

TEAMS - INPUT

INTRODUCTION

Teams are organised around a small number of people with various views, perspectives and skills who decide to come together, setting aside their individual interests, and supporting each other to achieve a common purpose and goal for which they are mutually accountable (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993). Just like any other group, teams have a distinctive life of their own and evolve and grow in response to different external and internal factors. Building a performing and cohesive team is one of the key roles of leadership. This responsibility needs distinct but complementary skill sets and tasks to help the team come together, function properly, address any potential dysfunction and achieve its mission.

MAIN IDEAS

Team Leadership and Management

The genuine desire to build a team and drive it to success calls for a balance between answering the practical demands of the job (team management) and inspiring a common vision and mobilizing the team to achieve it (team leadership).

Team leadership involves among others:

- Clarifying team identity, values and purpose
- Articulating team vision and mission
- Helping team members understand and commit to that vision
- Crafting an appropriate strategy
- Aligning actions and interventions to team's values and purpose (doing the right things)
- Coping with change and managing complex issues

On the other hand, team management refers to instilling good operational processes, techniques, and tools for organizing and coordinating a group of individuals working towards a common goal. Team management is therefore more focused on how the mission will be fulfilled (doing things right), through:

- prioritizing and planning
- delegating and allocating tasks
- motivating and empowering
- developing the team
- monitoring and assessing performance
- managing conflict, etc...

Team management and leadership are important for getting things done and ensuring that the team mission is implemented efficiently and successfully:

- Both set of responsibilities require constant inquiry and evaluation as well as a desire to improve in implementing these tasks for the service of the team.
- They often involve wearing many hats: being able to be engaged as a team member in a mutual relationship yet being also able to lead and drive a team to perform.

Leadership Orientation: Giving Priority to Task and Relationships

Many of us in leadership positions find ourselves in our roles because we know how to get things done or because we know how to get others to get things done.

Both orientations are essential:

- our ability to stay focused on goal achievement and deliver results (**Task-oriented behaviors**)
- our ability to capitalize on our relationships, show consideration and respect to others and mobilize them to perform (**Social-oriented behaviors**)

On par, each orientation produces results, though in the long run, productivity was higher (increase of around 8%) for relationship-oriented led teams than for task-oriented teams. (Burke et al., 2006). It has also been suggested that groups who perceive their leaders as more task-oriented achieve higher levels of task accomplishment (Arana; Chambel; Curra; Taberner, 2009).

According to the University of Central Michigan, there is growing evidence that both orientations are important for successfully leading teams: by focusing on tasks, productivity and performance, team leaders can ensure that the team stays on schedule and members are clear about their roles. Similarly, by focusing on team cohesiveness and fostering relationships with team members, leaders can motivate them and cultivate an environment in which everyone feels safe and encouraged to contribute and take initiatives. Given the importance of both orientations, team leaders are invited to look at their preferences and identify their gaps. Balancing the interdependent task-oriented behaviors with the social-oriented behaviors involves:

Under the Task Focus	Under the relationship focus
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Emphasis on work facilitation● Focus on structure, role, and task● Priority for achieving desired results● Emphasis on goal setting and planning● Strict use of schedules and step by step plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Emphasis on interaction facilitation● Focus on relationships, well-being, motivation● Priority to foster positive relationships● Emphasis on people and communication within● Communications facilitation, casual interactions, frequent meetings
<p><u>Note:</u> If you are strongly oriented toward tasks, have someone on your team pay attention to relationships amongst colleagues, morale, inclusion, socials and celebrations. Even if the task is somewhat urgent, the focus on relationships is key:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Slow down to go fast● Encourage team members to get to know each other● Share strengths and weaknesses● Form agreements about group expectations	<p><u>Note:</u> If you are strongly oriented toward relationships, have someone on your team pay attention to goals, timelines and planning, workflow, performance reviews, delivering outcomes...</p>

Team Development and life cycle

Just like any other group, teams have a distinctive life of their own. Teams do not form automatically when people come together, but gradually take shape and undergo various phases where they evolve and mature in response to different external and internal factors. There are a number of models that describe group life and suggest approaches to team leadership depending on the stage of team development (Tuckman Model, Randall and Southgate, Bass and Ryterband, Woodcock's model, Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership model, Tannenbaum and Schmidt Continuum, ...).

You will find in the attached handout more details on the team formation process based on the the work of Bruce Tuckman (1965). The framework suggests five consecutive stages (Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Mourning) and describes how teams come together, face challenges, find solutions, plan, deliver results and eventually dissolve.

You will also find in the handout a series of questions and exercises to deepen in the understanding of the model along with insights for leadership on how to manage each stage.

Building High-performing teams

Maintaining team cohesiveness and performance across the different phases of the team's life cycle requires mastering a series of skills and initiating (in collaboration with others) a wide array of practices and tasks such as team building, practicing resonant communication, coaching/mentoring/supervising, managing discipline, managing conflict,... You will find in the handout key themes to help you start the reflection. You can also refer to the Practices and Exercises section to deepen in each of the suggested elements and explore other tools.

IGNATIAN NOTE

Maintaining the life of the group: Insights from the instructions at Trent

While Ignatius' writings focused a lot on the care of the individual and provided considerable insights on organizational matters, he relatively seemed silent when it comes to teams. His instructions to his companions at Trent offer however a subtle and insightful model rooted in purpose and spirituality that could guide the work of teams today. For more details, refer to David Coghlan's article on ignatian teamwork (in the Resources section) as well as Ignatius' instructions at Trent. A summary of the article along with some helpful questions are provided in the section's handout.

There are two instances in Gonçalves da Câmaras' *Memoriale* (83, 296) that allow us to infer a known idea in leadership development about team work:

And apropos of the order that our Father had given him about novices' penances, he told me that between the two of us we would make a good salad, if he poured the oil and I, being the minister, the vinegar.

Loarte returned amazed from his interview with Fr. Ignatius, and greatly consoled and encouraged to confront all the tasks he had in hand. When I asked him what he thought of the Father, he replied, "The Father is like a fountain of oil." When I asked him what he thought of me, he replied, "Your Reverence is all vinegar."

I reported to our Father in detail each day everything that passed between the two of us, and I followed his instructions in everything. I remember especially that when I told him of this reply about oil and vinegar, he made a great joke of it, and recounted it to various Fathers with signs of great satisfaction.

These two passages that talk about Ignatius being the oil and Gonçalves da Câmara being the vinegar of a salad show us how as leaders, we are not called to be perfect and be able to do everything by ourselves. Complementary gifts are to be used accordingly. This is one of the beauties of teamwork, if you are not good at, for example, negotiating and one of your team members is, do not hesitate in asking them to deal with challenges that require this managerial role.

A good leader is therefore, called not only to know well his or her gifts and vulnerabilities but also to know the ones from his/her team members. This, in turn, requires you to spend time with them, ask them about what they consider they are good at, put them in challenging positions to see how they respond, ask around to third parties to see if there is some quality (or flaw) you might have missed about a person, and many more little tricks that allow you to build a cohesive and well blended team.

EXPECTED LEARNINGS AND OUTCOMES

1. Introducing key responsibilities of team management and leadership
2. Introducing the orientation toward tasks (productivity focus) and toward people (relational focus)
3. Understanding the team formation process and the leader's role in each stage
4. Exploring elements that promote and hinder team productivity and cohesiveness and applying to one's own team experience
5. Exploring Ignatius' views on teams and group life and reflecting on how teams and groups work best according to the Ignatian Charism

"Teamwork is neither "good" nor "desirable." It is a fact. Wherever people work together or play together they do so as a team. Which team to use for what purpose is a crucial, difficult and risky decision that is even harder to unmake. Managements have yet to learn how to make it."

Peter Drucker