

Forming an Effective Team

Team effectiveness isn't inevitable. Teams quite often fail to meet performance objectives, and the consequences can be harsh and lasting. The business opportunities a team is charged with developing may be missed, the business problem a team is charged with solving may persist and even worsen, competitive advantage may be lost, relationships between business units may be damaged, trust in the organization's leadership and direction can erode, valuable people may resign, and subsequent teams may launch in an atmosphere of cynicism and doubt, increasing the likelihood that they, too, will fall short.

Yet most of the pitfalls teams encounter are predictable and preventable. In its research into teams and its work with organizational teams, CCL has learned that what a leader does or fails to do prior to and during team formation has considerable impact on the team's fate. You can head off most of the problems that beset teams by considering in advance the composition of the team, its purpose, the resources it will need, and the potential obstacles it will face.

By carefully laying the groundwork you will greatly increase the likelihood that the team you launch will deliver on its potential. You can be sure to cover all of the facets of team formation by reviewing five critical components:

1. *Set a clear direction.* A common sense of purpose unifies team members and provides a context within which they can understand how the team functions and how their own contributions play a part.
2. *Build organizational support.* Teams are more productive when they are able to operate within an organization that provides resources that support their efforts.
3. *Create a team structure that empowers team members.* Establishing shared expectations, identifying and organizing

resources, and creating a clear sense of how the team goes about doing its work allows team members to focus their efforts on achieving the team's goal(s).

4. *Identify key relationships.* Building key relationships with individuals, other teams, and organizations allows more efficient and effective flow of resources into and from your team.
5. *Monitor external factors.* Gathering and analyzing information about the broader environment relevant to your team's goals enables it to make necessary adjustments when conditions warrant.