6

BRINGING THE FOUR Cs TOGETHER

Designing a Team-Building Program

The goal of any team-building program is to help the team engage in a continual process of self-examination to gain awareness of those conditions that keep it from functioning effectively. In Chapter Five we identified a number of symptoms of unhealthy teams. Having gathered data about such problems, the team must learn how to use that data to make decisions and take actions that will change team context, composition, or competencies in ways that will lead to a growing state of team health. Team building, in this sense, is a continual, ongoing process, not a one-time activity.

As mentioned in Chapter Five, team building often begins with a block of time, usually two or three days, during which the team starts learning how to engage in its own review, analysis, action planning, decision making, and even action taking. Following the first meetings, the team may periodically take other blocks of time to continue the process, to review progress made since the last team meeting, and to identify what should be done to continue to improve the team's overall effectiveness. It is also possible that in time, the team will develop its skills for development to such a point that team members are continually aware of areas that need improvement and will raise them at appropriate times with the appropriate people, thereby making it unnecessary to set aside a special meeting for such action.

There is no single way to put together a team-building program. The format will depend on the experience, interests, and needs of the team members, the experience and needs of the team leader, the

Alternative Actions

There are several possible actions that managers might take to get started, including the following:

1. Have an outside person interview each team member to identify problems, concerns, and the need for change.
2. Invite an outside speaker to talk about the role of teams in organizations and the purposes of team development.
3. Gather data on the level of team effectiveness. (See the "Team-Building Checklist," Figure 5.1, and the other instruments presented in this book.)
4. Have a general discussion about the need for developing a team competency to change—which can emerge through a team-building program.
5. Invite a manager who has had successful team-building experiences to describe the activities and results in his or her unit.

Creating an Open Climate for Data Gathering

Goals

The goals of this phase are to create a climate for work; to get people relaxed; to establish norms for being open with problems, concerns, and ideas for planning and for dealing with issues; and to present a framework for the whole experience. The climate established during the start-up phase will, of course, influence the rest of the program.

Alternative I

The manager or team leader can give a short opening talk, reviewing the goals as he or she sees them and the need for the program, emphasizing his or her support and reaffirming the norm that no negative sanctions are intended for any open, honest behavior.

The data can be gathered openly from team members and tabulated on a whiteboard or it can be gathered anonymously, with the results tallied (with high and low scores on each item and the mean score) and then presented to the team. After seeing the results the team should be asked to discuss these questions: Why are the scores rather low (or high)? What could be done here to help people feel more positive about these meetings? If the team is rather large, subgroups should be created to discuss these questions for twenty minutes and report back to the entire team.

The purpose of this type of beginning is to set the norm that the whole program is centered on data gathering, data analysis, open sharing, and trying to plan with data. This also allows group members to test the water about simple, immediate data rather than more sensitive work-group issues, to see how people will respond and react to the questions.

Alternative II

After preliminary remarks by the manager, the team members could be asked, "For us to get a picture of how you see our team functioning, would each of you take a few minutes to describe our team as a kind of animal or combination of animals, a kind of machine, a kind of person, or whatever image comes to mind?" Some teams in the past have been described as

- A hunting dog—a pointer. We run around and locate problems, then stop and point and hope that somebody else will take the action.
- A Cadillac with bicycle pedals. We look good on the outside, but there is no real power to get us moving.
- A centipede with several missing or broken legs. Although the centipede can move forward, its progress is crippled by the missing and broken legs.
- An octopus. Each tentacle is out grasping anything it can but doesn't know what the other tentacles are doing.

Figure 6.2. Agree-Disagree Statements on Team Leadership.

Instructions: Read each statement once. Without conferring with anyone, indicate whether you agree (A) or disagree (D) with the statement. Then as a team discuss each statement and decide whether the team agrees or disagrees with the statement. Take sufficient time to understand each person's point of view. If your team cannot reach agreement, you may change the wording of the statement in order to reach agreement. The goal is to reword the statements so that the team can reach consensus agreement or disagreement on 14 of 15 items.

- ☐ 1. Effective team leaders consult with team members in order to collect information so they, the team leaders, can make a decision.
- ☐ 2 Team leaders should involve team members in all decisions that affect them.
- ☐ 3. Team leaders should take full responsibility for team decisions.
- ☐ 4. Team leaders should not confront team members in front of other team members.
- ☐ 5. A primary function of the team leader is to establish an atmosphere in which all team members feel free to express their feelings and opinions.
- ☐ 6. The team leader should perceive and interact with team members as equals.
- ☐ 7. The team leader should strive to help team members reach their potential even though that may result in one member's being "better" than another.
- ☐ 8. A major responsibility of the team leader is to provide direction to the team and keep it on track.
- ☐ 9. Maximum team effectiveness exists when there is a minimum amount of disagreement among team members.
- ☐ 10. The team leader is a "model" of effective team participation for other team members.
- ☐ 11. There are times when a team leader needs to use autocratic methods to get the team to function effectively.
- ☐ 12. There are times when the team leader should ignore the feelings of a team member in order to reach a decision.

Continued

- Rigid or dysfunctional group norms and procedures
- A climate of defensiveness or fear
- A lack of creative alternatives to problems
- Restricted communications—not all have opportunities to speak
- Avoidance of differences or potential conflicts

Such conditions reduce the team's ability to work together in collective problem-solving situations. The role of the consultant is to help the group become aware of its processes and begin to develop better group skills. Specifically, after becoming aware of a process problem, the group needs to establish a procedure, guideline, or plan of action to respond to the negative condition.

Alternative I

Following the opening remarks, the consultant, outside person, or team leader presents data that have been collected from the team members through observations, interviews, or instruments prior to the meeting. The team is asked to analyze the data. What do the data mean? Why do we respond the way we do? What conditions give rise to negative responses? What do we need to change to get a more positive response to our own team?

This analysis can best be done in subgroups (three to four people) and then shared with the whole group and compiled into a listing of issues and possible change actions. The summaries form the basis for subsequent sessions. The team also puts the data into categories, as described earlier in Chapter Five. Category A items are the major work issues on the agenda.

Alternative II

This design requires some extensive case analysis prior to the team-building sessions. A consultant or someone in management pulls together one or more studies, vignettes, or critical incidents that

Problem-Solving Process

Regardless of the alternative selected, the team should, by this point, have identified a series of problems, concerns, or issues. It may be helpful in the problem-identification stage of team building for the team leader or consultant to share with the team the Four Cs of team performance and then list the problems the team faces in the four categories: context problems, composition problems, competency problems, and change management problems. In this way the team can determine which problems reside within the team and which are related to context issues that may not be under the team's direct control. The team next must move into a traditional problem-solving process by engaging in the following actions:

1. Put problems in order of priority and select the five or six most pressing problems to be addressed during the workshop.
2. Begin the classic problem-solving process: clearly define the problem, describe the causes of the problem, list alternative solutions, select the alternative to be implemented, develop an action plan, perform the action, and evaluate the results.
3. Conduct a force field analysis.[2] Identify the existing level of team performance on a set of performance metrics, formulate a specific goal to improve performance, identify the restraining forces (the factors that are barriers to better performance), and develop a plan to remove the restraining forces.
4. Begin role negotiation. Negotiate between people or subunits that are interdependent and who need to coordinate well with each other to improve effectiveness.
5. Set up task-force teams or subunits. Give each team a problem to work on. Set up a plan of action, carry out the plan, and assess the results.
6. After all problems have been listed, the team can sort them into categories based on the nature of the problem: (A) we

3. It is one year from today and our team is functioning more successfully than any of you imagined. What are we doing, how are we working together differently, what does this success look like, and how did we make it happen?

Members of the team pair up and share their answers to these questions. They then can move into larger subgroups and share their stories, or the entire team can be brought back together to report their stories and their feelings about the future of the team. Professor Gervase Bushe, who uses the AI approach, explains how one team improved its performance through AI:

> In one business team I worked with one member talked about a group of young men he played pick-up basketball with and described why they were, in his opinion, such an outstanding "team." He described their shared sense of what they were there to do, lack of rigid roles, [and] easy adaptability to the constraints of any particular situation in the service of their mission. But what most captured the team's imagination was his description of how this group was both competitive and collaborative at the same time. Each person competed with all the rest to play the best ball, to come up with the neatest move and play. Once having executed it, and shown his prowess, he quickly "gave it away" to the other players in the pick-up game, showing them how to do it as well. This was a very meaningful image for this group as a key, unspoken, tension was the amount of competitiveness members felt with each other at the same time as they needed to cooperate for the organization's good. "Back alley ball" became an important synthesizing image for this group that resolved the paradox of competitiveness and cooperation.[5]

By sharing such powerful images, a team may be able to envision a different way of functioning from its current pattern and create new values and beliefs that will enable the team to plot a new course. The role of the team leader or consultant is to help the team identify those images and metaphors that can be incorporated by ing of others. All feedback should reflect a genuine willingness to work cooperatively. For example, one might say, "My performance suffers because of some things that happen in which you are involved. Let me share my feelings and reactions so you can see what is happening to me. I would like to work out a way that we all can work more productively together."

Types of Feedback

Feedback is most helpful if it can be given in descriptive fashion or in the form of suggestions. Here are some examples.

Descriptive Feedback. "John, when you promise me that you will have a report ready at a certain time (as happened last Thursday) and I don't get it—that really frustrates me. It puts me behind schedule and makes me feel very resentful toward you. Are you aware that such things are going on? Do you know what is causing the problem or have any ideas on how we could avoid this type of problem in the future?"

Suggestions. "John, let me make a suggestion that would really help me as we work together. If you could get your reports to me on time, particularly those that have been promised at a certain time, it would help my work schedule and reduce my frustration. Also, if I don't get a report on time, what would you prefer I do about it?"

Other Possibilities. Following are some other ways group members might go about sharing feedback with one another:

1. *Stop-Start-Continue Activity.* Each person has a sheet of newsprint on the wall. Each team member writes on the sheets of other members' items in three areas: things that person should *begin* doing that will increase his or her effectiveness; things the individual should *stop* doing; and things he or she should *continue* to do.

Goals

The goals of this phase are to pinpoint needed changes, set goals, develop plans, give assignments, outline procedures, and set dates for completion and review. Often the plan is a set of agreements on who is willing to take a specific action. All such agreements should be written down, circulated, and followed up later to ensure that they have been carried out.

Options for Action Planning

Following is a set of actions that are possible during this phase:

1. *Personal improvement plan.* Each person evaluates his or her feedback and develops a plan of action for personal improvement. This plan is presented to the others.
2. *Contract negotiations.*[6] If there are particular problems between individuals or subunits, specific agreements for dealing with conflict issues are drawn up and signed.
3. *Assignment summary.* Each person summarizes what his or her assignments are and the actions he or she intends to take as a follow-up of the team-building session.
4. *Subunit or team plans.* If development plans have been completed, they are presented and reviewed.
5. *Schedule review.* The team looks at its time schedule and its action plans. Dates for completion and dates for giving progress reports on work being done are confirmed. The next team meeting is scheduled. If another team-development workshop or meeting is needed, it may be scheduled at this time.

Implementation, Evaluation, and Follow-Up: What Happens After Team Building?

Assuming that a team-building program began with a block of time that resulted in some agreements to change or improve the way team members have been functioning, how does a good follow-up

- Training or coaching given by the supervisor to the subordinate
- Resolution of any concerns or problems between supervisor and subordinate
- Information sharing to bring the subordinate up to date on what is happening in the team and organization
- Discussion of any personal problems or concerns

These were common agenda items, but the first part of every meeting was spent reviewing assignments and accomplishments since the last session. Time was also spent on making new assignments and agreeing on goals and plans to be reviewed at the next PMI. These assignments and agreements were written down, and both parties had a copy that was the basis of the review at the following meeting.

Boss has the following suggestions for conducting an effective PMI:

- The PMI is most effective when conducted in a climate of high support and trust. Establishing this climate is primarily the responsibility of the superior.
- The interviews must be held on a regular basis and be free from interruptions.
- Both parties must prepare for the meeting by having an agreed-upon agenda; otherwise, the PMI becomes nothing more than a "rap" session.
- When possible, a third party whom both the supervisor and the subordinate trust should be present to take notes and record action items.
- Meetings should be documented by use of a standard form to make sure the key issues are addressed in a systematic way. Both parties agree on the form.
- The leader must be willing to hold subordinates accountable and to ask the difficult "why" questions when assignments are not completed.

- The team leader (the sales manager) had high personal performance goals and a plan for achieving those goals. Team members saw an example of high performance as they watched the team leader.
- The team leader displayed highly supportive behavior toward team members and encouraged them to support one another.
- The team leader used participative methods in supervision. That is, all team members were involved in helping the team and the members achieve their goals.

The major process for achieving high performance was holding regular, well-planned meetings of the sales team for review of each person's performance. In contrast to Boss's PMI, which is a one-to-one follow-up, the units in the Likert research used team meetings as the follow-up process. Those team meetings had the following major features:

- The team met regularly—every two weeks or every month.
- The size of the team varied but was usually between twelve and fifteen members. (Note that this is larger than the ideal team size discussed in Chapter Three.)
- The sales manager presided over the meeting but allowed wide participation in the group. The main function of the manager was to keep the team focused on the task; push the team to set high performance goals; and discourage negative, nonsupportive, ego-deflating actions of team members.
- Each salesperson presented a report of his or her activities during the previous period, including a description of the approach used, closings attempted, sales achieved, and volume and quality of total sales.
- All the other team members then analyzed the person's efforts and offered suggestions for improvement. Coaching was given by team members to one another.

short paper-and-pencil survey or ask for a critique of the meeting verbally, using questions such as the following: How satisfied were you with the team meeting today? Are there any actions we keep doing that restrict our effectiveness? What do we need to stop doing, start doing, or continue doing that would improve our team performance? Do we really function as a team, or are there indications that teamwork is lacking? Are we achieving our goals and using each person's resources effectively?

If your team discusses these questions, you need to allot sufficient time to do an adequate critique. If you use a written form, you could summarize the results and begin the next team meeting by reviewing the summary and discussing what should be done in the current meeting to make the team more effective.

In summary, in this chapter we have described the basic elements of a team-building program. These elements include

- The purposes of the team-building program are described and any concerns or fears of team members are addressed. If a consultant is used, his or her role should be explained.
- Data regarding the performance of the team is generated by examining archival data, observing the team as it performs a particular task, interviewing team members, or surveying members of the team. A variety of alternatives are available to generate such data.
- The team then engages in a problem-solving process to come up with solutions to the problems that have been identified. An appreciative inquiry approach is an alternative to the traditional problem-solving model.
- Action plans are developed and implemented by the team. Commitments generally are written down and assignments clearly communicated to team members.
- To ensure that changes in the team persist over time, team leaders should engage in regular personal management interviews