



Module 2: Types of Teams

You hear a lot about teams every day—sports teams, disaster and rescue teams, and medical support teams. Teams exist because they are effective in achieving goals, especially when the goal is well-defined. In the business environment, the reliance on teams has been growing in the last few decades as organisations become more virtual (operating over distance) and more structurally complex. Businesses rely on teams to perform tasks not well-suited to more traditional organisational structures. The most common types of teams are discussed in this module.

Business organisations have both groups and teams. A group is formed around a common interest or purpose with the goal of sharing information, but there is no collective accountability. Work groups may consist of social clubs or volunteer efforts. A team's focus is collective performance, with both individual and mutual accountability. For example, all of the people who work in accounting constitute a group, but people from each functional department who meet regularly to standardise financial procedures are a team. Before we look more closely at what constitutes an effective (high-performing) team, we will review the advantages and disadvantages of using teams in the workplace.

Click on the first lesson below—or the “*Start eLearning*” button above—when you're ready to begin.

Advantages of Teams in the Workplace





Disadvantages of Teams



Roles and Responsibilities



Types of Teams



Knowledge Check



Module 2: Completed

Advantages of Teams in the Workplace



Improved Motivation

Teams bring together people with diverse skills and make something that nobody could do alone. A well-planned team improves motivation. Communication is higher on teams, and the diverse skill set means teams can discover new approaches. Because teams have specific shared goals, team members usually enjoy greater autonomy, variety, task identity, task significance, and feedback. Teams often enjoy the social support for difficult tasks, improving morale and motivation.

Improved Quality

Another benefit of teams is to improve product and service quality. Each Whole Foods grocery store operates with an average of ten “self-managed” teams, including produce, prepared foods, groceries, etc. Each store also has a team made up of just the team leaders

from each team to facilitate communication and sharing. Each team takes responsibility for the quality of the products and services in its area.

Efficiency

Efficiency in product development is another advantage to building teams within the traditional hierarchy. Teams can analyse and identify dependent tasks in a nonlinear process, sometimes realising startling improvements.

Employee Benefits

Employees also benefit from participating in teams. They develop relationships with people from other areas of the business and learn more about what is happening across functional department lines (cross-training). A 2009 study of eighty global software development teams showed that members of effective teams are more motivated and report greater job satisfaction, which leads to fewer employees quitting.



Check your understanding by answering the question below...

Google shares its research on work on a website called [ReWork.withGoogle.com](https://rework.withgoogle.com/). On teams, Google says great teams are not a product of great players. Instead, the most important dynamic is psychological safety, meaning team members can speak up without fear of embarrassment or punishment. With this, teams bring together people with diverse skills and

-
- complete the work once they overcome interaction inefficiencies.
 - make something that nobody could do alone.



allow individuals to complete their roles independently.

SUBMIT



Complete the content above before moving on.

Disadvantages of Teams



Not all teams are wildly successful. When companies do not make adequate efforts to create, build, and support strong teams, employees may initially become discouraged and leave the company.

Here are some common disadvantages of teams:

You read in the first module about some of the behavioural problems related to teams, including social loafing. Another phenomenon that can happen in groups is **groupthink**. It involves the reluctance to speak out against the majority opinion for fear of upsetting other members and disrupting social cohesion. When a few people begin to speak for the whole team, individual members may not feel as responsible for the team's success.

Teams are also ineffective when they lack leadership when the decision-making is not democratic, and when the team lacks expertise and necessary skills. Eventually, team members don't feel accountable, and the team fails.

Finally, some teams fail because the members are not adequately prepared or supported. Teams can't perform well if they have no clear purpose, are not given autonomy, and don't have the resources required.

Some individuals are not compatible with teamwork. Workers must be selected to fit the team as well as requisite job skills. Conflict will develop between team members, so leaders must be able to step in. And teams can be time-consuming due to the need for coordination and consensus.



Check your understanding by answering the following question:

Outward Bound builds teams by having groups of strangers rough it in an outdoor adventure. There are individual challenges like rock climbing, as well as group challenges like putting up a shelter for the night. The group sleeps on a tarp to conserve body warmth when there is frost on the ground. The tarp is the difference between sleeping and being too cold to sleep. The trick is rotating so that no one spends the entire night near the cold edge. On the first night, though, the group does not know this, and someone is usually too cold to sleep. This means:

-
- the team lacks expertise.



the group lacks leadership.



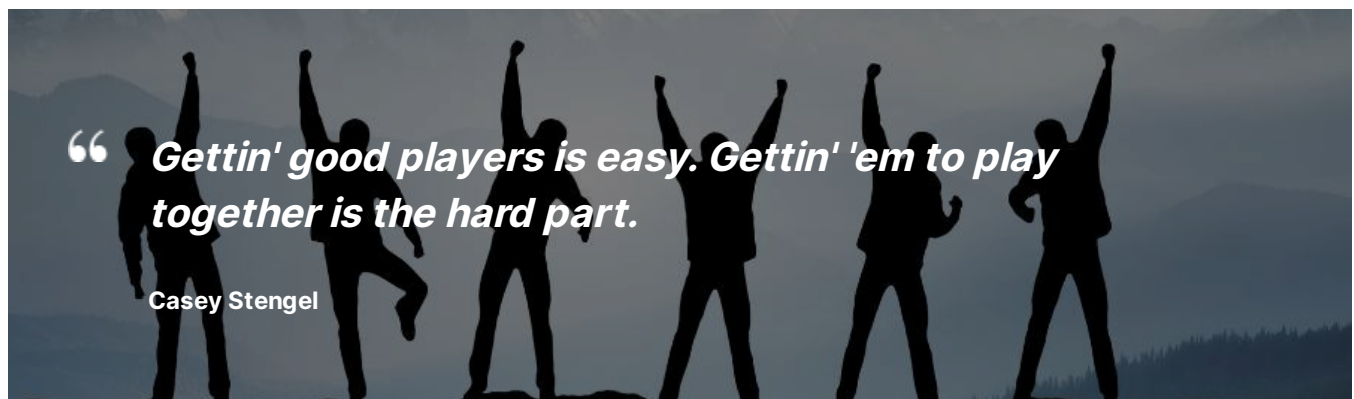
some of the team are guilty of social loafing.

SUBMIT



Complete the content above before moving on.

Roles and Responsibilities



The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a team as a number of persons associated together in work or activity. Teams are formed for many purposes: project teams, ad-hoc teams, quality improvement teams, and task forces. Sometimes the team is formed to work on a goal as an adjunct to a traditional hierarchy in an organization. At other times, the team is designed to replace the hierarchy.

Several roles help to keep a team operating smoothly.

TEAM LEADER	TEAM FACILITATOR	TEAM RECORDER	TIME KEEPER	TEA
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- Directs the team to accomplish its task
- Provides a conducive environment for getting the work done (location, resources)
- Communicates with the team

TEAM LEADER	TEAM FACILITATOR	TEAM RECORDER	TIME KEEPER	TEA
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- Makes things happen with ease
- Helps the group with the process
- Enables the group to produce the "how" decisions

Note: Facilitators may be members or non-members of the team.

TEAM LEADER	TEAM FACILITATOR	TEAM RECORDER	TIME KEEPER	TEA
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- Writes down the team's key points, ideas and decisions
- Documents the team's process, discussions, and decisions

TEAM LEADER	TEAM FACILITATOR	TEAM RECORDER	TIME KEEPER	TEA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitors how long the team is taking to accomplish its tasks • Provides regular updates to the team on how well or how poorly they are using their time • Collaborates with the team leader, facilitator and others to determine new time schedules if the agenda has to be adjusted 				

TEAM LEADER	TEAM FACILITATOR	TEAM RECORDER	TIME KEEPER	TEA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display enthusiasm and commitment to the team's purpose • Behave honestly; maintain confidential information behind closed doors • Share responsibility; rotate through other team roles • Share knowledge and expertise and do not withhold information • Ask questions • Respect the opinions and positions of others on the team, even if the person has an opposing view or different opinion 				



Complete the content above before moving on.

Types of Teams



Companies create different types of teams for different purposes.

Cross-Functional Team

A **cross-functional** team is just what it sounds like—a team that pulls its members from across the different functional areas of an organisation. For example, cross-functional teams may be composed of representatives from production, sales, marketing, finance, and legal. The strength

of this type of team lies in its members having different functional backgrounds, education, and experience. The diversity of experience aids innovative problem-solving and decision-making.

Unfortunately, the very factors that give cross-functional teams strength can also lead to weaknesses. Without a strong leader and very specific goals, it may be hard to foster social cohesion in cross-functional teams and to create a system of accountability. A cross-functional team might be brought together to review and make recommendations on potential acquisitions or mergers.

Task Force

A **task force** is a group or committee, usually of experts or specialists, formed for analysing, investigating, or solving a specific problem. Quite often, a task force is formed in reaction to a problem or specific event, and once the job is done, the task force is disbanded. The goal of a task force is to offer solutions, support, and, if possible, create preventive measures for issues.



National LGBTQ Task Force

Types of concerns that may generate task forces in the workplace include bullying, health and wellness, employee training, increasing customer sales, or improving employee job satisfaction. A project team is similar to a task force, but a project team is often ongoing and covers a wider range of tasks.



Working across cultures can be as challenging as working cross-functionally.

Virtual Teams

Virtual teams are groups of individuals working together with a common purpose but from different locations. People may be in different time zones or even different organizations. The obvious advantage of a virtual team is the low cost, both in time and money to maintain it. Meeting in virtual time increases flexibility for the members (no need to get dressed before the meeting!) and allows the organization to use the talent of people from around the globe.

The idea of virtual teams is relatively new. However, according to the IQVIS management consulting firm, virtual teams have grown 80 percent in business use from 2005 to 2015. Virtual teams are possible thanks to advances in communications and technology, such as e-mail, the World Wide Web (Internet), videoconferencing, and other products.

Working across cultures can be as challenging as working cross-functionally. Working with different cultures means working with very different leadership styles and decision-making processes. In the United States, managers tend to gather data, make a quick decision, and move forward, making corrections as need. Northern Europeans prefer to slowly build consensus, whereas French schoolchildren are trained to debate and confront. Some business consultants will tell you that decisions in Japan are made in small, informal conversations before the formal meeting ever takes place.

In spite of these barriers, many companies have been adapting virtual teams. SAP is the world's largest inter-enterprise software company with more than thirty thousand employees in sixty countries. It relies on virtual teams to survive. It has five headquarters around the globe, each one with a specific area of expertise shared via virtual meetings. IBM and General Electric are corporations that also depend on virtual team strategies.

Self-Managing Teams

A **self-managed team** is a group of employees that's responsible and accountable for all or most aspects of producing a product or delivering a service. It could be thought of as a mini-company within a larger organisation. Traditional organisations assign tasks to employees depending on their skills or the functional department (sales, finance, production). A self-managed team carries out the supporting tasks as well, such as planning and scheduling the technical workflow tasks, and human resource tasks such as managing vacations and absences. Team members may take turns leading and assuming technical responsibilities.

Because of the autonomy given to self-managed teams, these teams have greater ownership of the jobs they perform. Some benefits of self-managed teams are:

- team members share accountability for what they accomplish, which can be a great motivator;
- individuals have greater commitment to the task because they're directly responsible for its results;
- and they take on some of a manager's work so he can continue on other tasks.



Self-managed team.

However, self-managed teams are not without problems. Groupthink occurs more frequently with these teams. Members may struggle during the transition from supervisor-led management to self-management, possibly because of lack of interpersonal skills or poor implementation by the company. Not surprisingly, the most effective self-managing teams are found in companies where the corporate culture supports democratic decision making and the employees are generally well-educated.



Check your understanding by answering the following questions:

Bill Gore was the inventor of Gore-Tex, a fabric popular in many sports. When building his company, he wanted to harness the fast decision-making, diverse perspectives, and collaboration of small teams. His approach was that "We're all in the same boat," sharing risks and rewards

and committed to what's best for the company and its long-term success.

One advantage of teams is

- shared risk
- groupthink
- better communication

SUBMIT

CORE-econ has written a new free economics textbook. The authors include 53 people in 3 countries: Colombia, France, and the United States. They coordinated through a version of GitBooks called the Electric Book. Because of the distances, the team did not meet in person and functioned as a

- virtual team



task force



self-managing team

SUBMIT



Complete the content above before moving on.

Lesson 5 of 6

Knowledge Check



Module 2: Review Questions

Question

01/10

A _____ is a number of persons associated together in work or activity.

Court

Company

Team

Group

Question

02/10

Several _____ help to keep a team operating smoothly.

- Roles
- People
- Responsibilities
- Leaders

Question

03/10

A Team _____ makes things happen with ease.

- Picnic
- Meeting
- Facilitator
- Dictator

Question

04/10

A _____ documents the team's progress, discussions, and decisions.

Recorder

Rider

Rapport

Reporter

Question

05/10

A _____ Keeper provides regular updates to the team on how well or how poorly they are using their time.

Time

Number

Money

Stop

Question

06/10

A Team _____ respects the opinions and positions of others on the team.

- Boss
- Mascot
- Member
- Accountant

Question

07/10

A team _____ a shared understanding and purpose among team members, as distinguished from a group.

- Gains
- Loses
- Carries
- Avoids

Question

08/10

_____ teams distinguish task from process.

- Ineffective
- Defective
- Effective
- Expected

Question

09/10

A _____ team is a team that is responsible for a whole product or process.

- Self-managed
- Self-assured
- Self-absorbed
- Self-confident

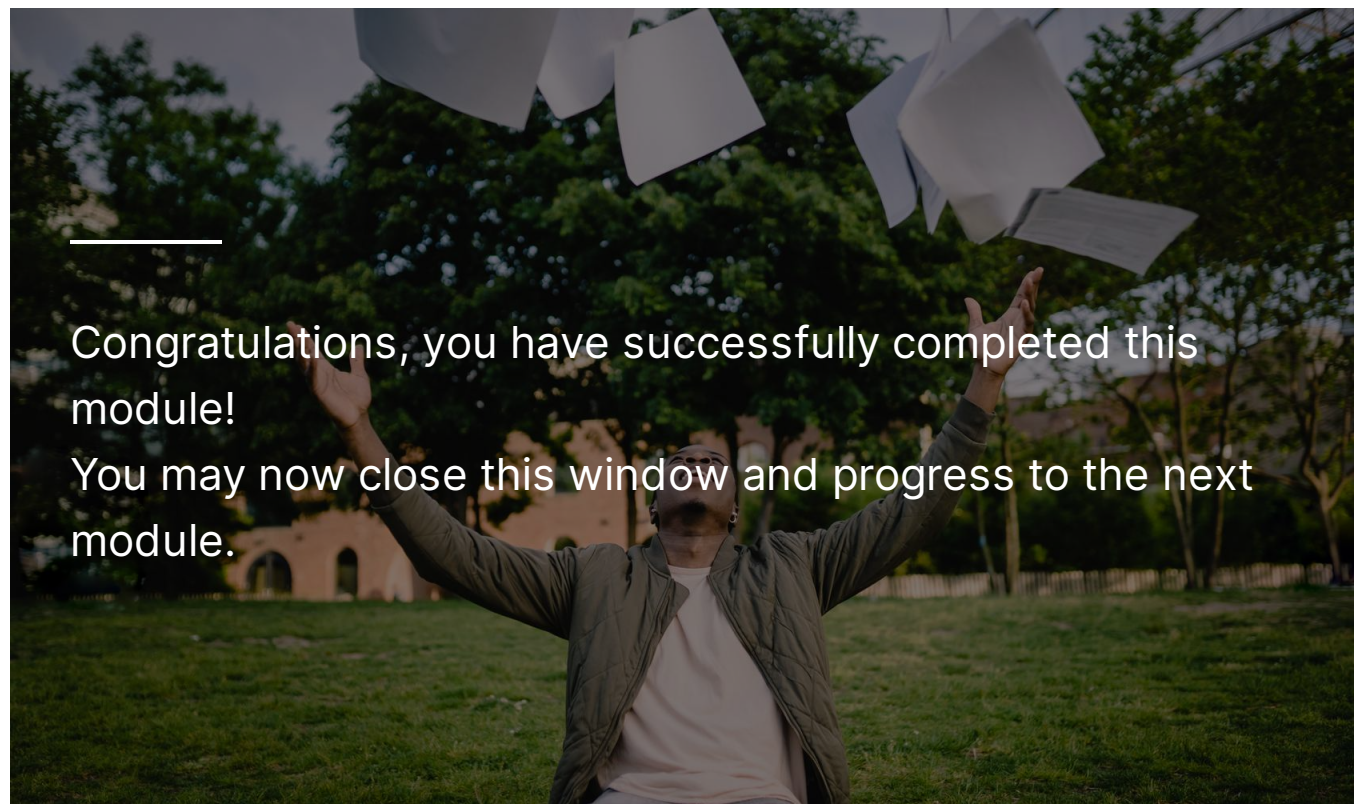
Question

10/10

A _____ is a group or committee, usually of experts or specialists, formed for analysing, investigating, or solving a specific problem.

- virtual team
- self-managing team
- task force
- cross-functional team

Module 2: Completed



Congratulations, you have successfully completed this module!
You may now close this window and progress to the next module.