



EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES ON BUILDING PRODUCTIVE AND HIGH PERFORMANCE TEAMS - A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses and provides clear ways to improve team building strategies that can enhance the work quality and performance. It throws light into needs of goal setting and also discusses a conceptual team building model, which explains in detail the team building need assessment, process of setting up goals, action planning and implementing process. To ensure effectiveness, the proposed model also discusses the follow-up steps to be adopted for achieving the targeted objectives. This article provides details on team building process that establishes and develops greater sense of collaboration and co-ordination between the team members. It also intends to bring out the importance of the team building stages that strive to build a higher degree of mutual trust between the team members. It proposes the team building attributes that are both strategical and critical and explains their influence over building a high performance team in a given period of time. This paper details on the influence of an effective team building process over clarifications on customer expectations, operational agreements and also on the changes in the people's approaches that directly impacts the collective team abilities. It also emphasizes the effects of team building initiatives/interventions over the overall team productivity and performance. This analyzes the effective team building strategies that can improvise the learning capacities of the team members and the factors that can lead to performance adjustments and increased productivity. It reinforces the importance of building a good team culture in workplace and its impact, need for sustaining the creativity, innovation and competency around the changes that happen during the whole team building process (i.e) from initial stages of team setting to goal accomplishment.

Keywords: High performance teams, Team Building Model, team leadership, team trust, team dynamics, Team motivation

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INTRODUCTION

In any organization, a team is something that can complement each other's skills within a small work group and is committed to a common purpose and a set of performance goals. Building a team is nothing but a cultural change that includes acquiring knowledge, understanding how the teams function, learning skills to perform new teaming behaviours, internalizing attitudes and beliefs, and creating clarity over the organization's vision (Mackin, 2007). Such a process can be done effectively by setting up importance on the individual roles and responsibilities within the team and also making sure there exists a co-operation climate for its progressive operations. Any healthier organization can be perspected by its ability to voice the differences and appreciate conflict, its willingness to work towards the greater good of the team and its proposal to set up a vision and value for the whole team (Cook, 2009). For building high performance teams, it is very vital to make sure whether all the team members get the support and security they need to pursue their work in an efficient and productive way. While building a team, following aspects should be considered for achieving high performance and quality work (Kanaga & Kossler, 2004)

- ❖ Building organizational support
- ❖ Creating an empowering team structure
- ❖ Identifying key relationships
- ❖ Setting a clear direction
- ❖ Monitoring external factors

On top of the above said crucials, assessing the team's dynamics, knowledge and skills, tactics and efforts, by an efficient leader becomes an important key to keep the team intact and also helps in achieving continuous team progress. Any successful team should be able to clearly define its team's convictions, and should be able to demonstrate high level of competency in every role within the team (Harkavy, 2007).

OBJECTIVES

With the growing technology demands and the increased competitors all over the world, an organization should be able to clearly define and execute their strategies and goals in a very efficient way to be stable and successful in the trending market. Therefore building efficient and high performance teams become mandatory when it comes to planning and implementation. For teams to achieve superior performance, four C's should be managed thorough out the whole process (Dyer, Dyer & Dyer, 2013). They are

- The Context for the team
- The Composition of the team
- The Competencies of the team
- The Change management skills of the team

The type of team needed, culture and structure that supports the teamwork, tracking the performance of the team members and making changes when needed are some of the crucial factors to be considered for achieving the at most productivity in a team. So building high



performance teams become really crucial to manage the team's competencies like dealing and managing conflict when it arises, effectively communicating, giving and receiving feedbacks, risk-taking and decision making ability. To accomplish the team objectives/targets, the team should be able to construct a team building process that can initiate the changes that are needed to be done and also be able to evaluate them periodically for a better performance. Team building objectives can focus on continued improvement only if, it could track its performance and understand its strengths and weaknesses and bring up a positive attitude within the team. So building a highly productive team is very crucial because it helps indulge in itself the team member's trust, determination and their passion towards bringing in team spirit and innovation.

EFFECTIVE TEAM BUILDING ESSENTIALS

a) Team goal setting:

For any successful organization, setting up team/ group goals- both immediate and long term are very essential. Goal setting within a team has to be adopted, keeping in mind the fact that it can be achieved within a reasonable amount of time but should be in consensus with all the team members.

A team before setting objectives should be able to have a collective perception of unity (i. e) ability to act in a unitary manner. Factors like well defined membership, high group consciousness should be highly enabled in a team for its success in achieving a common shared goal (Adair, 2009). Keeping in mind the longer term organization's motto and team member's work ability and commitment to achieve the objectives, proper steps should be adopted and administered to correct the flaws that might rise up in the future. Group goal setting should involve effective action plan as well as customized plan/ agenda for effective implementation. The need for Team goal setting is shown below in Fig.1.

Team goal setting Need:

(Fig.1)



Source: Primary data

b) High performance team traits:

A team needs to have the following essential traits for its successful Performance and its effectiveness.

- ❖ Individual Accountability
- ❖ Individual Engagement
- ❖ Collaborative skills
- ❖ Interpersonal Competencies

Every individual is supposed to have self- efficacy skills and should have group co-ordination skills- (i.e) They should contribute to all the group actions and processing in terms of decision making and trust building.

Group members should be able to collaborate with the others in the team by praising each other for their achievements and also have self-monitoring and self-efficacious thoughts which will determine their persistence and Success (Sarason and Potter,1983). For effective team performance, any organization should plan for Group Sessions to amplify the collaborative skill set of the group members, to emphasize on the group participatory skills and to achieve targeted behavioural skills within the group as well (Johnson, 2018). These group cohesive skills not only directly contribute to overall productivity of the team but can lead to successful goal accomplishment and also can reduce the conflicts within the members to a greater extent.



EFFECTIVE TEAM BUILDING MODEL DESIGN

An effective team building framework is given below in Fig.2. It is a four step process which is explained below.

1. Team building need assessment:

An effective team building framework should start off by discussing and clarifying the goals in both short and comprehensive terms and also should put forth the organizational perspective of what to expect in terms of business model and company's culture (Barner, 2012). When a team building model is constructed, the critical aspects like trust building, conceptual understanding, ability to identify the strength and weakness should be given the most priority. It should be made sure and assessed in a team building process, that the individual skill sets and resources are integrated into a united effort for a successful team formation. Proper evaluation should be done to understand the collective team purpose to accomplish the objectives and assessment should be done to estimate the balance between the extent of team member's mutual accountability and the overall team motto.

2. Setting up the right team goals and culture:

The agendas and objectives should be set by keeping in mind the critical deadlines, task completion dates and an explicit assumption of who is doing what- by- when. Given the fact of consistently changing organization's expectations, team goals should be checked and ensured periodically for their alignment with the management's objectives. A good Team culture is very crucial in building a high performance team since it encourages team empowerment, provides a better team future and develops efficient team leaders as well. A well set goals and a healthier team culture that rewards collective achievement, always provides an inspiring vision which in turn results in effective and highly productive teams.

3. Plan and Implement Actions:

A team building process happens by finding out what needs to be done to achieve the team objectives by consensus, identifying the obstacles, overcome them and finally meeting the deadlines (McClay, 2009). Planning and Implementation of building a team can be executed by the following steps:

- ❖ Define the roles clearly
- ❖ Explain the Tentative project plan and agenda
- ❖ Provide opportunities for better communication
- ❖ Emphasize the importance of team morale and strong relationships
- ❖ Facilitate plans to track progress
- ❖ Periodical Team evaluations
- ❖ Encouraging creativity and Innovation
- ❖ Provide Conflict Resolution Tips throughout the team building process
- ❖ Identify, encourage and motivate work excellence

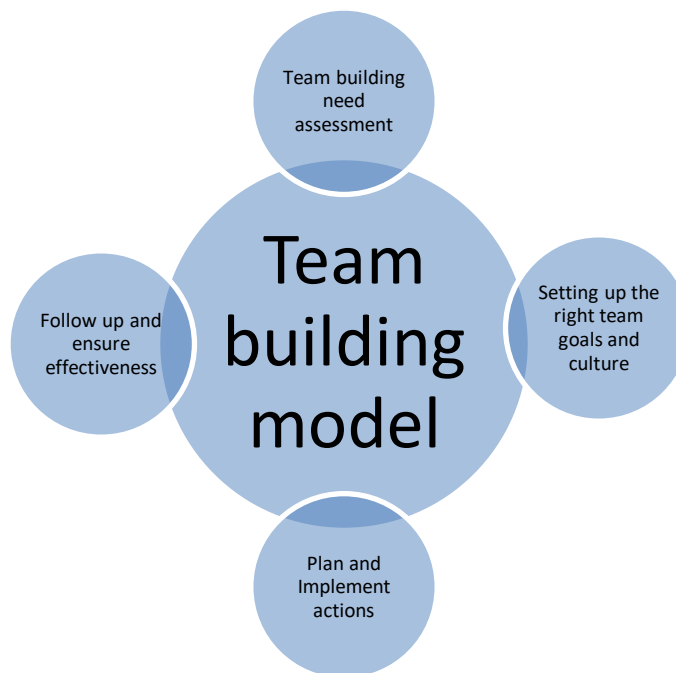
4. Follow-up and Ensure Effectiveness:

An effective team building completes with a periodical follow up to make sure whether there is a right balance between the strategical and operational focus. It is very essential that in spite of the team functionally working together, it has to be made sure that the team's objectives still align with the organization's goals and directions. To achieve consistent productivity and collective success, it should be ensured that,

- ❖ Conflict level, team structure, flexibility are taken care of
- ❖ Team members work towards achieving the peak in their learning curves
- ❖ Necessary technical facilitation and support is provided during difficult and challenging times.
- ❖ the employees are happy and excited, meaning "work matters" to them and necessary steps are taken to control and nibble the communication issues that potentially lower the team's effectiveness
- ❖ team lead brings in impact and influence over the team members

Effective Team building Model

(Fig. 2)



Source: Primary Data

STRATEGICAL AND CRITICAL TEAM BUILDING ATTRIBUTES

Every team member within the team should possess certain group skills/attributes and focus on their own individualistic goals, co-operative behaviour and interpersonal communication skills, thereby enabling the task accomplishment. Their cognitive, emotive and inter-intra personal attributes along with effective leadership and cohesive strategies within the team, play a major

impact on the behaviour of the entire team and its performance. The overall value of the team is predominantly determined by whether the team is dominant in cooperative strategies rather than indulging on competitive or individualistic relations. In order to manage the conflicts, challenges and disagreements, certain strategical and critical team building factors play a vital role in building a high performance team with characteristics pertaining to operational, target oriented, and a well inter-supportive-group and they are discussed below. Along with building these attributes, monitoring the Team health in the overall process and evaluating the progress are also vital phases that contribute to the effective Team building.

1) **Strategical Attributes:**

Important strategical areas that influence a successful team building process are explained below in Fig.3. They fall under four major categories namely learning, challenging, working with each other and working as one.

Team building Strategical factors (Fig.3)



Source: Primary Data

2) Critical attributes:

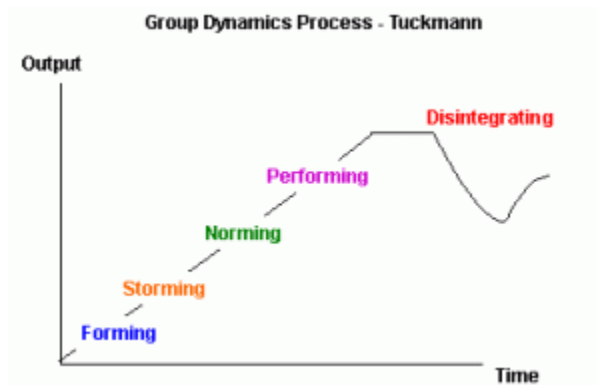
For a team to get the job done effectively and smoothly without any inappropriate situations and to function as a single unit, the following critical factors are very essential.

- ❖ Team dynamics
- ❖ Team trust
- ❖ Sustained Team Innovation
- ❖ Team Motivation
- ❖ Effective Leadership
- ❖ Team spirit

a) Team dynamics :

Team dynamics is the force that can influence the team's behaviour and performance towards achieving a common goal in an effective way. Strengthening team's dynamics is very important since it paves way for the team to work with cohesion. For building effective team dynamics, team leaders should know their team well and have good delegation skills and should also be able to define every team member's role and responsibilities through effective communication.(McDermott, 2014). Because of the fact that team dynamics play an important role in the process of team shaping and developing, it obviously has a lot to contribute towards the team performance and even productivity for that matter. The process of team dynamics by Tuckmann (shown in Fig. 4) involves five stages- Forming (Establishing ground rules), Storming(Start to communicate their feeling), Norming (Start feeling to be a part of the team), Performing (Working on the basis of trust, not in hierarchy and feeling united), disintegrating (Recognitions, Rewards and Role Transitions)

Tuckmann Team dynamics stages
(Fig. 4)



Source: <http://www.lifemasters.co.za/team-building-facilitators-gauteng/real-team-building-activities/>



b) Team Trust:

A productive team should have a common agreement on the performance expectations (Evans, 2015). As a matter of fact, distrust within the team members can contribute to the following situations:

- Cannot understand the team roles properly
- Exhibiting poor work quality due to internal conflicts
- Team members will start to stew the issues privately rather than being open and honest
- Hesitate to provide feedback or offer / ask for help
- Not recognizing their peer's experiences and skills

This lack of trust may be due to them being over-whelmed, intensively stressed, or even being given too much of pressure or challenges. Also team trust is strongly associated with team attitudes like commitment, motivation, synergy and satisfaction as well. Team trust gives freedom to every person in the team to act on every other's behalf as well as on behalf of the company's best interest.

c) Sustained team innovation:

Innovation is a crucial strategic way to cope up and come out as a successful team. That being said, less exposure and minimal access to current cutting edge practices lead a team to not only lag behind but also get deprived of evolving industry trends. Many factors like less structured teams, non-integral teams, and groups with improper guidance at needed times can contribute to a less innovative and a less creative environment. So consistent and committed teams with constant efforts to learn, can not only survive during the hardest times and face the challenges, but can make a big difference with great innovation and higher degree of creativity.

d) Team Motivation:

Team motivation can be achieved in a team by bringing in encouragement and persuasive attitude that will strive the entire team to adopt and exceed (Freemantle, 2005). Motivation can be indulged in a team by:

- Finding the best approaches to be adopted
- Setting the right standards in their respective fields.
- Providing environment for creative and innovative thinking that will excite the team members
- Providing enthusiastic, helpful and positive feedback at difficult times
- Offering spot-bonuses and better pays
- Stimulating and inspiring the team members by personalizing relationship with each and every one in the team
- Providing opportunities for self- development

Higher the degree of motivation within a team, better the work quality and productivity. For long term success of a team, the team members should be motivated to perform certain roles



throughout the process both for working towards the goal and also for their improvement and development. These roles include supporting, confronting, gate keeping, mediating, harmonizing, and process observing.(Quick, 1992)

e) Effective Leadership :

A team leadership process involves defining goals, problem solving, strategic planning, developing and maintaining relationships, negotiations and decision making (Gaines, 2006). An effective leader should be able to

- ❖ Influence behaviours
- ❖ Initiate the team to work towards the set goals
- ❖ Coach the team members for self-management and risk taking
- ❖ Effective delegation and communication
- ❖ Cultivate credibility
- ❖ Demonstrate integrity
- ❖ Acknowledge Contributions
- ❖ Set directions and mobilize individual commitment

Depending on the situation/need, an effective leader should be able to adopt a style (whether be commanding, inspirational, logical or visionary) and it sure does has a major influence and impact towards a team's performance and productivity.

f) Team Spirit:

Team spirit is the attitude that brings in willingness towards work and a passion to perform in an interdependent way to accomplish a common shared goal and also builds reliability upon each other (Top chick, 2007). This interdependence, mutual support and accountability among the team members boost up the team enthusiasm multifold. The more recognized and rewarded the team members are, the better the team spirit would be. Ultimately, if the team members are excited and are able to share their thoughts, opinions and energy in a constructive manner, it paves way to the team's success. Nevertheless, a team with high- spirit can always be highly productive and performing even during the challenging times.

SUGGESTION

The primary focus of this article is to help establish an effective and high quality team building model that can promote the overall team performance and to provide clarity over the team building strategies. For increased team productivity, appropriate team building initiatives should be taken and customized team building interventions should be conducted depending on the team's needs and objectives in a long run. These initiatives and interventions should be experiential learning ones, thereby allowing the team members to use their skill sets to experience the team dynamics and evaluate themselves after the program (Rose & Buckley, 1999) . These initiatives and interventions will obviously have a direct impact over the overall team's problem solving ability, communication skills, attitude and self-development. Efficient Team building should always facilitate Team building programs for the members that promote



trust building, provide valuable problem solving practices and encourage open sharing of thoughts and feelings (Newstorm & Scannell, 1998). These activities should be able to provide opportunities for a better interaction with each other and help them learn from their interaction. Real time team building interventions should be facilitated to deliver real values and benefits, achieve the set- goals and optimize team management. Team building activities that add emotional element to the team will definitely bring in cooperation within the team members and also cultivate a healthy competition across the teams (Thiagarajan & Parker, 1999).

CONCLUSION

Thus to conclude, an effective team building is one in which a manager should fill a role by looking into a hire with a possibility of long term professional growth for both the team and for himself/herself (hire). A proactive manager should be able to cultivate an environment that can stimulate learning, facilitate engagement and motivation (Johnson, 2018). Nevertheless, a team building process should be able to focus and bring in employees who are capable of showing highly engaged growth, maximized efficiency and productivity in a longer run. Having done due diligence in framing the team building model, hiring process and having set a clear goal, roles and responsibilities, a team manager with the organizational support will be able to build a high performance team in a very short period of time. That being said, keeping consistent track of team member's learning curve (whether being in the bottom, middle or on the top) will help achieve engagement, learning, innovation and success in the so formed teams. So in spite of an effective team building framework with well-designed team building interventions based on the team's requirement, efficient managers with best team building strategies and enthusiastic, innovative group members are the prime resources to propel a team to its peak performance and to influence team effectiveness.

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