

## PCA article series

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### How to make teams effective

People in every workplace talk about building the team, working as a team, but few understand team work or how to develop an effective team. Belonging to a team, in the broadest sense, is a result of feeling part of something larger than yourself; understanding the mission or objectives of your organisation.

In a team-oriented environment, you contribute to the overall success of the organisation, working with fellow members to produce results. Even with a specific job function or in a specific department, you work with others to accomplish the overall objectives. The bigger picture drives your actions; your function exists to serve the bigger picture.

Executives, managers and organisation staff members universally explore ways to improve business results and profitability. Many view team-based, horizontal, organisation structures as the best design for involving all employees in creating business success.

Few organisations, however, are totally pleased with the results their team improvement efforts produce. If your team improvement efforts are not living up to your expectations, this self-diagnosing checklist may tell you why. Successful team building, that creates effective, focused work teams, requires attention to each of the following.

The following 12 "C's" can be used as a blueprint to develop effective teams:

**1. Clear Expectations:** Has the management clearly communicated the expectations of the team and the expected outcomes? Do members understand why the team was created? Does the work of the team receive sufficient support, time, attention and interest by executive leaders?

**2. Context:** Do team members understand why they are part of the team? Does the team understand where its work fits in the total context of the organisation's goals, principles, vision and values?

**3. Commitment:** Do team members want to participate on the team and feel the team mission is important? Are members committed to accomplishing the team mission and perceive their service as valuable to the organisation? Are team members excited and challenged by the team opportunity?

**4. Competence:** Does the team feel that it has the appropriate people involved with the knowledge, skill and capability to address the issues for which the team was formed? Does the team feel it has the resources, strategies and support needed to accomplish its mission?

**5. Charter:** Has the team taken its assigned area of responsibility and designed its own mission, vision and strategies to accomplish the mission. Has the team defined and communicated its goals; its anticipated outcomes and contributions?

**6. Control:** Does the team have enough freedom and empowerment to accomplish its charter – whilst understanding their boundaries? Are limitations (i.e. monetary and time resources) defined at the beginning of the project before the team experiences barriers and rework? Do team members hold each other accountable for project timelines, commitments and results?

**7. Collaboration:** Does the team understand team and group process? Do members understand the stages of group development? Are team members working together effectively interpersonally? Do all team members understand the roles and responsibilities of team members? team leaders? team recorders? Has the team established group norms or rules of conduct in areas such as conflict resolution, consensus decision making and meeting management?

**8. Communication:** Are team members clear about the priority of their tasks? Is there an established method for the teams to give feedback and receive honest performance feedback? Do team members communicate clearly and honestly with each other? Do team members bring diverse opinions to the table?

**9. Creative Innovation:** Is the organisation really interested in change? Does it value creative thinking, unique solutions, and new ideas? Does it reward people who take reasonable risks to make improvements? Or does it reward the people who fit in and maintain the status quo? Does it provide the training, education, access to resources necessary to stimulate new thinking?

**10. Consequences:** Do team members feel responsible and accountable for team achievements? Are rewards and recognition supplied when teams are successful? Can contributors see their impact on increased organisation success?

**11. Coordination:** Have priorities and resource allocation been planned across departments? Are cross-functional and multi-department teams common and working together effectively?

**12. Cultural Change:** Does the organisation recognize that the team-based, collaborative, empowering, enabling organisational culture of the future is different than the traditional, hierarchical organisation it may currently be? Is the organisation planning to or in the process of changing how it rewards, recognizes, appraises, hires, develops, plans with, motivates and manages the people it employs?

Spend time and attention on each of these twelve tips to ensure your work teams contribute most effectively to your business success