

Characteristics of Effective Teams

Sources: Based on *The Wisdom of Teams* (1993), by Kaztenbach and Smith; *The Human Side of Enterprise* (1960), by Douglas MacGregor

1. There is a clear unity of purpose.

There is free discussion of meeting or task objectives until members can commit themselves to them; the objectives are meaningful to each group member.

2. The group is self-conscious about its own operations.

The group takes time to explicitly discuss group process -- how the group will function to achieve its objectives. The group has a clear, explicit, and mutually agreed-upon approach: mechanics, norms, expectations, rules, etc. Frequently, the group will stop to examine how well it is doing or what may be interfering with its operation. Whatever the problem may be, it gets open discussion and finds solutions.

3. The group has set clear and demanding performance goals.

The group has translated performance goals into well-defined concrete milestones against which it measures progress. The group defines and achieves a continuous series of "small wins" along the way to larger goals.

4. The atmosphere tends to be informal, comfortable, relaxed.

There are no obvious tensions. People are involved and interested.

5. There is a lot of discussion in which virtually everyone participates.

Discussion remains pertinent to the purpose of the group. If discussion gets off track, someone will bring it back in short order. The members listen to each other. Every idea is given a hearing. People are not afraid of being foolish by putting forth a creative thought even if it seems extreme.

6. People are free in expressing their feelings as well as their ideas.

7. There is disagreement and this is viewed as good.

Disagreements are not suppressed or overridden by premature group action. The reasons are carefully examined, and the group seeks to resolve issues rather than dominate the dissenter. Dissenters are not trying to dominate the group; they have a genuine difference of opinion. If there are basic disagreements that cannot be resolved, the group figures out a way to live with the disagreement(s) without letting them block group efforts. Dissenters address their concerns within the group not behind others backs.

8. Most decisions are made at a point where there is general agreement.

However, those who disagree with the general agreement of the group do not keep their opposition private and let an apparent consensus or simple majority mask their disagreement. Ideally group actions emerge from individual and group learning shaping win-win solutions.

9. Each individual carries his or her own weight.

Each individual meets or exceeds the expectations of other group members. Each individual is respectful of the mechanics of the group: arriving on time, coming to meetings prepared, completing agreed upon tasks on time, etc. When action is taken, clear assignments are made (who-what-when) and willingly accepted and completed by each group member.

10. Criticism is frequent, frank and relatively comfortable.

The criticism has a constructive flavor -- oriented toward removing an obstacle that faces the group. People talk *to* each other about their concerns, not *about* each other.

11. The informal leadership of the group shifts from time to time.

The issue is not who controls, but how to get the job done.