, and reports higher levels of satisfaction than less cohesive teams.

However, there is such a thing as too much cohesion in a team, which can have negative consequences. For example, an overly cohesive team may be prone to inflexibility or resistance to change. It may also limit team members’ ability to express their own personal thoughts and feelings for fear of upsetting the group dynamic. Too much cohesion can also lead to lack of accountability and decision making.

Team Charters
Another good way to ensure good team communication and positive work cohesion is to provide team charters for every project. A charter is a type of document that outlines the purpose of the team, the benefits of the project, the required objectives, and expected timeframe. Ideally, team charters should be created in the early stages of team formation. Managers are responsible for ensuring that team members have been given clear direction and feel confident enough in their roles in order to achieve the goals of the project described in the charter efficiently and effectively.

Synergy: Process Gains and Losses
Team are more likely to perform well when they have good 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. The Arizona Diamondbacks baseball team featured in OB in the Real World has good
synergy, mostly because of its familial culture where every team member is given a voice. Positive synergy is achieved by good leadership as well as ensuring the right people are hired for the right roles. Teams with good synergy are more committed to goals, apply more diverse skills and abilities to tasks, and show greater willingness to share information and knowledge. Typically, teams that share common interests and values have a better chance of creating and maintaining positive synergy.

However, bad synergy within teams can lead to toxic negativity, especially when one or more team members exhibits negative behavior. Research has shown that it only takes one “bad apple” to impact a whole team. These bad apples tend to work less than the other members, or attack and bully others. For example, in a study analyzing team dynamics in fifty manufacturing teams, researchers found that the teams with at least one irresponsible or negative team member were more likely to experience conflict, poor communication, and lack of cooperation. Managers can address this issue by making an effort to try and change the negative behavior, but if this doesn’t work, there may be little choice but to let the bad apple go.

Teams that achieve positive synergy will produce a number of process gains, which are the degree to which certain factors contribute to team effectiveness. 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. In many cases, the level of process gains leads a team to exceed its performance.

In contrast, a team without good synergy can lead to process losses, the factors that detract from team effectiveness. Team members who are afraid to disagree with other team members inhibit decision making and problem solving. Process losses include personality clashes or unproductive conflict; and the inability to focus on certain tasks. It also includes social loafing, also known as “free riding,” which is the reduced effort people exert in a team compared to the amount they supply when working independently. In fact, sometimes working in teams can achieve less than people working alone. For example, in a brainstorming session, people may make less effort to contribute because they know that other people will put forward ideas instead. People are more likely to engage in social loafing when they work in large teams where they can slip below the radar, when clear goals are not given, or when they believe they lack the skills and abilities necessary to complete the tasks.

Another form of social loafing facing today’s organizations is cyberloafing or accessing the internet for personal use while pretending to be working, such as checking Facebook or playing YouTube videos. According to a University of Nevada study, cyberloafing is estimated to cost US businesses up to $85 billion per year. Not only does it cost organizations money, but it also affects productivity, drains bandwidth, and makes systems vulnerable to computer viruses. In a different study conducted by Kansas State University, participants admitted to spending between 60 to 80 percent of their time cyberloafing at work. So how can organizations tackle this problem? Blocking employees from browsing sites unrelated to work may sound like the obvious solution, but there are some sites such as LinkedIn or Facebook used by organizations for legitimate work reasons. How can managers tell if employees are using a site for work purposes or cyberloafing?

In an effort to find a solution to cyberloafing, Jeremy Glassman and his team of fellow researchers at Arizona State University created some software designed...
EXAMINING THE EVIDENCE

Team Cohesion: Is Too Much More Than Enough?

Team 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.

A recent study provides additional support for this idea. The study of 180 teams in a national travel agency found that social ties within the teams had a curvilinear effect on team performance over time, first increasing and then decreasing performance as the negative effects of cohesion such as groupthink began to take a negative toll on team performance.

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?


to prevent cyberloafing.26 This system permitted employees to use certain sites and used on-screen warnings to remind employees not to access sites that were not work-related. Sites that used up bandwidth (video sites) or could cause legal issues (pornography) were blocked. While employees were still allowed to access some leisure sites, they were limited to ten minutes at a time, with a maximum limit of ninety minutes per day. When the ninety minutes expired, employees were blocked from those sites and if they needed further access would have to explain to their managers the reason why.

When Glassman tested his system at a real agricultural company, the results showed a significant decrease in cyberloafing.

A group’s effectiveness can be attributed to social facilitation, when individuals perform better in the presence of others.
“It provided them with a reminder of the acceptable uses for Internet resources while at work and what is expected of them,” Glassman says. “With a greater amount of interaction with the system, the more likely they will be using the Internet resources for work-related purposes.”

While social and cyberloafing tend to negatively impact team dynamics, there are several factors that contribute to group effectiveness (see Figure 7.4). The first factor is social facilitation, which occurs when individuals perform tasks better in the presence of others. 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.

**THINKING CRITICALLY**

1. Recall a time you were part of a team at work or at school. Did your team experience all of the stages of Tuckman’s model? Explain. Do you think a team can skip over one of the stages? Why or why not?

2. Discuss the ways in which team cohesion can contribute to overall team effectiveness. What questions would you ask to determine whether a team was suffering from too much team cohesiveness?

3. Once again, recall a time you were part of a team at school or work. Apply the model of process gains and losses to this scenario you recalled. What gains and losses did you identify? Based on this assessment, what could you have suggested to improve the team’s performance?

**Types of Teams**

**LO 7.3 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. A virtual team is a group of individuals who work together from different geographic locations and rely on communication technology, such as email, video conferencing, instant messaging, and other electronic media, to collaborate. See Figure 7.5 for the types of tools virtual teams use to communicate with each other. Virtual team members have great flexibility because they are able to work anywhere, including their own homes. According to a 2016 survey carried out by...
Global Workplace Analytics, the amount of people working regularly from home has increased by 103 percent since 2005, and 3.7 million Americans work from home at least half the time.30

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. San Francisco–based Buffer, a web-based platform that helps users share social media content, has a team of twenty-five employees working virtually from all over the world, with employees from Hong Kong, London, New York, and Cape Town. Buffer founder Joel Gascoigne strongly believes in the benefits of a totally virtual team.

Because working remotely can be a challenge to some people, Gascoigne makes sure new team members learn the art of self-motivation and productivity by monitoring them over a forty-five-day trial period. He also ensures Buffer team members take advantage of the flexibility of working remotely by encouraging them to share travel photos, go on adventures, or simply spend time with family.

Teams are also encouraged to use the latest tools to communicate regularly whether it’s online chat, virtual conference rooms, or instant messaging. Furthermore, Buffer is a diverse group which helps members from different cultures and backgrounds learn new things from each other. To avoid the perils of faceless contact, Gascoigne ensures the whole team convene for retreats three times a year to encourage bonding and relationship-building.

Finally, Buffer maintains its high productivity because of its global virtual team—different time zones means that Buffer is always operational. Software provider in the education sector Fire Engine RED, app automation company Zapier, and professional job service provider Flexjobs are all examples of companies that successfully run their businesses using the virtual model.31

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 can result in miscommunication, and cultural differences can also compound misunderstandings related to distance. Recall that Yahoo famously put an end to virtual working to encourage more face-to-face collaboration and since then other big companies have followed suit, including healthcare provider Aetna, multinational conglomerate Honeywell, and more recently technology giant IBM. However, according to a recent survey, faceless interaction is not the only challenge of working in a virtual team.

In 2016, New York–based consulting firm RW3 CultureWizard conducted a survey of global virtual teams with 1,372 respondents from eighty countries.32 The results showed how dominant virtual teams have become in the corporate world with the majority of corporate teams operating virtually. It also highlighted the fact almost half of those respondents had never met their virtual team members face to face. The report also showed that faceless interaction is also the cause of many cultural problems, especially when virtual workers include members from other nations. In fact, 68 percent of respondents stated that cultural challenges were the most difficult to overcome in working in a virtual team. Overall, the survey emphasizes the urgent need for increased intercultural training in order to improve relationships between teams from different cultures.

The survey shows that communication and cultural understanding are key to operating successful virtual teams (Figure 7.5).

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
PART III  TEAMS AND TEAMWORK

A self-managing team is a group of workers who manage their own daily duties under little to no supervision. Manufacturing company W. L. Gore, systems engineering and management company Semco, and technology solutions firm Barry Wehmiller are among many companies composed of highly effective self-managing teams, in which team members are expected to make decisions without consulting higher management. The concept of self-managed teams is growing in popularity because of the benefits it brings to organizations. Numerous examples show that companies with self-managed teams tend to grow faster, are more productive and profitable, and have a lower turnover of employees. However, self-managing teams are not without their downsides. Research suggests that self-managing teams often struggle with internal conflict, trust, and accountability issues.

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. While it has been generally thought that teams comprised of different ages, ethnicities, and gender are the more effective for finding solutions, recent research shows that cognitively diverse teams (how they think about and perceive new complex situations) are the best for fast problem solving.

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. The cross-functional model can be effective in both large and small companies and is growing in popularity. A recent survey conducted by Robert Half Management Resources and Robert Half Technology discovered that 51 percent of CFOs collaborate more frequently with their company’s CIO, in comparison to three years ago. Tim Hird, executive director for Robert Half Management Resources, believes cross-functional teams are vital to today’s organizations.

“Before, these functions were run as silos,” says Hird, “but business has become more complex and organizations continue to invest in technology to make strategic decisions. A few years ago it wasn’t necessary to work together—now it’s essential.”

FIGURE 7.5
Virtual Communication

How you prefer to communicate virtually?

- Online Chat
- Email
- Video
- Texting
- Hybrid tools (Slack, Basecamp)
- Phone/Skype
- Social Media

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

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.
OB IN THE REAL WORLD
Derrick Hall, President and CEO, Arizona Diamondbacks

The Arizona Diamondbacks (D-Backs) are a major league baseball (MLB) team located in Phoenix, Arizona. With a world championship, multiple division championships, and countless other non-baseball-related honors awarded to them since their inaugural season in 1998, the organization has proven to be an industry leader in fan experience, corporate performance, financial efficiency, community, and culture. The Diamondbacks organization is not one of the famed cash-cow MLB organizations that can seemingly throw money at any internal problem that arises and solve it right away. Rather than putting out fires with cold hard cash, the D-Backs have invested in its people to prevent problems from arising in the first place. The result is an organization that has been named one of the best places to work in baseball and has a work culture that is described as “familial” by the majority of its employees. Under the direction of President and CEO Derrick Hall, this middle market baseball organization is doing big things in the industry by constantly investing in its workplace culture.

Fostering this coveted familial culture starts with a work environment supported by successful teams. Teams are what drive the success of this organization and the D-Backs know that their people are the most crucial component of this. Derrick Hall provides a very interesting perspective on how to foster a successful workplace culture by investing in people.

“The customer doesn’t come first, the fan doesn’t come first, the employee comes first. If the employee feels respected, developed, invested in, and rewarded he/she will treat the customers the way we want them to be treated. When the employee is valued the most it feels like a family. It feels like a team.”

By focusing on the employee first, each employee feels a sense of responsibility toward the organization and buys into its mission. Once everyone is bought in, the organization’s teams are ready to meet the customer’s needs across the various different departments.

The team on the field playing baseball is only one of over thirty highly successful individual teams that work in the Diamondbacks organization. What lies at the core of each of these teams is a mutual commitment to excellence amongst members. This means that team members can openly disagree with each other and can challenge each other to bring their best individual work to the table. When this is done, the teams function at maximum production and efficiency.

Derrick Hall sits on top of the organization. However, he is a member of multiple smaller teams which have adopted this culture. For example, the members of Derrick Hall’s executive team know that they have a voice in the executive meetings and that their opinions matter. Also, Derrick has made it clear that the only way the executive team will put forth its best work for the organization is if each member brings forth a different perspective. This is so crucial to the success of any team because it prevents missed opportunities, groupthink, and power imbalance.

Teams are the backbone of any organization and the backbone of every team is its people. By investing in his people, Derrick Hall lays the groundwork for an environment where individual teams can thrive. The culture within these teams, where each member has a voice and each member can openly challenge another’s work in a healthy, productive way, is what has made the Diamondbacks such a successful organization.

Critical-Thinking Questions

1. Do you agree with the “employee is always first” philosophy? Why or why not?
2. Why might an investment in an organization’s employees be more valuable than an investment elsewhere?
3. What kind of work would a team experiencing groupthink put forward?
4. Is there value in creating a culture where disagreements and healthy conflict is encouraged? Why or why not?

Source: Interview with Derrick Hall, April 22, 2017.
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?

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.

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?

4. Given the nature of self-managing teams, what could be some potential problems facing such a team in the workplace? How would you overcome such problems?

A Model of Team Effectiveness:
Context and Composition

>> LO 7.4 Apply the model of team effectiveness to evaluate team performance

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 consider teams in terms of the contextual influences that affect their functioning, their composition, the processes they use, and the outcomes they achieve. Figure 7.6 shows how these factors influence team effectiveness.


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Team Contextual Influences

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.

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. For example, in the Thomas Jefferson University Hospital case study, the new initiative to improve patient service required team members to work closely together and depend on each other to complete work tasks. There are three levels of interdependence (see Figure 7.7):

- **Pooled interdependence** occurs when each team member produces a piece of work independently of the others. Sandwich fast-food restaurant Subway and Bank of America branches are both examples of pooled interdependence. Though each restaurant unit is a part of the overall Subway organization, the units work independently of each other. Similarly, bank branches in different cities carry out the same duties but have no real need to interact with each other.

- **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.

- **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 Southwest Airlines rely on reciprocal interdependence to manage the intense coordination of the different services provided to its customers in real time.

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 accomplish. Subway restaurants are an example of pooled interdependence. While all Subway restaurants are part of the larger organization, they operate independently of one another.
perform. In general, teams tend to consist of four to seven members. A recent study by management consulting firm Bain shows that decision-making effectiveness is reduced by 10 percent when more than seven people join a team.47 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. In terms of personality, teams typically need a balance between extraverts and introverts.48 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.49

Ensuring diversity on a team can be a challenge. Recall from Chapter 2 that diversity includes 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 7.8) states that people are functions of three interrelated dynamic processes: attraction, selection, and attrition, all of which influence organizational culture.50 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.51 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.
1. Based on this section and Figure 7.6, 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.

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.

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.

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).

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?

Team Decision Making

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

One approach to team decision-making is the concept of brainstorming, which is generating creative, spontaneous ideas from all members of a group without making any initial criticism or judgment of them. While brainstorming is a popular method of idea generation among many organizations, decades of studies have shown that simply gathering a group to toss out as many ideas as possible within a certain amount of time does not work. In fact, studies show that people who follow this type of brainstorming produce less ideas (and less good ideas) than if they had been on their own. This is because people in a group setting are more likely to be influenced by the ideas of others which causes them to think similarly, resulting in stagnation of creative and original thinking.

However, while the evidence points to flaws in the brainstorming process, this does not mean that people should stop brainstorming altogether; it merely calls for a new approach.

Brainstorm Alone—At First

Brainstorming alone is a useful way of coming up with new, creative ideas without being influenced by the group. Then when everyone has had a chance to brainstorm alone, they can get together as a group and build on those ideas. One brainstorming technique includes the 6-3-5 method. Six people write down three ideas each. These ideas are passed to the person on their right who builds on those ideas. The stack is passed around five times, ensuring that everyone in the group has a chance to develop each idea. When everyone is finished the group then gets together to discuss.
Slow Down the Creative Process

Some people don’t like brainstorming. They would rather get the brainstorming process over and done with quickly in order to start implementing the solution. These people have a high level of the personality characteristic “need for closure.” However, it is important that enough time is given to the brainstorming process so enough ideas are generated to find the right solution to the problem. The 6-3-5 method slows down the creative process by giving people individual turns to write down their ideas. This also helps people who have a need for closure as it teaches them that everyone needs to wait until ideas are generated and built upon.

Start Drawing

Studies show that a combination of drawing and writing is highly beneficial to idea generation and coming up with creative solutions to problems. Drawing is useful because it helps describe ideas that are difficult to explain in words, and also appeals to part of the brain dedicated to visual processing. It is also helpful to include words in sketches or diagrams to aid interpretation. Google employees use pictures during their brainstorming sessions, believing that “pictures are usually louder than words and harder to misinterpret.”

While using the right approach to brainstorming can 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. 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.

The Delphi technique is a method of decision making in which information is gathered from a group of respondents within their area of expertise. 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 decision is reached. The Delphi technique was applied during the implementation of the new patient efficiency program at the Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, profiled in our case study. This method allowed the group of executive physicians to gain new insights into the hospital’s operations by gauging the thoughts and perspectives of the nurses in the emergency department. In this chapter, we have focused on the different types of teams and how teams generate ideas and find solutions. In the next chapter, we will explore how managers make decisions and how organizations, teams, and individuals engage in creativity and innovation.

When it comes to decision making, teams play an important part. According to enterprise platform Cloverpop’s business decision database, teams make better decisions 75 percent of the time, and are more effective in making decisions than managers and executives acting alone. Going by these results, it stands to reason that decision making drives business performance which in turn positively impacts an organization’s bottom line. However, there are both advantages and disadvantages to team decision making.
Advantages and Disadvantages of Team Decision Making

Some of the key benefits include increased engagement of staff, consensus decisions that when implemented already have buy-in from the staff that do the work, and finally and most importantly: better decisions.

Team decision making has its advantages. It often gives those involved a broader perspective, provides more alternatives, clarifies ambiguities, and brings about team satisfaction and support. By involving each team member in the decision, it also increases engagement, gains buy-in from the people who will have to do the work, and overall results in better decisions being made.

However, team decision making also has its disadvantages. Meetings can be time consuming; too much attention can be paid to simple matters; nobody may take responsibility for the decision; and team members might end up agreeing on a compromise that satisfies nobody.

One important factor that can negatively affect team decision making is groupthink, a psychological phenomenon in which people in a cohesive group go along with the group consensus rather than offering their own opinions. 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. In doing so, people lose the ability to “think outside the box” or think creatively in their decisions. This leads to an environment where ideas and perspectives simply remain unchallenged, which over time can prevent an organization from innovating, progressing, and competing. 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. The executive team at the Arizona Diamondbacks prevents groupthink by encouraging each member to bring forth different perspectives, and in doing so gives them a safe space to air their opinions without fear of reprisals.

The rise of social media has contributed to “political groupthink.” For the first time in history, people are able to air their political views to a large audience without the help of television networks, radio, or other media reserved for the select few.

However, not only do we like to express our political opinions on social media, but according to Pew research, we are more willing to share our political views with a like-minded audience. According to author Eli Pariser, this creates “filter bubbles” containing people with the same views, but, where those views go unchallenged, leading to polarization. In fact, a study conducted by the University of Chicago discovered that “people held more-extreme positions after they spoke with like-minded others,” which further cements groups together, limiting diversity of thought. However, there is hope that social media will eventually become a tool that fosters wider political discussion rather than restricting it to the shared views of like-minded groups.

Organizations are far more likely to be successful when their employees work well together to meet required objectives. But as we have seen, it doesn’t take more than one negative member to destroy team dynamics. This is why managers must work hard to nurture a positive team culture by giving clear direction, treating each member equally, and ensuring that teams are cohesive, communicative, and collaborative.

THINKING CRITUICALLY

1. Define the team decision-making approaches of brainstorming and nominal group technique. In your opinion, is one of these techniques better than the other? Or does it depend on the situation? Why or why not?
2. Do you think the management style (e.g., more or less authoritative) of a group's manager can impact the group's performance?

3. What are the pros and cons of having a team leader for a particular team? What problems might the addition of a team leader create for a group?

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**IN REVIEW**

7.1 Distinguish between teams and groups

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 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.

7.3 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 email, 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.

7.4 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.

### 7.5 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.

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- Brainstorming 201
- Cohesion 191
- Cross-functional team 196
- Cyberloafing 192
- Decentralization 185
- Delphi technique 202
- Forming 188
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**UP FOR DEBATE: Hiring Teams Instead of Individuals**

Companies are beginning to entertain the idea that they could hire teams rather than individuals. For example, firms in Silicon Valley have claimed that hiring a team of three people who already know how to work with each other eliminates multiple steps in the team-building process. This allows the team to hit the ground running on their first day of work. Agree or disagree? Explain your answer.

**EXERCISE 7.1: Practicing 6-3-5 Brainstorming**

**Objective**

The purpose of this exercise is to gain a greater appreciation of brainstorming.

**Instructions**

Brainstorming is ubiquitous in the business world. Companies use brainstorming for developing new products, adding features to existing products, crafting new marketing campaigns, improving services provided by human resources, and many more uses. One technique that has gained a foothold in businesses in recent years is the process of 6-3-5 brainstorming. With
this method, team members spend some time alone developing ideas before bringing those to the group as a whole. It works like this: first, teams of six members are formed; second, each of the six team members writes down five ideas without input from anyone else; and third, the pieces of paper with the ideas are passed to the right, where new ideas are added (and this is done a total of five times).

This exercise utilizes the 6-3-5 method of brainstorming. Form teams of six people (if there aren’t enough people to make this work exactly, it’s ok if some groups have five or seven team members). The scenario is as follows: your team works for a restaurant and the dessert menu has been exactly the same for the last five years. The owner wants some new, fresh ideas for desserts. Using the 6-3-5 method, brainstorm as many new ideas as possible. Then, once the papers have been passed around five times, narrow the list down to the top three desserts you can all agree on to ultimately submit to the restaurant owner.

Reflection Questions

1. Traditional brainstorming simply has a group of people all working together to develop as many ideas as possible. The 6-3-5 method is individual-based first and then the other team members get involved in adding ideas. What are the advantages and disadvantages of traditional brainstorming and the 6-3-5 method of brainstorming?
2. Which do you prefer as a brainstorming technique: traditional brainstorming or the 6-3-5 method? Explain.
3. What are ways you could utilize the 6-3-5 method of brainstorming at your current or most recent job?

Exercise contributed by Steven Stovall, Southeast Missouri State University.

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 Jacqueline R. Mayfield, Professor of Business, Texas A&M International University.

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**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 Jacqueline R. Mayfield, Professor of Business, Texas A&M International University.
ONLINE EXERCISE 7.1: Virtual Team Project

Objective
The purpose of this exercise is to gain an appreciation for virtual teams.

Instructions
Utilizing a discussion board, a virtual team will be created to complete a project. The scenario is as follows: you work for a very small company that had a very successful app for phones two years ago. The app was for runners who wanted to connect with other runners nearby for training or for just partnering with another runner to enjoy the company of a fellow runner. Though the app was free, income was garnered through ads on the app. However, the initial popularity of that app has faded and sales of ads have diminished greatly. The president of the company desperately wants to introduce a new app to the public and she does not care what that app is.

The president has asked all of you to develop a new app from start to finish. Using the discussion board, brainstorm a new cell phone app. Once you all agree on what the concept is, virtually partner with others on the discussion board and divide up the following roles among you:
- Sales (how the app will generate income)
- Images (what the graphics will look like)
- Text (what words and wording will be used)
- Functions (what the app will actually do)
- Marketing (how consumers will know that the app exists)

After these roles have been divided among the discussion board participants, develop the app. Obviously, those working on functions will have to work closely with the images and text personnel to ensure the app’s interface is attractive to users—which is important for marketing. And, if sales personnel want to place ads within the app, the sales people will need to work closely with all the other groups to make the ads as seamless and unobtrusive as possible to the end users.

Reflection Questions
1. What difficulties did you have in building an effective team for this exercise? What successes did you have?
2. How did the team resolve conflict?
3. In what ways was this exercise similar to team-building projects you have had at your current or most recent job? How was it different?
4. What did you learn from this exercise that you can utilize in your current or most recent job? How will this help you as your career progresses?

Exercise contributed by Steven Stovall, Southeast Missouri State 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 45 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—could 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 could 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

### Dealing with a Difficult 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>NOT AT ALL ACCURATE</th>
<th>SOMEWHAT ACCURATE</th>
<th>A LITTLE ACCURATE</th>
<th>MOSTLY ACCURATE</th>
<th>COMPLETELY ACCURATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I am specific rather than general, giving good, clear, and recent examples of the problem behavior.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I present the situation as a problem that disrupts the whole team not just one individual.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 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.