

Project Team and Stakeholder Management

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Lecture 2

جامعة الجميع الذكية

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PGM 341
the search for the
high-performing team



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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.

Lecture 5: competencies: Developing Team Skills for High Performance.

Lecture 6: Change: Devising More Effective Ways of Working Together.

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

Lecture 8: Leading Project Teams.

Lecture 9: Managing Conflict in the Team.

Lecture 10: Writing Project Reports.

1. the search for the high-performing team.
2. Determinants of High-Performing Teams: The Four Cs.
3. Context for the Team.
4. Composition of the Team.
5. Competencies of the Team.
6. Change Management Skills of the Team.

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1. the search for the high-performing team:

Poor team performance is a major concern because most of the work performed today is done in a team environment—research teams, product development teams, production teams, sales and marketing teams, cross-functional problem-solving teams, and top management teams. **One reason** that work is done more by teams now is that products and services have become increasingly complex, requiring a wide range of skills and technologies.

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No single person is capable of developing, manufacturing, and selling increasingly complex products, which means that teams of individuals with complementary knowledge must coordinate effectively in order to be successful. This requires teamwork. **A second reason** is that in a global economy, individuals must collaborate across cultural, organizational, and geographical boundaries to accomplish their goals.

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Hence, the need for cross-cultural, virtual, and alliance teams (teams collaborating across organizational boundaries) has increased in recent years. Thus, to be a high-performing company in today's competitive landscape essentially requires **high-performing work teams**. The two unavoidably go hand in hand.

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High-performing teams are those with members whose skills, attitudes, and competencies enable them to achieve team goals. These team members set goals, make decisions, communicate, manage conflict, and solve problems in a supportive, trusting atmosphere in order to accomplish their objectives. Moreover, they are aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and have the ability to make changes when they need to improve their performance.

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2. Determinants of High-Performing Teams: The Four Cs:

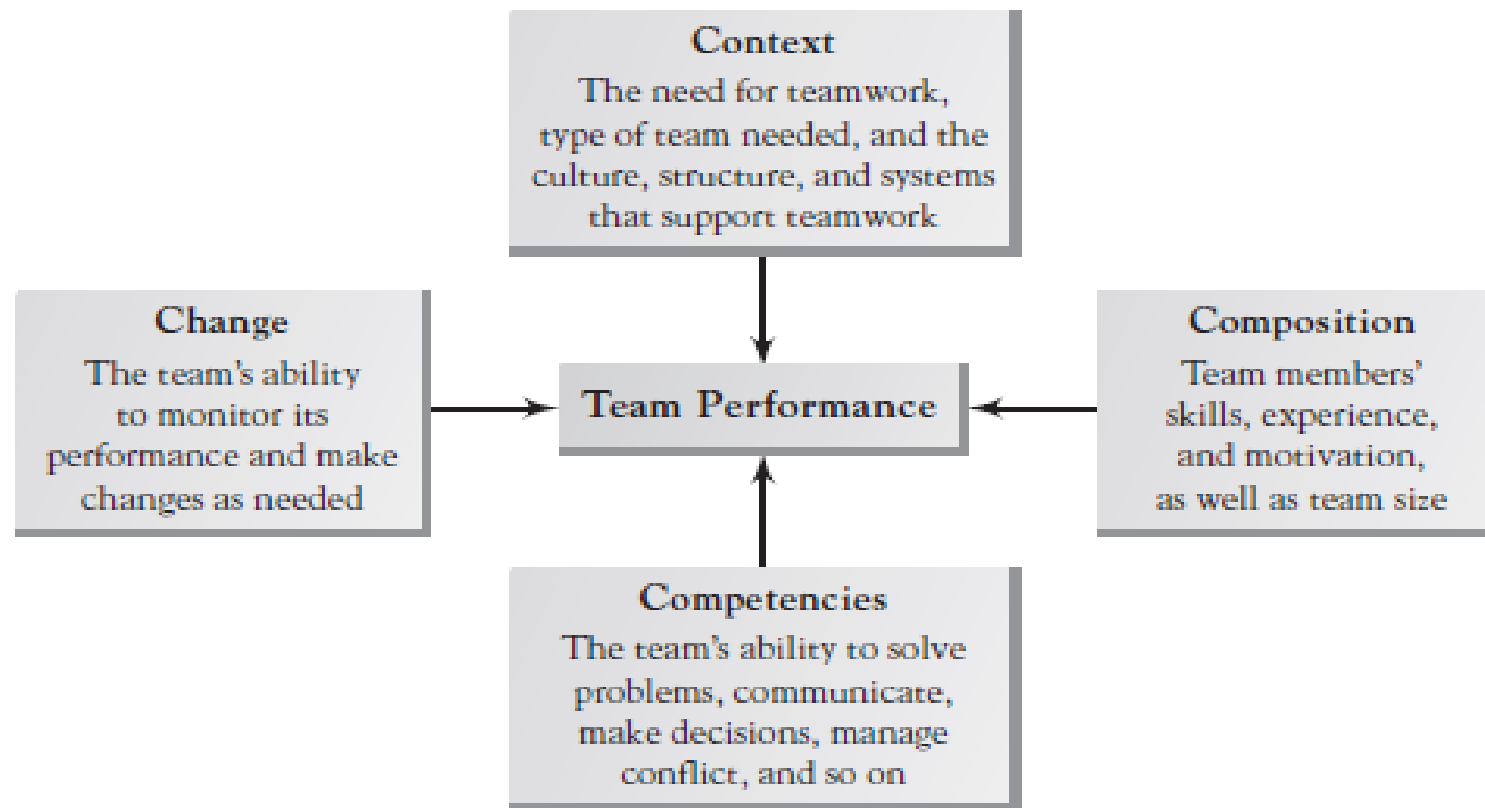
the four factors—the Four Cs—must be understood and managed for teams to achieve superior performance (figure 1.1):

1. The context for the team.
2. The composition of the team.
3. The competencies of the team.
4. The change management skills of the team.

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Figure 1.1 The Four Cs of Team Performance



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1. Context for the Team:

Team context refers to the organizational environment in which the team must work. **Understanding context and how it influences team performance requires an understanding of the answers to two questions:**

1. Is effective teamwork critical to accomplishing organizational goals? If so, are there measurable team performance goals around which we can organize a team?

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2. Do my organization's senior managers, reward systems, information systems, human resource practices, structure, and culture support teamwork?

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Experience has shown that the teamwork required to achieve high performance is much more important when the team must complete a complex task characterized by a high degree of interdependence. In addition, we have found that some organizations deploy formal organization structures or reward systems that become barriers to effective teamwork.

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For example, reward systems that provide strong individual incentives often create strong disincentives to engage in cooperative behavior within a team. Unfortunately, many organizations, while paying lip service to the importance of teamwork, do little to encourage and support those who work on teams. Thus, they do not foster a culture in which teams can succeed.

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High-performing teams manage context effectively by:

- (1) establishing measurable team performance goals that are clear and compelling.
- (2) ensuring that team members understand that effective teamwork is critical to meeting those goals.
- (3) establishing reward systems that reward team performance (more than individual performance).
- (4) eliminating roadblocks to teamwork that formal organization structures might create.

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(5) establishing an organizational culture that supports teamwork oriented processes and behaviors (e.g., everyone in the organization understands that success is predicated on effective collaboration; consequently, informal norms and processes support team-oriented behavior).

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- (6) creating information systems to provide the team with needed information to make decisions.
- (7) establishing human resource systems to provide training, team member selection, methods, and so on to support teamwork.

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2. Composition of the Team:

The composition of the team concerns the skills and attitudes of team members. You have to have the “right people on the bus” to make things happen as a team and achieve top performance. To effectively manage the composition of the team, **team leaders must understand that team leadership and processes differ depending on the answers to the following questions:**

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- Do individual team members have the technical skills required to complete the task?
- Do they have the interpersonal and communication skills required to coordinate their work with others?
- Are individual team members committed to the team and motivated to complete the task?
- Is the team the right size to complete the task successfully?

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Teams saddled with members who are not motivated to accomplish the task or lack the skills to achieve team goals are doomed to failure from the outset. Of course, **team composition also refers** to assembling a group of individuals with complementary skills. High performing teams use the diverse skills and abilities of each team member in a synergistic way to achieve high performance. The members of high-performing teams clearly understand their roles and assignments and carry them out with commitment.

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Team size also plays a significant role in team effectiveness. A team that is too large may be unwieldy and cause team members to lose interest due to a lack of individual involvement. Having too few team members may place unnecessary burdens on individual team members, and the team may not have the resources needed to accomplish its goals.

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High-performing teams effectively manage team composition by:

- (1) establishing processes to select individuals for the team who are both skilled and motivated.
- (2) establishing processes that develop the technical and interpersonal skills of team members as well as their commitment to achieving team goals.

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- (3) cutting loose individuals who lack skills or motivation.
- (4) managing the team according to the skills and motivation of team members.
- (5) ensuring that the team is the right size, that is, neither too large nor too small to accomplish the task.

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3. Competencies of the Team:

We have found that successful teams have certain competencies that exist independent of any single member of the team but are embedded in the team's formal and informal processes—its way of functioning. **High-performing teams have developed processes that allow the team to:**

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- Clearly articulate their goals and the metrics for achieving those goals.
- Clearly articulate the means required to achieve the goals, ensuring that individuals understand their assignments and how their work contributes to team goals.
- Make effective decisions.

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- Effectively communicate, including giving and receiving feedback.
- Build trust and commitment to the team and its goals.
- Resolve disputes or disagreements.
- Encourage risk taking and innovation.

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Thus, while the context and composition of the team set the stage, these competencies propel it to high performance. If the team hopes to be extraordinary, it must develop competencies for goal setting, decision making, communicating, trust building, and dispute resolution.

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4. Change Management Skills of the Team:

High-performing teams must change and adapt to new conditions to be effective over time. Factors related to team context, composition, and competencies may need to change for the team to succeed in reaching a new goal. A team that is able to monitor its performance and understand its strengths and weaknesses can generate insights needed to develop a plan of action to continuously improve.

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Toyota, a company that we've researched extensively, uses the **kaizen, or continuous-improvement**, philosophy to help its teams identify the bottlenecks they are facing and then develop strategies to eliminate the bottlenecks. Toyota's managers are never fully satisfied with their team's performance because once they've fixed one problem, they know that continuous improvement requires that they find and fix the next one.

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We have found that teams in most companies, unlike **Toyota**, are oblivious to their weaknesses. And even when they do recognize them, they do not have the ability to manage change effectively to overcome those weaknesses. It is possible to view change management skills as just **another team competency**, but this meta competency—what we call team-building skills—is so important that it deserves special attention.

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High-performing teams have developed the ability to change by:

- (1) establishing team-building processes that result in the regular evaluation of team context, team composition, and team competencies with the explicit objective of initiating needed changes in order to better achieve the desired team goals.

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(2) establishing a philosophy among team members that regular change is necessary in order to meet the demands of a constantly changing world.

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Chapter 1

