

## Chapter 1: Team as a Concept



When trainees finish studying this part, they should be able to:

1. **Define** teams and groups
2. **List** the main characteristics of teams
3. **Know** the differences between teams, groups and individuals
4. **Determine** teams' importance in nowadays organizations
5. **Define** some impressive results of work teams in organizations.

Team Definition,  
Characteristics  
and Steps



### 1.1 Team Definition, Characteristics and Steps

*Although teams (groups) have always been a central part of the organizations, they are gaining increasing attention as potentially important organizational asset. Professionals rarely work alone; they work with their colleagues and their work managers. Accordingly, managers are concerned with creating effective teams that make real contributions to quality products and services and thus containing success of the total organization.*

The evidence suggests that teams typically outperform individuals **when the tasks being done require multiple skills, judgment, and experience.** As organizations have restructured themselves to compete more effectively and efficiently, they have turned to teams as a way to better utilize employee talents. *Management has found that teams are more flexible and responsive to changing events than are traditional departments or other forms of permanent groupings.* Teams have the capability to quickly assemble, deploy, refocus, and disband.

Definition of a  
Team



#### Definition of a Team

From the abovementioned facts, we can define a **team** as:

***“Two or more interdependent individuals who interact with and influence one another in order to accomplish a common purpose”.***

**Imagine** three people waiting in line at the cashier's stand at a supermarket. Now compare them to the board of directors of a large corporation. **Which collection would you consider to be a “group” or a “team”?** Although in our everyday language we may refer to the people waiting in line as a group, they are not a group and the same sense as the members of the board.

Social scientists have formally defined a **group** as a collection of two or more interacting individuals with a stable pattern of relationships between them who share common goals and who perceive themselves as being a group.

**One** of the most obvious characteristics of group is that they are composed of two or more people in social interaction. In other words; the members of a group must have some influence on each other. Groups also must possess a structure. Although groups can change and often do, there must be some stable relationships that keep group members together and functioning as a unit. **To be a group, a greater level of stability would be required.** A third characteristic of groups is that members share common interests or goals.

**Finally**, to be a group, the individuals involved must perceive themselves as a group. Groups are composed of people who recognize each other as members of their group and can distinguish these individuals from nonmembers.

We have all spent a great deal of time working and playing in groups. Some of these groups seem to work very well together, and we sense that the group is able to accomplish something that none of the individuals could have accomplished on his own. In these cases, group members tend to identify with the group and may even surprise themselves in what they are able to accomplish individually when working with the group. Other groups, however, seem to function less effectively. In these cases, group members may hate spending time in the group and often feel that they could accomplish the task, or at least their part of the task, much more efficiently if they were left own their on.

**From the abovementioned definition, we can summarize the team characteristics as follows:**

- A team can involve as few as two people.
- A team is not a mere aggregate of individuals.
- A team success depends on the interdependent and collective efforts of various team members.
- Team members are likely to have significant impacts on one another as they work together.

### Assessment 1.1



#### Why do people join groups or teams?

People often join groups to satisfy their mutual interests and goals. Also, they frequently form groups for purposes of seeking protection from other groups. They also exist because they appeal to a basic psychological need to be social.

(A) Mention five more reasons that motivate people to join teams or groups:

1. -----
2. -----
3. -----
4. -----
5. -----

(B) Discuss the reasons you defined with the rest of the group and try to come up with a unified list that reflects the group's agreement.



## 1.2 Requirements of a Team

There are four major requirements for a team, as shown in Figure 1.1.

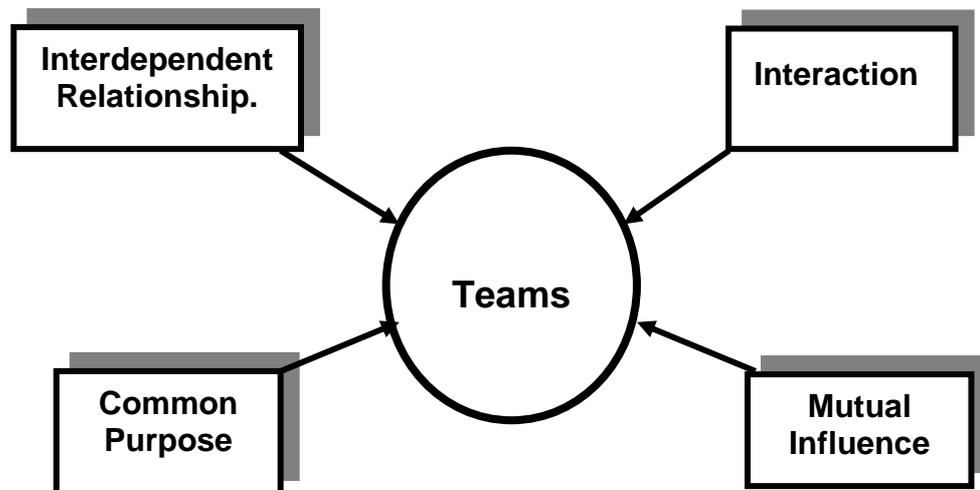


Figure 1.1: Requirements for teams

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

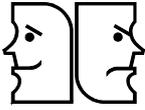
**First:** the team members have an interdependent relationship with one another to accomplish the team activities.

**Second:** this interdependence dictates that group members must interact through conversation or work activities.

**Third:** a team is characterized by a condition of mutual influence between team members.

**Fourth:** teams have a common purpose such as accomplishing work, completing a project, or preparing a report.

The Difference  
between Teams,  
Groups and  
Individuals



## 1.3 The Difference between Teams, Groups and Individuals

**On one hand**, some people see that teams and groups are the same. Therefore, it is common to use the two words interchangeably.

**Teams and groups are the same.**

**On the other hand**, some other people see that the two words are not the same. In recent years, team has become a popular word in the business community, often replacing the word group. Taking that into consideration, we can define a group and a work group as follows:

- **A group** is defined as *two or more individuals, interacting and interdependent, who have come together to achieve particular objectives.*
- **A work group** is a group that interacts primarily to share information and to make decisions to help one another perform within each member's area of responsibility with a given work or organization.

**Teams and groups are not the same**

- **A work team**, from that perspective, generates positive synergy at work through coordination of effort. The individual efforts result in a level of performance that is greater than the sum of those individual inputs.

Teams: Special  
Kinds of Groups



## 1.4 Teams: Special Kinds of Groups

A team may be defined as a group whose members have complementary skills and are committed to a common purpose or set of performance goals for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.

At this point, it is probably not entirely clear to you exactly how a team is different from an ordinary group. This confusion probably stems in part from the fact that people often refer to their groups as teams, although they are really not teams. Yet, there are several important distinctions between them.



**First**, in group, performance typically depends on the work of individual members. The performance of a team, however, depends on both individual contributions and collective work products – the joint outcome of team members working in concert.



**Second**, members of groups put their resources to attain a goal although it is individual performance that is taken into consideration when it comes to issuing rewards. Members of groups usually do not take responsibility for any results other than their own. By contrast, teams focus on both individual and mutual accountability. That is, they work together to produce an outcome (e.g., a product, service, or decision) that represents their joint contributions, and each team member shares responsibility for that outcome, the key difference is this: in groups, the supervisor holds individual members hold themselves accountable.



**Third**, whereas group members may share a common interest goal, team members also share a common commitment to purpose. Moreover, these purposes typically are concerned with winning in same way, such as being first or best at something.



**Fourth**, in organizations, teams differ from groups with respect to the nature of their connections to management. Work groups are typically required to be responsive to demands regularly placed on them by management. By contrast, teams are to varying degrees self managed – that is, they are to some extent free to set their own goals, timing, and the approach that they wish to take, usually without management interference. Thus, many teams are described as being autonomous or semiautonomous in nature.



**Clearly teams are very special entities. Some teams go beyond the characteristics of teams described here and are known as high- performance teams**

We can summarize the difference between **Teams** and **Groups** as shown in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1: Differences between teams and groups**

	<b>Work Group</b>	<b>Work Team</b>
<b>Goal</b>	Share information	Collective performance
<b>Synergy</b>	Neutral	Positive
<b>Accountability</b>	Individual	Individual and mutual
<b>Skills</b>	Random and varied	Complementary

Trainees should remember



**Trainees should remember:**

**(1) A group is two or more people who interact with each other to accomplish a goal.**

**(2) A team is a group who work intensively with each other to achieve a specific common goal.**

**(3) All teams are groups, *BUT*, not all groups are teams.**

**(4) Teams often are difficult to form because:  
It takes time for members to work together.  
Teams can improve organizational performance, but  
this requires time and effort**

Team  
Importance in  
Nowadays  
Organizations



## 1.5 Team Importance in Nowadays Organizations

In the workplace, a new recognition and appreciation of individuals and groups are emerging. Effective organizations must pull together all their human resources to forge strong, viable organizational culture that emphasizes teamwork. In recent years, organizations have begun to see just how important teamwork is to quality and organization effectiveness. The organizational improvements processes, such as Total Quality Management (TQM) and Process Reengineering, heavily rely on work teams.

Teams are particularly good at combining talents and providing innovative solutions to possible unfamiliar problems; in cases where there is not well established approach/procedure, the wider skill and knowledge set of the group has a distinct advantage over that of the individual. In general, however, there is an overriding advantage in a team-based work force, which makes it attractive to Management: that it engenders a fuller utilization of the work force.

A team can be seen as a self-managing unit. The range of skills provided by its members and the self-monitoring, which each group performs, makes it a reasonably safe recipient for delegated responsibility. Even if a single person could decide a solution for a problem, there are two main benefits in involving the people who will carry out the decision. **First**, the motivational aspect of participating in the decision will clearly enhance its implementation. **Second**, there may be factors, which the implementer understands better than the single person who could supposedly have decided alone.

More indirectly, if the lowest echelons of the workforce each become trained, through participation in team decision-making, in an understanding of the companies' objectives and work practices, then each will be better able to solve work-related problems in general. Further, they will also individually become a safe recipient for delegated authority, which is exemplified in the celebrated right of Japanese car workers to halt the production line.

**From the individual's point of view**, there is the added incentive that through belonging to a team each can participate in achievements well beyond his own individual potential. Less

idealistically, the team provides an environment where the individual's self-perceived level of responsibility and authority is enhanced, in an environment where accountability is shared: thus providing a perfect motivator through enhanced self-esteem coupled with low stress.

Finally, a word about the much vaunted "**recognition of the worth of the individual**", which is often given as the reason for delegating responsibility to teams of subordinates. **The bottom line is that the individual's talents are better utilized in a team, not that they are wonderful human beings.**

Teams in  
Organizations:  
Some Impressive  
Results



## 1.6 Teams in Organizations: Some Impressive Results

**Case studies have reported many remarkable outcomes stemming from teams.** Here is just a sampling of the impressive results, as shown in Table 1.2.

**Table 1.2: Remarkable outcomes stemming from teams**

Company	Results
<b>Federal Express</b>	▪ Reduce errors (e.g., incorrect bills, lost packages) by 13 % in 1989.
<b>Corning</b>	▪ Defects dropped from 1,800 parts per million to only 9 parts per million in its cellular ceramics plant.
<b>Shenandoah Life Insurance Co.</b>	▪ Saved \$ 200,000 per year in reduced staffing while increasing volume of work handled by 33 %.
<b>Xerox</b>	▪ Increased productivity by 30%.
<b>Tektronix</b>	▪ One team produces as many products in 3 days as an entire assembly line used to produce in 14 days.
<b>Carrier (Division of United Technologies Corporation)</b>	▪ Reduced unit turnaround time from 2 weeks to 2 days.
<b>Westinghouse Furniture Systems</b>	▪ Productivity increased by 74% within three years.
<b>Sealed Air</b>	▪ Waste reduced by 50%, and downtime cut from 20% to 5 %.
<b>Eli Lilly</b>	▪ Faster-ever rollout time for a new medical product.
<b>Citibank</b>	▪ Substantially improved customer satisfaction ratings in 11 key areas.
<b>Exxon</b>	▪ \$ 10 million saving in 6 months.

Competitive  
Advantage with  
Groups & Teams



## 1.7 Competitive Advantage with Groups & Teams

- Performance Enhancement: Make use of synergy
- Workers in a group have the opportunity to produce more or better output than separate workers.
- Members correct others' errors and bring new ideas to peers.
- Managers should build groups with members of complimentary skills
- Responsive to Customers: difficult to achieve given many constraints.
- Safety issues, regulations, and costs.
- Cross-functional teams provide the wide variety of skills needed.
- Teams consist of members of different departments.
- Innovation: individuals rarely possess the wide variety of skills needed. Teams do.
- Team members also uncover flaws and develop new ideas.
- Managers should empower the team for the full innovation process.
- Motivation: members of groups, and particularly teams, are often better motivated and satisfied than individuals.
- It is fun to work next to other motivated people. It is also that:
- Team members see their contribution to the team.
- Teams also provide social interaction.