

CHAPTER 6. TEAMWORK

Teamwork is key to organizational success and represents one of its greatest competitive advantages.

6.1. THE WORK TEAM AND ITS COMPOSITION

A work team is a group of people striving to achieve a common goal, combining their efforts under the direction of a leader. Team members possess complementary skills or attitudes and stand together responsibly as a unit. The collective work of a team generates a result greater than the sum of the individual assets of each person: training, aptitudes, and attitudes.

People have worked in teams since the earliest times. The hunting of animals by primitive tribes demonstrates early forms of teamwork. This highlights that teams have always been necessary, and teamwork is increasingly promoted and considered essential in current times. During the Exodus, Moses delegated work and organized teams among the Israelites.

6.1.1. Number of team members

The number of members in a team should be small, averaging between 3 and 6 people. This size is justified for the following reasons:

- With a small number of people, consensus is reached sooner, and the group is far more operational.
- Larger groups may generate more ideas, but they are generally neither practical nor manageable. Furthermore, beyond a certain size, the number of ideas generated decreases proportionally as membership grows.
- If a work team is large, responsibility becomes so dispersed that many members become passive, relying on others to take the lead.
- Increased membership complicates interaction and facilitates the creation of subgroups, making it difficult to pursue objectives in the same direction.

6.1.2. Advantages of teamwork

The diversity of knowledge among team members makes it possible to achieve results that individual contributions alone could not. Moreover, the greater the challenge sought, the higher the likelihood of the team remaining together.

A work team is more effective than individual action, successfully achieving desired objectives and optimizing necessary resources. Working in a team offers the following proven advantages:

- We learn from others and exchange information.
- Attitudes such as initiative, decision-making, creativity, self-discipline, and the ability to listen are developed.
- People become motivated through sharing.
- Communication is rewarding and often leads to friendship.
- The working method, and consequently the results, are improved.

Working in a team is distinct from working in a group. In a group, each member works individually, maintaining individual responsibility and control. When working in a team, people are interdependent; responsibility and control are both individual and collective.

6.1.3. Team structure

The fundamental requirement for work teams is that they must be multidisciplinary and self-managed. Ideally, a work team should be heterogeneous in terms of personality, opinions, knowledge, and skills.

Just as a football team cannot be composed solely of eleven strikers, even if they were all great stars such as Real Madrid's Raúl or Barcelona's Messi, an organization and its teams cannot be made up only of "number one" people. A team must consist of different individuals, with varied aptitudes and attitudes. A team needs people with diverse characteristics, the most important being:

- A leader.
- Experts, who contribute ideas and experience.
- Indefatigable workers (or hard workers), who drive the tasks forward.
- People who, due to their personal characteristics, foster team cohesion.
- An administrator or secretary.

A team requires people with the characteristics described above. Think of the national basketball coach selecting players for specific positions: point guard, small forward, center. The same principle must apply in an organization. Selecting team members is essential for its proper functioning.

It is interesting to observe that companies form teams both with people from the same department and with employees from different departments. Employees often prefer working with those linked to them (colleagues in their own department) but frequently acknowledge that they work harder and better in the latter case.

6.1.4. The need for many team leaders

Organizations must ensure that the maximum possible number of workers lead work teams. Indirect positions (such as managers, line supervisors, etc.) often lack justification or meaning. Indirect staff must be integrated into work teams. The goal is to create leaders instead of specialists.

Indirect staff generally do not generate value. Historically, they have typically limited themselves to giving instructions and conducting ex-post checks. Integrated into work teams, these indirect roles can transform into creative leaders who share and innovate. Work teams must be self-managed, as this autonomy fosters creativity, allows for mistakes, and enables learning from those errors. This capability facilitates continuous decision-making.

6.1.5. Diversity of people in the organization

Companies must rely on teamwork, but what happens when individuals within the company or teams do not collaborate or perform adequately? Since these usually represent small percentages, typically between 10% and 15% (under normal conditions), the recommendation is to focus on motivating the remaining 85–90%. Workers in the 10–15% range may fail to cooperate for various reasons. If deficiencies are due to physical problems, the issue must be resolved. If the shortcomings are not physical, the 85–90% majority must be motivated to carry

the smaller group along. The large group must be persuaded of this approach, rather than the opposite, punishing the low performers.

Punishing low performers can be counterproductive, as some workers in the large group may take the side of the smaller group simply out of affinity, trust, or friendship. An organization will always have good, average, and poor workers. It is essential to try to ensure that all of them improve over time, even the high performers.

6.1.6. Sharing successes and failures

The secret to success is for managers or leaders to share everything with employees—both successes and failures. Sometimes, successes are credited only to managers, which explains why failures are also attributed to them. However, successes and failures must be shared by all employees in the company.

6.2. THE CONDITION FOR TEAMWORK

6.2.1. Requirements for teamwork

These requirements are:

- The presence of a leader. A team leader is essential; where leadership exists, opportunities arise; otherwise, the team fails to function. Furthermore, the leader must be the team's motivator. A leader should never reflect or transmit uncertainty and pessimism to collaborators; on the contrary, they must instill confidence.
- A common objective.
- Appropriate attitude and integration among members. Team members must adopt the attitude of listening to others, accepting majority opinions, and setting aside their own. When an individual objective is prioritized over the team's objective, the person lacks the right attitude for teamwork. The team's interest must prevail over individual interests. Many companies lack a culture of teamwork. In a work team, either everyone wins, or everyone loses.
- Assignment of task responsibilities. Every team member, including the leader, must know their role and responsibilities, as well as those of the others.
- Indicators tracking objective progress.
- Efficiency: achieving the objective at the lowest possible cost.
- The team should be composed of people from multiple disciplines.
- The team should be self-managed.
- The team should have resources.
- Commitment from team members, involving assuming and taking responsibility for decisions made, and sharing successes and failures. Successes must be celebrated, and failures must be learned from.
- Constant communication; however, unnecessary meetings should be avoided, and those that are held must be properly planned and executed to optimize them.
- A sense of belonging to the team.

6.2.2. Attitude of team members

Any member of a work team must adapt to specific requirements to correctly analyze the content being proposed. This means thinking as a team. When addressing any topic, a person should endeavor to:

- Deepen knowledge of the subject.
- Listen to and analyze different points of view.
- Try to see what others see.
- Be willing to change one's opinion.
- Not mind losing.
- Show others the justification for their proposals and ask others to do the same with theirs.
- Avoid rushing into premature judgments, while still demonstrating initiative and taking risks.
- Not be afraid to make mistakes.
- Work with quality, correcting defects without blaming others.

In a teamwork meeting, one must both talk and listen. A person must listen to the different points of view and present their own. If one truly listens, they can change their own point of view. Knowing how to listen is the most challenging aspect.

6.3. LEADERSHIP IN TEAM MEETINGS

There must be a leader in any work meeting. This person must conduct the meeting, ensuring that people can speak freely, express their opinions, listen to others' proposals, and analyze them to either express agreement or disagreement. To achieve this, the following steps are necessary:

a) Problem analysis:

- Analyze what is known, what is unknown, and what is needed.
- Listen to the ideas of others.
- Respond to all viewpoints.

b) Conducting the debate:

- The mandatory mission of the leader is to conduct the meeting (only as strictly necessary), with optional duties including controlling it, participating, and helping others reach conclusions.
- The meeting is conducted by asking questions, listening, and responding to others. The leader must never impose a personal decision or idea, and their interventions must always be impartial. Progressively summarizing the points discussed is highly beneficial.
- The leader must maintain control of the meeting. To do this, they can select topics, set time limits for subjects and interventions, and seek specificity rather than rambling. Examples include: "Could we table this topic for later?" "Anything else before moving on to the next point?" "There are 15 minutes left for this last topic".
- To encourage participation, the moderator must sometimes sacrifice their own involvement.

It is important for the leader or person in charge of a work team to evaluate the following:

- Degree of trust among team members.
- Type of communication between them. Listening skills.
- Mutual support.
- Understanding of the objectives.
- Knowledge of the topics they are working on.
- Collection of information for work.
- Conclusions reached by each person.
- Creativity.
- Clarity of exposition.
- Interest in the opinions of others.
- Conflicts, their types, and intensity.
- Skills of the team members.

In turn, the leader must be evaluated according to the following parameters:

- How they prepare for meetings.
- Direction of the meeting.
- Do they listen to others?
- Degree of contribution to the team based on their experience and expertise.
- Do they foster an adequate climate?
- Do they consider the personality of each team member in their dealings?
- Do they plan the agreed actions?
- Do they follow up on them properly?
- Are they motivators and drivers of the team?

Being a leader does not mean being above others, but it does imply being responsible for a common goal and the proper functioning of the team.

6.4. FACILITIES AND TOOLS FOR TEAMWORK

6.4.1. The meeting room

The location and layout of the meeting room are significant factors. Depending on the number of team members and their activity, meetings are held in rooms specifically prepared for this purpose. These rooms must be equipped with necessary functional furniture, good working conditions (including the absence of noise and adequate air conditioning), a whiteboard for writing, computer equipment, a projector, and a screen for projection.

6.4.2. Brainstorming

In work meetings, teams sometimes resort to brainstorming among all team members. In practice, brainstorming is carried out in the following manner:

1. The leader states the objective of the meeting.
2. A block of Post-it notes is given to each of the work team members.
3. Each person writes their ideas on the Post-it notes, with one idea on each note.
4. The leader places the Post-it notes on a whiteboard. The notes are grouped together based on homogeneous ideas.
5. Once the groups of similar or homogeneous ideas are defined on the whiteboard, with their corresponding notes pasted beneath the group name, the team proceeds to work, sharing members' opinions until conclusions are reached through consensus.

6.4.3. Pareto analysis

This method is also a highly useful tool for teamwork. It involves classifying the data in descending order of frequency within a bar chart. It helps team members identify the most important causes of problems in order of priority.

6.4.4. Group dynamics

Group dynamics can be used as a practice scenario for a small group of people to sit around a table and try to solve a proposed case. A video may be made and subsequently projected to the team members to analyze the strengths and weaknesses detected by the supervisor.

A typical exercise involves presenting the case of a person who is on a yacht when a fire occurs. A list of items is provided, such as paddles, three days' worth of food, a life jacket, flares, a compass, a radio, a fishing rod, a water canister, etc. The members of the working group have 10 minutes to work individually and arrive at an ordering of the list of items based on their importance for survival. Following this, they work in a group for 45 minutes to agree on an order. The goal is not simply for the majority to agree, but rather to reach a consensus. The objective is to succeed in compiling the final order.

6.4.5. Role-playing method

This method consists of simulating a fictitious company meeting where each participant (for example, six people) is assigned a role in a department, such as commercial, production, administration, R&D, sales, and purchasing. The company has a sum available for investment (for example, 600,000 euros), and a decision must be made regarding where to invest it, specifying the department and the option. The individuals carrying out the exercise have 10 minutes to study the case and then 45 minutes to reach an agreement.

Each person is previously provided with information about the needs of the department they represent, including four possible options. Furthermore, each person has information about the most significant problems that have occurred in their department over the last three years. For example, in sales, a new market had opened but subsequently failed to meet expectations due to a series of temporary circumstances. Each person must prioritize the needs of their department and has about ten minutes to defend their proposal.

6.4.6. Outdoor training

This is a method to promote teamwork that consists of carrying out activities in small groups in the middle of nature to overcome challenges. These activities are performed as a team to identify and develop leadership, communication, and collective work skills.

An example of outdoor training is to propose that team members build a catapult to launch objects by providing supplies such as slats, adhesive tape, rubber bands, etc., or to construct a raft using empty drums, logs, and rope.

Some people believe this method is original, relaxed, and encourages communication and companionship; others argue that the high cost does not justify it.

6.5. TEAM MOTIVATION

There are several fundamental concepts that are key to keeping team members motivated:

- a) The team members must accept the leader.
- b) Each person must be assigned a function within the team and specific tasks for each project. The role is not a hierarchical position, but an assignment based on the individual's characteristics, skills, and knowledge. For example, a person who is enthusiastic about and knowledgeable in multimedia could be responsible for the team's presentations, or another person could be in charge of everything related to the design of work plans because they are an expert in that subject, etc.
- c) The leader and the rest of the team members must define the rules of operation, as this allows them to work with freedom and autonomously, which is a motivating factor.
- d) Good relationships among team members are achieved when:
 - A person greets colleagues cordially and calls them by name.
 - All people interact with others without exception, even if only in friendly conversations.
 - In addition to work matters, people talk about other topics.
 - Meetings are organized on special dates to celebrate births, birthdays, and Christmas.
 - When one person presents an idea, the rest try to understand it instead of immediately engaging in debate.

Maintaining positive relationships also depends on important aspects, such as:

- Not making inappropriate comments about others.
- Not offending people.
- Not discrediting others in public.

Example: Jerónimo Cienfuegos was the concierge at the entrance of a factory. Among his duties was controlling the parking lot, where there were areas assigned for employees and visitors. He was a strict observer of the existing rules. One day the Commercial Director parked in the "visitor parking," and Jerónimo asked him to take the car out of that area. The Commercial Director called the General Manager from the entrance booth, expressing his annoyance about the issue. The General Manager then asked to speak to Jerónimo, ordering him to allow the Commercial Director to keep the car in the visitor parking lot.

6.6. WORK MEETINGS

Meetings are organized sessions held among workers from different work teams (processes), groups of employees, or workers from the same section. Examples include weekly meetings of the management committee, or planned meetings of the quality committee, the prevention committee, or the maintenance team. There are also other types of more informal meetings designed to establish communication links with workers and listen to their suggestions. Meetings are a widely used method in companies to unify criteria, integrate objectives, and facilitate direct communication. No one doubts that meetings are necessary in companies because:

- Teamwork and decision-making by consensus are increasingly necessary.
- Interpersonal communication favors integration into the organization's objectives.

Meetings are part of the life of the company, but great caution is necessary. If they are not properly planned and organized, they often become a waste due to the large number of employee hours lost unnecessarily.

6.6.1. Justification of meetings

Analyses have been carried out that determine that approximately 50% of meetings are ineffective and become a significant cost for companies. This cost equals the total of each participant's hours multiplied by their hourly cost to the company. In Spain, the cost/hour of each worker is calculated:

$$\text{Annual gross salary} + \text{annual cost of social security payable by the company}$$

$$\text{Annual working hours of the worker (agreement hours – hours of absenteeism)}$$

Only the necessary meetings **should be held**, and they must be prepared very well.

6.6.2. Preparation for meetings

Meetings are often treated as routine, and the concept of the importance of preparing them well is lost. The preparation consists of:

a) Having a very clear objective for the meeting. In addition to defining the objective very well, it is necessary to specify and restrict the topics to be discussed, since when there are too many, the meeting loses effectiveness (operability).

b) Planning. The most productive time in the agenda of any manager is the time spent planning. To do this, the person convening the meeting must consider:

- Who should attend, striving to limit the list of attendees and analyze the compatibility of people.
- An agenda provided in advance for participants to prepare the topics. The agenda can sometimes be agreed upon by consensus.
- What should be prepared and brought to the meeting: preparation of information and presentation materials.
- Establishing a date and time for the start and end of the meeting.

Although there are no general rules, it seems reasonable not to schedule meetings at the beginning or at the end of the working day, since the beginning of the day is useful for setting guidelines on day-to-day matters, and the end of the day is necessary to resolve other issues that have arisen. The end of the meeting must be planned to respect the agenda of each person attending. It is also not useful to call meetings on the eve of a long public holiday weekend, during the holiday period, or, depending on the company, on Mondays first thing.

c) Organizing the meeting logistics. This is important and consists of the following:

- Choosing and preparing the appropriate location, seeking a comfortable room, isolated from noise, and well air-conditioned.
- Preparation of the necessary material: computer, projector, whiteboard, and office supplies.

6.6.3. Method for effective meetings

1. Respect established schedules:

- Punctuality at the beginning of the meeting.
- Finishing at the scheduled time.

2. Existence of leadership in the meeting:

- There must be a moderator who channels the meeting and directs the opposing viewpoints. They must also allocate and monitor time for the different topics to be discussed.
- Mobile phones must not be used.
- To begin with, the previous minutes must be approved, and the established agenda followed.
- Sometimes it is useful to deal with simple topics that are easy to solve at the beginning. Issue resolution provides confidence and satisfaction. Subsequently, topics that need more dedication should be addressed.
- The meeting cannot be routine.
- Interruptions must be avoided.
- Consensus should not be confused with unanimity. Consensus is reached through the alignment of viewpoints (positions).
- Clear conclusions must be drawn.

3. Drawing up the minutes of the meeting:

- The minutes will be prepared by the meeting secretary and must include:
 - Date of the meeting.
 - Attendees (Present).
 - Topics covered.
 - Agreements reached and the person responsible for each task to be carried out. The deadline for completion must be defined for each task.
 - Outstanding issues that must be addressed in subsequent meetings.

- Date of the next meeting, if applicable.
- Once prepared, the minutes must be sent to the attendees.

4) Follow-up

- After a work meeting, the tasks and measures that must be implemented should be evaluated and reviewed. The agreements reached and the decisions taken have to be put into practice. To ensure this, the team leader will check the progress of each task periodically.