

Importance of team building

Author: Carl Tapi . November 2021

Introduction

One of the key challenges facing organisations today is building effective teams that will help the organisation achieve its goals. The need for teamwork at all levels of the organisation cannot be over-emphasized. For organisations to achieve superior performance, employees need to work together. However, getting people to work together towards achieving a common goal is a challenging assignment for all managers.

In more than 40 years of research, J. Richard Hackman uncovered a groundbreaking insight: what counts most in cooperation is not team members' personalities, attitudes, or behavioral patterns. Instead, an enabling environment is required for teams to thrive. Hackman stated that for teams to be successful there is a need to have a compelling direction, a strong structure, and a supportive context.

What is a Team?

A team is a group of individuals, all working together for a common purpose. The individuals comprising a team ideally should have common goals, common objectives and more or less think on the same lines. Individuals who are not compatible with each other can never form a team. They should have similar if not the same interests, thought processes, attitudes, perceptions, and likings.

What is Team Building?

Team building is a management technique used for improving the efficiency and performance of the workgroups through various activities. Team building is not a one-time act. It is a step-by-step process that aims at bringing a desirable change to the organization.

Effective teams, to a large extent, rely upon the psychological capacity of team members to work together. Individual team members need to have an appreciation of their role in the team and how it affects the effectiveness of the team. The members need to have a clear sense of the goal the team is trying to achieve. They need to have a collective sense of reality, where each one clearly understands not only their role but also that role of other team members.

Why Team Building is Important

The fundamental objective of forming cohesive teams is to bring people together to achieve a similar goal or vision. The idea behind using cohesion is that different people are more likely to come up with better explanations for varied jobs at hand, the work is done faster and with better quality. The times have moved away from the days when one person would be handed a task with a possibility that at the end of the day, the end goal is not of the best quality.

The Benefits of Cohesive Teams

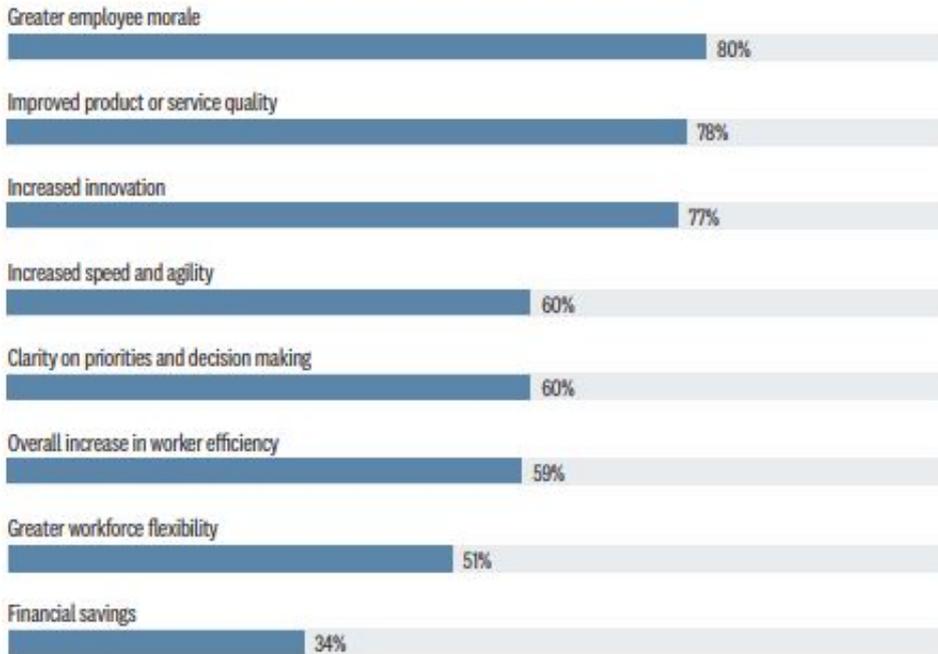
Cohesive teams: help people to come together, solve problems, help people learn from each other, open up new means of communication, boost morale across the organization, may lead to higher retention rates within the organization, and may make employees work more efficiently.

Below is a graph of the survey results from a Harvard Survey conducted in 2019 regarding the perceived benefits of cohesive teams. More and more organizations are beginning to appreciate the benefits that may come along with introducing cohesive teams into the system of doing things.

FIGURE 1

PERCEIVED BUSINESS BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

Business benefits expected from strong collaboration and/or teamwork



SOURCE: HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW ANALYTIC SERVICES SURVEY, JULY 2019

Below

Review, Pulse Survey 2019)

Challenges of Team Cohesion

Cohesive conundrums are inevitable. When faced with this situation, it means that there are some issues regarding the new team. Remarkably, some of the pillars that strengthen a cohesive team can be the very reason why the team fails. These pillars are outlined by the Harvard Business Review (2017): large size, diversity, virtual participation, and educational levels.

Large Size

Just 10 years ago, teams rarely had more than 20 members, research shows that the size of teams has increased significantly as a result of new technologies. Large teams are frequently formed to ensure the participation of a diverse stakeholder group, the coordination of a variety of activities, and the honing of many talents. According to another research, when the size of the team grows over 20 members, the level of natural cooperation among team members decreases.

Diversity

The varied challenges that today's businesses face need people with diverse experiences and perspectives. In many cases, a sizable portion of the team would have never met. While their diverse knowledge and perspectives can stimulate insight and creativity, research suggests that the higher the number of people on the team who do not know anybody else and the greater the diversity, the less likely the team members are to share knowledge.

Virtual Participation

Because of the ever-changing global dynamics, most complex collaborative teams have members who are working at a distance from one another. Technology has allowed for team members to be working in offices in the same city or spread out across the world. In a Harvard Business Review survey (2017), results showed that 40% of the teams in the sample had members all in one place. This meant that the remaining 60% was made of people in various areas. The survey also revealed that as teams become more virtual, collaboration declines.

Educational Level

Complex cohesive teams often generate huge value by taking advantage of a variety of deeply specialized skills and knowledge to create new solutions to new or existing issues. As with the other three pillars above, the research shows that the greater the proportion of highly educated specialists on a team, the more likely the team is to disintegrate into unproductive conflicts.

The Eight Ways to Build Teams

In every team, there needs to be the right composition of the right people in the group. As we have come to understand, collaborative teams are not the normal type of teams. Not everyone can be successful working or learning with people they are not familiar with. Callahan, Schenk, and White (n.d.) point out the three most essential kinds of people to have in a collaborative team. Investing in signature relationship practices – The executive or senior management team can inspire cohesive team behavior by making investments in offices such as those with open door plans to foster communication. Many organizations have moved from a one-person office to team rooms, where employees, even from different departments can interact each day ([Assbeihat](#), 2016).

1. **Modeling cohesive behavior** – *One of the best ways of cementing a certain behavior is by doing it yourself. Leading by example is a crucial aspect of wanting successful Cohesive teams. Have you ever thought of how employees will behave in the same manner that the organization's leaders exhibit?*
2. **Creating a "gift culture"** – *When speaking about a "gift" culture, one needs to think about it as gifting others with things such as time and effort. Mentoring and coaching, especially on an informal basis may encourage employees to build the networks they need to work across the corporate landscape (Gratton and Erickson, 2007).*
3. **Ensuring the requisite skills** – *Human Resources departments that teach employees how to develop relationships, communicate effectively, and creatively resolve conflicts may have a significant influence on team cohesiveness, according to the Harvard Business Review (2017).*
4. **Supporting a strong sense of community** – *Having a sense of community in the organisation can be highly beneficial. This is because employees start to foster a feeling of belonging which results in a level of comfort. When people are comfortable with each other, it opens up room for ideas to move around and for others to ask questions. Having inquisitive individuals on the team is a win because they may bring up questions that no one has ever asked before.*
5. **Building on heritage relationships** - *When too many team members are strangers, people may be reluctant to share knowledge. The best practice is to put at least a few people who know one another on the team. 40% is a good figure to work with as identified by a survey conducted by a Harvard Business Review survey in 2017.*
6. **Understanding role clarity and task ambiguity** - *Cooperation increases when the roles of individual team members are clearly outlined yet the team is given space on how to achieve the task. Group members should be given a guideline of what is expected of them, without necessarily restricting them to how to achieve a set target of goals. Having the freedom to work in a preferred way may yield better quality results than being forced to work and behave in one specific way.*

Teamwork has never been easy, in recent years, it has become much more complex. As teams become increasingly global, virtual, and project-driven. Taking a systematic approach to analysing how well your team is set up to succeed and identifying where improvements are needed can make all the difference. As stated before in this article, there are several approaches for organisations to ensure that they have a very successful cohesive team. Having a diverse cast on the team can open up new avenues of thought and ideas that have never been explored before. Many organisations operating in this global village have found these teams to be beneficial.

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