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Team assessment and development

Introduction

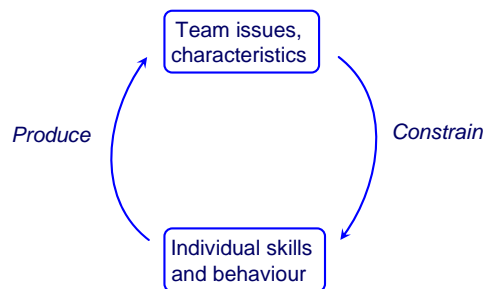
This paper describes our approach to team assessment and development. This approach has two distinctive features:

1. It assesses the performance of **individual team members** as well as that of **the team as a whole**.
2. It recognises that there are **different types of team** and ensures that the assessment and development of performance is appropriate to the type of team concerned.

Individual and team levels of performance

These two levels of performance are interdependent and both need to be addressed if team performance is to improve. Team development commonly addresses only the team as a whole and results in feedback which is non-personalised and is therefore hard to act on because responsibility for change is generalised.

Individual and team levels of analysis



Different types of team

We think there are three distinct kinds of team, each with different performance challenges:

- Management teams.
- Operational teams.
- Project teams (including all varieties of temporary team).

The table on the next page summarises our analysis of the key differences.

| Dimensions | Management team | Operational team | Project team |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| <i>Task</i> | Strategic direction and major decisions. Overall business performance. | Deliver an ongoing service or carry out an ongoing activity to defined standards of performance. | Produce a product or deliverable (often a one-off) to an agreed quality standard within a given timescale and budget. |
| <i>Members</i> | Typically permanent and full-time. Leaders of their own teams, with significant management responsibilities. Line role may be more important than team role. | Typically permanent and full-time. Responsible for doing own job. | Time-limited. Often part-time – belong to other team(s) as well. |
| <i>Interdependence</i> | Variable. Can be very low: corporacy and consistency in how run own areas. Sharing external information; external representation. | Variable. Lower if all doing same job - though may still be issues about cover and support. Higher if work process is based on division of labour. | Usually high. Members each deliver a piece of the jigsaw. |
| <i>Interaction between members</i> | Often ad hoc and intermittent; may be mainly through formal whole team meetings. | Typically daily. | Variable. Occasional in a virtual team, intense in a full-time team who are co-located. |
| <i>Meetings</i> | Regular, formal (agenda, papers). Decision making. Test of teamwork. | Often regular, likely to be informal. Information sharing rather than decision making. | Usually regular, may be driven by project cycle. Progress reporting and problem solving. |
| <i>Special features</i> | Some tension between the collective responsibility of the team and the personal responsibility of the team leader (who in some cases will be the CEO). Consequences of team behaviour are felt throughout the organisation the team manages. | Service to internal or external customers. Conformity to processes and quality standards. Issues of equality of contribution and treatment. | The team commonly has an external sponsor and often a steering group. Task will often be unique or one-off. Emphasis on deadlines and cost. |

Steps in the process

One to one meetings with the individual team members

These meetings enable us to understand the role of the team and the skills and behaviours required to be an effective member of it. We also begin to establish a working relationship with team members and to diagnose performance issues which may need to be addressed.

Identification of key skills

In the light of the one to one meetings, and of our understanding of what makes for an effective team of the relevant type, we would develop a skills framework which would become the basis for assessment. This is drawn from our generic competency framework and tailored to the individual needs of the team concerned.

Online assessment by team members

This assessment process combines three elements:

- Self assessment against the key skills.
- Peer assessment of each other member of the team against the key skills.
- Assessment by each individual of the performance of whole team against a set of criteria appropriate to the type of team

Observation of team meetings

We then observe two separate team meetings to gather independent observational data against the skills framework and the team performance criteria. We observe both the behaviours of individual team members and the performance of the team as a whole. Observing two meetings helps to ensure a more reliable overall assessment.

Team feedback

The team feedback addresses the whole team level of performance. The feedback is given as a presentation to the whole team after the second meeting and covers:

- Team members' assessments of how the team works as a whole.
- Our assessment against the same criteria.
- Some suggestions for things to address: quick hits and more fundamental issues.
- But **not** feedback on members' individual skills – that is for the one-to-one debriefs which come later.

This whole team feedback provides a baseline for subsequent comparison.

Individual team member reports

We then produce a report for each individual, drawing together the peer feedback data, the self assessment and the observational assessment.

One to one debriefs

The culmination of the process is a series of one-to-one meetings with individual team member to give feedback based on the reports and to discuss and agree development plans.

Follow up

We recommend a follow up observation of the whole team about six months after the team feedback session. We observe the whole team and give feedback on the extent of progress to both the team as a whole and to the individual members.