

Building a Winning Team

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Anyone who has ever been part of a group that worked well together remembers how good that experience felt.... When this happens, employees experience work as not only productive but also creative, innovative, and, quite simply, fun.

— Larry Hirschhorn & Thomas Gilman

The words *team* and *teamwork* are magic these days. Every organization, no matter how small or large, is trying to understand what teams are and how to develop them as quickly as possible.

That has not always been the case. Only a decade ago most managers and their employees thought of teams as groups that took to the playing field to win some kind of athletic contest. Teams were confined to sports; work groups were found in offices and factories. Occasionally, some foresighted individual tried to relate what teams achieved in sporting contests to what groups of workers could do in their organizations. Until a few years ago, however, that connection seemed questionable.

Every organization had its wake-up call during the 1980s. In the 1990s, it is no longer a question of whether we should have teams, but how fast we can develop them and replace the marginally effective groups of the past. Today it is clearly understood that teams are needed to attain quality goals, solve complex problems, and design more efficient systems. Individuals working alone or within ineffective groups are not able to achieve at the level required to survive in today's global economy.

This article was written for those involved in a work team — team members, leaders, managers, supervisors, coaches — anyone who works with a group of people who must coordinate their efforts to reach a common goal. What is it they must know and do to convert their groups to teams — or to maintain a high level of team excellence if they believe that effective teamwork already exists in their group?

* This article is an updated version of the original article titled *Building a Winning Management Team*.

What is a Team?

Understanding what makes a team different from a group offers a good beginning point. Why should there be such a fuss about these labels? The following two examples may help to illustrate one of the major differences between a team and a group.

***Work Group A** is a collection of individuals who have been working together on a project for the past six months. Group members are a little disappointed about their lack of progress, and they are unclear about what they might do to correct the situation. Their leader is a busy person who happens to have a demanding boss. When the pressure is on, their leader barks orders and personally takes over aspects of the project. The group members respond by doing what they are told or lying low until the storm blows over. Participation in problem-solving and decision-making situations is almost nonexistent. Most members of the group want to perform their own responsibilities in a satisfactory way. But they have never given much thought to the need for group goals or concerted group action. Under these circumstances, perpetuation of the status quo seems all but certain.*

***Work Group B** is a collection of individuals who also have been working together for six months on a project similar to that of Group A. By contrast, this group is energized and proud of its successes. Like Group A's leader, this leader also is a busy person with a demanding boss. When the pressure is on in this group, however, the leader stops the action, convenes a problem-solving discussion, and tries to get input from all team members. The result of this approach is that better solutions are found because the pressure is channeled into a spirit of "Let's fix this together." Work for Group B has become more than just getting through the day or week. Everyone looks forward to solving problems and making decisions together.*

Of course, it is easy to see the differences in these two groups when they are contrasted in this way. Yet, these same differences exist in most organizations whenever people have to work in groups.

While some organizational groups may legitimately be called teams, most cannot. Consider a more specific way of looking at the distinction between a group and a team. A group is an assemblage of people whose combined efforts are designed to result in a given product or service. How effectively this collection of individuals works and how it feels about its accomplishments and about itself are often left largely to chance. No special effort is made by the team leader or team members to ensure that the best product or service is achieved or that the members of the work group feel a sense of pride and accomplishment.

Team, on the other hand, is a special designation awarded to a group of people who feel energized by their ability to work together, who are fully committed to a high level of output, and who care about how each member feels during the work process. A team with these characteristics does not emerge quickly or accidentally. Rather, a team results from the deliberate efforts of its membership, including the leader, to improve its practices and patiently eliminate those behaviors that block or inhibit its performance.

A group can mature to a team only through awareness, learning, and determination. An effective work team, like a well-coached soccer team, a well-rehearsed chamber orchestra, or a synchronized surgical team is exciting to witness. Those who observe from the sidelines can see and feel the energy. The members of a team bring a great deal of commitment to their task, enjoy the process of problem solving together, and take pleasure from achieving superior results from their combined efforts.

Are You a Member/Leader of a Group or of a Team?

Teamwork has become an overused word. The label is applied to groups of all kinds whether or not they are really teams. How, then, can you judge whether your group is a team? Here are a few measures that could be used to make an evaluation.

- Do members of your work group have a strong commitment to the achievement of organizational goals? Is getting the job done a top priority? Are the goals and tasks clearly understood and accepted by everyone? Does a sense of urgency, excitement, and purpose permeate the group's work meetings?
- Do members of your work group respect one another? Do they actively listen? Do they openly communicate their feelings? Are they willing to give and receive constructive feedback about their work?
- Is full participation a norm in your group? Do all members take responsibility for helping others participate in group discussions, problem solving, and decision making?
- Are members generally cooperative with one another and with other work teams?
- Do members feel a sense of loyalty to individuals and to the group as a whole? Has each member made an emotional investment in the total group?
- Do group members feel committed to the implementation of the group's decisions?
- Has the group taken responsibility for its own learning and development?
- Is the group capable of objectively evaluating its own work? Will members take corrective action on their own? Do the members care enough to sense problems and gather data in an effort to understand what might be making the group less effective?
- Do group members recognize situations in which collective effort can be more effective than individual effort? Conversely, do members recognize when tasks are more effectively handled by an individual(s) rather than the total group?
- Is the group familiar with the concept of synergy? If so, do members attempt to reach synergistic outcomes when they work together?

Although the answers to these questions will not tell the whole story, if you answered affirmatively to most of them, your group probably works more like a team than a group. If your answers were mainly, "We should be doing that," or "We are not able to do that now," or "We hope to do that in the future," then you and your work group may want to take the time required to learn together how to become a team.

The remainder of this article addresses the question of how a work group can be transformed into a team. Is formal training the only answer? Not necessarily, although an extended opportunity to work at becoming a team will certainly speed the process. Even after a group receives some training, there still will be much that the group will need to do on its own. Let us take the next step and begin to explore the fundamentals of building a team — a winning team.

Charting a Course

To simplify what is known about improving teamwork, it is helpful to understand that all teams have five important concerns:

- Determining the team's direction
- Determining who should do which tasks and with whom
- Understanding the mechanisms that will be needed to facilitate the team's work
- Identifying the kinds of interpersonal relationships that will foster high work accomplishment
- Developing the kinds of relationships that will be needed for working with other teams.

Each of these concerns is complex and sometimes can be tricky to negotiate. But, in order to become a team, a work group must successfully confront these five important sets of issues. If any one of these concerns is shortchanged, a group runs the risk of being arrested at a lower level of development. These five concerns are addressed separately in the sections that follow.

Team Direction

The first team concern is that of direction. Consider these two groups that should have or already have dealt with the issue of team direction.

***Work Group A** has been together for about two years. Group members have come and gone, which is not unusual in most groups. At present, two members have less than one year of service with the group. To an outsider, the efforts of the group seem fragmented. Members do not appear entirely clear on the work and goals of the group. The group rarely meets, and when it does, most of the time is used for announcements and social interaction. There is no evidence of a short- or long-term plan for the group's work. Individuals work at their own jobs as best they can to meet what they perceive to be the boss's daily requirements.*

***Work Group B** has been together for the same period of time and has experienced about the same degree of employee turnover as Group A. But there is one important difference. Group B has some written documents that are shown to new members of the group. For example, new members are provided with a copy of the vision statement that has been carefully prepared by the team. That statement helps the team understand what it is trying to become. Occasionally, the entire group will discuss the relevance of the existing vision statement, making changes to it as appropriate. In addition, posted on a wall in the work area is a neatly typed statement about the group's mission that reads: "The mission of our team is to assemble the highest quality components for our computers." You can't miss it when you come into the department. An outsider would be impressed with the group's goal orientation. The members really seem to know where the group is headed and how its direction relates to the total organization.*

As in the previous comparison of two work groups, the differences are obvious. Again, both types of groups can be found in any organization. Group A does not have a clear purpose or sense of direction; Group B has used several techniques for developing alignment around both a group and an organizational purpose.

Objective setting, goal setting, mission statements, vision statements — none of these are new inventions. Many organizations have been using them for years. They all serve the important purpose of helping people pull or push in the same approximate direction even though their experience and training may be diverse. The extent to which a group avails itself of these techniques is related to its success as a team. Without a clear sense of direction, a group will do what its members like to do, feel comfortable with, or were successful doing in the past. Imagine an organization without any concrete sense of purpose. Great quantities of energy would be lost, and the organization would eventually collapse because of its inability to accomplish what is necessary to ensure its survival.

Mission Statements

Some simple techniques for charting a course or setting direction for a work group are readily available. Take, for example, the mission statement developed by Group B above. A mission statement is a short description of the purpose of any organizational unit. If an organization has a mission statement, the mission will apply to the entire organization. A team's mission statement tells a team and its members what their particular team is expected to accomplish. For example, the mission of the payables team is to pay the organization's bills on time and to protect the financial health of the organization.

Most mission statements are fairly short and straightforward. One might even wonder why time had to be expended to develop such a basic statement. However, anyone who has tried to get a group of people to agree on what they were supposed to be accomplishing knows that getting something clearly stated and committed in writing is not that easy. Individuals can have vastly different perceptions of why their group exists. The processes of reflecting on and discussing the group's mission are the most valuable aspects of mission statement development. When members talk about their group mission, they begin to clarify the purpose for the group's existence and what it is that their group can contribute to the organization as a whole.

To begin developing a mission statement, ask the members of a group to complete the following sentence: "Our team exists to" The discussion is guaranteed to be an eye opener.

Vision Statements

A mission statement tells a group what it is supposed to be doing and accomplishing in the present. But groups need something more — something to aim for, something to work toward, something to dream about. That is the purpose of a vision statement. A vision statement addresses what the team will be like two to three years into the future. A vision statement can galvanize a team. It requires the same effort to produce as does a mission statement, but the gain for the team is even more dramatic.

To prepare a vision statement, ask the group members to complete this statement: "Within a few years we would like to see this team"

Team Performance Goals

We know that a mission statement deals with the purpose of a team, and a vision statement is focused on the team's future. Now the team needs some short-term (one year or less) goals — important, achievable activities that will drive the team to perform as a unit. Much has been written about goals, and most people already have some familiarity with them. Determining the major goals to be achieved, setting deadlines for accomplishment, and developing ways to measure achievement will make this process more effective.

To summarize: mission statements, vision statements, and team performance goals all serve the purpose of helping group members understand the form and function of their group's work. A group can never become a team unless its direction is clarified and its members become aligned and committed to that direction. Before anything else is done, a group must chart a course for itself if its members are to find their work challenging, satisfying, and productive.

Who Does What and With Whom?

Once a team's direction has been established and is clear to the entire team, the team needs to determine who will perform what jobs or parts of jobs and with whom members must coordinate their efforts to get those jobs done. Some will argue that job descriptions already serve that purpose. Unfortunately, most job descriptions do not provide enough detail to clarify group member roles and relationships. Differing individual perceptions and expectations further cloud the issue. Consider the plight of the following group.

A small work group has just finished a long and frustrating meeting. Everyone is getting up to leave to get back to his or her job when one person says to another, "You know, it really wasn't my fault. I didn't know that I had to get the approval of marketing before contacting that customer. Nobody said anything to me." The other person nodded in agreement and added, "I wish we knew who was responsible for what around here. If we did, embarrassing mistakes like this wouldn't happen." A third group member chimed in, "It's the turnover we have in this department. Nobody is sure of what he or she is supposed to do. We all just close our eyes and hope we're doing the right thing at the right time. In the last company I worked for, we all did a lot of finger pointing when anything went wrong. No one ever took the blame for anything."

The problems experienced by this work group happen all of the time, in every organization, and in every team. The reason is simple; members assume that they understand what they are personally responsible for, but they also have expectations of everyone else in the group that might not be shared by the others. Clarifying individual roles is an ongoing process; a job description or a single discussion will not be enough. Every group needs to make explicit those things that usually are assumed. This means that the important decisions that the group will make need to be discussed in terms of individual responsibility.

Responsibility Charting

One of the techniques for clarifying roles and responsibilities is called responsibility charting. The process begins with an identification of the specific decisions for which the entire group is responsible. The decisions are listed in a column in the chart and the group members are listed in a row across the top, as in the chart on the next page.

Decision	Team Members					
	Kerry	Jacob	Andrew	Susan	Laura	Chris (Team Leader)
Set Performance Goals	R	R	R	R	R	RCA
Select New Team Members	C	C	I	R	I	CA
Develop Production Schedule	R	R	R	C	I	CI
etc.						

Sample Responsibility Chart

Each of the decisions is coded (R) Responsible; (A) Approve; (C) Consult; or (I) Inform. Each group member first codes each of the decisions as it relates to him or her, as follows:

- R = I am personally *responsible* for the decision
- C = I should be *consulted* before the decision is made
- I = I need to be *informed* after the decision is made
- A = I must *approve* the decision

Codes may be combined to clarify the finer points of the relationship. For example, CA means, "I should be consulted about the decision and I must approve it."

Team members then share their individual codings with the entire team. Members often are surprised when they discover that no one has taken responsibility for some of the decisions, that several people believe they are responsible for the same decision, and that people are confused about whether they should be consulted or simply informed. By sharing their individual perceptions of their own relationship to each decision for which the group is responsible, team members gain clarity on what needs to be done, who should do it, and what responsibility or relationship each individual has to every other member of the team regarding each of the important team decisions.

Responsibility charting should be done once or twice a year to determine whether the status of things has changed and to ensure that all team members are still in agreement. It is especially important to introduce new team members to the process so that they can be clear at the outset on everyone's responsibilities, including their own. Sometimes new groups are formed because of the needs of the organization. In these cases, much time and confusion can be avoided by spending the few hours that are required to create a responsibility chart for the team.

The Leadership Role

A special group role that deserves attention is the role of the leader. How does the appointed team leader behave in a way that stimulates critical reflection on work problems, builds consensus, and develops commitment within the group? Much has been written on the subject of leadership, and many people have attended training sessions to learn how to lead more effectively. Unfortunately, most people still remain unclear about how to provide effective leadership to their work groups.

Although there are many definitions of leadership, perhaps this more concise definition will be helpful:

Leaders give direction, help others to align themselves with that direction, and inspire and motivate others to work toward the outcomes of that direction.

These three activities are fundamental to group leadership: helping a group gain clarity on where it is headed; getting group members to put their best efforts behind the agreed-upon direction; and keeping members aware and excited as they work toward the goals of the group. Whatever else leaders do, they must include these three activities in their interactions with group members.

When many leaders consider this definition of leadership, they will not find it surprising; they will feel that they already engage in these activities. The important point here is that what transforms group leadership into team leadership is getting everyone in the group to help with these three leadership tasks. Traditional group leaders assume the full responsibility for all three tasks. Team leadership, however, requires the appointed leader to encourage each member of the team to help clarify direction, develop alignment, and inspire and motivate others. In other words, leadership is a role that can and must be shared by everyone in the group.

The second important concern of a group, then, is to develop clarity on group member roles and relationships and to come to terms with the leadership role, which every member must assume if the group is to become an effective team.

Facilitating the Accomplishment of the Team's Work

Teams, as distinct from groups, have a number of well-developed and well thought-out processes for accomplishing their work. These are broadly referred to as operating processes. They include such activities as planning, problem identification, problem solving, running meetings, evaluating performance, making decisions, implementing work projects, encouraging participation of all members, handling conflict, developing and maintaining group norms and culture, selecting new team members, rewarding performance, learning, and a host of others. All of these operating processes make it possible for the group to coordinate its efforts and achieve its goals efficiently and effectively.

Traditional work groups also have these same operating processes, but they usually have not evaluated and developed them deliberately and critically. They may not even be clear about what those processes are or why they are important. Most of the time the operating processes of the group have been handed down by the manager or supervisor, and the group simply accepts the system without discussion or modification. For a group to become a team, the leader and the team members will need to examine the operating processes of the group, consciously discuss their usefulness to the group, modify them where necessary, and develop group commitment to them. If this has never been done before, much effort will be required before the group can begin to move forward.

The following example of a group meeting illustrates how two different work groups have dealt with this particular operating process.

***Work Group A** has been in existence for at least three years. The group meets when the team leader thinks it is necessary, which is once or twice a month. Because there is never a written agenda for these meetings, the subject is decided upon by the team leader just before the meeting. Discussions generally are dominated by a few of the longer-service, more vocal group members. Most of the group members do not think that the meetings accomplish very much, and they would prefer to be back in their own work areas accomplishing their individual responsibilities. Final decisions usually are made by the team leader after he has elicited the group members' opinions. He often makes his decisions independent of the group's opinions, but his people expect that because he is the leader.*

***Work Group B** has been in existence for about the same length of time as Group A. The group meets regularly, usually once each week for about one hour. A written agenda is circulated a day or two before the meeting and reflects what everyone considers to be the most important issues facing the team for the coming week. Everyone is expected to participate in the meeting discussion, and those who are more reserved are specifically encouraged by others to make their opinions public. Debate gets somewhat heated at times, but people accept disagreement as part of the process of reaching an effective decision. The leader works toward building a consensus in the group, which sometimes causes the meeting to run later than planned. Generally, people don't mind because they regard these meetings as important opportunities for the team to express itself, build relationships, and learn more about the product or service they are providing.*

While Work Group B has participative meetings that are productive, Group A's meeting process is largely ineffective. No one in this group would be disappointed if the meetings were discontinued entirely. Even the leader is just going through the motions of having meetings, in order to meet the organization's requirements.

If a meeting is to be successful, six areas must be addressed: the purpose of the meeting; the leadership roles of the appointed leader and all group members; the interpersonal relationships in the group; the decision-making procedures; the meeting ground rules; and the meeting environment. A *team* will systematically examine all of these factors in an effort to get the most from its meeting time. A *group* will accept the status quo because the leader wants it that way or because it has always been done that way.

Meetings are only one of many operating processes a team relies on for accomplishing its work. There are other processes that must be examined jointly by the leader and the team members. In some cases a process may be modified, reinvented, or even eliminated. Becoming a team means being aware of the systems, policies, procedures, and processes for working together and then taking the time to eliminate the blockages that often arise and can dampen group performance.

Interpersonal Relationships

When interpersonal relationships among team members are of high quality, work accomplishment also tends to be high. When there are interpersonal problems in a group, work accomplishment will be lower. The following example illustrates how poor interpersonal relationships in a group can negatively affect the group's productivity. The description of the meeting in this example is typical of the meetings this particular group conducts.

It's budget planning time again. The members of this group have gathered to discuss the needs of their respective projects and areas of responsibility. One member begins by saying to a few others, "I don't look forward to these budget meetings. I'm never sure that I'm getting my fair share." Another member replies, "It's a war out there. You've got to try to get more than you need so when the cuts come down, you'll be able to survive." A third member says, "Let's join forces and argue for our own areas. United we stand, divided they fall." Everyone silently prepares for the coming battle. The prevailing atmosphere seems to be one of cynicism and mutual distrust.

Groups like this one are not unusual; perhaps you even have had the misfortune of being assigned to one. What is missing in this group is the fundamental desire to cooperate with one another to achieve a larger goal, namely creating a budget that is fair to all and will help the team achieve its goals.

Probably the single most important element of teamwork is a spirit of cooperation. Unless members are willing to put the team's needs before their own, there can be no real teamwork. Yet in situation after situation, people in groups tend to respond first from their own self-interest. Some people attribute this tendency to the long-standing traditions in our culture — a frontier mentality that reflects the belief that "you don't survive if you don't look out for number one." People compete for everything — resources, positions, favor from the leader, pay — whatever. Small wonder that group goals and needs may not be their first consideration. Most group members do not ask, "What is best for my organization and my team?"

To transform a group into a team, each member of the team must accept the group's needs as being primary. This does not mean that individuals must give up their personal needs but that group needs must be integrated with individual needs. Teams must possess a spirit of cooperation. Team member behaviors must communicate that, "This group is important to me. I may have to give up something of myself to make it work, but it is worth it." Without the presence of a shared intent to cooperate, interpersonal relations within the team can never become healthy and productive.

What makes cooperative behavior so difficult is that societies do not promote it sufficiently. Organizations are microcosms of the larger world in which we live. Having cooperative organizations in an uncooperative world is a difficult condition to achieve.

One of the issues that stands in the way of most teams is the different points of view that usually exist among team members. Most people like to be with others who share their thinking and experience. But, teams are made up of diverse personalities and backgrounds. The starting point for healthy interpersonal relationships is the recognition that there are and always will be differences in thinking and behavior and that these differences must be accepted at the outset. Once this occurs, the next step for the team is to find ways to understand and value these differences, to see them as an important component of group strength. Diversity of experiences and perspectives in a group promotes problem solutions that individuals alone might never have produced.

One of the primary interpersonal issues a developing team needs to face is the level of candor and openness that exists among its members. Until the team realizes that open, candid sharing of information is crucial to the quantity and quality of work produced, little progress toward maturity can be made.

Most people perceive themselves as open and sharing team members. Often there is great surprise, even mild shock, when people receive the first serious feedback from others that challenges their long-held self-perceptions. Unfortunately, self-deception is prevalent; consciously or unconsciously, people tend to regard themselves more favorably than they are seen by others.

Closely associated with the level of openness in the group is the level of trust among team members. Openness and trust are reciprocal conditions; when one is high or low, the other is likely to be correspondingly high or low. A high trust level is critical to a team because of its effect on problem solving and decision making. Raising the trust level among team members facilitates the exchange of relevant information, allows for the clarification of issues, and promotes an array of more imaginative solutions to problems. Team members will experience relationship benefits as well. They will be more satisfied with the team's output, have greater motivation to implement the team's decisions and programs, feel a greater sense of individual accomplishment and self-worth, and will ultimately become closer as a group.

Interteam Relationships

No work group operates in a vacuum in an organization. If such a group did exist, it could not help achieve the organization's goals. Many groups may have high quality relations within their own boundaries, yet have poor, ineffective relationships with other organizational groups. After a group has clarified its direction, roles and relationships, operating processes, and interpersonal relationships, it must create positive relations with other groups with whom it must interact to accomplish its work. No matter how effectively a group functions within itself, it cannot succeed in organizational terms unless it can be effective with other groups.

The following example illustrates one of the many possible problems interdependent groups may have.

Work Group A and Work Group B depend on each other to get their work done, but neither has much respect for the other. Both groups have a well-developed sense of their own identity, so much so that both groups frequently talk among themselves in we/they terms. "Our group works hard and produces, but the other group is a bunch of sluggards." While they may not say this to each other, both groups feel the effects of their mistrust, competition, and occasional sabotage of the other group's efforts.

Today Group A needs a report generated by Group B in order to complete its inventory assignment. Group B, however, feels that it has more important priorities. Recognizing this situation as an opportunity to exert its power, Group B uses its own priorities as an excuse to delay generating the report needed by Group A. When Group A discovers this, hostilities break out, and the respective group leaders are forced to meet to discuss the situation. Both leaders are angry and communicate their anger within their own groups. Each group resolves to "get" the other group at the next opportunity. As the members of each group swear allegiance to their own group, the cycle of blaming, discounting, and withholding support continues, resulting in both groups being less productive.

According to Jones and Bearley (1992), effective interteam relationships are characterized by seven criteria. These criteria are described below.

Commonness of Purpose

Groups first must have a strong sense of being part of the same organization before they will be able to work together effectively. They need to see their missions, visions, and goals as being intimately related to those of all other groups; they must have a sense of their dependence on one another.

Open Data Flow

The second important criteria that is required is open communication between groups. This means routine sharing of information of all kinds so that no group risks being in the dark concerning the work of the other groups. Withholding information is a favorite ploy of groups at war with each other.

Compatible Leadership

The groups in the above example hardly can be said to have compatible leadership, the third criteria for group effectiveness. Both leaders fuel the competitive feelings of their own groups without considering the consequences for future intergroup relations.

Flexibility/Influencibility

For two (or more) groups to work together effectively, both must demonstrate some willingness to be flexible in terms of the needs of the other and to be influenced by the other group based on reason and logic. Without these considerations, resentment and resistance will continue to develop between the groups.

Mutual Respect

One of the important ingredients that is missing in the previous example is mutual respect. When two groups disparage each other in private, members from each group begin to stereotype members from the other; all members of the other group are seen as incompetent or inconsiderate.

Clear Expectations

Just as groups need to clarify the roles and expectations of their own members, they need to clarify their expectations of one another. Failure to go through this clarification process can lead to unrealistic expectations.

Problem-solving Capacity

Even when the other six criteria for interteam effectiveness are in place, problems between groups can still occur. Both groups must have the concepts and the skills required for effective joint problem solving.

Building a winning team requires not only the development of the immediate group but the development of healthy, productive relationships with other groups with whom it must interact.

Helping Your Group Grow Into a Team

A group is somewhat like a living organism, moving in fairly predictable stages from immaturity to maturity. If a group understands the characteristics of each stage and expects these stages to occur, it then will be in a position to assess its current level of maturity and to take steps to move toward greater team maturity.

The following examples illustrate groups at four different levels of maturity.

***Group One** is a newly-formed group that has been organized in response to a specific organizational need for market research. The group has been together for about one month and is having trouble figuring out what its goals and strategies should be. Members spend most of their time attempting to get the leader to spell out the group's purpose and the members' roles. The leader spends much of her time trying to help the group get started on some meaningful work. No one in the group, including the leader, feels as if the group is accomplishing anything.*

***Group Two**, which has been in existence for about six months, was started as a policy-making body. Its meetings are characterized by disagreements over philosophy and procedure. Members argue with one another over the interpretation of previous policy statements. Group members form temporary coalitions and attempt to overpower the designated leader and other members of the group. Most members, including the leader, are dissatisfied with the group's results so far. One member is threatening to ask for his old job back because he feels that the group will never accomplish anything of worth. Interpersonal relationships are cynical and distrustful.*

***Group Three** was started two years ago. Until recently, its meetings were similar to those of Group Two. Then a watershed meeting occurred in which the group members decided to give one another some constructive feedback about how they were working together. At first people were hurt and angry, but the longer the group members discussed their situation, the more frank and expressive they became. Eventually, some good feelings began to arise, and individuals started to see the possibility of coming together as a team. Outsiders now would describe the members of Group Three as being loyal to one another and growing more productive every day.*

Group Four has been together for about two years. The leader finds it a pleasure to work with this group. It wasn't always this way, but over time and with effort, members have come to understand the mission of their team and their own work roles; have developed effective operating processes; and have strived for a high level of interpersonal trust. Members now look forward to team meetings; they expect to be challenged and to produce synergistic results from their efforts. Other groups take inspiration from the achievements of this team.

The four groups described above fall into fairly neat stages of development. Real groups may fall into these same clearly defined stages, but it is more likely that they will be moving from one stage to another, even occasionally moving backward as they struggle with the issues that eventually can help turn them into a team.

Jones and Bearley (1986) have created a useful model of group development that delineates four distinct stages of growth: *Immature Group* (Group One), *Fractionated Group* (Group Two), *Sharing Group* (Group Three), and *Effective Team* (Group Four). The major characteristics of these four stages are presented below.

Immature Group. A group in Stage I will look to the leader for all of its leadership, direction, support, and work definitions. Most of the group's time will be spent in attempting to learn what the organization expects of it as a functioning group.

Fractionated Group. In Stage II, a group's activity will be characterized by leadership struggles, incomplete communication, arguments, and taking things personally. Members may appear confused and they may express concern about the competence of the group.

Sharing Group. For a group in Stage III, an open exchange of feelings, facts, ideas, preferences, and support will have been achieved. Members will feel less dissatisfied as ways of working together have become more clear.

Effective Team. In Stage IV, shared methods for solving problems will have been developed, and there will be a strong feeling of pride in the group's accomplishments.

By using the Jones and Bearley model, groups can be helped to see that what they are presently experiencing may only be temporary, that the group can learn and grow, and that teamwork in its truest sense is a real possibility in the future.

Why build a Winning Team?

Charting direction, clarifying roles and relationships, developing well thought-out operating processes, strengthening interpersonal relationships, and improving relationships with other teams — is all of that worth the trouble? It is certain that substantial effort must go into dealing with these five areas of concern; and the effort will never really stop. New team members will appear in your department; leaders will come and go; new problems, new equipment, new procedures — these potential problems will bombard your work group almost daily. Change and our need to deal with change are never ending. We may already feel that we have enough to do to take care of our daily responsibilities without adding the time and effort required to develop a team. The rewards of undertaking a team-building process must indeed be significant. Otherwise why would leaders and their groups bother?

People have different reactions to the prospect of building a team. Some prefer the status quo — “let sleeping dogs lie” is their attitude. But many others find the challenge and excitement of working in a group to be worth the price. They feel that way for several reasons. They enjoy interacting and solving problems with others. They like the excitement of developing ideas in a group setting. They prefer the comradery and friendship of their co-workers. They are extremely interested in the success of their group and the total organization. They like the feeling of reaching a synergistic result after an intense discussion. They prefer open relationships and high-trust situations. And they feel exhilarated by the control they have over their own destinies.

If you are one of those leaders or team members who shares some of the above characteristics, then you will find building a winning team to be a most stimulating and rewarding journey.