

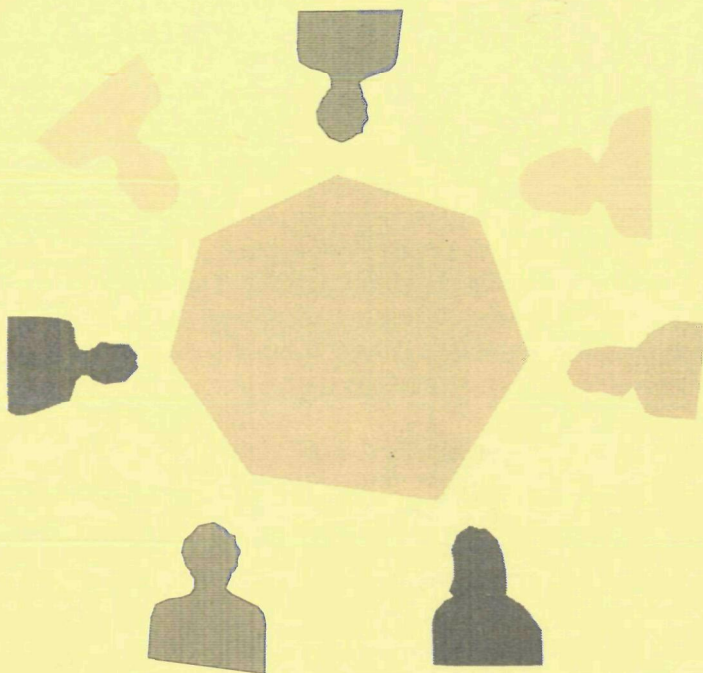
United States
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Agency

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Administration And Resources Management (3634)



Work Teams



Teams Series #1

As a result of the focus on improving customer service, maximizing available resources and streamlining, there is growing interest in the use of work teams. We have been gathering information and testing some of the theories behind the effective implementation of work teams. In collaboration with a number of Program Managers, Human Resources Officers and other consultants, we are in the process of developing tools designed to help you decide if teams may be a viable alternative for your organization.

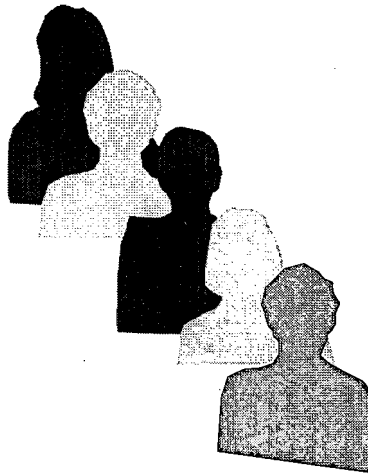
The attached information is a primer. It provides a broad overview on the concept of teams and covers issues that are typically considered when deciding on whether teams will be appropriate in a given work environment.

Over the next few weeks, we will provide additional information to help guide you through the decision-making process. We plan to create an information and ideas exchange so that those interested in getting more information can have ready access. We also envision the formation of a group of Agency and outside advisors that can be available to help in developing and implementing a team-oriented organizational strategy.

Please give Hector Suarez a call on (202)260-3308, if you are interested in getting additional information, if you would like to get involved, or if you would like to be a part of the information exchange.

What is a Work Team?

An interdependent collection of individuals who share responsibility for specific organizational outcomes.



Why should we redesign our organization?

Rapid Change
Global Marketplace
Customer Standards
Life-Time Standards
Collaborative Work Designs
Information Technology
Speed
Opportunities

What are the key differences with work teams?

<i>ELEMENT</i>	<i>TRADITIONAL</i>
<i>Organizational Structure</i>	Hierarchical/Controlling
<i>Job Design</i>	Narrow, Specialists, Rigid Job Boundaries
<i>Management Role</i>	Directing, Controlling
<i>Leadership</i>	Top-Down
<i>Adaptability</i>	Limited, slow change
<i>Information Flow</i>	Controlled, Limited, Unidirectional
<i>Rewards</i>	Individual Recognition, Seniority
<i>Job Process</i>	Managers Plan, Control, Approve
<i>Morale</i>	Low Involvement

WORK TEAMS	SELF-MANAGED WORK TEAMS
Flat/Semi-Autonomous	Flat/Autonomous
Whole Process, Generalist, Flexible Workers	Multiple Processes, Generalists, Very Flexible Workers
Team Leader is Advising, Coaching, Facilitating	Team Shares Advising, Coaching, Facilitating
Team Leader and Team	Shared among Team
Interactive, Quick, Dynamic	More Interactive, Quick, Dynamic
Team Leader Works Toward Open, Shared, Multidirectional	Open, Shared, Multidirectional
Team and Individual	Team Recognition, May be Skills-Based
Team Leader Helps Teams Plan, Control, Improve	Teams Plan, Control, Improve
Higher Degree of Involvement	Full Involvement

Let's take a closer look --

A model for the flatter organization is the work team approach. A work team is defined as an interdependent collection of employees who share responsibility for specific outcomes of their organization. In going to work teams:

A supportive organizational context should be developed, including:	Reward and performance management
	Resources
	Feedback and performance measures
	Intergroup relations
	Training and orientation arrangements

Team processes should be established, and interventions undertaken as needed. Consider:	Coordination
	Communication
	Conflict resolution
	Decision making
	Problem solving
	Individual and team training

Team characteristics should be clarified. Look at:	What work will they do
	Roles and responsibilities
	Individual characteristics

Team outcomes should be defined. Articulate:	Individual changes
	Team changes
	Team performance

Look for these outcomes for self-directed teams:

- Increase in Productivity
 - Increased Flexibility
 - Improvement in Quality
 - Increased Commitment
 - Improved Customer Satisfaction
-

Seek these situational factors before deciding to change to work teams:

- 1. TASK AUTONOMY**
It is necessary, but it cannot be too extreme, or the group goals may depart from those of the organization.
- 2. TASK VARIETY**
There is no point in implementing **work teams** unless there is a significant amount of task variety. The tasks must be interdependent as well, otherwise the group members will be co-acting rather than interacting. [Co-acting means they come together on some tasks, but to a low degree.]
- 3. TASK PROCESS UNCERTAINTY**
Work teams function best when there is a fair amount of this. If the task process is too well structured, the necessity for team input and involvement diminishes.
- 4. CONGRUENCE OF GOALS, REWARDS, AND FEEDBACK.**
If the organization is moving from the traditional form to work teams, feedback and reward systems may still be designed for the individual, rather than teams. Also, those feedback and reward mechanisms may be aligned toward out-of-date goals.

—————
(Cited in Beyerlein and Associates, 1994.)

Consider these environmental and contextual issues.

1. Labor Mobility

High mobility disrupts vital informal group processes such as friendship formation.

2. General Economic Conditions

Poor conditions lead to a focus on short term profitability rather than on long term development or organizational effectiveness.

3. Cultural Values of the Employees

The degree to which employees value cooperation over individualism is important to the success of work teams.

4. Top Management Attitude

The transition to work teams must be seen as a long-term process, and not as a program, or failure will be likely.

(Adapted from Beyerlein, Johnson, & Richardson, 1994)

We recommend that in preparing to convert to work teams you:

- think about it,
- assess the situation, then
- design your new organization

On pages 8-12 we discuss each of those preparation phases. The phase being discussed on each page is highlighted in the box at the top of the page.

Think	Assess	Design
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What prompts a change?

- “People Problems” (absenteeism, low morale, high turnover)
- Productivity Problems (error rate, sluggishness, etc.)
- Flexibility Problems (can’t respond to rapidly changing environment)
- Customer Service Problems (current processes don’t suit customer needs)
- Profits
- Want to or are expected to decrease layers of management.

(Adapted from Beyerlein, Johnson; & Richardson, Beyerlein,1994)

Think

Assess

Design

Learn about alternatives.

Other than converting from a traditional organization to work teams, what steps could you take to remedy your problems? (Do you need a by-pass, or will a change in diet and exercise do?)

[You may want to make other improvements *and* convert to work teams, because when process improvements accompany a transition to work teams, success is more likely.]

If you think teams are the answer, start learning!

Learn about how self-direction works; know what benefits to expect; be aware of the costs, risks, and pitfalls

Learn when and where work teams are appropriate

Understand the general process of redesigning work

If you still think teams are the answer, establish a Steering Committee.

Ask them to look at your organization's:

Mission

Vision

Goals

Values

Have the Steering Committee develop these:

Implementation Plan

Commitment Plan

Communication Plan

Support Plan

Plan for Managers & Supervisors

<i>Think</i>	Assess	<i>Design</i>
<i>Do a Readiness & Roadblocks Assessment, looking at:</i>	Business analysis Support structure Barriers Culture	
<i>Examine the results of that assessment and use them to plan.</i>	Technical processes People processes	
<i>Assess how your work groups are currently aligned.</i>	Current level of empowerment/team maturity Current leader style Team member characteristics Amount of collaboration in work processes Culture/context	
<i>Establish at a lower and more practical level a Design Team. That team will:</i>	Create an implementation plan Implement the new design, as approved by Steering Committee Envision the culture for the new work system Maintain communication with the Steering Committee Receive coaching from the Steering Committee as needed	

Think	Assess	Design
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Thorough Design Team Work Should Include an examination of:

- Information Flow/Decision Making
- Technical Work Processes
- Motivation/Reward
- Human Resources
- Management Transition Plan
- Ongoing Development and Renewal

Select Design Team members carefully.

- Employees are usually selected to be on a design team because of:
- Their knowledge of operations
 - Influence at their respective levels
 - Ability to work with others
 - Affinity for the notion of employee involvement

Your Design Team will oversee the redesign process, and:

- Champion organizational change
- Represent stakeholders whose support is essential
- Decide where teams will be first piloted, then implemented
- Come up with a plan for implementing redesign (big picture, time frames)

Think

Assess

Design

The Design Team should also oversee the transition to work teams.

Make sure support which the teams need is available

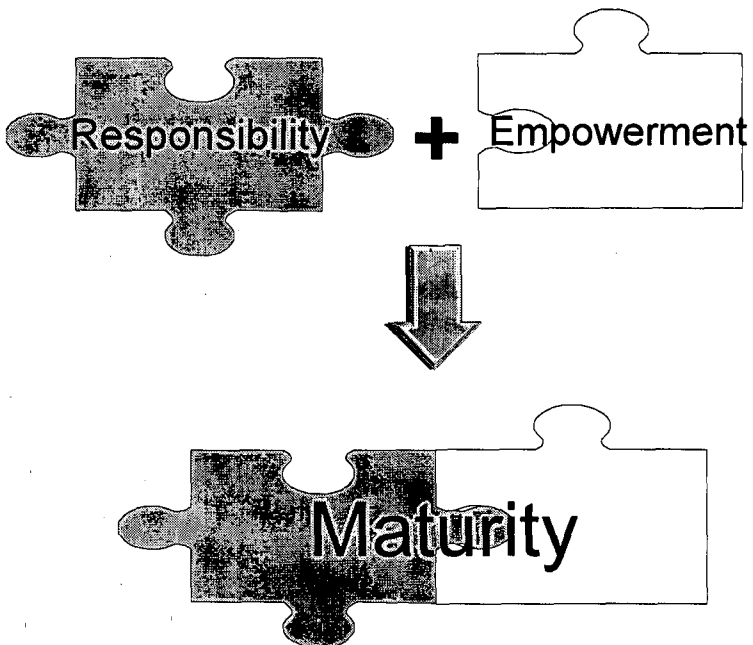
Maintain communication links between the design team and the rest of the organization

Act as a buffer for the new work system, once implemented

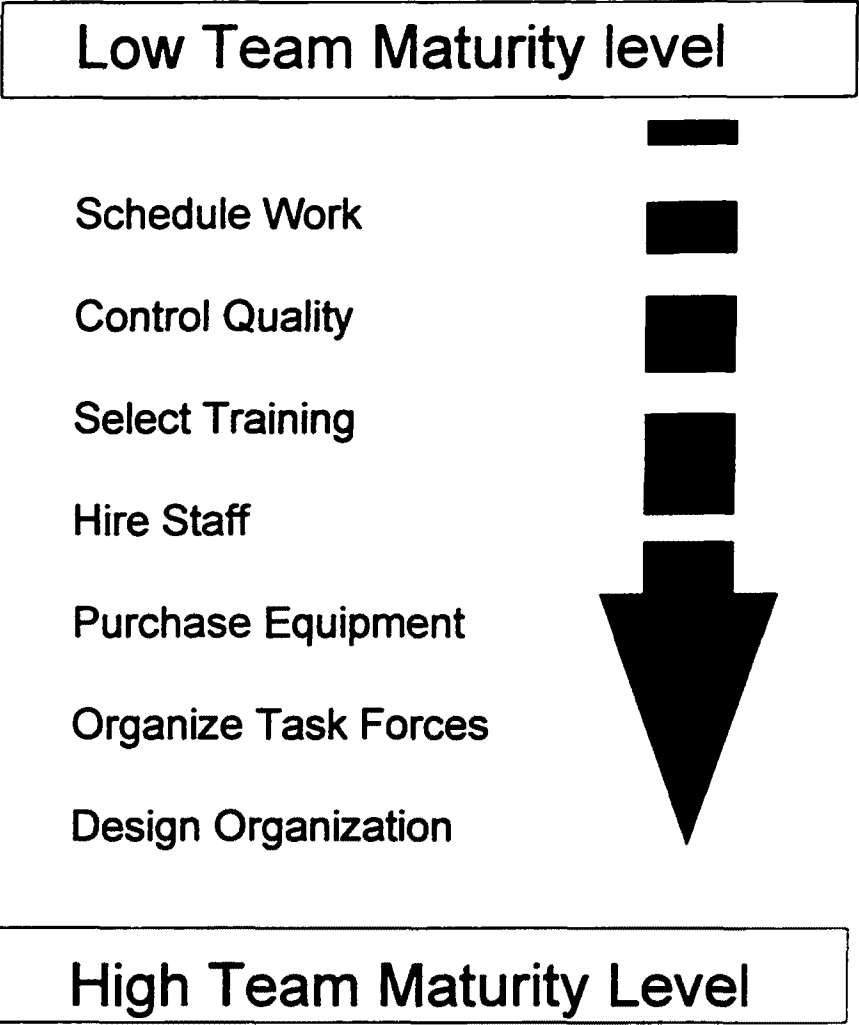
Pass on learnings for next design teams

Act as a council to solve problems or address issues which can't be solved at the team level

Insure that the redesigned pieces fit into a coherent whole



Transfer management responsibilities to teams, starting with those high on this list, then progressing farther down as transition occurs.



(Adopted From Beyerlein & Associates, 1994)

As jobs are designed or redesigned in the work team setting, consider these differences in approach:

Job Design - Individuals

Traditional Approaches

- high specification
- low variety
- low discretion
- routinized

Modern Approaches

- skill variety
- task identity
- task significance
- autonomy
- feedback

Job Design -- Teams

Team membership, their degree of influence, a high degree of task

Traditional Approaches

- specified roles
- external supervision
- planned & scheduled interaction

Self-Managing Groups

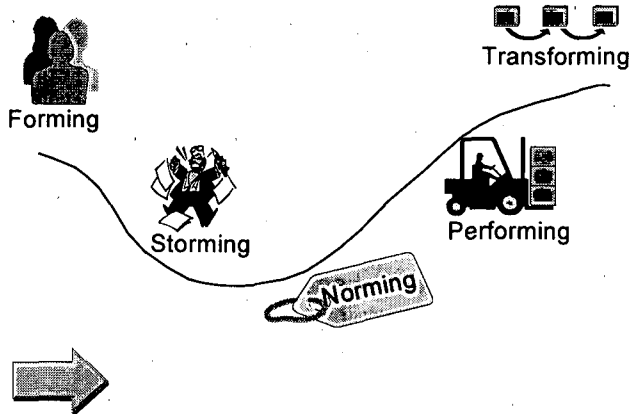
- task differentiation
- task control
- boundary control

Expect, as the transition to work teams progress, to go through the four stages below:

Stages of Team Development

Stage 1: Form	Development of initial relationships Roles are very unclear People tend to be cautious Group behavior reflects anxiety, anticipation, uncertainty
Stage 2: Storm	Most difficult stage A sense of common direction develops Members still rely on individual methods Group behavior reflects arguing, frustration and conflict
Stage 3: Norm	Members clarify responsibilities Members more comfortable with their roles Group behavior reflects cooperation, trust, and cohesion
Stage 4: Perform	Team has reached maturity Group is able to renew its energy and reach for bigger challenges Group behavior reflects high confidence, self-facilitation, self-critique, loyalty, and resistance to break up.

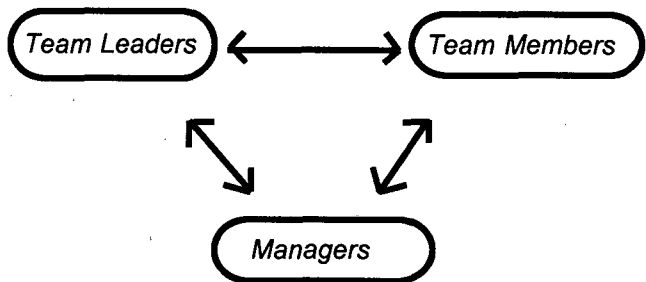
Stages of Development



(Adapted from Michael Beyerlein & Associates, 1994.)

Comments on Storming

There is a continuous feedback loop that cycles between the work process, team assignments, team development, organizational coordination, and team outcomes. This provides team performance information to management and team members which they can use to make necessary adjustments.



Strategies involving the implementation and use of team organization require management and employees to understand and be able to make needed adjustments to each of these components. The active problem solving and decision making of all concerned is crucial to the management of the team organization.

***Work through
the post-
implemen-
tation
problems
which arise --***

Process losses

Increased time and effort spent on task and interpersonal issues

Groupthink

***Those may
include:***

Increased conflict

Social loafing and diffusion of responsibilities

Increased risk taking

Escalated commitment to incorrect or irrational courses of action

Premature consensus

Note: If work teams are not provided with clear and continuously engaging leadership, necessary training, and an appropriate reward system, there is a high probability for significant process losses.

Implementation

Once you decide to pursue the use of teams as an organizational option, the next step is to assess the status of the work force and determine their preparedness for the change.

The issues below would be part of the stages to be incorporated into a team implementation framework.

Stage 1: Prework

Clarify what work needs to be done to set up teams.

Determine the degree of authority the teams will have.

Assess costs, benefits, and feasibility of using teams to do the work.

Stage 2: Creating Performance Conditions

Design the group tasks.

Select team members.

Provide for organizational support (i.e., rewards).

Arrange for material resources.

Stage 3: Forming and Building The Team

Help team set its boundaries (membership and tasks).

Legitimize and help with the task redefinition process.

Help develop team norms and members' roles.

Stage 4: Providing Ongoing Assistance

Allow team to renegotiate aspects of its performance.

Provide process assistance to promote positive team work (i.e., TQM training).

Provide opportunities for team to learn from its experiences.

Three Crucial Implementation Levers

An integrated, comprehensive change process that is managed -- Process involves an organization vision; business and customer needs; a planning and operations strategy; and aligned systems, policies, practices, goals, and measures.

Work arrangements that support teams -- Work interdependence, team members with necessary technical and interpersonal skills, and team responsibilities clearly defined and understood.

A comprehensive training and development strategy for teams -- Team skills seen as a priority, team performance management and rewards, and leadership training for team members.

Conclusion

Establishing well-functioning teams requires more than shifting people and assigning work responsibilities. It requires an appraisal of the preparedness of employees and a well-defined strategy for implementation. It will not happen without management's continuous commitment and involvement and the allocation of resources to effect the necessary sequential steps.

EPA Work Team Consultants

The following is a listing of EPA staff members who 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.

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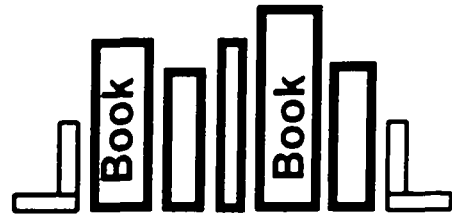
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