

Team Work



Tutorial One

Team Expertise

Tutorial 1: Team Expertise

The key resource you have in the team is its members - your colleagues. They hold all the knowledge, experience, behaviour, skills and other team inputs on which to draw in achieving goals. Collectively, these inputs are the team's total expertise and these should be exploited to the full in focusing on objectives and maximising team potential.

There are a number of reasons why teams fail to reach their full potential and they include the following:

Unclear Objectives

If a team is unclear about its objectives, it is often difficult to identify what team expertise is necessary to achieve positive results. There may be a tendency for a team leader to rely more heavily on the expertise of a few members rather than the whole team. Due to differing personalities within the team, some members find it more difficult than others to contribute their expertise.

Work and Time Pressure

Time pressures and heavy workloads result in a reduced contribution from team members, due to conflicting priorities.

Team Composition

Team members tend to take expertise for granted and overlook the need to question what expertise is relevant. Alternatively, the team leader may have selected team members who are similar to him/herself, with the consequential effect that they all have the same strengths but also share the same weaknesses. These factors combine to reduce the contribution of expertise and preferred role to teamwork and become an acceptable norm, resulting in the team operating at a disadvantage.

It is important that all teams should, from time to time, consider the composition of the team in relation to the job objectives and required outcomes.

The following questions should be addressed as part of the team discussions.

1. How many different preferred team roles are included in the team? (Belbin's Team Roles are described in *Motivating People – Tutorial Five: Creating a Winning Team*)
2. Are there any notable omissions in terms of team role preferences?
3. What expertise is required to fulfil the teams' objectives?
4. What expertise does the team have in relation to what it requires?
5. Where may the team find the expertise required?
6. What are the teams strengths and weaknesses?
7. How can the team create development opportunities for the team members?

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Action Plan

The real value of your learning is how well you apply your additional knowledge in the context of your job. So, to improve your teams' use of its expertise, here are a number of action points for you to consider and apply:

- **Action Point 1**

Agree with the team clear and specific outline objectives that contribute appropriately to the organisation objectives (the next session deals in detail with team objective setting).

- **Action Point 2**

Identify with the team, the expertise (knowledge, skills, experience, role preferences and traits) required to deliver the team objectives. Discuss with the team the extent to which they possess the required expertise and agree any current shortfall.

- **Action Point 3**

Discuss with the team how the shortfall in expertise might be overcome. This might be through adding new members to the team or agreeing development programmes with individual members so that they acquire the expertise.

- **Action Point 4**

Search for all team member's hidden and special expertise. See if you can create the opportunity for it to be used.

- **Action Point 5**

Ensure that you allow all team members to contribute to the discussion. Encourage the more introvert personalities by asking how they can use their expertise on this team matter.

- **Action Point 6**

When a new team member arrives, stimulate the new member to talk about their expertise in a full and open way. Let it be demonstrated that this is how your team wants to work.

- **Action Point 7**

Make certain that all team members manage their workloads well. Controlled workloads provide time for discussing the many important (but not urgent) issues that get overlooked in day-to-day working.

- **Action Point 8**

Don't forget that good management revolves around involvement. Talk about team expertise and make it legitimate in your team.

- **Action Point 9**

Complete your action plan details in the templates provided before moving on to the next tutorial. Always ensure that you have carried out the action points in time for the review meeting.

ACTION PLAN



Use this action plan to identify the appropriate job-based actions that derive from the action points.

| Steps to be taken List the stages of the process in order to identify the key elements of each stage. | Information Identify the information you need at each step and the likely sources. Consider any assistance you may require and who can provide it. | Deadlines Set a realistic target for completing this stage. |
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ACTIVITY LOG



Use this activity log to identify and track your outcomes, performance improvements, problems, additional development needs and support.

| Date | Activity Record brief details of the activity. What was achieved? What problems were encountered? | Notes Record any changes in the plan from the activity. Include details of knowledge and skills gained as a result. What additional support is necessary for you to take full advantage of the activity? |
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