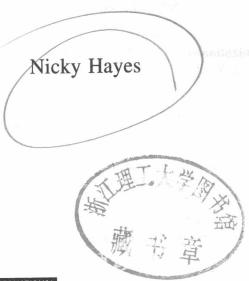# Successf Team Management

Nicky Hayes

Series editor: Clive Fletcher

Successful Team Management

Nicky Hayes

INTERNATIONAL THOMSON BUSINESS PRESS

I ⓣ P An International Thomson Publishing Company

London • Bonn • Boston • Johannesburg • Madrid • Melbourne • Mexico City • New York •
Singapore • Tokyo • Toronto • Albany, NY • Belmont, CA • Cincinnati, OH • Detroit, MI

Successful Team Management

Copyright © 1997 Nicky Hayes

First published by International Thomson Business Press

I(T)P A division of International Thomson Publishing Inc.
The ITP logo is a trademark under licence

Other books in the series:

Note
Each of the organizational examples discussed in these boxes has been drawn directly from real-life. Inevitably, therefore, this has meant that the companies or organizations concerned cannot be named, and so pseudonyms have been used. The few exceptions occur when the organization concerned has already given permission to be named in previously published material which forms a source for the discussion.

Series editor's preface

The rapid, far-reaching, and continuing changes of recent years have brought about a situation where understanding the pyschology of individuals and teams is of prime importance in work settings. Organizational structures have shifted radically to the point where individual managers and professionals have far greater autonomy, responsibility and accountability. Organizations seek to reduce central control and to 'empower' individual employees. Those employees combine in teams that are frequently cross-functional and project-based rather than hierarchical in their construction. The traditional notion of careers is changing; increasingly, the expectation is that an individual's career is less likely to be within a single organization, which has implications for how organiztions will command loyalty and commitment in the future. The full impact of the information technology revolution is finally being felt, with all the consequences this has for the nature of work and the reactions of those doing it.

The capacity of people to cope with the scale and speed of these changes has become a major issue, and the literature on work stress bears testimony to this. The belief in the importance of individuals' cognitive abilities and personality make-up in determining what they achieve and how they can contribute to team work has been demonstrated in the explosive growth in organizations' use of psychometric tests and related procedures. Perhaps more than ever before analysing and understanding the experience of work from a psychological perspective is necessary to achieve the twin goals of effective performance and quality of working life. Unfortunately, it is the latter of these that all too often seems to be

overlooked in the concern to create competitive, performance-driven, or customer-focused cultures within companies.

It is no coincidence that the rise in the study of business ethics and increasing concern over issues of fairness paralleled many of the organizational changes of the 1980s and 1990s. Ultimately, an imbalance between the aims and needs of the employees and the aims and needs of the organization is self-defeating. One of the widely recognized needs for the years ahead is for a greater emphasis on innovation rather than on simply reacting to pressures, yet psychological research and theory indicate that innovation is much more likely to take place where individuals feel secure enough to take the risks involved, and where organizational reward systems encourage experimentation and exploration – which they have signally failed to do in the last decade. Seeking to help organizations realize the potential of their work-force in mutually enhancing ways is the business challenge psychology has to meet.

The aim of the *Essential Business Psychology* series is to interpret and explain people's work behaviour in the context of a continually evolving pattern of change, and to do so from the perspective of occupational and organizational psychology. The books draw together academic research and practitioner experience, relying on empirical studies, practical examples, and case studies to communicate their ideas. Hopefully, the reader will find that they provide a succinct summary of accumulated knowledge and how it can be applied. The themes of some of the books cover traditional areas of occupational psychology, while others will focus on topics that cut across some of those boundaries, tackling subjects that are of growing interest and prominence. The intended readership of the series is quite broad; whilst they are most directly relevant for practitioners, consultants, and students in HR and occupational psychology, much of what they deal with is increasingly the concern of managers and students of management more generally. Although the books share a common aim and series heading, they have not been forced into a rigid stylistic format. In keeping with the times, the authors have had a good deal of autonomy in deciding how to organize and present their work. I think all of them have done an excellent job; I hope you think so too.

Clive Fletcher

— Contents

— *Figures*

—— Tables

—*Boxes*

1 *Why use teams?*

INTRODUCTION

To an ever-increasing extent, modern management has become focused on the idea of the team. Management consultants propose organizational restructuring to facilitate teamwork, directors make policy statements about the importance of the team to the organization, and senior managers exhort their junior staff to encourage teamworking in their departments. Where organizational culture became the managerial buzz-word of the 1980s, teamworking became the managerial concept of the 1990s.

And with reason. Teams have enormous potential. A growing number of organizations have found that changing to team-based work has had far more far-reaching effects than anyone could have predicted. In industry, directors report that both production levels and profits increased and their company improved its sales and marketing strategies when it went over to teamwork. In the public sector, tasks are reported to be performed more thoroughly and efficiently, jobs become enriched as more direct contact with clients or patients becomes possible and team members offer one another support in coping with difficult situations. In all types of organization, whether public or private, reports indicate that teamworking improves staff morale and decreases staff turnover.

These are powerful claims and indeed, there are those who claim even more. For example, Katzenbach and Smith (1993) argue that high-performing organizations depend on the creation of strong, semi-autonomous working teams. They see other approaches to management as counter-productive, and even damaging, on the grounds that ultimately, all they do is to lead the

organization into static practices and eventual stagnation. A chief executive aiming to lead a dynamic organization, they argue, should forget about hands-on management. Instead, that CE should set up structures and systems which will allow teams of people to take the organization's running into their own hands.

Box 1.1   **What is teamwork?**

The idea of teamwork is not always an easy one to grasp. Most organizations, after all, organize their work-force into groups of people who work together but each have their own jobs to do; and these are often referred to as teams. But simply having an arrangement whereby people work together isn't the same as having an organization which has converted to teamwork.

Essentially, the message of teamwork is delegation and empowerment. Teamworking is all about passing responsibility over to working teams, so that they can get on with what they have to do without continually having to refer to higher levels in their organization. That means that the teams need to be given enough authority to make day-to-day decisions about their work and enough power to make sure that things are done properly.

Many inexperienced managers – and also many who ought to know better – feel that they have to keep control of everything that happens in their organization or department, so they are reluctant to allow employees the power to make decisions on their own. Yet over-control of that kind can create a tremendous amount of damage. The people who know their jobs best are the people who are actually doing them; and they are often able to see what needs doing much better than those at higher levels of management. Moreover, it is often difficult for people to communicate freely with people in authority over them, so managers often don't realize what problems are caused when their decisions are inappropriate.

Although some managers see the idea of teamwork as threatening their own jobs, in fact it does quite the opposite.

It is the manager who has to make the overall, strategic decisions which will help to keep the organization or department on course. Managers represent their department at higher levels and initiate wider-reaching projects, such as training initiatives, which their employees might not realize are possible. And, most importantly of all, managers are the people who make it possible for the team to get on with its work: who are available with support when needed and who can discuss with the team its direction and goals. So managers actually do a great deal – but what they *don't* do, in a teamworking structure, is run the day to day work. They rely on the team to do that.

Teamworking, then, is very different from the old-fashioned, high-control, authoritarian management that is still, unfortunately, so common. But it is also much more effective. Organizational psychologists have known for a long time that when people are given responsibility, they act in a much more responsible way. Strict, authoritarian systems produce resentful and passive employees and interfere with communication into the bargain. But teamworking gives people a sense of being valued and we all work better when we feel that our efforts are appreciated. Teamworking also encourages people to be more professional in their approach and to take their responsibilities seriously. All of which is a tremendous benefit to any organization.

That doesn't mean, of course, that teamworking is the answer to all ills. As Guest (1995) pointed out, organizational change requires interventions at several different levels within an organization: not just at the level of the working group. When the Rover Group transformed its management practices – and hugely increased its profitability and market share – teamworking was just one type of change out of many changes to the organization as a whole (see Table 1.2). But it was teamworking which involved the organization's employees directly and which created a situation where everyone could work together to help the company to succeed. Teamwork allows a company to draw on the ideas and potential of their people, so that it can build firmly on its strengths.

Management may be subject to fashions, but organizations don't make such radical changes just on a whim. According to Katzenbach and Smith, directors and senior management are turning to teamwork for one reason and one reason only: because when it works, it works very well indeed. They cite numerous examples of organizations which have been entirely transformed – for the better – by changing their practices in this way. In an organization which has got its teamwork practices right, people work more efficiently, experience less stress and contribute more to their work. They stay with the company longer and don't take as much time off sick. They contribute new ideas and try to improve the way that they do their work. The result is that the organization functions better internally, saves money and becomes more competitive.

Not every organization which introduces teamworking finds these effects, of course. Some companies have introduced teamworking and found that it hasn't really made much difference at all. But it is clear that if it is implemented well, teamworking does make a dramatic difference. For an organizational psychologist, this raises a number of questions. Why should working in teams make any difference? Why does being organized into autonomous (or nearly autonomous) working groups affect people's motivation? And how might understanding the psychological processes underpinning teamwork help managers to manage their teams more successfully in real life?

About this book

This book covers many areas: team-building, team leadership, how teams can influence their organizations and so on. When we actually look into the psychology of teamworking, we find that working in teams taps into some very deep-rooted mechanisms in human psychology. The roots of these mechanisms lie far back in our evolutionary past, but they are very real and very powerful influences on everyday life. As we explore the different aspects of teams, teamworking and team management, I hope that these mechanisms will become clearer. If we can understand why successful teams can be so powerful, then we are in a better position to establish positive teamworking ourselves.

Knowing why, however, is only part of the process. We also need to be able to see what it means in practice so that we can

understand it fully. To this end, each chapter in this book contains a number of case studies, which give real-life illustrations of some of the examples given in the chapter. The case studies are all taken from real organizations and describe situations which have happened in the recent past. There are probably as many examples of bad practice as of good, because we can all learn from other people's mistakes. But for that reason – to prevent embarassment to the individuals or companies concerned – I have used assumed names for the organizations concerned. The exceptions occur where the case study was drawn from previously published research, for which the company concerned gave permission for its name to be used.

Seeing examples of other people's practice can help our understanding of the issues, but we also need to be able to translate that understanding into practical action. It's one thing understanding that a manager should be fostering a positive sense of identity among the work-force; but a manager also needs to know just how that can be done. Because of that, I have introduced a set of management recommendations at the end of each chapter in this book. These are intended to show how the implications of each chapter can be translated into practice: to provide practical guidance for managers who would like to develop their skills in this area.

The idea, then, is that this book should allow its readers to explore and examine the different aspects of successful team management. That exploration needs to include why teams work in the way that they do, but also how teams can be managed to ensure that they work as effectively as possible. Obviously, though, the book deals with team management in general and every organization is different. So the important thing is to understand the fundamental principles of team management and how they work. Knowing those principles will help any manager to develop an appropriate teamworking strategy for their particular company, organization or department. Successful team management should be a practical reality, as well as an idealistic aim.

TYPES OF TEAM

We often use the word 'team' quite loosely. But teams can take many different forms and serve many different functions. In

Chapter 2, we'll be exploring some of the differences between the team and the working group; but here we will look at some of the different types of teams which can be found in organizations.

Production or service teams

The type of team which most commonly comes to mind when we think about teams in organizations are those teams which are actively involved in manufacturing, production, or service. They include teams of stewardesses or stewards on aircraft, production-line assembly teams involved in direct manufacturing, mining or drilling teams, computing or data processing teams and maintenance teams such as those involved in municipal gardening or building maintenance. Essentially, their work is routine and it is involved in keeping up a steady flow of production or services.

Teams of this type usually consist of full-time workers, who may sometimes have worked together over many years. These teams are largely self-managing in terms of the rest of their organization, in that they organize their own work and get on with it. How far individual team members have a say in what they do, though, is usually up to the team manager, who is also the link between the team and the rest of the organization.

Action/negotiation teams

Another type of team consists of highly skilled individuals who come together to engage in special activities where each person's role is clearly defined. These teams include surgical teams, musical groups, sports teams, airline cockpit crews and military combat teams. These teams tend to be entirely task-focused, with each team member having specific skills which contribute to the successful performance of the task. So it is the task which the team has to perform which effectively defines how the team members operate.

Since the tasks which these teams perform are complex and sometimes unpredictable, it is vital that each team member is able to draw from their own expertise to contribute to the whole. That way, it is possible to improvise in unusual situations. The role of management in these teams is really about establishing the task or mission which the team has to perform. Once that has been done, the team takes over. Within the team itself, leadership is not about