

Team Development Manual

by Mike Woodcock

Published by Gower Publishing

This model is based on the work of Mike Woodcock, and suggests that there are nine building blocks of effective teams:

- Clear objectives and agreed goals
- Openness and confrontation
- Support and trust
- Co-operation and conflict
- Sound working and decision-making procedures
- Appropriate leadership
- Regular review
- Individual development
- Sound inter-group relations

Building Blocks in more Detail

Clear objectives and agreed goals

In order to be able to focus on a clear way forward, the team needs to understand what it is aiming to achieve. The result will be even better if the team is involved in this decision making process. Once the priorities are agreed, the team and individuals within it tend to take on a results-orientated outlook, any work they carry out can then be related to this. This tends to be a building block that energises and focuses the team.

Openness and confrontation

In a team in which there is a healthy group dynamic, the team members are prepared to reveal what they think and feel to each other. It is a group norm to recognise that differences within the team are best brought into the open and acknowledged, even if they can not always be resolved. Team members do not bear grudges, nor are they suspicious of each other's motives. People are not punished for what they think or feel, which leads to a 'no-blame' culture.

Support and trust

In balance to a team dealing with openness and confrontation, team members actively look for ways to help each other, and are happy to own up to their mistakes in the knowledge that they will not be held against them. They recognise each others' values and good intentions, and are able to accept help as well as to give it. There is a culture in the team that 'if I am stuck someone will always help'.

Working effectively with co-operation and conflict

Teams often tend to shy away from rather than address how to work with both co-operation and conflict, and yet evidence suggests that the really top performing teams are very effective at handling this situation. The team pays careful attention to its internal communications, and distinguishes carefully between arguing as a means of attack, and problem solving when there are two or more views on a subject. Differences are explored rather than fought over.

Sound working and decision-making procedures

In the modern organisational culture teams are often called upon to make decisions as a group, or at least be involved in the decision. This is particularly true for self managed teams. This building block is about the team having the most appropriate procedure/decision making process in place. The question that needs to be asked here is 'are the processes used the most appropriate ones for this team at this time over this issue?'

Appropriate leadership

There are many possible styles of leadership. The most effective teams have a style of leadership that is appropriate for the team's development, their culture, their level of skill, and the task to be achieved. The leader varies his or her style to suit different situations, and seeks and listens to feedback from the team.

Regular review

Extremely effective teams have an interest in their own improvement and so one way of facilitating this is by regularly reviewing how they are doing. The team regularly reviews both its tasks and its working procedures. Members are aware of how the rest of the organisation views the team, and are prepared to listen to outsiders' views on improving the team's performance. Individual team members receive regular feedback on their performance, when they are performing well and when they are performing unsatisfactorily.

Individual development

Individuals are encouraged to grow and fulfill their potential, even when that may mean outgrowing the team. The team leader takes an interest in the hopes and aspirations of team members, and seeks appropriate opportunities to help them to gain the skills and experiences that they need for the future.

Sound inter-group relations

This building block looks outside the team, and how they interact with other teams and other parts of the organisation. A very cohesive team can come unstuck when the focus of their attention turns to 'beating' another team rather than being effective themselves. The team is respected by the rest of the organisation because of the visible contribution that it makes. The team works well with other teams when necessary, and team members are careful not to disparage the team or other members in front of outsiders. The team takes an active part in defining its role in the organisation, and seeks ways to help other teams to add value.

Summary

Woodcock's analysis of team working is a very useful way of structuring how teams can be viewed. The model is practical and therefore allows direct action to be carried out as a result of comparing the team to the model. It allows the team to focus on one or two issues at a time to work on. From the team builder's point of view it enables you to design an event with some very clear and specific goals and therefore to design your exercises accordingly. It is not (and not meant to be) a totally comprehensive model of teams, and in itself does not explain how to put these things right (although Woodcock's book goes some way to discussing this). It is very good used as a framework for the teambuilder when the team is working, or for when the team is carrying out self analysis, and does not know where to start.