Building Teams

Workshop Guide

Module 6

Purdue University, University of Illinois, & University of Wisconsin-Madison
Building Teams
Workshop Guide

Objectives

Participants will be able to
1. Understand what teams are and what makes them effective;
2. Understand the difference between teams and other types of groups;
3. Appreciate the various roles members play for team effectiveness;
4. Understand the stages of team formation and the importance of leadership.

Materials Needed

• Flipchart & markers
• Balloons, about 75 per small group (alternative materials: marshmallows, about 1.5-2 bags per small group)
• Cellophane tape, two rolls per small group (or toothpicks, if marshmallows are used, 1 box per group)
• Copies of “Reflection on Teams and Leadership” for each participant

Workshop Outline

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1 Hour 35 minutes Total Time
Icebreaker – 15 Minutes – “My Team Experiences”

Before participants arrive, post four sheets of flipchart paper around the room at four different locations. Place one of the following headings on each of the four sheets of paper, one heading per sheet.

- Groups/Teams in Which I’ve Participated
- What Makes Teams Effective
- What Makes Teams Ineffective
- Most Important Thing for Team Leaders to Do

Point out the four sheets of paper, and read each of the headings to the participants. Ask them to consider each of the statements and how they would respond. Tell them to write their response on the flipchart. They are to respond to all four statements. If they have not been part of a group or team, it is okay to write that on the sheet. However, they should go ahead and write their thoughts about the other three questions.

Introduction – 5 Minutes

There are two modules in this series on teamwork. In this module, we address the difference between teams and groups, what makes teams effective, group goals, group roles, group dynamics, and leadership. In Module 7, we will discuss problem solving in teams.

Let’s start by looking at some of the groups and teams in which you’ve participated.

Refer to the “Groups/Teams in Which I’ve Participated” sheet the group generated during the Icebreaker activity. Read the group and team names teams listed by the participants. Ask questions about the groups/teams, and invite participants to ask questions, especially if anyone is unfamiliar with the group/team.

Topic Discussion – 20 Minutes

Do you think there is a difference between a group of people and a team?

Allow time for responses. Probe their responses by asking them about how groups and teams differ.

“According to Gilbertson and Ramchandani, a team is generally defined as a group of two or more people who share a common goal and are interdependent in that the tasks necessary to accomplish the goal require them to work together” (1999, p.5). While a team is a group of people, not all groups are teams. A “team” is more than just a group of people. Members of a team are dependent upon one another to accomplish the team’s goal. In other words, they are not able to accomplish the goal by themselves, but instead need the skills, talents, knowledge, and resources of others in order to reach the goal. As they work together to achieve a common goal, team members’ relationships with each other mature. Thus, teams are a mature group.

Groups, on the other hand, come together because they share a common interest, and members are not interdependent. Groups might be thought of more as simply a “bunch of people.”

Teams are small, usually composed of 6-8 individuals; groups, however, can be very large. Teams usually exist within the context of a larger organization; groups do not. We make this distinction between groups and teams because the role of leadership in teams should be deliberate, especially in the early stages of teamwork, to enable the team to be effective.
There are three important components of teams:
1. The purposes for which the team comes together and the clarity of its goals and actions;
2. The nature of the relationships among the members, such as how they interact, influence, share, co-operate, support, and trust one another; and
3. The processes used in working together to achieve common goals, such as how they communicate, organize, solve problems, and make decisions.

Let’s talk about what makes teams effective and look at what you wrote on the sheets during the Icebreaker. Refer to the “What Makes Teams Effective?” sheet from the Icebreaker. Allow time for comments and questions.

What makes teams not work well? Refer to the “What Makes Teams Effective?” sheet from the Icebreaker. Allow time for comments and questions.

What can leaders do to help teams be effective? Refer to the “Most Important Thing for Team Leaders to Do” sheet from the Icebreaker. Allow time for comments and questions.

Summarize the discussion with the following comments.

In general, effective teams have several characteristics.
1. The members of the team are trying to accomplish a common goal or purpose. The goal, project, or task is understood by all group members. They are committed to it and view the goal as worthwhile.
2. Each member of the team has a role to play. Each person has something to give, such as time, talent, knowledge, expertise, skill, or other resource to reach the goal, and each person has something to gain by reaching the goal. Members appreciate each other’s contributions.
3. The procedures and processes for accomplishing the tasks/goals are understood by all and are adequately documented, respected, and followed.
4. There is a willingness to work together in a spirit of cooperation, respect, and trust. There are effective working relationships among the members and an ability to deal with conflict, to openly share information, to share the work equitably, and to enjoy and celebrate successes.
5. Team leaders are committed to the team’s members and goals. As the team matures, leadership is shared among the team members.

Activity – 20 Minutes – Balloon Tower

Note to workshop facilitators: If you are using balloons for this activity and are in a public building, you may want to notify security ahead of time regarding the noise of bursting balloons.

Break participants into small teams of 4-5 people each.

Give the participants about 75 balloons and 2 rolls of scotch tape per team.

Provide the following instructions:

You have 15 minutes to build the tallest free-standing structure you can. It will be judged on its height and stability.

While the teams are working, write the following two sets of questions about tasks and relationships and the questions about leadership on three separate flipchart sheets.

Questions about the team’s goal:
• Was the goal clear?
• Did you discuss the goal before you started your work?
• Did you plan first or just start building?
• Did one person decide, or did you decide as a group?
Questions about team members’ roles:
- What role/s did you take in this activity?
- What roles did others take?
- What were the task-oriented roles?
- What were the relationship-oriented roles?

Team effectiveness:
- What did your team do well?
- What could you have done better?
- What role did leadership play in your team? Was it effective? Why or why not?

After 15 minutes, determine which team has built the tallest and most stable structure. You can ask the total group to determine the “winner” by their applause for each group. Declare the winner, and celebrate success.

**Topic Discussion – 20 Minutes**

Ask the teams to remain together. Refer to the questions on the flipchart sheet about the teams’ goals. Ask the teams to discuss the questions among themselves. Allow a few minutes for the discussion, and then ask them to share their thoughts with the total group.

Ask the total group to think about the questions raised about team roles and relationships. Allow a few minutes for individual reflection, and then ask them to share their thoughts within their team. Allow a few minutes for discussion. Ask them to share their thoughts with the total group.

Refer to the questions about team effectiveness. Ask if they felt like a group or like a team.

**Team Member Roles**

Team members basically have two roles to play:
1. Get the job done—accomplish the task, project, or goal.
2. Work with others in supportive, trusting relationships.

Specifically, what could you do to help a team accomplish its goals?

Allow a few minutes for responses. Refer to the sheets generated during the Icebreaker, and list new ideas.

Task-oriented actions that help a team accomplish its goals include:
- Generating ideas
- Clarifying goals or information
- Linking concepts together
- Facilitating group process
- Attending to details
- Organizing thoughts, actions, or meetings
- Seeking or offering information
- Volunteering to do the work
- Planning next steps
- Summarizing decisions

What could you do to help a team build relationships among members so they can work together effectively?
Allow a few minutes for responses. Refer to the sheets generated during the Icebreaker, and list new ideas.

Actions that build relationships include:
- Dealing with disagreements
- Seeking input from others
- Respecting others’ contributions
- Listening
- Cooperating
- Supporting others
- Compromising
- Encouraging others
- Communicating clearly
- Sharing information

All too often, team members are disruptive and behave in ways that hinder the team’s effectiveness. Let’s look at some of the things you said in the Icebreaker about ineffective teams.

Refer to the Icebreaker sheet that was generated on ineffective teams. Ask if there are additional ideas to add to the list.

Disruptive actions to a team include:
- Remaining silent, not participating
- Acting bored, uninterested
- Seeking recognition
- Dominating
- Withholding information
- Talking too much
- Being overly critical
- Having a hidden agenda
- Not listening
- Lacking a sense of humor
- Having a big ego, being a “know it all”

Group Dynamics

There are dynamics in all teams that are important to understand because they provide insights into what leaders can do to help a team move forward. The four stages of team development were identified in 1965 by an organizational development specialist, Bruce Tuckman. The stages are “forming,” “storming,” “norming,” and “performing.” At a later date, he added a fifth stage, “adjourning.”

Forming

In the “forming” stage, individuals are becoming acquainted with one another and getting oriented to the task, project, or goal. This is the stage of getting oriented to the goal and gaining acceptance from others. A team leader can facilitate this stage through “get acquainted” activities, identifying expectations, clarifying individual roles, and clarifying the goal and a way to proceed. By providing information and enabling people to speak and ask questions, the leader can alleviate the uncertainty that members commonly experience at this point.
Storming

The second stage of group dynamics, the “storming” stage, is often characterized by conflict among members of the team. This is the stage when it may not be clear exactly what the goal is, how the team is going to proceed, or what members’ roles are in reaching the goal. The goal may be more complex and/or time-consuming than originally expected. Members may have different views about the goals. There may not be adequate communication or trust among the members.

This second stage presents a test of effective leadership. An effective leader understands this difficult stage and can assist the team by fostering close communication, clarifying the goal/task and procedures, supporting team members, clarifying their roles, encouraging participation, and dealing with conflict early on, before it escalates. The more complex the goal/task and the higher the stakes, the more likely the team will struggle through this stage.

Norming

The third stage of the team development process is the “norming” stage. The group of individuals who initially came together now begin to develop norms about how they work together and develop a way to reach their goals. This is the stage where the “group” really starts to become a “team” because there is more cohesion. Leadership is still important, and leaders need to continue to facilitate communication and openness among team members and to provide clarity and focus on reaching team goals. The newly forming team should be taking on more of its own leadership during this stage.

Performing

The fourth stage is the “performing” stage. This might also be called the first real team stage. This is where the team members are now able to function together as a team, understanding their goals and working together effectively to accomplish them. The team develops pride as goals are achieved. The interdependence among team members is understood and appreciated. Leadership in this stage shifts from an individual, who may have started as the team leader, to the team itself.

Adjourning

The fifth stage is “adjourning.” This involves celebrating accomplishments; recognizing, evaluating, and documenting team efforts; writing reports; and bringing closure to the team.

To summarize, what would you add to the list about what makes effective team leadership?

Refer to the flipchart sheets already generated. Allow a few minutes for response, and add thoughts to the list.

Reflection, Application, & Summary – 15 Minutes

Distribute the “Reflection on Teams and Leadership” activity sheet to each participant. Allow 7-8 minutes for individuals to reflect on and respond to the questions. Read each question aloud, and ask if anyone would like to share their responses as time allows.

In this workshop, we discussed the process of team development and its relationship to leadership. Effective teams don’t just happen. Developing a team takes a lot of hard work and purposeful leadership at all stages of the process. Attention to both the accomplishment of the goals and the trusting, interdependent relationships among team members is a responsibility of both the team leader and members.
References


Reflection on Teams and Leadership

Instructions: Reflect on what you learned during this workshop about teams and leadership. Write your responses to the following questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What did you learn about teams as a result of this workshop?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Think about the role you took in the team today during the balloon activity. Do you find yourself taking the same role in other teams? If your roles differ, in what way and why? If not, why?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How could you use what you've learned to improve your student organization or any other group you're part of?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What did you learn about team leadership?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How will you use what you've learned in your career or in other leadership roles you plan to take?</td>
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About Leadership in Action

Leadership in Action is a multi-state leadership development program for college-age students. It was funded in part by an USDA/CSREES HEP Challenge Grant, 2005-2009 to the University of Illinois, Purdue University, and the University of Wisconsin – Madison. Undergraduate students from those universities participated in a 21-month program during which the workshop modules were developed, used during the two cohort programs, reviewed, and revised.

We intend that students who have been trained in conducting effective workshops use these materials for leadership workshops with various student organizations. The materials can be used separately for individual workshop sessions, in any combination for a short-term program, or in their entirety for a long-term program.

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