

Teamwork - Challenges and Solutions

Challenges

It is believed that teamwork can both be pleasant and challenging. It depends on the circumstances. For example:

- **Some team members might avoid responsibilities** (just to avoid accountability).
- **There might be a "right or wrong thinking"** for different team members. Such behaviour might negatively affect their decision-making.
- **Moreover, some team members might think in "Win-lose" categories.** This can remarkably reduce confidence and efficiency in the team.
- **Focus might be on solving the wrong tasks,** which means that team members often work on tasks that have low priority or are not even prioritised.
- **Sometimes, efficient communication within the team is lacking.** For example, critical decisions are sometimes taken by the project management without involving the team. Moreover, some team members do not even pay attention when important issues are raised.
- **Sometimes, there is an unreleased potential of learning.** There have been observations that many teams spend little time reflecting on how to improve how they work, and they do not discuss obvious problems. Some of the teams that carry out regular retrospective meetings struggle to convert their analysis into changes in action. Among those who try to remedy identified problems actively, several give up after seeing little change.
- **The absence of leadership qualities needed to facilitate teamwork is particularly problematic.** There exist teams, where nobody in the group is capable of organising a well-functioning working team. There are no discussions about managers taking on responsibility or ensuring that teamwork is put into practice.
- **Another problem might be a lack of organisational prerequisites for teamwork.** For example, development leaders, each upholding a specific area of expertise and all belonging to the same development department are supposed to work together as a team. Together they represent important perspectives to take into account when working toward the common goal for the team. (Nilsson, 2018)

Solutions

There are different ways to respond to these challenges by creating an atmosphere that enhances the spirit of teamwork.

- **Commitment to team success and shared goals.** Team members are committed to the success of the team and their shared goals for the project. Successful teams are motivated, engaged and aim to achieve at the highest level.
- **Interdependence.** Team members need to create an environment where together they can contribute far more than as individuals. A positive interdependent team environment brings out the best in each person enabling the team to achieve their goals at a far superior level. Individuals promote and encourage their fellow team members to achieve, contribute, and learn.
- **Interpersonal skills.** Interpersonal skills include the ability to discuss issues openly with team members, be honest, trustworthy, supportive and show respect and commitment to the team and to its individuals. Fostering a caring work environment is important and includes the ability to work effectively with other team members.
- **Open Communication and positive feedback.** Actively listening to the concerns and needs of team members and valuing and expressing their contribution helps to create an effective work environment. Team members should be encouraged to give and receive constructive criticism and provide authentic feedback.
- **Appropriate team composition.** The right mix of team members is essential in the creation of a successful team. Team members need to be fully aware of their specific team role and understand what is expected of them in terms of their contribution to the team.
- **Commitment to team processes, leadership and accountability.** Team members need to be accountable for their contribution to the team. They need to be aware of team processes, best practice and new ideas. Effective leadership is essential for team success including shared decision-making and problem solving.
- **Discussions and practicals.** Organisations should put efforts into helping team members in developing sustainable teamwork skills through topical discussions and practicals. Team members need to know their responsibilities in the team so that they will be able to work together.

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