

September 2017

Team MOUs

Teams vs. Working Groups (Katzenbach and Smith)

Definition: A team (or team approach) is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and an approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.

- Working groups: Individual accountability and individual work. Meet to coordinate and share information.
- Teams: Individual and mutual accountability, significant value of collaboration. Joint work product.

Working groups are more efficient than teams. Teams may or may not be more effective than work groups. So, efficient working groups should be the default approach. The team approach is important when the problems are very complex, the problems are very important, and/or when the standards are very high.

It's vitally important that groups consider these principles and make intentional decisions about working group and team approach priorities and meetings.

- Be absolutely clear regarding the objective and the nature of the specific need to work together.
- Can it be done as a working group? Why or why not? What specific objectives or tasks require a mutual commitment above and beyond a working group?

Real World Team Principles

- 1) Be absolutely clear regarding the mission and the specific need to work together.
- 2) Can it be done as a working group? What specific objectives or tasks require a mutual commitment?
- 3) Establish a covenant based on each member's personal commitment and value-added to the group.
- 4) Establish communication principles and group norms regarding interpersonal relationships.
- 5) Decide regarding the group leadership.
- 6) Develop a work plan (who/what/when?)
- 7) Define near term small victories that, if accomplished, will motivate the group to do more
- 8) Work the plan.
- 9) Effective team leaders adjust their styles to provide what the group can't provide for itself.

Teams: Getting off on the right foot

Specific questions for groups to invest time in discussing and resolving:

- 1) How do we define success?
 - a) What is our assignment?
 - b) What are our respective personal objectives and commitments?

- 2) Can we succeed by divvying up responsibilities into individual projects and working independently? Specifically, what problems result from this approach?
- 3) Can we define specifically those objectives and activities that require us to work together if we are going to be successful? Can we create a situation where the incremental value of joint activity exceeds the incremental cost?
- 4) What value can each of us add to the group's effort? What, in spite of good intentions, are our respective shortcomings?
- 5) What are the key communication principles that will govern our behavior (to enhance group effectiveness and strengthen long term relationships)?
 - a) Will the introverts participate? Will the extroverts listen? What will we do about this?
 - b) What do "being forthright" and "authenticity" mean to us?
 - i) How will we deal with "no-shows", "slackers", "controllers", and "perfectionists"?
 - ii) What types of communication (or silence), while collegial, hinder group effectiveness and the development of genuine relationships?
 - iii) How should we manage trade-offs between honesty and sensitivity to feelings?
 - iv) Do we want feedback when our behavior frustrates or upsets others?
 - v) Do we want unsolicited ideas and suggestions regarding ways to improve our performance?
 - vi) What feedback is *not* welcome?
- 6) How will the group's leadership be organized? Should there be a group leader? If so, should it be permanent or rotating?
- 7) What should be our method of operation?
 - a) How often should we meet? When? Where? For how long?
 - b) Can near term goals be defined that, if accomplished, will reinforce a sense of team validity and progress?
 - c) Should we have loose or tight meetings?
 - i) Should we have an agenda?
 - ii) Should we have a meeting leader?
 - iii) Should we classify the agenda on the basis of reports, problem-solving discussion, creative discussion, and decisions?
- 8) Should we document our responses to any of the questions above in a *team contract*? What purpose might it serve?