

Twelve Cs for Team Building

Executives, managers and organization staff members universally explore ways to improve business results etc. Many view team-based, horizontal, organization structures as the best design for involving all employees in creating business success.

No matter what you call your team improvement effort, continuous improvement, total quality, lean manufacturing or self-directed work teams, you are striving to improve results for customers.

Few organizations, however, are totally pleased with the results their team improvement efforts produce. If your team improvement efforts are not living up to your expectations, this self-diagnosing checklist may tell you why.

Successful team building, that creates effective, focused work teams, requires attention to each of the following.

Clear Expectations: Has executive leadership clearly communicated its expectations for the team's performance and expected outcomes? Do team members understand why the team was created?

Context: Do team members understand why they are part of the team? Do they understand how the strategy of using teams will help the organization attain its communicated business goals?

Commitment: Do team members want to participate on the team? Are members committed to accomplishing the team mission and expected outcomes? Do team members perceive their service as valuable to the organization and to their own careers? Do team members anticipate recognition for their contributions? Do team members expect their skills to grow and develop on the team? Are team members excited and challenged by the team opportunity?

Competence: Does the team feel that it has the appropriate people participating? Does the team feel that its members have the knowledge, skill and capability to address the issues for which the team was formed? If not, does the team have access to the help it needs?

Charter: Has the team taken its assigned area of responsibility and designed its own mission, vision and strategies to accomplish the mission. Has the team defined and communicated its goals; its anticipated outcomes and contributions; its timelines; and how it will measure both the outcomes of its work and the process the team followed to accomplish their task?

Control: Does the team have enough freedom and empowerment to feel the ownership necessary to accomplish its charter? At the same time, do team members clearly understand their boundaries? How far may members go in pursuit of solutions?

Collaboration: Does the team understand team and group process? Do members understand the stages of group development? Are team members working together effectively interpersonally?

Communication: Are team members clear about the priority of their tasks? Is there an established method for the teams to give feedback? Does the organization provide important business information regularly

Creative Innovation: Is the organization really interested in change? Does it reward people who take reasonable risks to make improvements? Or does it reward the people who fit in and maintain the status quo? Does it provide the training, education, access to books and films, and field trips necessary to stimulate new thinking?

Consequences: Do team members feel responsible and accountable for team achievements?

Coordination: Are teams coordinated by a central leadership team that assists the groups to obtain what they need for success? Are cross-functional and multi-department teams common and working together effectively?

Cultural Change: Does the organization recognize that the team-based, collaborative, empowering, enabling organizational culture of the future is different than the traditional, hierarchical organization it may currently be? Does the organization recognize that the more it can change its climate to support teams, the more it will receive in pay back from the work of the teams?

Spend time and attention on each of these twelve tips to ensure your work teams contribute most effectively to your business success. Your team members will love you, your business will soar, and empowered people will "own" and be responsible for their work processes. Can your work life get any better than this?