

Project Team and Stakeholder Management

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Lecture 3

جامعة الجميع الذكية

تسعى لتكون الكيان الأول الذي يتبنى مبدأ المجتمع التعليمي
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PGM 341

Context: Laying the Foundation for Team Success



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2. The Importance of Context.
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 - What Type of Team Is Needed?
 - Does the Organization's Context of Culture, Structure, and Systems Support Teamwork?

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1. The Context Problem:

Over the years we have surveyed dozens of personnel and human resource managers in both large and small companies and gathered data from hundreds of managers about their organizations' efforts to improve team performance. Although most report that their companies believe teamwork is important, only about one third were engaged in a serious effort to initiate team-building practices that would improve team performance. When the managers of the other two-thirds were asked why they didn't spend much time and effort to improve their teams, **they reported the following problems, listed in order of the frequency of response:**

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1. I don't know how to build a more effective team.
2. I'm concerned that the possible negative effects will outweigh the benefits.
3. I don't feel that developing an effective team is rewarded in our company.
4. My subordinates feel they don't need it, and it takes too much time.
5. I don't have the support of my boss to spend time in team development.

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1. I don't know how to build a more effective team.

With the business world's emphasis on teamwork, it is interesting that the primary obstacle to team building is that managers feel they do not know how to build an effective team. Virtually every recent publication on organizations and management has emphasized the importance of effective teams in achieving high levels of performance.

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However, rarely do these writings describe exactly how to develop effective teams. There is almost a sense that because everyone agrees that teams are important and almost everyone has participated on some type of team, everyone must therefore understand how to put an effective team together.

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2. I'm concerned that the possible negative effects will outweigh the benefits.

Most managers are pragmatic in their approach to taking action: they weigh the possible gains against the costs and risks and usually follow a course of action designed to maximize benefits and minimize negative consequences.

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3. I don't feel that developing an effective team is rewarded in our company.

Another key obstacle is the lack of apparent connections between team building and formal rewards in the organization. For many years, a major oil company had a program of management development for middle managers that included clear instruction about doing effective team building. However, few of these managers implemented their team development plans on the job.

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4. My subordinates feel they don't need it, and it takes too much time.

Our surveys revealed that because many people have never experienced working on an effective work team, they have no standard against which to compare their current team. Many describe their current team functioning as “Okay,” “We’re doing all right,” or “We are as good as most.” In a similar vein, many managers believe that team building is a kind of “touchy-feely” activity, not associated with getting work done. As one manager said, “What I need is help in getting a lot of work done with reduced manpower.”

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5. I don't have the support of my boss to spend time in team development.

Some managers in the organizations indicated that although they would like to engage in team building and thought they knew what to do, they did not get any support for these activities from their bosses. **These managers said that their bosses gave the following reasons for not supporting team development:**

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- “It will take too much time from our heavy workload.”
- “It isn’t supported by upper management.”
- “Team development is not part of the company goals or the performance review system.”
- “We have heard that it is a waste of time.”
- “We understand that it requires an outside consultant, which we can’t afford.”

When your boss doesn’t support an initiative, it is virtually impossible to feel it is important.

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2. The Importance of Context:

To create an organizational context that will support teamwork, managers should ask themselves the following questions:

1. How important is effective teamwork to accomplishing this particular task?
2. What type of team is needed?
3. Does the organization's context of culture, structure, and systems support teamwork?

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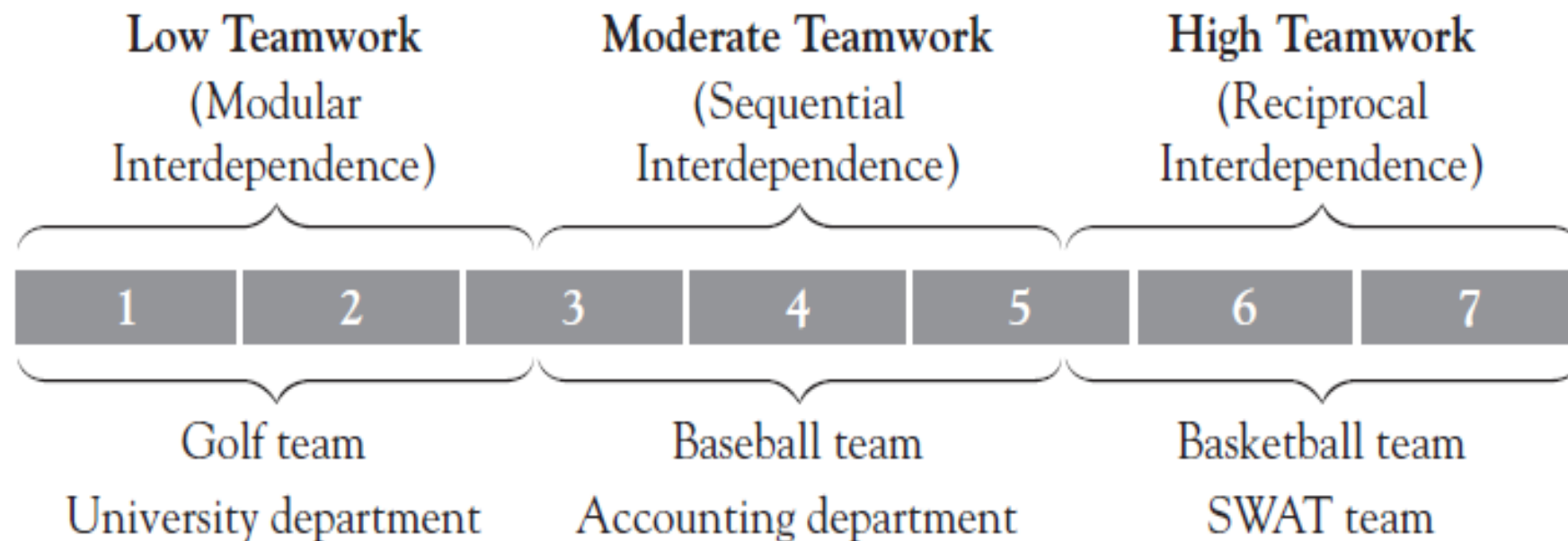
1. How Important Is Effective Teamwork to Accomplishing This Particular Task?

Although all teams represent a collection of people who must collaborate to some degree to achieve common goals, some tasks require more team collaboration than others. **Figure 2.1** represents a continuum of the teamwork or collaboration needed for a team to function. The continuum is based on the notion that the importance of teamwork will vary according to the task environment, notably the degree of interdependence required to complete the team's tasks.

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Figure 2.1 Continuum of Teamwork



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- **Modular Interdependence:** Sometimes the nature of the task doesn't require the team to work closely together all the time because the team tasks are modular in nature. In these tasks, individuals on the team are connected through modular or pooled interdependence, performing tasks independently and pooling only the results to create a team output.

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- **Sequential Interdependence:** Individuals on teams are sequentially interdependent when one person cannot perform his or her task until another has completed his or her task and passed on the results. Under these circumstances, team members must meet more regularly and consistently to coordinate their work.

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- **Reciprocal Interdependence:** In some groups, the nature of the task requires a high degree of teamwork because tasks are reciprocally interdependent. Team outputs are achieved through work done in a simultaneous and iterative process in which each individual must work in close coordination with other team members because he or she can complete tasks only through a process of iterative knowledge sharing. Thus, team members must communicate their own requirements frequently and be responsive to the needs of the other team members.

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Understanding the level of teamwork and the nature of interdependence required by the task is important for three reasons:

- **First**, they dictate the amount of attention that managers need to pay to teamwork and team processes: the greater the team interdependence, the more important it is to make sure the team is working together effectively and everyone understands the nature of the interdependence.

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- **Second**, by understanding the nature of interdependencies in the team, managers will have greater insight into why certain common problems arise and will know how to fix them. **For example**, team members of modularly interdependent tasks frequently feel frustrated when team processes are designed for frequent meetings and interaction.

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- **Third**, understanding the different levels of teamwork and the nature of interdependence will allow managers to adapt business and team structures to the nature of the task and thereby prevent some problems from occurring in the first place.

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2. What Type of Team Is Needed?

Once the nature of the teamwork needed for a particular task has been determined, decisions can be made about the type of team needed to accomplish that task. Although there are many typologies of teams that have been developed, **we describe three generic team types that are simple yet sufficient to cover the important distinctions:**

- (1) decision teams.
- (2) task teams.
- (3) self-directed teams.

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The first two types of teams are manager led but differ from each other in the roles that they play in the organization. The third type, the self-directed team, is based on different authority and autonomy from the traditional manager-led team that is merely a tool of the manager to get work done.

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1. Decision Teams

All teams have a basic activity and a goal. Many teams in organizations have as their basic activity making decisions. People on these decision teams meet to make decisions about a whole range of matters: defining goals, developing strategy to achieve those goals, giving assignments, allocating resources, cutting or expanding resources for various functions, preparing budgets, setting schedules and deadlines, and so on.

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2. Task Teams

By contrast, members of a task team must together perform a set of interlocking tasks in order to accomplish an end result—a certain product, service, or activity. Examples are a production unit that is making the total product (such as a Volvo automobile), a SWAT team, a surgical team in a hospital, and a utility company service crew.

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3. Self-Directed Teams

Much of organization restructuring in recent years has been based on the desirability of allowing work teams to have more authority to deal with the issues that they face. Such self directed work teams are also called autonomous or semiautonomous work teams.

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An autonomous team does not have a formally designated leader. It can select its own leader, rotate leadership among members, or operate without a leader—a kind of “leadership by committee” process during which leadership functions are assigned to different members of the team.

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A semiautonomous team, by contrast, does have a designated leader with a formal title and position, but the leader's role is defined in such a way that the team makes its own decisions and takes actions independent of the leader. This has led to one of the dilemmas of the semiautonomous team: determining the role of the leader if the team has the right to function without the direct influence and control of that formal leader.

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Organizations that have successfully adopted semiautonomous teams have begun to redefine the role of the formal leader in some combination of the following:

- The leader functions primarily as a training resource or facilitator to help the team examine how it is working and give the team the needed training, coaching, or facilitation.

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- The leader spends most of his or her time dealing with issues with other units or with upper management. Or the leader may increase the interaction and relationships with customers.
- The leader acts as a consultant to the team and can be asked to help deal with team problems, conflicts, problem members, or other concerns.

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- The leader may attend all team meetings or attend only when invited. The leader may formally open the meeting but then turn over the activities of the meeting to team members.

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3. Does the Organization's Context of Culture, Structure, and Systems Support Teamwork?

Three of the most powerful factors in shaping the context for team development are the organization's **culture, structure, and systems**.

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1. Culture

is probably the most significant factor in team development. While powerful, culture is often difficult to detect and change. An organization's culture represents the basic shared values and assumptions held by most people in the organization. It defines what things are viewed as right or wrong, what is valued, how one gets into trouble, and how people are expected to see the whole corporate world.

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It is critical to the collaborative team organization that the shared culture emphasize that teamwork is essential and that people at all levels get into trouble if they do not collaborate with others and respond readily as members of the total team. If the culture is either openly or passively resistant to the importance of teamwork, any attempts to foster collaboration, participation, or involvement will be seen as a temporary action or a management manipulation.

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2. Structure

refers to the basic design of the organization as represented in an organization chart. It reflects authority, communication patterns, and the responsibility for certain functions in the organization. Organization structure largely determines who works with whom and whether teams are designated formally to carry out organization tasks. Although all organizations have informal groups that form for a variety of reasons, the formal organization structure can encourage and support teamwork, or it can make it much more difficult for teams to form and function effectively.

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3. Systems

are the agreed-on methods for doing work in the organization. These integrated agreements, or systems, regulate almost all aspects of organization life. Pay systems, evaluation and promotion systems, decision-making systems, and management information systems are all examples of this component. It is critical that the systemic aspects of the organization support team development.

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People encounter major problems in a company that is attempting to build teamwork into the organization when the pay system is based entirely on individual performance, or if information is given only to individual senior managers rather than all team members.

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Chapter 2

