

Four Steps to Building Better Teams

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Overview

Team building is a four-step process that enables members to identify and resolve internal problems related to their team's ability to perform. While team building is commonly taught through formal training, its benefits are not fully realized until members have taken ownership of process and made it a part of their team's functions. But how does team building work?

The handout on the next page summarizes the team building process. Team building is initiated when members recognize deficiencies in their team's performance (**Step 1**). Problem solving simulations are a popular way to initiate team building because they allow teams to quickly and objectively evaluate their own performance and recognize deficiencies.

Recognition of performance deficiencies is the "wake up call" that drives a team's search for underlying causes (**Step 2**). There are a variety of methods that teams can use to gather information about underlying causes, including group process surveys, team member reviews, observers, or videotapes of team meetings. Such information will usually indicate that performance deficiencies are due to weaknesses in at least one of four areas: problem solving skills, interpersonal skills, goal setting, and member roles.

A number of tactics, techniques, and tools for improving internal processes can be considered by teams as they begin action planning (**Step 3**), including goal setting, role negotiation and clarification, member training in critical skill areas, use of problem solving and decision making techniques and tools, and ongoing evaluation and feedback of the team's processes. As they implement their action plans (**Step 4**), teams should monitor their performance and watch for deficiencies that signal the need for further team building (and therefore re-ignite the team building process).

All four steps to building better teams can be practiced in a training program. However, teams must continue to implement this process on their own to fully reap its benefits. Breaking the process down into these four basic steps will help teams to remember how to keep themselves on track.

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