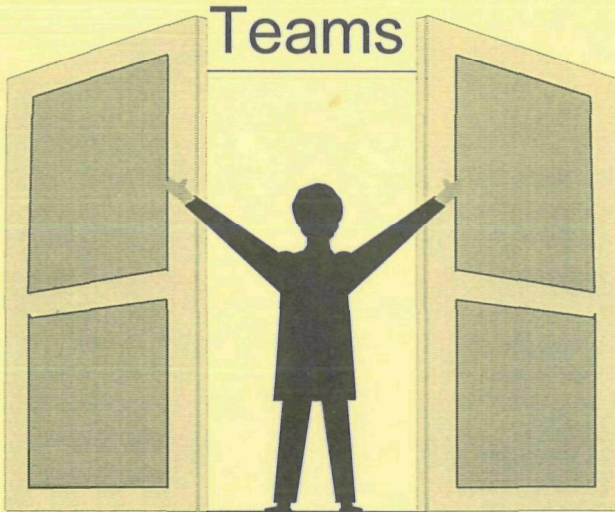# ⊕EPA

Are You Ready
For Work Teams?

Teams

Teams Series #2

The purpose of this booklet is to provide EPA managers, supervisors, and prospective team members with information on different aspects of work teams. This guide is intended to aid decision makers in deciding whether to implement work teams in their organizations.

The material contained herein will highlight important aspects of work teams, pose different questions about teams, and provide information that will facilitate making a decision about whether your organization is ready to implement work teams. Being ready is the first major step to engage this management alternative.

At the present time, there are various demands being placed on organizations. Work teams may be an effective means for meeting these demands. Chances are your organization is no exception.

What Is Triggering The Organizational Change?

☐ Continuous Improvement

☐ Continuous Learning

☐ Streamlining

☐ Reinvention

☐ Work Redesign

☐ Information Technology

☐ The Global Workplace

☐ Speed

☐ Opportunity

Unprecedented If your organization is feeling any of these
Social, pressures, you are not alone. Nearly all
Demographic, organizations are being pressured to con-
Economic, sider organizing differently.
and
Technical □ Is the Reinvention initiative prompting
Change Is your organization to consider a manage-
Taking Place ment alternative, given the requirement
to reduce middle management and
increase the supervisory span of con-
trol?

□ Has your organization benefited from
Total Quality Management (TQM)? (The
same philosophy and tools will be very
useful and necessary in the new work
team environment.)

If your answer to either of the above ques-
tions is yes, you may want to consider work
teams.

Pressures on the Organization
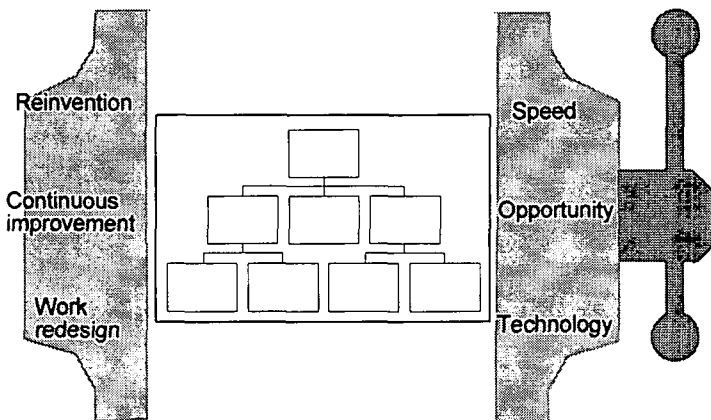
What Is a
Work Team?

If you ask people for their definition of work teams, chances are that you'll get many different answers.

A work team is an interdependent collection of individuals who share responsibility for specific outcomes. As such, a work team requires:

☐ employees who are well-trained

☐ responsibility for a well-defined segment of work

☐ employees with a great range of functional skills

☐ employees with extensive decision making authority

☐ employees with a high level of access to information

Is your organization willing to increase employee involvement through increased levels of employees' knowledge, skills, information, and decision making authority? Is it willing to reassess its current reward system? Organizations that are invested in empowering their employees should continue looking at work teams.

How Are Teams
Different from
Traditional
Organizations?

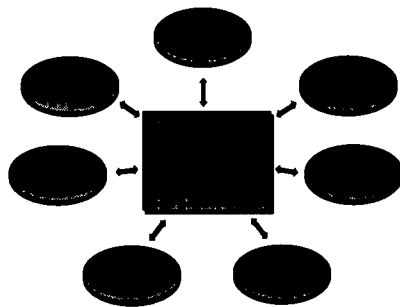Work teams differ from traditional organizations. The main differences include:

☐ Work teams have a broad set of functions rather than a very specialized set of tasks

☐ Team leaders serve as coaches, advisors, and facilitators, not directors and controllers.

☐ Work teams are responsible and accountable for the day-to-day operations of the work, as opposed to being told what to do.

☐ Work teams' success depends on the organization developing a clear sense of direction and espousing work place values like trust, cooperation, and openness.

If your organization's management thinks that it needs to decide the day-to-day expectations for the work unit and believes that the overall direction of the organization should remain with management and need not be shared, you may want to modify the present organization rather than transition to work teams.
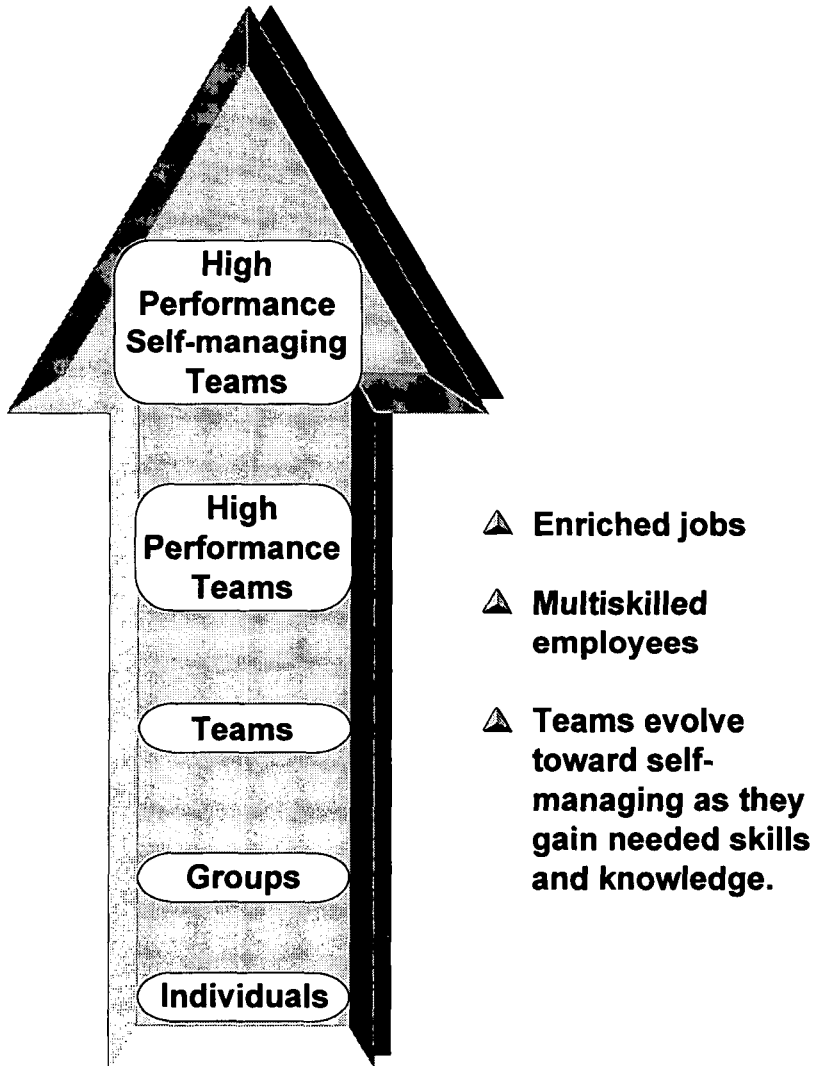
Traditional Organization
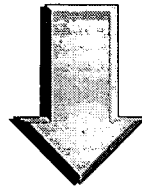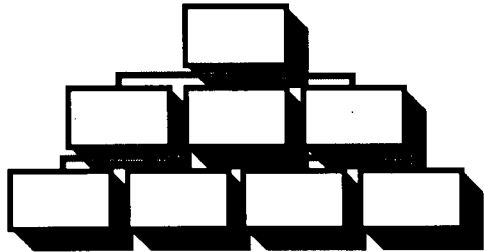
Work Team Organization

What is Different About Work Teams?

Aspect	Traditional Organizations
Functions	Specialized
Leaders	Directors, controllers, managers
Responsibility	Held by managers
Trust	Low
Communication	Top down
Decision making	Unilateral
Worker	Narrow
Training	Specialized, limited
Personal goal	Move up
Worker influence	Slight
State of mind	Stuck/complacent
Competition	Internal
Overall	Work together

Work Teams	Self-Managed Work Teams
Changing to broad	Broad
Coaches, advisors, facilitators	Coaches & all members
Assumed by teams	Teams and members
Getting higher	High
Top down & bottom up	360 degrees, high
From top & consensus	Consensus
Big picture	Very big picture
Cross-training, broad, considerable	Cross-training, diverse, continuous, extensive
Move around	Make larger organization as effective as possible
Considerable	Great
Challenged/innovative	Committed, contributing, fired-up
Internal & External	External
Work & celebrate together	Plan, troubleshoot, work and celebrate together

A team-based approach to achieving the vision

High
Performance
Self-managing
Teams

High
Performance
Teams

Teams

Groups

Individuals

⚠ Enriched jobs

⚠ Multiskilled employees

⚠ Teams evolve toward self-managing as they gain needed skills and knowledge.

What Are the The new organization will require a new
Pros and Cons way of doing business. That raises a set of pro
of Work Team and cons.
Organizations?

Pros
☐ employees who are committed to the
organization's goals
☐ improvement in work methods and procedures
☐ gain in attracting new people and retaining
employees
☐ increase in flexibility
☐ increase in product quality
☐ reduction in supervisory level
☐ improvement in decision making
☐ increase in communication

Cons
☐ increase in training cost and time
☐ resistance by middle managers and staff
☐ increase in team meeting time
☐ increase in conflict
☐ takes time to transition into teams
☐ potential short-term decrease in productivity

Important initial investments in training, time,
and role and responsibility changes will be required.
If your work unit is willing to go through these
adjustments and make these investments, you may
want to continue learning about work teams.

***How Will
Leadership
Change?***
Leadership and direction which has traditionally been provided by supervisors will be shared by coaches and team leaders. Over time, leadership will shift to the employees themselves, and be dispersed among the team members on a rotating basis through employees serving as Team Leaders. Experience suggests the time frame for this evolution may be several years.

***To What
Degree Will
the Roles of
Managers
and
Supervisors
Be Different?***
While traditional first-line supervisory roles will become obsolete, roles for middle managers will increase in areas supporting the work teams. These roles include:

❏ coaching the team
❏ supporting the team
❏ developing the overall strategy for the team
❏ linking the team to the overall organization
❏ serving as an expert resource for the team
❏ championing innovation focusing on the existing technology and its continuous improvement
❏ working with vendors and customers
❏ improving areas that have been neglected

The degree of innovation will be substantial and a long term investment will be required to accommodate the transition. In addition to developing the roles identified above, your organization will need to establish roles for managing the transition.

Work Teams may be a viable option, if your management is willing to support the role changes and participate in managing the transition.

What Kinds of Administrative, Technical, and Team Skills Will Be Needed Within the Team?

The work team environment will require broader skills and a wider variety of tasks. To meet these new expectations, the work teams will require training in administrative skills, technical skills, and team skills. These skills typically include, but are not limited to:

measuring work pro-cesses		problem solving	appraising colleagues performance
budgeting	leadership		conflict management
negotiation	listening		communica-tion

Work teams will be able to conduct the "How" in the organization -- how to do the work and make the decisions that go along with these greater responsibilities. Management keeps the "What" and the "Why." Management retains the authority to define organizational strategy.

If your organization has had good results from recent innovations in other areas and you expect that those changes can facilitate the transition to teams, continue to learn about work teams.

What Are the Transition Stages Involved in Team Implementation?

Four words typically describe the transition of work teams: forming, storming, norming, and performing.
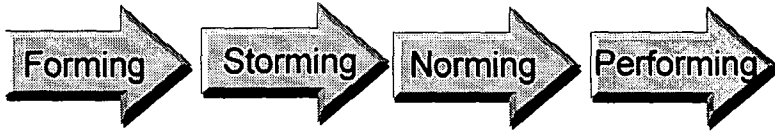
Employees will be assigned to work teams. They will require time to adjust to their new work arrangements and to each other. They will generate and engage in new work norms, and they will eventually perform in such a fashion that the whole will be greater than the sum of its parts.

Management will continue to focus on the broader perspective and the team will learn to do more for themselves. The trip from the traditional organization to the new organization will require a long-term investment. Like Total Quality Management, it.will be a process of continuous improvement.

*What is the ideal state of employee involvement?*　　Self-directed work teams.

Is a self-directed team undirected?　　No -- Demands from various outside forces will always be transmitted to working organizations. Some of those outside influences are:

□ Customers
□ Suppliers
□ Sources of funds
□ Overseeing organizations

What is a self-directed team like?

Self-directed Team Leadership Model
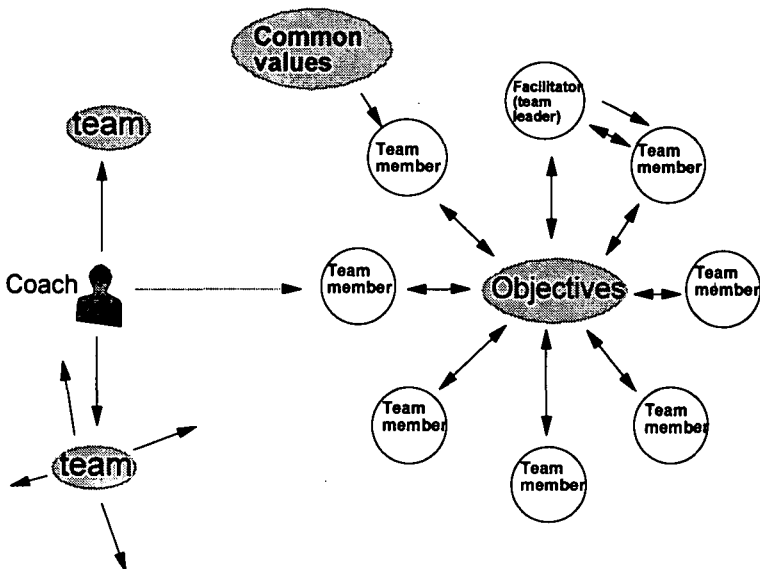
What is leadership like in a self-directed work team?

The team leader

- [ ] Sometimes called internal facilitator or "point person"

- [ ] Is aligned with non-management; that is, the team

- [ ] Rotates periodically, usually quarterly after the first six to nine months of team's existence

- [ ] Receives "perks" while leading

- [ ] Is not a mini-supervisor

- [ ] Is not held directly responsible for output of team

- [ ] Should usually be the best "people person," not necessarily the most technically expert

- [ ] Is often appointed by management; subsequent leaders are elected by the team

- [ ] May disappear as a position, becoming more "floating" or functional once the team is highly mature

- [ ] Does not do for the team what the team could do itself

The coach

- [ ] Sometimes called external facilitator, mentor or coordinator

- [ ] Is aligned with management

- [ ] Is held responsible for output of team

- [ ] Usually coaches several teams, some permanent, some temporary

- [ ] Typically a supervisor or manager who makes the transition to coaching

- [ ] Is involved, not "laissez-faire"

- [ ] Is more involved at the beginning of team development than later; e.g., attending team meetings, approving decisions, providing the team with appraisals

- [ ] Provides general parameters, training resources, information, performance feedback and encouragement

- [ ] Requires time to develop along the learning curve just as the team does

- [ ] Affords frequent, informal appraisals

- [ ] Communicates the vision

- [ ] Does not do for the team what the team could do itself

·Questionnaire

We have provided you with a set of questions below which can assist you in deciding your preparedness for work teams. If your score indicates a high readiness for work teams, give us a call.

On a scale of 1 (low preparedness) to 7 (high preparedness) respond to the series of statements about your work organization. For each statement, circle the number that best describes your organization.

1. Our managers have demonstrated a high interest in work teams and the application of Total Quality Management principles towards improving the organization's processes.

<div align="center">

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

</div>

2. Much of the work performed by your organization's employees requires that they work independently.

<div align="center">

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

</div>

3. Training is viewed as important and is being supported with appropriate resources by your organization.

<div align="center">

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

</div>

4. The current work tasks can be modified to provide employees with broader task assignments.

<div align="center">

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

</div>

5. Management takes employee suggestions seriously.

<div align="center">

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

</div>

6. Our communication processes can be described effectively as "multidirectional" (top down, bottom up, and sideways).

<div align="center">

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

</div>

7. Our managers have demonstrated an interest in other than technical skills by having enrolled in workshops or courses containing work team material.

       1   2   3   4   5   6   7

8. All of our employees demonstrate a high degree of maturity as exhibited by a willingness to generate objectives on their own, a willingness to take on responsibilities, and the persistence to complete tasks.

       1   2   3   4   5   6   7

9. Most of our managers and employees believe that current Federal (reinvention) initiatives are serious indicators of a need for change.

       1   2   3   4   5   6   7

10. Efforts at conflict management and employee involvement in decision making have been made to some degree in our organization.

       1   2   3   4   5   6   7

11. Work group members can make a substantial contribution to the work performed by other members.

       1   2   3   4   5   6   7

12. EPA's mission is well established and understood by all organizational members.

       1   2   3   4   5   6   7

13. Employees know that they are expected to communicate in a professional, courteous and respectful manner.

       1   2   3   4   5   6   7

14. Employees are both capable and prepared to perform new roles and responsibilities.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

15. An identified group of managers are committed to driving this effort and will invest time and energy to see it through.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

16. Upper management is ready to remove the barriers to successful employee involvement in decision making.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

17. There is an understanding that resistance exists with some key organizational members and steps are being taken to overcome this resistance.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

18. Upper management understands that once the effort to increase the level of employee involvement has begun and employees become involved, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to go back to the traditional ways.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

19. The organization is prepared for a short term drop in productivity as the organization's members spend extra time to learn new skills, responsibilities, and processes.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

20. Resources exist to communicate and track measures of team and individual performance.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

21. Our unions support the goal to increase employee involvement in decision making.
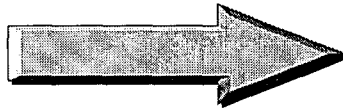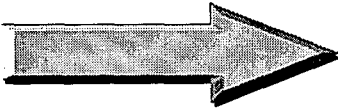
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Calculate your score by adding the numbers circled for all of the items.

If your total score is greater than 80, your level of preparedness warrants investing in implementation of work teams.

Your score

20   40   60   80   100   120   140

| Less than 80 = It is too soon. Learn more (see page 11); lay the ground-work. | 80 or more = Seek a decision to change to teams; start planning. |

EPA Work Team Consultants

The following EPA staff members are collaborating on the development and use of work teams in the Agency. Some or all may be contributors to this and subsequent materials that will be published for Agency use. All are available to provide guidance and information. As information is exchanged and distributed, the work group will increase in size to reflect the level of interest and expertise. If you would like to participate in the information network, please contact one of the group members.

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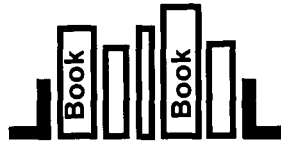
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