

UNDERSTANDING TEAMS AND TEAM EFFECTIVENESS



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With special thanks to CRF Programme Partners

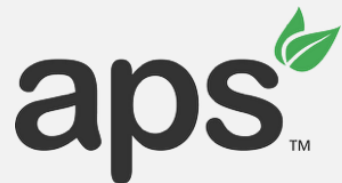


TABLE DISCUSSION

Please briefly introduce yourself and discuss, based on your experience your answers to these two questions:

1. When you hear the word 'team' what thoughts and feelings does it produce?
2. How effective are organizations managing teams and team effectiveness?

AGENDA: TUESDAY 16 SEPTEMBER

09:30	Welcome and Table Discussions
09:55	Five Starting Points for Considering Teams
10.05	What is a Team?
10.20	Team Types
10.30	What is Team Effectiveness?
10.40	Measuring Team Effectiveness
10.50	Models of Team Effectiveness
11.00	Coffee Break
11.20	Influences on Team Effectiveness
11.40	Table Discussion: Setting up the Conditions for Success
12.10	Improving Team Effectiveness
12.25	Table Discussion: Team Effectiveness Assessment
12.55	Concluding Thoughts
13.00	Lunch and Close

FIVE STARTING POINTS FOR CONSIDERING TEAMS.

1. THE ROMANCE OF TEAMS

- Teams are generally assumed to be A Good Thing
- But ever the earliest studies on teams show they can be inefficient and ineffective and don't necessarily produce greater or better results than same individuals working on their own
- This pro-team bias has been described as the romance of teams:

...a faith in the effectiveness of team-based work that is not supported by, or is even inconsistent with, relevant empirical evidence. We argue that this faith is commonly - although, obviously, not universally - held among managers, their employees, and the general lay population. - (Allen & Hecht, 2004)

FIVE STARTING POINTS FOR CONSIDERING TEAMS.

Causes three problems:

- Over-application of teams
- Poor organizational alignment (as assumed they will just work)
- Lack of cost/benefit analysis (again, assumed they are only positive)

One explanation for romance of teams is that we are

“inundated with the spectacle of sport, and the way in which we follow sports makes us believe we inherently understand teamwork” - (Klien, 2012)

FIVE STARTING POINTS FOR CONSIDERING TEAMS.

2. SO WHEN DO TEAMS MAKE SENSE?

Teams make sense when the work or task:

- Requires a combination of skills or knowledge no one person is likely to have.
- Is so large and/or complicated that it cannot be completed by employees working individually.

FIVE STARTING POINTS FOR CONSIDERING TEAMS.

3. HAVE TEAMS AND THE USE OF TEAMS CHANGED SO MUCH?

- Widespread assumption that teams and teamwork are quite different now compared to some (usually unspecified) point in the past is mentioned frequently in both academic and practitioner literature.
- Probably part of general rhetoric about 'ever-changing nature of work'
- Likely there have been changes but not so much evidence and not clear it changes fundamentally the way we should understand and manage teams.

Many scholars have pointed to evidence of new team forms in today's interconnected and fast paced world...Despite calls over several years for empirical research to examine, explore, and define new teamwork forms, empirical papers that do so directly remain few enough to prompt continued calls for more research. - (Kerrissey et al. 2020)

Same in relation to AI, multiteam systems and multiple team memberships.

FIVE STARTING POINTS FOR CONSIDERING TEAMS.

4. HOW USEFUL IS THE SCIENTIFIC THEORY AND EVIDENCE ABOUT TEAMS?

- There is a lot of research about teams which goes back around a century
- But is it useful? Yes, in principle, but...

Although a remarkable amount of research has been conducted to determine how to make teams function maximally, no one has been able to clearly define exactly what is teamwork. The study of teamwork has been fragmented over the years and has not lent itself to being used practically. - (Salas et al, 2005)

For those not deeply immersed in the research on teams, the science of team effectiveness is poorly translated and rarely understood. - (Klien, 2012)

FIVE STARTING POINTS FOR CONSIDERING TEAMS.

5. TEAMS ARE UNSTABLE DYNAMIC ENTITIES

- It should go without saying that teams are unstable and dynamic.
- However, it seems that much teams research and practice proceeds as though this is not the case.
 - Many simplistic practical models (e.g., Belbin, Tuckman's forming, storming, etc)
 - Many simplistic scientific models and research approaches (more later)
- Compared to many other work psychology phenomena teams are much more challenging to understand and manage.

WHAT ARE TEAMS?

SOME DEFINITIONS OF TEAMS

...a distinguishable set of two or more people who interact, dynamically, interdependently, and adaptively toward a common and valued goal/objective/mission.	Salas et al (1992)
A small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.	Katzenbach & Smith (1993)
A team is a collection of individuals who are interdependent in their tasks, who share responsibility for outcomes, who see themselves and who are seen by others as an intact social entity embedded in one or more larger social systems (for example, business unit or the corporation), and who manage their relationships across organisational boundaries.	Cohen & Bailey (1997)
(a) Two or more individuals who; (b) socially interact (face-to-face or, increasingly, virtually); (c) possess one or more common goals; (d) are brought together to perform organisationally relevant tasks; (e) exhibit interdependencies with respect to workflow, goals, and outcomes; (f) have different roles and responsibilities; and (g) are together embedded in an encompassing organisational system, with boundaries and linkages to the broader system context and task environment.	Kozlowski & Ilgen (2006)

<p>...individuals are members of a team when they share the responsibility and reward (or penalty) for the outcomes of the team's work and recognize each other as members of the team.</p>	<p>O'Leary et al (2011)</p>
<p>Real teams are intact social systems whose members work together to achieve a common purpose. They have clear boundaries that distinguish members from nonmembers. They work interdependently to generate a product for which members have collective, rather than individual, accountability. And they have at least moderate stability, which gives members time to learn how to work well together.</p>	<p>Hackman (2012)</p>
<p>...we define teams as assemblies of interdependent relations and activities organising shifting sets or subsets of participants embedded in and relevant to wider resource and institutional environments. As stated, this definition broadly encompasses self-organising collectives... Thus, an important codicil to this definition is that a team is bound to the extent it self-organises...</p>	<p>Humphrey & Aime (2014)</p>
<p>...an individual holds real team membership when they not only identify themselves as being a member of a team, but they report (a) that their team's task requires them to work closely and interdependently with fellow team members, (b) that their team has shared objectives, and (c) that their team engages in regular reflexivity to review team effectiveness.</p>	<p>Lyubovnikova et al (2015)</p>

SOME KEY FEATURES OF TEAM DEFINITIONS

The most comprehensive definition appears to be that offered by Kozlowski & Ilgen (2006) which suggests seven features that need to be in place to identify an entity as a team:

1	Two or more individuals.
2	Socially interact.
3	Possess one or more common goals.
4	Are brought together to perform organisationally relevant tasks.
5	Exhibit interdependencies with respect to workflow, goals and outcomes.
6	Have different roles and responsibilities.
7	Are together embedded in an encompassing organisational system.

SOME MORE KEY FEATURES OF TEAM DEFINITIONS

Other definitions provided here include some additional elements:

8	With complementary skills (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993).
9	Distinguishable (Salas et al, 1992); Have clear boundaries that distinguish members from non-members (Hackman, 2012); Recognise each other as members of the team (O'Leary et al, 2011).
10	Who see themselves and who are seen by others as an intact social entity (Cohen & Bailey, 1997); Intact social systems (Hackman, 2012).
11	Who manage their relationships across organisational boundaries (Cohen & Bailey, 1997).
12	Share the responsibility and reward (or penalty) for the outcomes (O'Leary et al, 2011); Members have collective, rather than individual, accountability (Hackman, 2012).

SOME MORE KEY FEATURES OF TEAM DEFINITIONS

13	Have moderate stability (Hackman, 2012).
14	Self-organising (Humphrey & Aime, 2014).
15	Engages in regular reflexivity to review team effectiveness (Lyubovnikova et al, 2015).

- There is **some agreement** about what a team is
- But different definitions include **additional elements**
- Probably a reflection of the diverse nature of teams

WHAT IS NOT A TEAM?

- A pseudo team is not a team

...a group of people working in an organisation who call themselves or are called by others a team; who have differing accounts of team objectives; whose typical tasks require team members to work alone or in separate dyads towards disparate goals; whose team boundaries are highly permeable with individuals being uncertain over who is a team member, and who is not; and/or who, when they meet, may exchange information but without consequent shared efforts towards innovation. - West & Lyubovnikova (2012)

WHAT IS NOT A TEAM?

- Similar to the idea of a co-acting group

...an individual holds co-acting group membership when they identify themselves as being a member of a team, but do not report interdependent working, shared objectives, or reflexivity. Such individuals are therefore more likely to work in parallel to their co-workers, often doing similar sorts of work but in a more discrete and independent manner, whereby each worker is held accountable for his/her personal output. - Lyubovnikova et al (2015)

Table discussion (5 plus 5). In your experience:

- How common are pseudo teams and co-acting groups?
- Why do organizations call work groups teams when they are not teams?
- What are the downsides of pseudo teams? Are there any upsides?



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BEYOND THE DICHOTOMY OF REAL TEAMS VERSUS FAKE TEAMS

- Rather than asking if a group is a team or not we can ask
 - To what extent is this group like a team?
 - In which ways is it more or less like a team?

BEYOND THE DICHOTOMY OF REAL TEAMS VERSUS FAKE TEAMS

REAL TEAMS		PSEUDO TEAMS
Typical tasks require team members to work in a closely coordinated and timely manner towards common goals and objectives.		Typical tasks require team members to work alone or in separate dyads towards disparate goals and objectives.
There are one or more clear shared team objectives that team members agree upon.		There are as many different accounts of team objectives as there are team members.

BEYOND THE DICHOTOMY OF REAL TEAMS VERSUS FAKE TEAMS

REAL TEAMS		PSEUDO TEAMS
Team members systematically review team performance and adapt future objectives and processes accordingly.	←→	Team members occasionally meet together to exchange information, often through obligation or habit, with no consequent shared efforts towards innovation.
Team members are clear about who is part of the team and who is not.	←→	Team boundaries are highly permeable, with individuals being unclear about who is part of the team and who is not.

- Has **practical implications** such as how we:
 - Set up a team/group
 - Allocate resources
 - Supervise and manage
 - Provide feedback
 - Design rewards

...as one begins to examine the team literature, it becomes clear that the types of teams are as varied as the number of authors who have discussed them.- West & Salas et al (2005)

- Quite a few taxonomies such as Sundstrom (1999)
 - Production teams (e.g., in manufacturing or assembly).
 - Service teams (e.g., maintenance and food services, repeated interactions with customers).
 - Management teams who work to plan and coordinate.
 - Project teams (e.g., in research and engineering).
 - Action or performing teams (e.g., sports and surgery teams).
 - Parallel teams are temporary teams that operate outside normal work, such as employee involvement groups.

DEVINE'S (2002) 14 TEAM TYPES

- Based on seven characteristics of team contexts (e.g., work cycle, physical abilities, task structure) Devine (2002) identifies 14 team types.

INTELLECTUAL WORK TEAMS

1. Executive: Diverse, high level organisation teams engaged in important yet ill-structured tasks. Deal with a variety of ambiguous situations that are not well understood and for which no standard operating procedures exist.

2. Command: Make critical organisation level decisions in real time by collecting and integrating information from a variety of...to determine appropriate action to be taken.

3. Negotiation: Engage in competitive intellectual tasks in which group members represent the interests of larger entities and attempt to maximise the outcomes of their constituents.

DEVINE'S (2002) 14 TEAM TYPES

INTELLECTUAL WORK TEAMS

4. Commission: Engage in special projects or investigations requiring judgments or plans. They exist for the duration of a particular mission.

5. Design: Do hands-on work requiring creativity and/or technical innovation for an internal or external client. Often cross-functional.

6. Advisory: Investigate problems associated with the organisation's sociotechnical systems and/or search for ways to improve effectiveness. Typically cross-functional and operate outside the formal structures.

DEVINE'S (2002) 14 TEAM TYPES

PHYSICAL WORK TEAMS

7. Service: Interact directly with customers to provide a good or service to the latter's specification. Focus on diagnosing customer needs, gathering requisite information and resources, and taking appropriate action to meet customer needs.

8. Production: Build or assemble a tangible product in a continuous, standardised fashion over extended periods of time, generally relying on sophisticated machinery, tools and equipment as well as timely coordination with external suppliers and distributors

9. Performance: Conduct elaborate behavioural sequences for the enjoyment of an audience. Their collective product is a series of coordinated movements and actions by team members.

10. Medical: Diagnosing the condition of patients and taking appropriate steps to improve their health. They operate under severe time constraints and team tasks are usually very structured, with the aid of standardised diagnostic protocols and procedures in a highly controlled operating environment

DEVINE'S (2002) 14 TEAM TYPES

PHYSICAL WORK TEAMS

- 11. Response:** Physically move to the scene of an accident or a natural disaster, diagnose the situation and provide some form of rapid treatment or intervention.
- 12. Military:** Small, formal units that use lethal force (or the threat of it) to accomplish a variety of tasks associated with maintaining domestic order and ensuring national security.
- 13. Transportation:** Operate a specialised machine or vehicle (e.g., train, airplane or ship) to transport people or cargo from one place to another.
- 14. Sports:** Although generally included in broad categories pertaining to action and performance, sports teams differ in several important respects. This includes extremely well defined tasks where the collective goal is clear and shared, and elaborate rules define and constrain how the outcome is determined.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ABOUT TEAM TAXONOMIES

- Many teams may be **a mix of these team types** and not purely fit into one category.
- Teams may **change over time** in response to task requirements and take on some characteristics of other team types.
- Various **technologies may change the nature of these teams**. For example, response teams may not so much need to move physically to the scene of an accident or disaster.
- Some team types are about the **nature of team tasks** and others are about the context or setting in which the team works.
- Identifying different types of teams would seem to be an important goal though **it's not clear how practically useful** such typologies are likely to be.

OTHER FEATURES OF TEAMS WHICH CHALLENGE THE IDEA OF BOUNDARIES

- **Multiteam systems** have been defined as “two or more teams that interface directly and interdependently in response to environmental contingencies toward the accomplishment of collective goals” (Mathieu et al, 2021).
- **Multiple team** membership on the other hand refers to situations in which individual team members are also be members of other teams.
- General **team boundary blurring** occurs because of team fluidity (team member changes), team overlap (multiple team membership) and geographic dispersion.

WHAT IS TEAM EFFECTIVENESS?

- Often means team performance which is **a combination of team process and team behaviors and team outcomes**. Similar to individual performance in this sense.

Some definitions of team effectiveness

Team effectiveness is context specific, and although at an abstract level we may be able to refer to the efficiencies of airline cockpit, surgical, knowledge management, pharmaceutical sales, forensic accounting, and college basketball teams, clearly the manifestations and indicators of those efficiencies.

Kozlowski & Ilgen
(2006)

...whatever the group produces is at least acceptable to those who receive, review, or use it; that the group becomes a more competent performing unit over time; and that the group experience contributes positively to individual members' learning and development.

Hackman (2012)

...the result of a judgment process whereby an output is compared to a subjective or objective standard. Essentially, the results of the team's inputs and processes are evaluated. Therefore, to ensure accuracy, we must match the outcome with the correct methods of measurement.

Salas et al (2017)

WHAT IS TEAM EFFECTIVENESS?

<p>Last, team performance effectiveness is an assessment of the quality or quantity of team performance outcomes in relation to specified standards (i.e., an overall evaluation of how well the team performed; Salas et al., 2008). Measures of team performance effectiveness include outputs such as error rates, compliance, completion time, team member satisfaction and viability, and learning.</p>	<p>Rosen & Dietz (2017)</p>
<p>...team effectiveness [is considered] broadly in terms of two types of outcomes: (a) tangible outputs...of team interaction and (b) influences on team members...Tangible outcomes can be further classified into three types: (a) productivity, (b) efficiency, and (c) quality...The second general category of team outcomes can be defined in terms of influences on members. More generally, this category can be thought of as including collective or individualistic outcomes...[the] collective level of analysis includes shared experiences, such as cohesion or psychological safety. In contrast, the individual level outcomes refer to attitudes, reactions, learning, and behaviours of individuals.</p>	<p>Mathieu et al (2019)</p>

SOME OBSERVATIONS ABOUT TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

- What team effectiveness is considered to be (and therefore how it is assessed) **depends on the context**.
- Team effectiveness is about whether a **team's outputs are acceptable compared to some standard set by others**. Interestingly, these definitions do not consider that these outputs should contribute to organisational objectives.
- Team effectiveness is also about **team processes (e.g., learning) not just outcomes**.
- Team effectiveness can also include phenomena considered here to be **team outputs such as psychological safety** or team member satisfaction.

MEASURING TEAM EFFECTIVENESS AS TEAM PERFORMANCE PROCESSES

- Team effectiveness as defined by outcomes or outputs is **highly contextual** therefore it is difficult to have a general measure of team performance as outcomes.
- However it may be **team performance processes that lead to team effectiveness are more common across contexts** so can be assessed in similar ways.

The first step to understand team performance is to identify what characteristics the team possesses starting out. Examples of these inputs are individual motivation, attitudes, and personality traits... Team-level inputs include power distribution, cohesion, and team resources... The type of task and how complicated it is also play a role. Next, we have to identify the processes, or the actions that occur when the team is working together to complete a task... Though assessing team performance is challenging, we do it because team performance is linked to team effectiveness.- (Salas et al, 2017)

MEASURING TEAM EFFECTIVENESS AS TEAM PERFORMANCE PROCESSES

Team performance represents the sum of both taskwork and teamwork activities. This means that measures of team performance capture in a collective sense what the team does in relation to their personal and team goals. - (Rosen & Deitz, 2017)

- Both of these definitions emphasize that team performance is about **team processes or how teams actually behave**. How can team performance processes be measured?

OBSERVATIONS ON MEASURING TEAM PERFORMANCE (SALAS ET AL, 2017)

- **It is best to capture the ABCs - attitudes, behaviours, and cognitions:** A great many ABCs are potentially relevant to team performance. Choose a manageable number.
- **Context and purpose of measurement matter:** As with all measurement its purpose should drive what is measured and how that it is done.
- **Behavioural markers matter:** Specific behaviours and their markers are paramount in team performance measurement. What are the specific behaviours of interest?
- **It is best to triangulate:** Preferable to always have more than one data source.
- **Team size matters:** Larger teams can have more performance problems and therefore team performance measurement needs to take account of this.
- **Subject matter experts can assess only four or five constructs:** They can probably not reliably give ratings of more than a handful of constructs as they are intercorrelated.
- **Measurement of teamwork is assessing dynamic phenomenon:** Team performance is episodic and dynamic. A good starting point is detailed observation to understand when and how team performance happens and, therefore, when and how assessments should take place.

HOW GOOD DO OUR ASSESSMENTS OF TEAM EFFECTIVENESS NEED TO BE?

- Assessing team effectiveness can be highly elaborate and time consuming.
- How much time is required depends on importance of outcomes.
- Much work psychology theory and evidence around teams and team effectiveness comes from contexts such as the military, healthcare, and aviation. Here, team outcomes means not only the successful completion of a task but also the avoidance of accidents, injury and death. Hence assessing team effectiveness is extremely important.

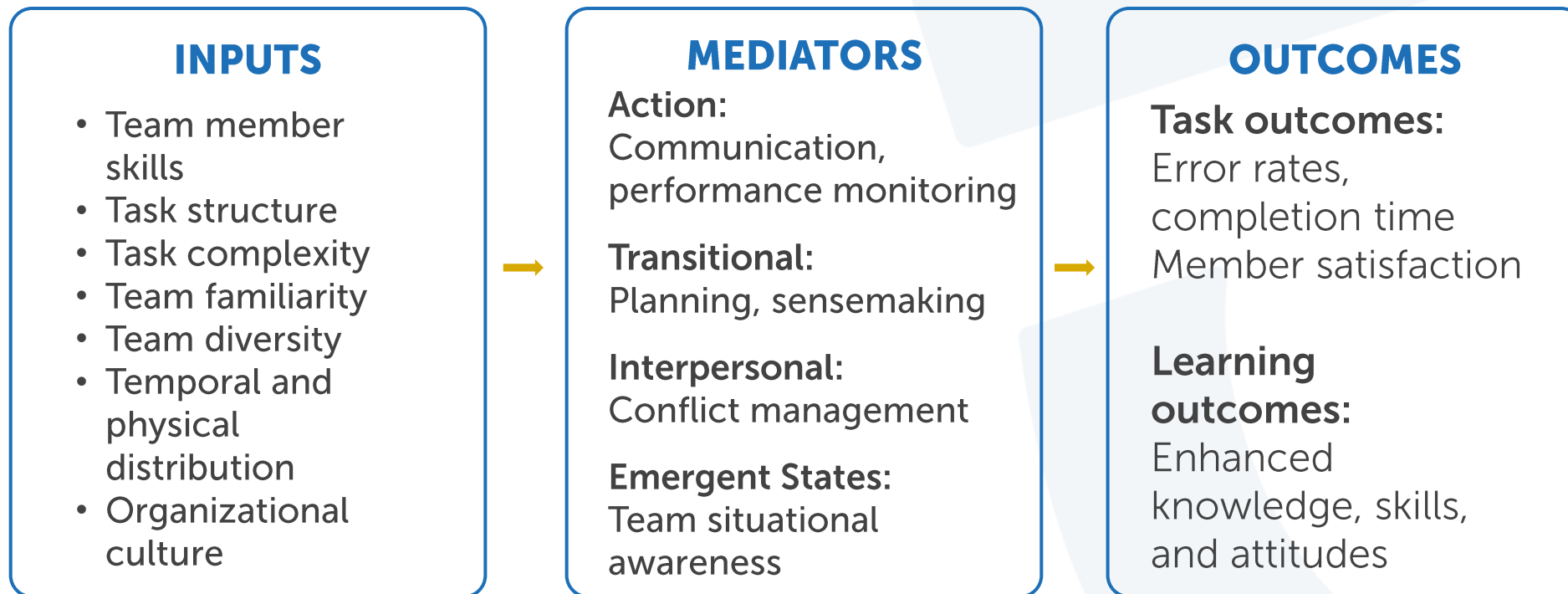
“The criteria [team effectiveness or outcomes] side of the team effectiveness framework continues to be the least well specified.” - (Mathieu et al, 2008)

MODELS OF TEAM EFFECTIVENESS (AFTER HACKMAN, 2012)

- 1** **Model 1. $x \rightarrow y$:** Where a variable or factor x affects outcome y . For example, group cohesiveness causes productivity.
- 2** **Model 2. $x \rightarrow m \rightarrow y$:** The input-mediator-output model in which variable or factor x affects m , a mediating variable, which in turn affects outcome y . For example, group cohesiveness affects information sharing which in turn affects productivity.

MODELS OF TEAM EFFECTIVENESS (AFTER HACKMAN, 2012)

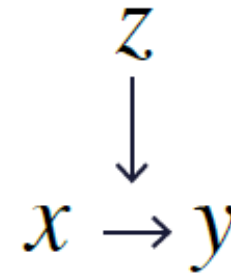
Overview of the input–mediator–output model (Rosen & Dietz, 2017)



These mediators are also sometimes considered specifically to be group processes – the input-process-output model.

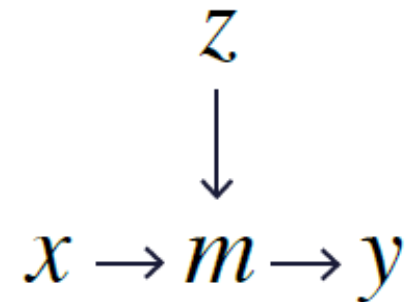
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Model 3. $x \rightarrow y$ depending on moderator z : Moderation models suggest that input x affects output y depending on the presence or level of a third variable, moderator z . For example, team diversity affects team performance depending on the level of task complexity.



4

Model 4. $x \rightarrow m \rightarrow y$: Input variable x affects m , a mediating variable, which in turn affects outcome y . The level of a fourth variable, moderator z , then affects the extent to which mediator m accounts for the relationship between x and y . For example, group cohesiveness affects information sharing which in turn affects productivity, but the extent that information sharing acts as mediator depends on the extent the team is engaged in knowledge work.



ON CAUSE EFFECT MODELS OF TEAM EFFECTIVENESS (HACKMAN, 2012)

With every methodological advance, it seems, things become both more complex and more distant from the phenomena. That which started so simply, with an analysis of direct input–output relationships, now risks sinking of its own weight, of becoming decreasingly useful to both scholars and practitioners. It may be time, therefore, to question the appropriateness of the cause–effect models that have pervaded group research from its inception and to consider an alternative way of construing group behaviour and performance.

...groups are social systems. They redefine objective reality, they create new realities ...and they evolve their own purposes and strategies for pursuing those purposes. Groups are not mere assemblies of multiple cause–effect relationships; instead, they exhibit emergent and dynamic properties that are not well captured by standard causal models.

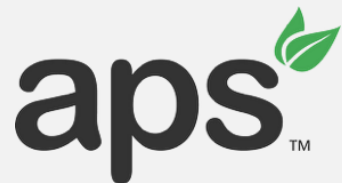
Coffee Break – Return for 11.20

UNDERSTANDING TEAMS AND TEAM EFFECTIVENESS



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INFLUENCES ON TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

Table discussion (5+5):

List as many things that you believe may influence team effectiveness as you can.

INFLUENCES ON TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

1	Cohesion (social, task)
2	Collective cognition
3	Collective leadership enactment
4	Competences (knowledge, skills, abilities)
5	Conflict management
6	Coordinating team members
7	Creative processes
8	Crew resource management

INFLUENCES ON TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

9	Diversity (demographic, functional background, personality, and attitudes/values, complex combinations)
10	Emotional intelligence
11	Empowerment (psychological and structural)
12	External team leadership (teamwork-, taskwork-, person-focused)
13	Feedback
14	Formulating strategies
15	Goal orientation
16	Goal specification

INFLUENCES ON TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

17	Human resource systems
18	Informational diversity
19	Interdependence (input, output, process, task, goal, informational)
20	Interpersonal trust
21	Member centrality
22	Minority dissent
23	Mission analysis
24	Monitoring

INFLUENCES ON TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

25	Monitoring progress and systems
26	Motivation and confidence building
27	Multiteam system coordination
28	National culture
29	Openness climate
30	Organisational citizenship behaviour
31	Performance plans
32	Personality (Big Five, achievement orientation, dependability, assertiveness, locus of control)

INFLUENCES ON TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

33	Planning
34	Preference for teamwork
35	Psychological safety
36	Relationship conflict
37	Roles
38	Shared cognition
39	Shared leadership
40	Shared mental models (technology, task, team interaction, team)

INFLUENCES ON TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

41	Skill and authority differentiation
42	Strategic consensus
43	Task accomplishments
44	Task conflict
45	Team adaptability
46	Team building
47	Team charters
48	Team climate

INFLUENCES ON TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

49	Team composition
50	Team confidence
51	Team debriefing
52	Team efficacy
53	Team learning
54	Team learning orientation
55	Team longevity
56	Team potency

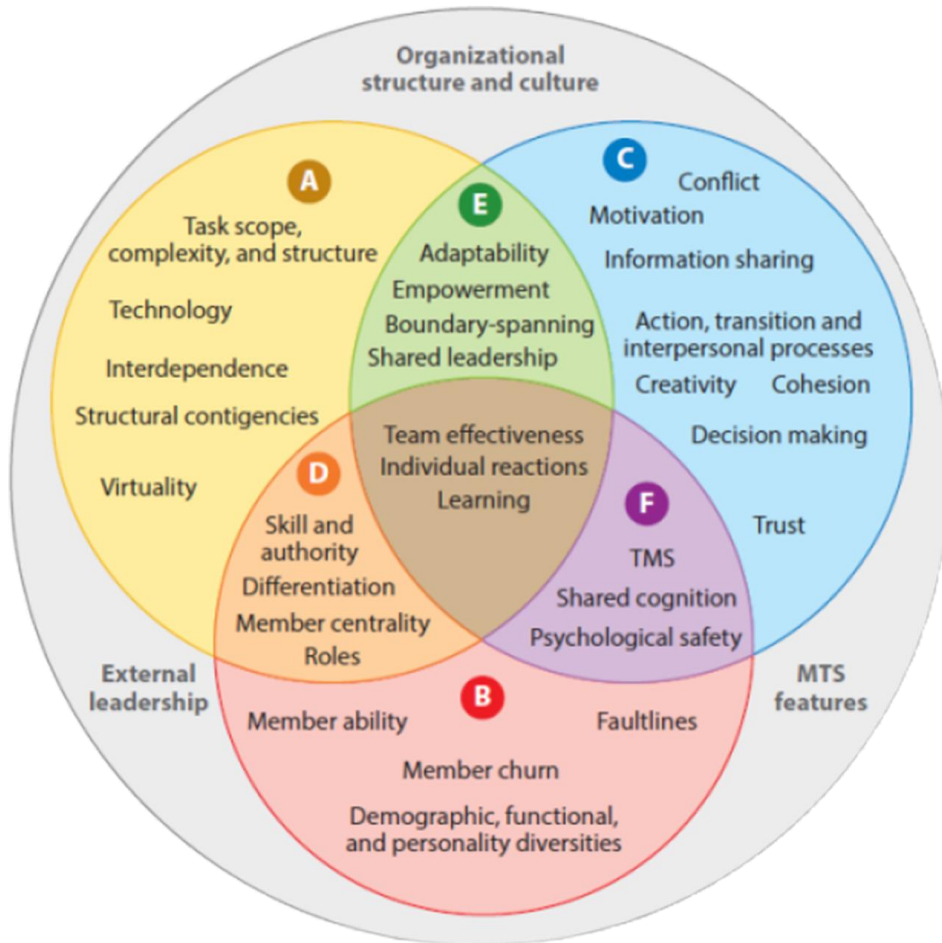
INFLUENCES ON TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

57	Team size
58	Team structure (functional, divisional)
59	Team training
60	Teamwork orientation
61	Technologies
62	Training
63	Transactive memory systems
64	Trust

INFLUENCES ON TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

65	Virtuality
66	Work design

AN ATTEMPT TO ORGANISE THE INFLUENCES ON TEAM EFFECTIVENESS (MATHIEU ET AL, 2019)



Region A: Structural features (inputs).

Region B: Compositional features (inputs).

Region C: Mediating mechanisms.

Region D: Features that are both structural and compositional.

Region E: Structural features that are also mediating mechanisms.

Region F: Mediating mechanisms that are also compositional features.

REDUCING THE NUMBER OF INFLUENCES

Rather than specify the main causes of group productivity (or provide a long list of all possible causes), I have proposed a small set of conditions that, when present, increase the chances—but by no means guarantee—that a group will develop into an effective performing unit. - (Hackman, 2002)

These six conditions are:

1. Real team.
2. Compelling purpose.
3. Right people.
4. Clear norms of conduct.
5. Supportive organizational context.
6. Team-focused coaching.

REDUCING THE NUMBER OF INFLUENCES

Salas et al (2002) Big Five of teamwork:

1. Team leadership.
2. Mutual performance monitoring.
3. Backup behaviour.
4. Adaptability.
5. Team orientation.

OBSERVATIONS OF ATTEMPTS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF INFLUENCES

- Given the quantity and quality of the available scientific evidence, to **what extent is it even possible** to produce a reliable list of the most important influences on team effectiveness?
- What is the **exact meaning of the items on these shorter lists?** In many cases they appear not to be specific influences on team effectiveness but, rather, labels for categories of influencing factors.
- Given the diversity of team types, purposes and contexts, is it likely that these **key influences apply to all or most teams?**
- What are **costs and benefits** for research and practice of **reducing** the very large number of known influences on team effectiveness to relatively few?

A FOUR STEP APPROACH TO CREATING AND IMPROVING TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

1. Tackle and remove **misconceptions about teams** and teams effectiveness which get in the way of attempts to improve team effectiveness.
2. **Create awareness of the most common mistakes** made when managing teams and how they can be overcome.
3. **Set the conditions** for team effectiveness before the team is created.
4. If something appears to be going wrong consider ways of **fixing the problems**.

STEP 1: DEAL WITH MISCONCEPTIONS

- 1. Misconception 1: Harmony helps.** Smooth interaction among members avoids time-wasting debates about how best to proceed. *NO - When conflict is focused on the work itself and is well-managed it is beneficial for the team.*
- 2. Misconception 2: It's good to mix it up.** New members bring energy and fresh ideas to a team. Without them, members risk becoming complacent and inattentive. *NO - The longer teams stay together the better they perform.*
- 3. Misconception 3: Bigger is better.** Larger groups have more resources to apply to the work and including members from all relevant constituencies increases the chances that whatever is produced will be accepted. *NO - Larger groups are harder to coordinate and more likely to produce social loafing. Smaller teams are more efficient.*

STEP 1: DEAL WITH MISCONCEPTIONS

- 4. Misconception 4: Face-to-face interaction is passé.** Powerful technologies for communication and coordination means teams can work much more efficiently at a distance. *NO - Face-to-face contact is important. For distributed teams this can be done when the team is launched, around half way through the team's work and when the work is completed.*
- 5. Misconception 5: It all depends on the leader.** The personality, behavior or style of the leader is the most important driver of team effectiveness. *NO - Hands-on leader activities can make a difference but the most important things leaders do is create conditions that help members manage themselves, to launch the team well and engage in coaching and education.*
- 6. Misconception 6: Teamwork is magical.** All one has to do is gather up some really talented people and tell them in general terms what is needed - the team will just get on with it. *NO - It takes careful thought and preparation to set up a team for effectiveness.*

STEP 2: AVOID COMMON MISTAKES

<p>Mistake 1: Use a team for work that is better done by individuals.</p>	<p>Check this first using job analysis and ensure the task is one that is fully appropriate for performance by a team.</p>
<p>Mistake 2: Call the performing unit a team but really manage members as individuals.</p>	<p>Ensure the team is an intact performing unit whose members perceive themselves as a team and that others deal with as such.</p>
<p>Mistake 3: Fall off the authority balance beam.</p>	<p>It is important for leaders to achieve a balance between the authority they give to the team and withholding it for other parts. Ensure the team has a clear, authoritative and engaging direction.</p>
<p>Mistake 4: Dismantle existing organisational structures so that teams will be fully “empowered” to accomplish the work.</p>	<p>Ensure that the structure of the team - its task, composition and core norms of conduct - promotes rather than impedes competent teamwork.</p>

STEP 2: AVOID COMMON MISTAKES

<p>Mistake 5: Specify challenging team objectives, but skimp on organisational supports.</p>	<p>Make sure the organisational context provides support and reinforcement for high team performance through policies and systems that are specifically tuned to the needs of work teams.</p>
<p>Mistake 6: Assume that members already have all the skills they need to work well as a team.</p>	<p>Make plenty of expert coaching available to the team at those times when members most need it and are ready to receive it.</p>

STEP 3: SET THE CONDITIONS

To think about the conditions within which groups chart their own courses is very different from conventional scholarly models (in which the attempt is to link causes tightly to effects) as well as from action strategies that derive from those models (in which practitioners attempt to manage team processes more or less continuously in real time). - Hackman (2002)

The decisions and actions that make the most difference are those that occur even before a group convenes and at the very beginning of its life...leaders sometimes find themselves tempted to over-design the group and to provide excessively detailed guidance during the launch process...it is wise to resist that temptation and instead to adhere to the principle of minimum critical specification. That principle asserts that one should specify only those few design features that are absolutely essential, thereby leaving a great deal of latitude for group members to chart their own course. - Hackman (2012)

SIX CRITICAL CONDITIONS (HACKMAN, 2012)

Hackman (2002) – Conditions for Team Effectiveness

1. Real team	Real work teams are intact social systems whose members work together to achieve a common purpose. They have clear boundaries that distinguish members from nonmembers. They work interdependently to generate a product for which members have collective, rather than individual, accountability. And they have at least moderate stability, which gives members time to learn how to work well together.
2. Compelling purpose	A compelling purpose energizes team members, orients them toward their collective objective, and fully engages their talents. Purpose has high priority when establishing a team because so many other design decisions depend on it—how the team is structured, the kinds of organisational supports that are needed, and the type of coaching by team leaders that will be most helpful.
3. Right people	Well-composed teams have the right number and mix of members, each of whom has both task expertise and skill in working collaboratively with others. And they are as small and as diverse as possible—large size and excessive homogeneity of membership can cripple even teams that otherwise are quite well designed.

SIX CRITICAL CONDITIONS (HACKMAN, 2012)

4. Clear norms of conduct	<p>Norms of conduct specify what behaviors are, and are not, acceptable in a team. Having clear, well-enforced norms greatly reduces the amount of time a team must spend actively managing member behavior. The best norms promote continuous scanning of the performance situation and the deployment of work strategies that are well tuned to the special features of the team's task and situation.</p>
5. Supportive organisational context	<p>Even teams that are properly structured and supported sometimes founder because they cannot obtain the organisational supports they need to perform well. Having the material resources needed to carry out the work is of course essential. But beyond that, team performance is facilitated when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) the reward system provides recognition and positive consequences for excellent team performance,(ii) the information system provides the team with the data and the information-processing tools members need to plan and execute their work, and(iii) the organisation's educational system makes available to the team any technical or educational assistance members may require.

SIX CRITICAL CONDITIONS (HACKMAN, 2012)

6. Team-focused coaching

Competent and well-timed team coaching can help a team minimize its exposure to process losses and increase the chances that it will operate in ways that generate synergistic process gains. But even highly competent coaching is likely to be futile when the other enabling conditions are not in place, or when the team is not at a stage of its life cycle when members are ready to receive it. That is why coaching, as important as it can be in fostering competent teamwork, comes last in the list of enabling conditions.

TABLE EXERCISE:

Setting up the Conditions for Success

Review Hackman's six conditions in your handout.
In pairs or groups of three, discuss the practical actions you could take within your organisation to strengthen each condition to set up teams for greater success.
15 minutes to discuss, 15 minutes to feedback

STEP 4: TAKE REMEDIAL ACTION

- **Stage 1:** Some sort of assessment of team effectiveness issues. What is going wrong?
- **Stage 2:** Some sort of a diagnosis or analysis of causes. Why is it going wrong?
- **Stage 3:** Identify actionable solutions or interventions that are likely to help. What can we do about it? Followed by an evaluation of whether or not these actions have been effective.

STEP 4 STAGE 1 AN ASSESSMENT OF TEAM EFFECTIVENESS ISSUES – WHAT'S GOING ON?

There are two aspects to team effectiveness: Outputs and processes. In order to diagnose what might be happening in relation to these we can ask questions as a starting point.

Example questions about team outputs

- What exactly are the team's outputs?
- Are they clearly specified?
- How much control does the team have over these outputs?
- To what extent are the outputs being produced?
- Are they being produced to schedule with the quality required?
- Are outputs satisfactory to clients?

Example questions about team processes

- Are team members generally satisfied?
- How much is the team learning and adapting?
- To what extent are individual team efforts coordinated?
- To what extent do team members have shared objectives?

STEP 4 STAGE 2: DIAGNOSIS OR ANALYSIS OF CAUSES – WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?

Consider Hackman's six enabling conditions to identify if the absence or low level of any of these could be the cause.

Examine Tannenbaum et al's (2023) common obstacles to see if any apply to the team and might explain why the issues are happening:

Competing priorities.

1. People do not value their teammates.
2. Power differentials.
3. A leader is not promoting collaboration.
4. Lack of experience working together.
5. Dynamic work demands.
6. Working with team members from different disciplines or training.
7. Team member overload.
8. Lack of resources.

STEP 4 STAGE 3: INTERVENTIONS - WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

For example, Salas et al (2015) practical advice for enhancing critical considerations

Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build collective efficacy through promoting “early wins.”• Build trust through the discussion of past experiences relevant to team goals.
Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be proactive—set expectations for how to handle conflict.• Be reactive—confront conflict when it occurs instead of ignoring it.
Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-correct via huddles and debriefs.• Ensure team member roles are clear but not overly rigid.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share unique information among team members.• Utilise closed-loop communication patterns.
Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use coaches to diagnose and address teamwork problems.• Distribute leadership responsibilities among multiple members of the team.

STEP 4 STAGE 3: INTERVENTIONS - WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

Cognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foster understanding of roles and how these roles fit together through cross-training.• Establish a clear shared understanding of team functioning through self-correction.
Composition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Select for a strong team orientation.• Compose teams based upon both the teamwork and taskwork demands.
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One size does not fit all—anticipate and plan for contextual teamwork challenges.• Set organisational policies, practices and procedures that promote and support teamwork.
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a hybrid culture that leverages pro-team values and creates a safe environment for voicing ideas and concerns.• Create a team culture that embraces similarities and respects differences.

STEP 4 STAGE 1 AN ASSESSMENT OF TEAM EFFECTIVENESS ISSUES – TABLE EXERCISE

Think of a team you know might be struggling. In pairs or threes, design a method for how you would assess what the issue is with the team. This should include both the team outputs and the team processes.

20 minutes to discuss, 10 minutes to feedback

Example questions about team outputs

- What exactly are the team's outputs?
- Are they clearly specified?
- How much control does the team have over these outputs?
- To what extent are the outputs being produced?
- Are they being produced to schedule with the quality required?
- Are outputs satisfactory to clients?

Example questions about team processes

- Are team members generally satisfied?
- How much is the team learning and adapting?
- To what extent are individual team efforts coordinated?
- To what extent do team members have shared objectives?

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

- It is important that we deal with team misconceptions and mistakes first as these seem quite common before moving on to creating team effectiveness.
- The nature of teams and team effectiveness means that we can't "make" a team perform well. We can't just "drive" team performance. Hence the emphasis on first ensuring the critical conditions that are likely to lead to team effectiveness are put in place.
- At the same time, things can easily go wrong. If they do, we need a straightforward way of diagnosing what the issues are, their causes and likely solutions.
- Given that teams are fundamentally unstable and dynamic it seems highly unlikely that remedial action will only be required once.
- Rather than constantly "tweaking" various factors that might affect team effectiveness, it would seem to make more sense to pay attention to the critical conditions and ensure that they remain, broadly, in place.

WORK PSYCHOLOGY NETWORK

Work Psychology provides much of the foundational knowledge for HR practice and is a critical underpinning for all HR practitioners.

It takes us beyond the unhelpful notion of 'best practice' and instead to practices relevant to our business context that are designed to drive business performance.

CRF's Work Psychology Network was launched to provide accessible but scientifically grounded research, peer networking and events exploring HR topics through the lens of Work Psychology.

Topics addressed

2025 Programme

February:
Motivation and Work
Performance

May:
Assessing Potential

September:
Behaviour Change in
Organisations

2026 Programme

February:
Predicting Performance at
Work

May:
Understanding Teams and
Team Effectiveness

September:
Feedback and Work
Performance

2027 Programme

February:
Psychological Wellbeing at Work

June:
Assessing Job Performance

September:
Evaluation of Learning
Interventions

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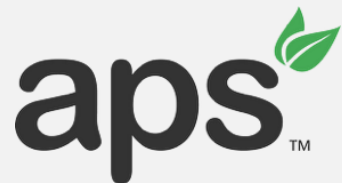


UNDERSTANDING TEAMS AND TEAM EFFECTIVENESS



Prof. Rob Briner
Associate Director Research

With special thanks to CRF Programme Partners



PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY POST

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY: IS THAT REALLY A THING?*

As part of my work leading [Corporate Research Forum \(CRF\)](#)'s Work Psychology Network I've been reconsidering some popular ideas about work behaviour such as psychological safety (PS).

The idea that employees should not feel afraid to speak up about their concerns is difficult not to like. It seems morally and practically important.

Certainly PS is a 'thing' in that we know how it feels. But is it a useful idea?

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY POST

1. **We don't know much about how to increase psychological safety:** "We believe that the most glaring gap in the literature pertains to how to create PS."

2. **We don't know much about the causes and effects of psychological safety:** "Despite prior calls for longitudinal research to better understand the dynamics of PS, studies that collect data at multiple points in time...remain few and far between."

3. **We don't know much about the meaning and measurement of psychological safety across demographic groups, countries or cultures.**

4. **We don't know much about factors which affect or limit the relationships between psychological safety and outcomes:** "Other salient factors may also moderate (or serve as boundary conditions) for the effects of PS. We believe this remains an area ripe for further exploration."

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY POST

Other limits on its usefulness include the finding that high levels of PS could be harmful [<https://lnkd.in/eFNzSJ4w>] and uncertainties about how it can be measured [<https://lnkd.in/egENxqGV>].

PS makes sense and seems promising but maybe we don't yet know enough about it for it to be practically useful - though this may change.

So what's the alternative to PS?

Rather than latching onto an appealing idea, **use evidence-based practice** to first understand the specific issues you're dealing with in your context and, once understood, consider actions you can take which will most likely help resolve those issues.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY DEFINITION

Team psychological safety is defined as a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking. (2019)

Psychological safety describes perceptions of the consequences of taking interpersonal risks in a particular context such as a workplace. (2014)

Psychological safety describes a work environment where people believe that such candor is expected and possible. (2023)

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY MEASUREMENT

1. If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you.
2. Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.
3. People on this team sometimes reject others for being different.
4. It is safe to take a risk on this team.
5. It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help.
6. No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.
7. Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.