

Project Team and Stakeholder Management

Composition: Getting the Right People on the Bus

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4th Lecture

Lecture (4)



Course Outline

Lecture 1: Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project.

Lecture 2: the search for the high-performing team.

Lecture 3: Context: Laying the Foundation for Team Success.

Lecture 4: Composition: Getting the Right People on the Bus.

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Lecture 7: The Project Team's Environment (Stakeholders, Developing and Using Project Networks).

Lecture 8: Leading Project Teams.

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Lecture Outline

1. Team Composition and Performance.
2. Team Size.
3. Creating the Context and Composition for Team Performance.
4. High Priority on Personal Development.
5. Creating the Context and Composition for Team Performance.

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1. Team Composition and Performance:

For a team to succeed, its members need **two things**: the **skills** and **experience** to accomplish the task and “fire in the belly,” that is, the motivation to succeed. Team leaders play a critical role in identifying and attracting people with those attributes to the team.

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Beyond that, we have found that effective team leaders have the following characteristics:

- Clear vision of the team's goals and the metrics that will accurately measure team performance.
- Ability to set clear direction for the team with regard to how to achieve team goals.
- Ability to motivate and inspire team members as they pursue team goals.
- Ability to teach and coach team members in developing the skills necessary to complete team tasks.

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- Ability to make each team member feel that she or he is valued and an important contributor to the team.
- Ability to hold team members accountable for their contributions to team performance.
- Ability to include and listen to team members when making decisions that affect the team.
- Ability to manage conflict and solve team problems effectively.
- Ability to gain support and resources for the team from key executives and other constituencies.

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We often find that team leaders do not receive adequate training and as a result are ill equipped to lead the team.

In addition to effective leaders, successful teams need members who have the following characteristics:

- Strong technical skills, knowledge, or experience related to accomplishing the team's tasks.
- High motivation to be an effective contributor to the team effort.

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- Effective interpersonal and communication skills.
- A willingness to help and support other team members in their efforts to achieve team goals.
- Good conflict management skills (i.e., they are capable of working through disagreements).
- Ability to adapt to new situations.
- Dependability and ability to take initiative to help the team achieve its goals.

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Effective team leaders understand that the way they manage the team and individual team members is strongly influenced by the degree to which team members are skilled and motivated (see figure 3.1).

In some instances, team members may not have the necessary skills or may not be properly motivated to work on the team.

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Figure 3.1 Team Composition: Evaluating and Managing Team Members Based on Skills and Motivation

Team Member's Skills: Technical and Interpersonal	High	Provide incentives and use motivational techniques	Share power and responsibility
	Low	Drop from team	Provide training and develop skills
		Low	High
		Team Member's Motivation	

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When **team members** are neither skilled nor motivated, team leaders may be wise to drop them from the team because the challenge of building their skills and motivating them is simply too daunting. When team members are skilled but not motivated, the team leader's role is largely a motivational one.

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Naturally, it is preferable if team members are intrinsically rather than extrinsically motivated. In fact, when selecting someone for the team, try to determine to what extent the person has a passion and love for this kind of work and to what extent she or he is committed to the team goals.

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Finding people who are **passionate** about the work and internally committed to the organization's goals can save team leaders headaches down the road.

However, in some cases, it may be necessary and desirable to motivate through increased **pay, rank, or other perks**. The key, of course, is to understand what motivates the particular team member to give his or her best effort for the team.

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In contrast, when team members are motivated but not skilled, the leader's task is largely one of **coaching and skill building**.

This requires that the leader play the roles of **educator and coach**. It also means that assessments of skill deficiencies are necessary so that an individual **development and training program** can be established to ensure that the person develops the **technical skills** necessary to be effective in completing the team's tasks.

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Finally, when team members are **both skilled and motivated**, the wise team leader will share **power and responsibility** with the members, since they are capable of assisting the leader in developing team competencies and motivated to achieve the team's goals.

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As teams are formed, team leaders should meet with potential team members before selection to ascertain their ability to contribute to the accomplishment of the team's goals as well as their motivation to be part of the team.

Offering a meaningful team goal or significant performance challenge generally can rally individuals to a team and motivate them.

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When team members believe they are being asked to contribute to something important—something that counts, that has vision—they are more likely to give their best effort than will people who are asked to serve on another team or committee that seems to serve little purpose.

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2. Team Size:

There is **no clear answer** as to the size of an optimal team because size is determined in part by the **nature of the task**.

Some managers like large teams because they believe that these teams generate more ideas and call attention to the importance of a project or functional area.

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Moreover, some managers think that putting people on a team is a good experience, and they don't want to leave anyone out.

However, in general, **small teams** are preferable to large teams, and there are rules of thumb and certain pitfalls to avoid in determining team size.

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We find that large teams (**typically over ten people**) have lower productivity than smaller teams. Research reported by **Katzenbach and Smith** in their book **The Wisdom of Teams** suggests that

“serious deterioration in the quality and productivity of team interactions sets in when there are **more than 12 to 14 members** of the team.”

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The greater the number of team members, the more difficult it is to achieve a common understanding and agreement about team goals and team processes. Large teams lead to less involvement on the part of team members and hence lower commitment and participation, which leads to lower levels of trust.

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Although team size clearly should be determined by the nature of the task, much of the research suggests that the most productive teams have **four to ten members**.

In summarizing research on team size, researcher **Glenn Parker** notes, “Although optimal size depends on the specific team mission, in general, the optimal team size is **four to six members**, with **ten** being the maximum for effectiveness.

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It is important to remember that many team tools in decision making, problem solving, and communicating were created to take advantage of small-group dynamics.

Consensus, for example, just does not work as a decision-making method in a team of **twenty members.”**

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3. Effective Team Context and Composition: The Case of Bain & Company

Bain & Company, a top-tier global consulting firm, has made team development a high priority. Although the company and its teams certainly have their problems, most organizations can learn some valuable lessons from Bain's team development efforts. (Jeff Dyer experienced the impact of Bain's team culture personally as a Bain consultant for several years.)

Bain's ability to develop productive teams hinges largely on a program that includes the following key elements:

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- Bain's ability to develop productive teams hinges largely on a program that includes the following key elements:

A strong team culture that features:

- A team orientation explicitly stated in the company's mission statement
- Promotion and rewards for those who demonstrate team leadership skills
- Team processes that emphasize interdependency.

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- Attention to team dynamics and structure, including:
 - Lean and flat semiautonomous teams with high responsibility.
 - Attention to complementary team skills and team chemistry.
 - High priority on personal and leadership skill development.
- Systems that measure team satisfaction and performance on a monthly basis.

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4. High Priority on Personal Development:

To ensure that individual needs are considered, professional development is a company priority. Managers and team members jointly develop skill plans to outline the skills that the team member needs to develop in order to advance in the organization.

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Skill plans are prepared every **six months**, with the manager providing coaching and feedback. Most managers also conduct a monthly or bimonthly lunch with each member to discuss professional development needs.

The system is supported by a professional development department whose primary responsibility is to help employees with their **personal growth and development**. Team “buddies,” or colleagues, are assigned when a new member joins the company to ensure that he or she is properly integrated into the team.

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- Monthly Measurement of Team Satisfaction and Performance

Overall team satisfaction and team leadership effectiveness are evaluated every month through a formal review process.

Members fill out a survey and rate their satisfaction on such issues as these:

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- Value addition and impact of work.
- Ability of team leaders to motivate and inspire team members.
- Clear and prompt downward communication.
- Reasonable time demands.
- Upfront planning and organization.
- Fun, motivation, and a sense of teamwork.

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- Interest level of work.
- Clear performance expectations.
- Level of responsibility.
- Opportunities for professional growth and development.
- General level of respect for each person.

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5. Creating the Context and Composition for Team Performance:

Almost all organizations and teams will likely be deficient in some way related to providing the right context and composition to create a high-performing team. In summarizing,

we suggest the following ideas and actions that we have found useful for managers in creating the appropriate context and composition for teamwork:

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1. Provide Clear Top Management Support for Team Development

In any organization, people at lower levels respond to cues from upper management about what is truly important to the organization.

A key role for leaders is to create a vision for others of what is possible for the organization to achieve.

A company with a clear team-related mission statement will assign a top corporate officer or group to monitor how well teams are functioning.

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This sends a clear signal that teams are fundamentally important and that to succeed, everyone must learn to contribute to the team effort.

Too many organizations give some emphasis to team building in a middle management seminar or training program, but there is little evidence that upper management takes any of this seriously.

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2. Create Organizational Rewards to Support Teamwork

Managers must be able to see that if they develop a successful team, their efforts will be rewarded. This means having some criteria of team effectiveness and having those criteria emphasized in the performance review system.

Managers at all levels should monitor and be monitored on what is being done to build effective teams, and organizational resources need to be made available to support such action.

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3. Make Time Available for Team Development

Managers must feel that team development is a high-priority activity and that the organization supports time spent in team-building activities.

If managers believe that upper-level management views team development as a frill that prevents people from getting work done, few will be inclined to spend time in this area.

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4. Regularly Assess Whether the Organization's Culture, Structure, and Systems Support Teamwork.

One reason for poor team performance is the lack of congruence between an organization's culture, structure, and systems and team development.

To avoid this problem, an organization should periodically assess how these three factors are affecting teamwork in the organization.

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5. Develop a Systematic Process for Making Team Assignments

Without the right players (those who are motivated and have the right skills), a team is unlikely to succeed. Thus, organizations need to develop clear methods and criteria for making team assignments.

In this process, the organization should identify:

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1. The goals for the team.
2. The knowledge, skills, and experience that the team leader and team members need for the team to achieve its goals.
3. The optimal number of members needed for the team to achieve its goal.

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chapter 3

