

Monitoring and Maintenance for Successful Team Outcomes

It's not hard to tell if a team has been effective. The results tell the story. If the team has been effective,

- the outcomes – products, services, ideas, or recommendations – meet or exceed stakeholder expectations;
- members of the team feel satisfied with the process and the product of their effort;
- team members have learned lessons that will make themselves and the organization more effective in future initiatives.

The road to such results is plagued with potholes, and teams frequently run into obstacles and problems along the way. They may fail to live up to their potential, fail to deliver expected outcomes, or fail to produce their results in a timely manner. Many of these failures can be prevented if team leaders assess their team's effectiveness at regular intervals – if they monitor their team's performance. This is particularly true when a team's mission will take more than a few months to accomplish. Taking the pulse of your team at several points in time is the best way to safeguard against the drains and losses that attend failure.

Often managers wait until a problem surfaces or until it becomes apparent that their team isn't hitting its interim goals or performing at expected levels. It's much better to prevent small problems from getting out of hand and to correct situations that threaten the overall success of the team. This kind of maintenance, combined with incremental course corrections, keeps your team on track toward its goals.

When problems emerge in teams, more often than not they can be traced to a flaw in the basic foundation. Perhaps the team

doesn't have a clear mission. Maybe it doesn't have the support it needs from the top level of the organization. Team members may not be clear about their roles and responsibilities. Maybe the team hasn't been given the time, the training, or the authority it needs to carry out its task. A good foundation can also be traced to how well the team leader has turned a diverse group of people into a high-performing unit. Tactics for achieving that goal include clearly defining roles and responsibilities, designing effective practices and procedures, and building cooperation and effective relationships. (All of these foundational elements are covered in other CCL team guidebooks: *Do You Really Need a Team?*, *How to Form a Team*, and *How to Launch a Team*.)