

Project Team and Stakeholder Management

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Lecture 6

PGM 341

Change: Devising More Effective Ways of Working Together



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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.

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2. Differences Between Team Members and the Team Leader.
3. Differences Among Team Members.
4. Team Building as a Process.
5. Use of an Outside Facilitator or Consultant.
6. The Roles of Manager and Consultant.
7. The Team-Building Cycle.

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Introduction:

The last “C” refers to change, the key meta-competency in our model. High-performing teams not only understand what is impeding their performance but are able to take corrective action to achieve their goals. **Team building** refers to the activities a team can engage in to change its context, composition, or team competencies to improve performance.

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1. Common Problems Found in Teams:

Usually a team-building program is undertaken when a concern, problem, issue, or set of symptoms leads the manager or other members of the team to believe that the effectiveness of the team is not up to par. **The following symptoms or conditions usually provoke serious thought or remedial action:**

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- Loss of production or team output.
- A continued unexplained increase in costs.
- Increases in grievances or complaints from the team.
- Complaints from users or customers about quality of service.
- Evidence of conflict or hostility among team members.

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- Confusion about assignments, missed signals, and unclear relationships.
- Misunderstood decisions or decisions not carried out properly.
- Apathy and general lack of interest or involvement of team members.
- Lack of initiative, imagination, or innovation.
- Ineffective meetings, low participation, or poor decision making.
- High dependence on or negative reactions to the team leader.

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2. Differences Between Team Members and the Team Leader:

Usually this cause of team ineffectiveness is obvious to the subordinates on the team and an outside observer. Unfortunately, it often is not so apparent to the team leader. The problem is not that the leader and team members have differences of opinion with regard to how the team should function but rather how they deal with the differences. One common consequence of these differences is a condition of conformity.

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At times conformity may represent true acceptance of the leader's position. But at other times, it may simply represent avoidance of conflict. A leader who is surrounded by people who are dependent on him or her eliminates any possible conflict but also eliminates the richness of diverse opinion; or team members may have learned over time that conformity is the best strategy and automatically go along with whatever the leader suggests instead of making their own suggestions. At other times, conformity may represent passive resistance. People may agree with the leader publicly but privately resent and resist. Resistance may take subtle forms, such as **avoiding the leader** or **ignoring** or **never fully implementing the leader's decisions**.

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3. Differences Among Team Members:

Differences among team members are one of the most widely observed symptoms of a team in trouble. These difficulties are described in different ways: people fight all of the time; they don't trust one another; there are personality conflicts; people have different philosophies, goals, or values.

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Usually the signals of team member problems are strong statements of disagreement, with no attempt to reach agreement; complaints to the leader, indicating an unwillingness or inability to work out differences; avoidance of one another except when interaction is absolutely required; missed meetings or deadlines; poor-quality work; building of cliques or subgroups to protect against the other side; and minimal or guarded communication.

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4. Team Building as a Process:

Team building should be thought of as an ongoing process, not as a single event. Indeed, People who want to get away for a couple of days and “do team building” but then return to doing business as usual have an incorrect notion of the purpose of team building.

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Team building is a meta-competency that great teams develop that allows them to systematically evaluate and change the way the team functions. This means changing team processes, values, team-member skill sets, reward systems, or even the resources available to get teamwork done. These changes are initiated at a kickoff meeting and continue through the next several months or years while the group learns to function effectively as a team.

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The team development process often starts with a block of time devoted to helping the group look at its current level of functioning and devise more effective ways of working together. This initial sequence of data sharing, diagnosis, and action planning takes time and should not be crammed into a couple of hours. Ideally the members of the work group should plan to meet for at least one full day, and preferably two days, for the initial program.

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Most team-building facilitators prefer to have a longer block of time (up to three days) to begin a team development program. This may not be practical in some situations, and modifications must be made. Since we are thinking of team development as an ongoing process, it is possible to start with shorter amounts of time regularly scheduled over a period of several weeks.

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Some teams have successfully conducted a program that opened with an evening meeting followed by a two- to four-hour meeting each week for the next several weeks. Commitment to the process, regular attendance, high involvement, and good use of time are all more important than length of time.

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5. Use of an Outside Facilitator or Consultant:

Managers commonly ask, “Should I conduct the team development effort on my own, or should I get an outside person to help us?” As we noted previously, “outside person” can mean a consultant from outside the organization or an internal consultant who is employed by the organization, often in human resources or organization development and with a background in team development.

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Ultimately the manager should be responsible for team development. The consultant's job is to get the process started. The use of a consultant is generally advisable if a manager is aware of problems, feels that he or she may be one of those problems, and is not sure exactly what to do or how to do it but feels strongly enough that some positive action is necessary to pull the work group together to improve performance.

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6. The Roles of Manager and Consultant:

Ultimately the manager or team leader is responsible to develop a productive team and develop processes that will allow the team to regularly stop and critique itself and plan for its improvement. It is the manager's responsibility to keep a finger on the pulse of his or her team and plan appropriate actions if the team shows signs of stress, ineffectiveness, or operating difficulty.

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Unfortunately, many managers have not yet been trained to do the data gathering, diagnosis, and planning and take the actions required to maintain and improve their teams. **The role of the consultant** is to work with the manager until the manager is capable of incorporating team development activities as a regular part of his or her managerial responsibilities.

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The **manager and the consultant** (whether external or internal) should form their own two-person team in working through the initial team-building program. In all cases, the manager will be responsible for all team-building activities, although he or she may use the consultant as a resource. The goal of the consultant's work is to leave the manager capable of continuing team development without the assistance of the consultant or with minimal help.

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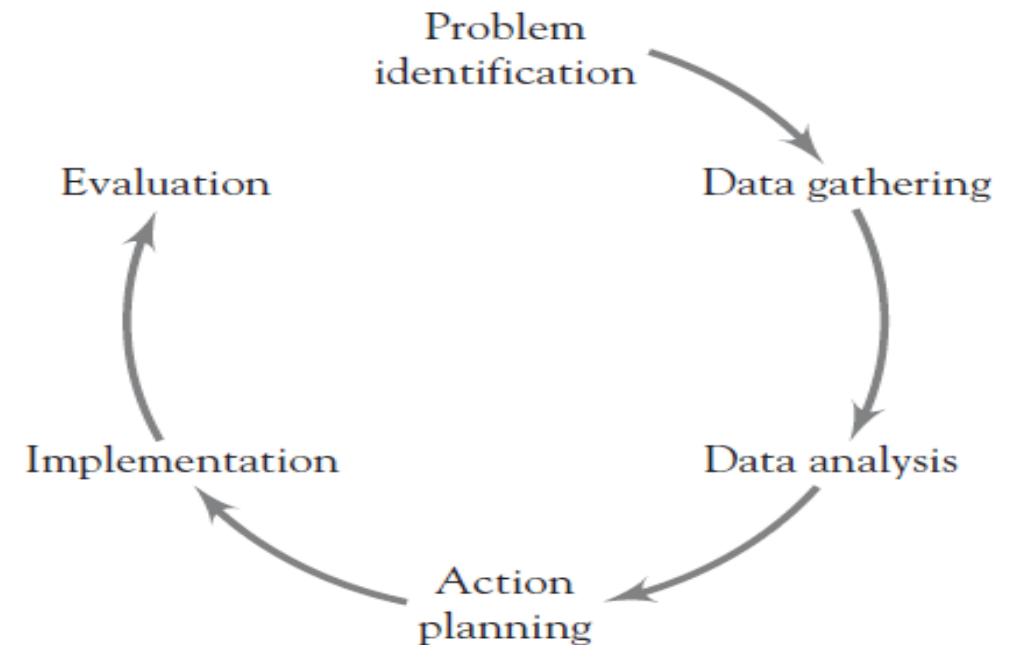
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7. The Team-Building Cycle:

A- Problem Identification

Ordinarily a team-building program follows a cycle similar to that depicted in figure 5.3. The program begins because someone recognizes one or more problems. Either before or during the team building effort, data are gathered to determine the root causes of the problem. The data are then analyzed, and a diagnosis is made of what is wrong and what is causing the problem.

Figure 5.3 Team-Building Cycle



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After the diagnosis, the team engages in appropriate planning and problem solving. Actions are planned and assignments made. The plans are put into action and the results honestly evaluated.

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Sometimes there is no clear, obvious problem. The concern is then to identify or find the problems that are present but hidden and their underlying causes. One still gathers and analyzes the data, identifies the problems and the causes, and then moves to action planning. The manager and the consultant work together in carrying out the program from the time the problem has been identified through some form of evaluation.

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B- Data Gathering

Because team building encourages a team to do its own problem solving and given that a critical condition for effective problem solving is accurate data, a major concern is to gather clear data on the causes behind the symptoms or problems originally identified. A consultant initially may assist in the data gathering, but eventually a team should develop the ability to collect its own data as a basis for working on its own problems. **The following are some common data-gathering methods:**

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- **Surveys:** One of the most common approaches to gathering data is to conduct a survey of all team members. Surveys are helpful when there are relatively large numbers of team members or members would be more open in responding to an anonymous survey. It also can be helpful to use a survey if you want to compare the issues and problems facing different teams in an organization.

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- **Interviews:** At times a consultant can perform a useful service by interviewing the members of the team. The manager or team leader could conduct such interviews, but in most cases, team members will be more open in sharing data with someone from outside the team. The consultant tries to determine the causes behind the problem in order to pinpoint those conditions that may need to be changed or improved. **In these interviews the consultant often asks the following questions:**

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1. Why is this team having the kinds of problems it has?
2. What keeps you personally from being as effective as you would like to be?
3. What things do you like best about the team?
4. What changes would make the team more effective?
5. How could this team begin to work more effectively together?

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- **Team Data Gathering:** An alternative to surveys and interviewing is open data sharing in a team setting. With this method, each person in the team is asked to share data publicly with the other team members. The data shared may not be as inclusive as data revealed in an interview, but each person feels responsible to own up to the information he or she presents to the group and to deal with the issue raised.

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C- Diagnosis and Analysis of Data

With all of the data now available, the manager and the consultant work with the team to summarize the data and put the information into a priority listing. **The following summary categories could be used:**

- A. Issues that we can work on in this meeting.
- B. Issues that someone else must work on (and identify who the others would be).
- C. Issues that apparently are not open to change; that is, things we must learn to accept or live with.

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D- Action Planning

After the agenda has been developed out of the data, the roles of the manager and the consultant diverge. The manager should move directly into the customary managerial role of group leader. The issues identified should become problems to solve, and plans for action should be developed.

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While the manager is conducting the meeting, the consultant functions as a group observer and facilitator. Schein has referred to this activity as “process consulting,” a function that others in the group also can learn to perform. In this role, the consultant helps the group look at its problem-solving and work processes.

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He or she may stop the group if certain task functions or relationship functions are missing or being performed poorly. If the group gets bogged down or steamrolled into uncommitted decisions, the consultant helps look at these processes, why they occur, and how to avoid them in the future. In this role, the consultant trains the group to develop better problem-solving skills.

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F- Implementation and Evaluation

If the actions planned at the team-building session are to make any difference, they must be put into practice. Ensuring that plans are implemented has always been a major function of management. The manager must be committed to the team plans; without commitment, it is unlikely that a manager can effectively hold people responsible for assignments agreed on in the team-building meeting.

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The consultant's role is to observe the degree of action during the implementation phase and be particularly active during the evaluation period. Another data-gathering process now begins, for that is the basis of evaluation. It is important to see if the actions planned or the goals developed during the team-building sessions have been achieved. This again ultimately should be the responsibility of the manager, but the consultant can help train the manager to carry out good program evaluation.

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The manager and the consultant should work closely together in any team development effort. It is ineffective for the manager to turn the whole effort over to the consultant with the plea, “You’re the expert.”

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