

Interpersonal and Group Process Approaches

This chapter discusses change programs relating to interpersonal relations and group dynamics. These interventions are among the earliest ones devised in OD and the most popular. They represent attempts to improve people's working relationships with one another. The interventions are aimed at helping members of groups assess their interactions and devise more effective ways of working. These change programs represent a basic skill requirement for an OD practitioner.

Interpersonal and group process approaches, including process consultation, third-party interventions, and team building, are among the most enduring OD interventions. Process consultation helps group members understand, diagnose, and improve their behaviors. Through process consultation, the group should become better

able to use its own resources to identify and solve interpersonal problems that often block the solving of work-related problems. Third-party interventions focus directly on dysfunctional interpersonal conflict. This approach is used only in special circumstances and only when both parties are willing to engage in the process of direct confrontation. Team building is aimed both at helping a team perform its tasks better and at satisfying individual needs. Through team-building activities, group goals and norms become clearer. In addition, team members become better able to confront difficulties and problems and to understand the roles of individuals within the team. Among the specialized team-building approaches presented are interventions with ongoing teams and temporary teams such as project teams and task forces.

PROCESS CONSULTATION

Process consultation (PC) is a general framework for carrying out helping relationships.¹ Schein defines process consultation as "the creation of a relationship that permits the client to perceive, understand, and act on the process events that occur in [his or her] internal and external environment in order to improve the situation as defined by the client."² The process consultant does not offer expert help in the form of solutions to problems, as in the doctor-patient model. Rather, the process consultant works to help managers, employees, and groups assess and improve *human processes*, such as communication, interpersonal relations, decision making, and task performance. Schein argues that effective consultants and managers should be good helpers, aiding others in getting things done and in achieving the goals they have set.³ Thus, PC is as much a philosophy as a set of techniques aimed at performing this helping relationship. The philosophy ensures that those who are receiving the help own their problems, gain the skills and expertise to diagnose them, and solve the problems themselves. PC is an approach to helping people and groups help themselves.

As a philosophy of helping in relationships, Schein proposes ten principles to guide the process consultant's actions.⁴

- **Always try to be helpful.** Process consultants must be mindful of their intentions, and each interaction must be oriented toward being helpful.
- **Always stay in touch with the current reality.** Each interaction should produce diagnostic information about the current situation. It includes data about the client's opinions, beliefs, and emotions; the system's current functioning; and the practitioner's reactions, thoughts, and feelings.
- **Access your ignorance.** An important source of information about current reality is the practitioner's understanding of what is known, what is assumed, and what is not known. Process consultants must use themselves as instruments of change.
- **Everything you do is an intervention.** Any interaction in a consultative relationship generates information as well as consequences. Simply conducting preliminary interviews with group members, for example, can raise members' awareness of a situation and help them see it in a new light.
- **The client owns the problem and the solution.** This is a key principle in all OD practice. Practitioners help clients solve their own problems and learn to manage future change.
- **Go with the flow.** When process consultants access their own ignorance, they often realize that there is much about the client system and its culture that they do not know. Thus, practitioners must work to understand the client's motivations and perceptions.
- **Timing is crucial.** Observations, comments, questions, and other interventions intended to be helpful may work in some circumstances and fail in others. Process consultants must be vigilant to occasions when the client is open (or not open) to suggestions.
- **Be constructively opportunistic with confrontive interventions.** Although process consultants must be willing to go with the flow, they also must be willing to take appropriate risks. From time to time and in their best judgment, practitioners must learn to take advantage of "teachable moments." A well-crafted process observation or piece of feedback can provide a group or individual with great insight into their behavior.
- **Everything is information; errors will always occur and are the prime source for learning.** Process consultants never can know fully the client's reality and invariably will make mistakes. The consequences of these mistakes, the unexpected and surprising reactions, are important data that must be used in the ongoing development of the relationship.
- **When in doubt, share the problem.** The default intervention in a helping relationship is to model openness by sharing the dilemma of what to do next.

Group Process

Process consultation deals primarily with the interpersonal and group processes that describe how organization members interact with each other. Such social processes directly and indirectly affect how work is accomplished. When group process promotes effective interactions, groups are likely to perform tasks successfully.⁵ Group process includes:

- **Communications.** One of the process consultant's areas of interest is the nature and style of communication, or the process of transmitting and receiving thoughts, facts, and feelings. Communication can be overt—who talks to whom, about what, for how long, and how often. It can include body language, including facial expressions, fidgeting, posture, and hand gestures.⁶ Communication can also be covert, as when a manager says, "I'm not embarrassed" as his or her face turns scarlet. Covert communication is "hidden" and the process consultant often seeks to find the best way to make the message more explicit.

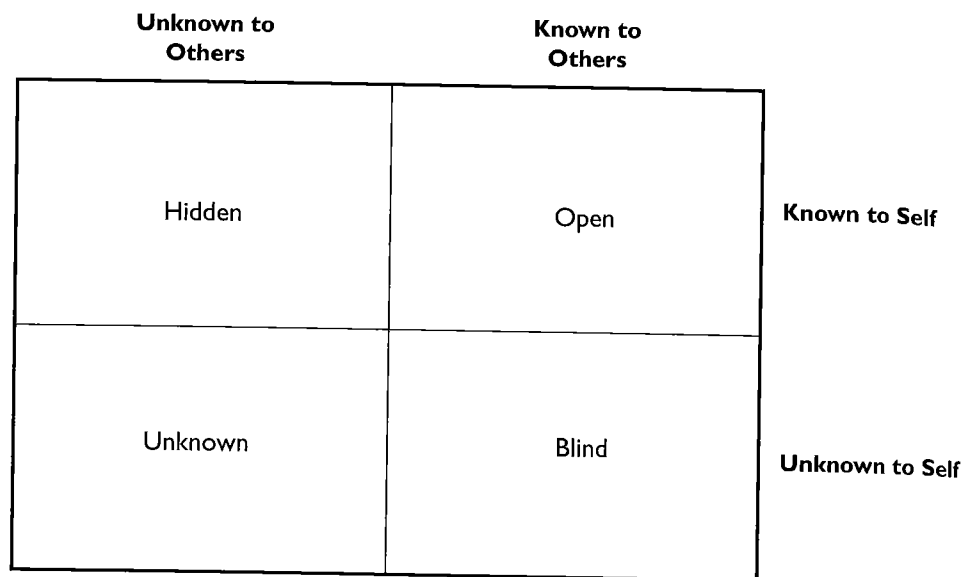
- **The functional roles of group members.** The process consultant must be keenly aware of the different roles individual members take on in a group. Both upon entering and while remaining in a group, individuals must address and understand their self-identity, influence, and power that will satisfy personal needs while working to accomplish group goals. In addition, group members must take on roles that enhance (a) task-related activities, such as giving and seeking information and elaborating, coordinating, and evaluating activities; and (b) group-maintenance actions, directed toward holding the group together as a cohesive team, including encouraging, harmonizing, compromising, setting standards, and observing. Most ineffective groups perform little group maintenance, and this is a primary reason for bringing in a process consultant.
- **Group problem solving and decision making.** To be effective, a group must be able to identify problems, examine alternatives, and make decisions. For example, one way of making decisions is to ignore a suggestion, as when one person makes a suggestion and someone else offers another before the first has been discussed. A second method is to give decision-making power to the person in authority. Sometimes, decisions are made by minority rule, with the leader arriving at a decision and turning for agreement to several people who will comply. Frequently, silence is regarded as consent. Decisions can also be made by majority rule, consensus, or unanimous consent. The process consultant can help the group understand how it makes decisions and the consequences of each decision process, as well as help diagnose which type of decision process may be the most effective in a given situation. Decision by unanimous consent or consensus, for example, may be ideal in some circumstances but too time-consuming or costly in other situations.
- **Group norms.** Especially if a group of people work together over a period of time, it develops group norms or standards of behavior about what is good or bad, allowed or forbidden, right or wrong. The process consultant can be very helpful in assisting the group to understand and articulate its own norms and to determine whether those norms are helpful or dysfunctional. By understanding its norms and recognizing which ones are helpful, the group can grow and deal realistically with its environment, make optimum use of its own resources, and learn from its own experiences.⁷
- **The use of leadership and authority.** A process consultant needs to understand processes involved in leadership and how different leadership styles can help or hinder a group's functioning. In addition, the consultant can help the leader adjust his or her style to fit the situation.

Basic Process Interventions

For each of the interpersonal and group processes described above, a variety of interventions may be used. In broad terms, these are aimed at making individuals and groups more effective.⁸

Individual Interventions These interventions are designed primarily to help people be more effective in their communication with others. For example, the process consultant can provide feedback to one or more individuals about their overt behaviors during meetings. At the covert or hidden level of communication, feedback can be more personal and is aimed at increasing the individual's awareness of how their behavior affects others. A useful model for this process has been developed by Luft in what is called the *Johari Window*.⁹ Figure 12.1, a diagram of the Johari Window, shows that some personal issues are perceived by both the individual and others. This is the "open" window. In the "hidden" window, people are aware of their behavior, motives, and issues, but they conceal them from others. People with certain feelings about themselves or others in the work group may not share with others unless they feel safe and protected; by not revealing reactions they feel might be hurtful or impolite, they lessen the degree of communication.

[Figure 12.1]
Johari Window



SOURCE: Adapted by permission of the publisher from J. Luft, "The Johari Window," *Human Relations Training News* 5 (1961): 6-7

The "blind" window comprises personal issues that are unknown to the individual but that are communicated clearly to others. For example, one manager who made frequent business trips invariably told his or her staff to function as a team and to make decisions in his absence. The staff, however, consistently refused to do this because it was clear to them, and to the process consultant, that the manager was really saying, "Go ahead as a team and make decisions in my absence, but be absolutely certain they are the exact decisions I would make if I were here." Only after the manager participated in several meetings in which he received feedback was he able to understand that he was sending a double message. Thereafter, he tried both to accept decisions made by others and to use management by objectives with his staff and with other managers. Finally, the "unknown" window represents those personal aspects that are unknown to both the individual and others. Because such areas are outside the realm of the process consultant and the group, focus is typically on the other three cells.

Individual interventions encourage people to be more open with others and to disclose their views, opinions, concerns, and emotions, thus reducing the size of the hidden window. Further, the consultant can help individuals give feedback to others, thus reducing the size of the blind window. Reducing the size of these two windows helps improve the communication process by enlarging the open window, the "self" that is open to both the individual and others.

Before process consultants give individual feedback, they first must observe relevant events, ask questions to understand the issues fully, and make certain that the feedback is given to the client in a usable manner.¹⁰ The following are guidelines¹¹ for effective feedback:

- The giver and receiver must have consensus on the receiver's goals.
- The giver should emphasize description and appreciation.
- The giver should be concrete and specific.

- Both giver and receiver must have constructive motives.
- The giver should not withhold negative feedback if it is relevant.
- The giver should own his or her observations, feelings, and judgments.
- Feedback should be timed to when the giver and receiver are ready.

Group Interventions These interventions are aimed at the process, content, or structure of the group. *Process interventions* sensitize the group to its own internal processes and generate interest in analyzing them. Interventions include comments, questions, or observations about relationships between and among group members; problem solving and decision making; and the identity and purpose of the group. For example, process consultants can help by suggesting that some part of each meeting be reserved for examining how these decisions are made and periodically assessing the feelings of the group's members. As Schein points out, however, the basic purpose of the process consultant is not to take on the role of expert but to help the group share in its own diagnosis and do a better job in learning to diagnose its own processes: "It is important that the process consultant encourage the group not only to allocate time for diagnosis but to take the lead itself in trying to articulate and understand its own processes."¹²

Content interventions help the group determine what it works on. They include comments, questions, or observations about group membership; agenda setting, review, and testing procedures; interpersonal issues; and conceptual inputs on task-related topics.

Finally, *structural interventions* help the group examine the stable and recurring methods it uses to accomplish tasks and deal with external issues. They include comments, questions, or observations about inputs, resources, and customers; methods for determining goals, developing strategies, accomplishing work, assigning responsibility, monitoring progress, and addressing problems; and relationships to authority, formal rules, and levels of intimacy.

Application 12.1 presents an example of process consultation with the top-management team of a manufacturing firm.¹³

Results of Process Consultation

Although process consultation is an important part of organization development and has been widely practiced over the past 40 years, a number of difficulties arise in trying to measure performance improvements that are a result of process consultation. One problem is that most process consultation is conducted with groups performing mental tasks (for example, decision making); the outcomes of such tasks are difficult to evaluate. A second difficulty with measuring PC's effects occurs because in many cases process consultation is combined with other interventions in an ongoing OD program. Isolating the impact of process consultation from other interventions is challenging.

Kaplan's review of process consultation studies underscored the problems of measuring performance effects.¹⁴ It examined published studies in three categories: (1) reports in which process intervention is the causal variable but performance is measured inadequately or not at all, (2) reports in which performance is measured but process consultation is not isolated as the independent variable (the case in many instances), and (3) research in which process consultation is isolated as the causal variable and performance is adequately measured. The review suggests that process consultation has positive effects on participants, according to self-reports of greater personal involvement, higher mutual influence, group effectiveness, and similar variables. However, very little, if any, research clearly demonstrates that objective task effectiveness was increased. In most cases, either the field studies did not directly measure performance or the effect of process intervention was confounded with other variables.

application 12.1

Process Consultation at Action Company

This application, a story often told by Ed Schein and documented in several of his books about process consultation and culture, involves the senior management team of an organization that he worked with over several years. It illustrates well several of the principles of process consultation, such as accessing your ignorance, always trying to be helpful, and understanding that errors are the prime source of learning.

The Action Company was a large and innovative high-technology organization. One salient feature of their executive committee meetings was long and loud discussions. Members interrupted each other constantly, often got into shouting matches, drifted off the subject, and moved from one agenda point to another without any clear sense of what had been decided. Based on his beliefs about the nature of effective groups and his experiences with group dynamics training, the process consultant made several initial interventions as an "expert" consultant. For example, whenever he saw an opportunity, he would ask the group to consider the consequences of interrupting each other repeatedly. This had the effect of communicating his belief that their process was "bad" and interfered with the group's task and effectiveness. He pointed out how important ideas were being lost and potentially important ideas were not getting a full discussion. The group invariably responded with agreement and a resolution to do better, but within 10 minutes were back to the same pattern.

As the process consultant reflected on these early interventions, he noticed that he was imposing on the group his own beliefs about what an ideal team should look like and how it should behave. This group, on the other hand, was clearly on a different path. Over time, he discovered that this group had a different set of shared assumptions that were driving their behaviors. In short, the group was trying to arrive at the "truth." Their assumption was that truth was revealed in ideas and actions that could withstand argument and debate. If an idea could survive intense scrutiny, it must be true and was worth pursuing.

Once he understood this basic premise, the process consultant asked himself what he could do that would be more helpful to the group. His answer was to work within the group's assumptions that were driving their behavior rather than imposing his beliefs on them. He had to learn that the primary task of the group, as they saw it, was to develop ideas that were so sound they could afford to bet the company on them. Generating ideas and evaluating them were therefore the two most crucial functions that they worked on in meetings.

Two kinds of interventions grew out of this insight. First, he noticed that ideas were in fact being lost because so much information was being processed so rapidly. Partly for his own sake and partly because he thought it might help, he went to the flipchart and wrote down the main ideas as they came out.

These ideas, incomplete or undeveloped because the presenter had been interrupted, led to the second kind of intervention. Instead of punishing the group for its "bad" behavior, as he had done in the early stages of the consultation, he looked for opportunities to turn the conversation back over to the person with the idea. For example, he would say, "John, you were trying to make a point. Did we get all of that?" This created the opportunity to get the idea out without drawing unnecessary attention to the reason why it had not gotten out in the first place. The combination of these two kinds of interventions focused the group on the ideas that were not on the flipchart and helped them navigate through their complex agenda. Ideas that were about to be lost were written down, resurrected, and given a fair chance.

The lesson was clear. Until the process consultant understood what the group really was trying to do, he could not focus on the right processes and he did not know how to intervene helpfully. He had to sense what the primary task was and where the group was getting stuck (incomplete idea formulation and too-quick evaluation) before he could determine what kind of intervention would be "helpful."



A third problem with assessing the performance effects of process consultation is that much of the relevant research has used people's perceptions rather than hard performance measures as the index of success.¹⁵ Although much of this research shows positive results, these findings should be interpreted carefully until further research is done using more concrete measures of performance.

THIRD-PARTY INTERVENTIONS

Third-party interventions focus on conflicts arising between two or more people within the same organization. Conflict is inherent in groups and organizations and can arise from various sources, including differences in personality, task orientation, goal interdependence, and perceptions among group members, as well as competition for scarce resources. Tjosvold notes that too little consensus on the definition of conflict has contributed to the perception that conflict is bad. Moreover, when it is defined as opposing interests or divergent goals, it narrows the range of potentially productive interventions. He suggests that conflict is best viewed as "incompatible activities." Such a definition opens up options for resolution, places responsibility for the conflict with the individuals involved, and allows conflict to be seen in a positive way.¹⁶

To emphasize that conflict is neither good nor bad per se is important.¹⁷ Conflict can enhance motivation and innovation and lead to greater understanding of ideas and views. On the other hand, it can prevent people from working together constructively, destroying necessary task interactions among group members. Consequently, third-party interventions are used primarily in situations in which conflict significantly disrupts necessary task interactions and work relationships among members.

Third-party interventions vary considerably depending on the kind of issues underlying the conflict. Conflict can arise over substantive issues, such as work methods, pay rates, and conditions of employment, or it can emerge from interpersonal issues, such as personalities and misperceptions. When applied to substantive issues, conflict resolution interventions often involve resolving labor-management disputes through arbitration and mediation. The methods used in such substantive interventions require considerable training and expertise in law and labor relations and generally are not considered part of OD practice. For example, when union and management representatives cannot resolve a joint problem, they can call upon the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service to help them resolve the conflict. In addition, "alternative dispute resolution" (ADR) practices increasingly are offered in lieu of more expensive and time-consuming court trials.¹⁸ Conflicts also may arise at the boundaries of the organization, such as between suppliers and the company, between a company and a public-policy agency, or between multiple organizations or groups.¹⁹

When conflict involves interpersonal issues, however, OD has developed approaches that help control and resolve it. These third-party interventions help the parties interact with each other directly, recognize the personal choices each party is making, and facilitate their diagnosis of the conflict and its resolution. The ability to facilitate conflict resolution is a basic skill in OD and applies to all of the process interventions discussed in this chapter. Consultants, for example, frequently coach clients through a conflict or help organization members resolve interpersonal conflicts that invariably arise during process consultation and team building.

Third-party interventions cannot resolve all interpersonal conflicts in organizations, nor should they. Many times, interpersonal conflicts are not severe or disruptive enough to warrant attention. At other times, they simply may burn themselves out. Evidence also suggests that other methods may be more appropriate under certain conditions. For example, managers tend to control the process and outcomes of conflict resolution actively when they are under heavy time pressures, when the disputants are

not expected to work together in the future, and when the resolution of the dispute has a broad impact on the organization.²⁰ Under those conditions, the third party may resolve the conflict unilaterally with little input from the conflicting parties.

An Episodic Model of Conflict

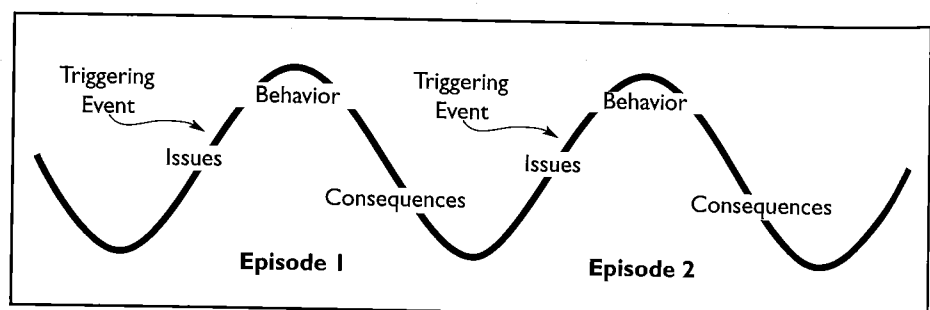
Interpersonal conflict often occurs in iterative, cyclical stages known as "episodes." An episodic model is shown in Figure 12.2. At times, issues underlying a conflict are latent and do not present any manifest problems for the parties. Then something triggers the conflict and brings it into the open. For example, a violent disagreement or frank confrontation can unleash conflictual behavior. Because of the negative consequences of that behavior, the unresolved disagreement usually becomes latent again. And again, something triggers the conflict, making it overt, and so the cycle continues with the next conflict episode.

Conflict has both costs and benefits to the antagonists and to those in contact with them. Unresolved conflict can proliferate and expand. An interpersonal conflict may be concealed under a cause or issue that serves to make the conflict appear more legitimate. Frequently, the overt conflict is only a symptom of a deeper problem.

The episodic model identifies four strategies for conflict resolution. The first three attempt to control the conflict, and only the last approach tries to change the basic issues underlying it.²¹ The first strategy is to prevent the ignition of conflict by arriving at a clear understanding of the triggering factors and thereafter avoiding or blunting them when the symptoms occur. For example, if conflict between the research and production managers is always triggered by new-product introductions, then senior executives can warn them that conflict will not be tolerated during the introduction of the latest new product. However, this approach may not always be functional and may merely drive the conflict underground until it explodes. As a control strategy, however, this method may help to achieve a temporary cooling-off period.

The second control strategy is to set limits on the form of the conflict. Conflict can be constrained by informal gatherings before a formal meeting or by exploration of other options. It also can be limited by setting rules and procedures specifying the conditions under which the parties can interact. For example, a rule can be instituted that union officials can attempt to resolve grievances with management only at weekly grievance meetings.

[Figure 12.2]
A Cyclical Model of Interpersonal Conflict



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The third control strategy is to help the parties cope differently with the consequences of the conflict. The third-party consultant may work with the people involved to devise coping techniques, such as reducing their dependence on the relationship, ventilating their feelings to friends, and developing additional sources of emotional support. These methods can reduce the costs of the conflict without resolving the underlying issues.

The fourth method is an attempt to eliminate or to resolve the basic issues causing the conflict. As Walton points out, "There is little to be said about this objective because it is the most obvious and straightforward, although it is often the most difficult to achieve."²²

Facilitating the Conflict Resolution Process

Walton has identified a number of factors and tactical choices that can facilitate the use of the episodic model in resolving the underlying causes of conflict.²³ The following ingredients can help third-party consultants achieve productive dialogue between the disputants so that they examine their differences and change their perceptions and behaviors: mutual motivation to resolve the conflict; equality of power between the parties; coordinated attempts to confront the conflict; relevant phasing of the stages of identifying differences and of searching for integrative solutions; open and clear forms of communication; and productive levels of tension and stress.

Among the tactical choices identified by Walton are those having to do with diagnosis, the context of the third-party intervention, and the role of the consultant. One of the tactics in third-party intervention is the gathering of data, usually through preliminary interviewing. Group-process observations can also be used. Data gathering provides some understanding of the nature and the type of conflict, the personality and conflict styles of the individuals involved, the issues and attendant pressures, and the participants' readiness to work together to resolve the conflict.

The context in which the intervention occurs is also important. Consideration of the neutrality of the meeting area, the formality of the setting, the appropriateness of the time for the meeting (that is, a meeting should not be started until a time has been agreed on to conclude or adjourn), and the careful selection of those who should attend the meeting are all elements of this context.

In addition, the third-party consultant must decide on an appropriate role to assume in resolving conflict. The specific tactic chosen will depend on the diagnosis of the situation. For example, facilitating dialogue of interpersonal issues might include initiating the agenda for the meeting, acting as a referee during the meeting, reflecting and restating the issues and the differing perceptions of the individuals involved, giving feedback and receiving comments on the feedback, helping the individuals diagnose the issues in the conflict, providing suggestions or recommendations, and helping the parties do a better job of diagnosing the underlying problem.

Third-party consultants must develop considerable skill at diagnosis, intervention, and follow-up, and be highly sensitive to their own feelings and to those of others. They must recognize that some tension and conflict are inevitable and that although there can be an optimum amount and degree of conflict, too much conflict can be dysfunctional for both the people involved and the larger organization. The third-party consultant must be sensitive to the situation and able to use a number of different intervention strategies and tactics when intervention appears to be useful. Finally, he or she must have professional expertise in third-party intervention and must be seen by the parties as neutral or unbiased regarding the issues and outcomes of the conflict resolution.

Application 12.2 describes an attempt to address conflict in an information technology unit.²⁴ How does this description fit with the process described above? What would you have done differently?

Conflict Management at Balt Healthcare Corporation

Pete Brooks and Dan Gantman were managers in an IT department that was part of the information services group at Balt Healthcare Corporation, a large organization that provided health care products to a global market. Brooks was the general manager of the IT department and had been working in the unit for most of his 16 years with Balt. The IT department had global responsibility for developing and maintaining the organization's intranets, Web sites, and internal networks. Brooks ran his department with a traditional and formal management style where communication traveled vertically through the hierarchy.

Gantman recently had been assigned to Brooks's department to operate a small experimental group charged with developing E-commerce solutions for the organization and the industry. This was state-of-the-art development work with enormous future implications for the organization as it explored the possibility of sales, business-to-business, and other supply-chain opportunities on the Internet. Gantman, in contrast to Brooks, had a management style that stressed the value of open communication channels to promote teamwork and collaboration.

The biggest challenge in Gantman's work was managing the transition from design into production. Senior management at Balt believed that by assigning Gantman's team to Brooks's organization, the resources required to manage this transition would be more readily available to Gantman's group. In fact, it was generally agreed that Brooks's strengths complemented Gantman's weaknesses. Whereas Gantman was a better designer, Brooks had operational expertise that would help in bringing Gantman's ideas on-line.

Unfortunately, the trouble started almost as soon as the assignment was announced. Although in front of their bosses, Brooks had agreed to work with Gantman to make the project a success, his support was lukewarm at best. Gantman and Brooks had a history of conflict in the organization. Neither one respected the other's style, and prior conflicts had been swept under the carpet, creating a considerable amount of pent-up animosity. Operationally, when Gantman's group needed resources to bring an idea

on-line, Brooks announced that all of his people were busy and that he couldn't assign anyone to help. Similarly, anytime Gantman needed access to a piece of hardware within the IT unit, Brooks made it complicated to get that access. Gantman became increasingly frustrated by Brooks's lack of cooperation and he was quite open about his feelings of being sabotaged. His complaints reached the highest levels of management as well as other members of the information services staff.

After several frustrating attempts to speak with Brooks about the situation, Gantman consulted Marilyn Young, the vice president for information services. Young, like others in the organization, was aware of the conflict. She requested assistance from the human resources manager and an organization development specialist. The OD specialist met with Brooks and Gantman separately to understand the history of the conflict and each individual's contribution to it. Although different styles were partly to blame, the differences in the two work processes were also contributing to the problem. Brooks's organization was primarily routine development and maintenance tasks that allowed for considerable preplanning and scheduling of resources. Gantman's project, however, was highly creative and unpredictable. There was little opportunity to give Brooks advance notice regarding the experimental team's needs for equipment and other resources.

The OD specialist recommended several strategies to Young, including a direct confrontation, the purchase of additional hardware and software, and mandating the antagonists' cooperation. Young responded that there was no available budget for purchasing new equipment and admitted that she did not have any confidence in her ability to facilitate the needed communication and leadership for her staff. She asked the OD specialist to facilitate a more direct process. Agreements were made in writing about how the process would work, including Young meeting with Gantman and Brooks to discuss the problem between them and how it was affecting the organization. But Young did not follow through on the agreement. She never met with Brooks and Gantman at the same time and, as

As a result, the messages she sent to each were inconsistent. In fact, during their separate conversations, it appeared that Young began supporting Brooks and criticizing Gantman. Gantman began to withdraw, productivity in both groups suffered, and he became more hostile, stubborn, and bitter.

In the end, Gantman felt sabotaged not only by Brooks but by Young as well. He took a leave of absence based on Young's advice. His project

was left without a leader and he ended up leaving the organization. Brooks stayed on, but staff at all levels of the organization were upset that his behavior had not been questioned. Similarly, the organization lost a lot of respect for Young's ability to address conflict. Losses in productivity and morale among staff in many areas in the organization resulted from the conflict between two employees.

TEAM BUILDING

Team building refers to a broad range of planned activities that help groups improve the way they accomplish tasks, help members enhance their interpersonal and problem-solving skills, and increase team performance. Organizations comprise many different types of groups including permanent work groups, temporary project teams, and virtual teams. Team building is an effective approach to improving teamwork and task accomplishment in such environments. It can help problem-solving groups make maximum use of members' resources and contributions. It can help members develop a high level of motivation to implement group decisions. Team building also can help groups overcome specific problems, such as apathy and general lack of member interest; loss of productivity; increasing complaints within the group; confusion about assignments; low participation in meetings; lack of innovation and initiation; increasing complaints from those outside the group about the quality, timeliness, and effectiveness of services and products; and hostility or conflicts among members.

It is equally important that team building can facilitate other OD interventions, such as employee involvement, work design, restructuring, and strategic change. Those change programs typically are designed by management teams and implemented through various committees and work groups. Team building can help the groups design high-quality change programs and ensure that the programs are accepted and implemented by organization members. Indeed, most technostructural, human resources management, and strategic interventions depend on some form of team building for effective implementation.

The importance of team building is well established, and its high use is expected to continue in the coming years. Management teams are encountering issues of greater complexity and uncertainty, especially in such fast-paced industries as software and hardware development, entertainment, and health and financial services. Team building can provide the kind of teamwork and problem-solving skills needed to tackle such issues. When the team represents the senior management of an organization, team building can be an important part of establishing a coherent corporate strategy, and can promote the kind of close cooperation needed to implement complex strategies and new forms of governance.²⁵ As manufacturing and service technologies continue to develop—for example, just-in-time inventory systems, lean manufacturing, robotics,

and service quality concepts—there is increasing pressure on organizations to implement team-based work designs. Team building can assist in the development of group goals and norms that support high productivity and quality of work life.

The globalization of work and organizations implies that people from different cultures and geographic locations will increasingly interact over complex management and operational tasks using a variety of information and communication technologies. Team-building activities for these “virtual” teams have increased substantially over the past several years.²⁶ Most team building processes are based on assumptions of face-to-face interaction and relationships are built partially on the basis of visual cues. In virtual teams, research suggests that closeness between team members is created through proactive offers of help and support on task related issues, and maintained through frequent, short, and task-focused communications (often technology mediated). Thus, team-building can help virtual teams to examine cross-cultural issues and their impact on decision making and problem solving, facilitate communication processes where tone and body language clues are absent, and build trust.

Finally, mergers and acquisitions, restructurings, and strategic alliances continue to proliferate. The success of these endeavors depends partly on getting members from different organizations to work together effectively. Team building can facilitate the formation of a unified team with common goals and procedures.

In the OD literature, team building is not clearly differentiated from process consultation and group facilitation. This confusion exists because most team building includes process consultation—helping the group diagnose and understand its own internal processes—and facilitation—providing structure to a group’s interactions so that it can focus on an agenda and exchange information. However, process consultation is a more general approach to helping relationships than is team building. Team building focuses explicitly on helping groups perform tasks and solve problems more effectively. Process consultation, on the other hand, is concerned with establishing effective helping relationships in organizations while facilitation often represents a substitute for group process. It is seen as key to effective management and consultation and can be applied to any helping relationship, from subordinate development to interpersonal relationships to group development. Thus, team building consists of process consultation plus other, more task-oriented interventions.

Team building is applicable in a large number of situations, from starting a new team, to resolving conflicts among members, to revitalizing a complacent team. Dyer has developed a checklist for identifying whether a team-building program is needed and whether the organization is ready to start such a program (Table 12.1).²⁷ If the problem is a structural or technical one, an intergroup issue, an administrative mistake, or a conflict between only two people, team building would not be an appropriate change strategy.

Team-Building Activities

A team is a group of interdependent people who share a common purpose, have common work methods, and hold each other accountable.²⁸ The nature of that interdependence varies, creating the following types of teams: groups reporting to the same supervisor, manager, or executive; groups involving people with common organizational goals; temporary groups formed to do a specific, one-time task; groups consisting of people whose work roles are interdependent; and groups whose members have no formal links in the organization but whose collective purpose is to achieve tasks they cannot accomplish alone. Another important variable in teams is location. When team members are in close proximity, a traditional team exists; when members are geographically dispersed and their interaction is mediated by information technology, a virtual team exists.

[Table 12.1]

Team-Building Checklist

I. Problem identification: To what extent is there evidence of the following problems in your work unit?

	Low Evidence		Some Evidence		High Evidence	
1. Loss of production or work-unit output	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Grievances or complaints within the work unit	1	2	3	4	5	
3. Conflicts or hostility between unit members	1	2	3	4	5	
4. Confusion about assignments or unclear relationships between people	1	2	3	4	5	
5. Lack of clear goals or low commitment to goals	1	2	3	4	5	
6. Apathy or general lack of interest or involvement of unit members	1	2	3	4	5	
7. Lack of innovation, risk taking, imagination, or taking initiative	1	2	3	4	5	
8. Ineffective staff meetings	1	2	3	4	5	
9. Problems in working with the boss	1	2	3	4	5	
10. Poor communications: people afraid to speak up, not listening to each other, or not talking together	1	2	3	4	5	
11. Lack of trust between boss and members or between members	1	2	3	4	5	
12. Decisions are made that people do not understand or agree with	1	2	3	4	5	
13. Good work is not recognized or rewarded	1	2	3	4	5	
14. Lack of encouragement for working together in a better team effort	1	2	3	4	5	

Scoring: Add the scores for the 14 items. If your score is between 14 and 28, there is little evidence your unit needs team building. If your score is between 29 and 42, there is some evidence but no immediate pressure, unless two or three items are very high. If your score is between 43 and 56, you should think seriously about planning the team-building program. If your score is over 56, team building should be top priority for your work unit.

II. Are you (or your manager) prepared to start a team-building program? Consider the following statements. To what extent do they apply to you or your department?

	Low		Medium		High	
1. You are comfortable in sharing organizational leadership and decision making with subordinates and prefer to work in a participative atmosphere.	1	2	3	4	5	
2. You see a high degree of interdependence as necessary among functions and workers in order to achieve your goals.	1	2	3	4	5	
3. The external environment is highly variable or changing rapidly, and you need the best thinking of all your staff to plan for these conditions.	1	2	3	4	5	
4. You feel you need the input of your staff to plan major changes or develop new operating policies and procedures.	1	2	3	4	5	
5. You feel that broad consultation among your people as a group in goals, decisions, and problems is necessary on a continuing basis.	1	2	3	4	5	

continued

[Table 12.1]
Team-Building Checklist, (continued)

6. Members of your management team are (or can become) compatible with each other and are able to create a collaborative rather than a competitive environment.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Members of your team are located close enough to meet together as needed.	1	2	3	4	5
8. You feel you need to rely on the ability and willingness of subordinates to resolve critical operating problems directly and in the best interest of the company or organization.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Formal communication channels are not sufficient for the timely exchange of essential information, views, and decisions among your team members.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Organization adaptation requires the use of such devices as project management, task forces, or ad hoc problem-solving groups to augment conventional organization structure.	1	2	3	4	5
11. You feel it is important to bring out and deal with critical, albeit sensitive, issues that exist in your team.	1	2	3	4	5
12. You are prepared to look at your own role and performance with your team.	1	2	3	4	5
13. You feel there are operating or interpersonal problems that have remained unsolved too long and need the input from all group members.	1	2	3	4	5
14. You need an opportunity to meet with your people to set goals and develop commitment to these goals.	1	2	3	4	5

Scoring: If your total score is between 50 and 70, you probably are ready to go ahead with the team-building program. If your score is between 35 and 49, you probably should talk the situation over with your team and others to see what would need to be done to get ready for team building. If your score is between 14 and 34, you probably are not prepared to start team building.

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Several factors can affect the outcomes of any specific team-building activity: the length of time allocated to the activity, the team's willingness to look at its processes, the length of time the team has been working together, and the team's permanence. Consequently, the results of team-building activities can range from comparatively modest changes in the team's operating mechanisms (for example, meeting more frequently or gathering agenda items from more sources) to much deeper changes (for example, modifying team members' behavior patterns or the nature and style of the group's management, or developing greater openness and trust).

Hackman has proposed that effective teams produce outputs that satisfy external stakeholders, constantly improve their team functioning, and have members that are learning.²⁹ As a result, team-building activities can be classified according to their level and orientation (see Table 12.2). Team-building activities can focus on the following levels: (1) one or more individuals; (2) the group's operation and behavior; or (3) the group's relationship with the rest of the organization. They also can be classified according to whether their orientation is (1) diagnostic or (2) development.

[Table 12.2]

A Classification of Team-Building Activity

LEVEL OF ACTIVITY	Orientation of Activity	
	DIAGNOSTIC	DEVELOPMENT
One or more individuals	Instruments, interviews, and feedback to understand style and motivations of group members	Coaching 360-degree feedback Third-party interventions
Group operations and behavior	Surveys, interviews, and team meetings to understand the group's processes and procedures	Role clarification Mission and goal development Decision-making processes Normative change
Relationships with the organization	Surveys and interviews to understand how the group relates to its organization context	Strategic planning Stakeholder analysis

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A particular team-building activity can overlap these categories, and, on occasion, a change in one area will have negative results in other areas. For example, a very cohesive team may increase its isolation from other groups, leading to intergroup conflict or other dysfunctional results, which in turn can have a negative impact on the total organization unless the team develops sufficient diagnostic skills to recognize and deal with such problems.

Activities Relevant to One or More Individuals

People come into groups and organizations with varying needs for achievement, inclusion, influence, and belonging. These needs can be supported and nurtured by the team's structure and process or they can be discouraged. Diagnostic interviews and survey instruments can help members to better understand their motivations, style, or emotions in the group context. It results in one or more of the members gaining a better understanding of the way inclusion, emotions, control, and power affect problem solving and other group processes, and provide choices about their degree of involvement and commitment. Such activities provide information so that people have a clearer sense of how their needs and wants can or will be supported.

Developmental activities that address one or more members of the group include coaching, 360-degree feedback, and assistance with conflict. These interventions attempt to alter the group's ongoing processes by focusing on the behaviors and attitudes of individual members. For example, one team's typical decision-making process included the leader having several agenda items for discussion. Each of the items, however, had a predetermined set of actions that she wanted the group to take. Most members were frustrated by their inability to influence the conclusions. The team-building process consisted of coaching the team leader and group members about ways to change this process. The leader received feedback about specific examples of her not-so-subtle

manipulation to arrive at preconceived decisions and how group members felt about it. At the next meeting, the leader acknowledged the feedback and indicated her willingness to be challenged about such preconceived decisions. Team members expressed their increased willingness to engage in problem-solving discussions, their trust in the leader, and their ability to make the challenge without fear of reprisal.

Activities Oriented to the Group's Operation and Behavior

The most common focus of team-building activities is behavior related to task performance and group process. In an effective team, task behavior and group process must be integrated with each other as well as with the needs and wants of the people making up the group. Diagnostic activities involve gathering data through the use of questionnaires or, more commonly, through interviews. The nature of the data gathered will vary depending on the purpose of the team-building program, the consultant's knowledge about the organization and its culture, and the people involved. The consultant already may have obtained a great deal of data by sitting in as a process observer at staff and other meetings. The data gathered also will depend on what other OD efforts have taken place in the organization. By whatever method obtained, however, the data usually include information on leadership styles and behavior; goals, objectives, and decision-making processes; organizational culture, communication patterns, and interpersonal relationships and processes; barriers to effective group functioning; and task and related technical problems. Diagnostic activities often establish a framework within which further work can be done.

Developmental activities aim to improve the group's process and functioning. French and Bell have defined team development as "an inward look by the team at its own performance, behavior, and culture for the purposes of dropping out dysfunctional behaviors and strengthening functional ones."³⁰ A variety of team development activities and exercises have been described by different authors.³¹ They include role clarification, improving goal clarity and member commitment, modifying the decision-making or problem-solving process, changing norms, increasing risk taking and trust, and improving communication.

Application 12.3 presents an example of a team-building meeting involving a top-management team.

Activities Affecting the Group's Relationship with the Rest of the Organization

As a team gains a better understanding of itself and becomes better able to diagnose and solve its own problems, it focuses on its role within the organization. A group's relationship to the larger organizational context is an important aspect of group effectiveness.³² Diagnostic activities focus on understanding the group's organizational role, how its goals support the larger organization, or how the group interacts with other groups.

Developmental activities involve actions that improve or modify the group's contribution to the organization, how it acquires resources, or alters its outputs in terms of cost, quality, and quantity. Sometimes, the team may recognize a need for more collaboration with other parts of the organization and may try to establish a project team that crosses the boundaries of existing teams.

As the team becomes more cohesive, it usually exerts a stronger influence on other groups within the organization. This can lead to intergroup conflict. Because that is one area in which team building can have negative effects, the process consultant must help the group understand its role within the larger organization, develop its own diagnostic skills, and examine alternative action plans so that intergroup tensions and conflicts do not expand.

Building the Executive Team at Caesars Tahoe

Caesars Tahoe is a casino, hotel, and entertainment complex on the south shore of Lake Tahoe, Nevada. As part of the Caesars World chain, including Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, Caesars in Atlantic City, and the riverboat Caesars Indiana, Caesars Tahoe enjoys a reputation as a "high-end" experience. Its history is laced with stories of celebrities, athletes, and some of the wealthiest people in the world winning and losing millions of dollars gambling in its casinos. Originally established as an alternative to the Las Vegas desert, Caesars Tahoe is the third-largest facility in town in terms of casino floor space and number of rooms, but it has the largest showroom for headline talent, the highest gambling limits, and the highest proportion of table games such as craps, blackjack, and roulette.

In 1995, the Caesars World organization was purchased by the IIT conglomerate, was spun off into the Starwood Resorts organization when IIT reorganized in 1997, and then was sold to Park Place Entertainment when Starwood decided to focus on nongaming properties. As of late 1999, the Caesars World corporate office was waiting for the transaction with Park Place to be closed formally.

The executive team at Caesars Tahoe consisted of an executive vice president and general manager (GM) for the property and seven direct reports. The marketing function was divided into three segments, each headed by a vice president. Far East marketing was responsible for recruiting "million-dollar players" from the South Pacific region; national marketing was responsible for working with other Caesars properties to ensure that "high rollers" from the United States were well attended to; and casino marketing handled the more traditional promotion activities of advertising, special-events coordination, entertainment bookings, and convention marketing. The hotel vice president was responsible for the front desk, housekeeping, maintenance, food and beverage service, and so on. The casino operations vice president managed all gambling operations. In addition, there was a vice president for human resources and a chief financial officer. The vice presidents for casino marketing and casino operations had been with the

property for 10 and 20 years, respectively. No other member of the team had been with the property more than two years. In fact, the current GM was the 13th in 20 years.

The GM contacted an external OD consultant to help the executive team improve teamwork and clarify the core values of the organization. General changes in the gaming industry, higher than normal turnover levels in the hotel and casino, concerns over whether the Caesars "brand" had suffered in all the corporate portfolio adjustments, and conflicts among his senior managers prompted his call. His own vision for the property included growing the property, reestablishing the Caesars brand, and investing in human resources. Interviews with the members of executive committee confirmed his initial descriptions about the team and the organization's situation.

In consultation with the GM, the corporate OD consultant, and the human resources vice president, an agenda was developed that addressed the goals and vision for the property, team processes and roles, and action plans for the future. A two-day off-site meeting was arranged at a local resort.

The workshop kicked off on the evening before the meeting with a welcome and overview of the agenda by the GM and a stakeholder mapping exercise that clarified the current mission of the property. Team members were excused for the evening with the thoughts of the exercise fresh in their minds. On the morning of the first day, executive-committee members were encouraged to share their expectations for the meeting and to develop specific norms that would guide their behaviors during the two-day meeting. This process was aided by an exercise in which the group members shared their experiences about the best team they had ever worked on and in that way identified characteristics of effective teams. The norms and characteristics were placed on flipcharts and hung on the wall of the meeting room. All members agreed to behave according to the norms and to assess periodically how well the norms were being followed. The consultant agreed to provide feedback on norm compliance during the session.

The group then participated in a problem-solving exercise that prompted members to collaborate on a task. The task generated important data about the group's functioning. Those observations were discussed, as were insights about the team gleaned from the results of an interpersonal style instrument completed by members prior to the meeting. The nature of the conflicts among members also was discussed. From this new basis of group understanding, the executive committee began to discuss their hopes and visions for the property. The first day ended with several unfinished lists of value statements, core purposes, and thoughts about the strategies and markets served by the organization. An evaluation of the day asked for an overall rating and comments about what the group should stop, start, and continue to do.

The next day began by feeding back the data from the evaluation, which suggested that most people were satisfied with the accomplishments of the first day but that important issues still needed to be addressed. Although the agenda called for a flow similar to that of the day before, moving back and forth between teamwork-related activities and discussions about the property's future, the consultant wrote several important topics on a flipchart and asked the group to identify the most important agenda items. Quickly they decided that they wanted to finish the core-values work and then discuss their core purpose.

The consultant facilitated the conversation that was now clearly under the control of the group members. Within a couple of hours, the group had produced a list of core values, developed a process for involving the rest of the organization in creating a final list of values, and crafted a core purpose that described the essence of the organization. Based on this work, the group moved to some initial discussions about its vision for the future. In addition, the group generated a list of key action items necessary to realize that vision. This was especially tricky given the uncertain demands of the new owner, but the group decided that it was important to have a clear strategy for themselves so that any demands from the new parent could be evaluated. Members also reasoned that the parent might ask them what they thought was possible and they wanted to be ready.

The meeting ended with the completion of a responsibility chart to clarify task completion expectations and accountabilities among the team members. A final evaluation of the meeting included process observations by the team members about how they had worked together and statements about their satisfaction with the results of the meeting. They all agreed that they had made important decisions and were leaving with substantial results.

The Manager's Role in Team Building

Ultimately, the manager is responsible for team functioning, although this responsibility obviously must be shared by the group itself. Therefore, it is management's task to develop a work group that can regularly analyze and diagnose its own effectiveness and work process. With the team's involvement, the manager must diagnose the group's effectiveness and take appropriate actions if it shows signs of operating difficulty or stress.

Boss and McConkie surveyed over 3,500 team building participants and found that 92% identified the team's leader as the single most important role in successful team building.³³ Many managers, however, have not been trained to perform the data gathering, diagnosis, planning, and action necessary to maintain and improve their teams continually. Thus, the issue of who should lead a team-building session is a function of managerial capability. The initial use of an OD consultant usually is advisable if a manager is aware of problems, feels that he or she may be part of the problem, and believes that some positive action is needed to improve the operation of the team, but is not sure how to go about it. Dyer has provided a checklist for assessing the need for a consultant (Table 12.3). Some of the questions ask the manager to examine problems

[Table 12.3]

Assessing the Need for a Consultant

SHOULD YOU USE AN OUTSIDE CONSULTANT TO HELP IN TEAM BUILDING? (Circle the appropriate response.)			
1. Does the manager feel comfortable in trying out something new and different with the staff?	Yes	No	?
2. Is the staff used to spending time in an outside location working on issues of concern to the work unit?	Yes	No	?
3. Will group members speak up and give honest data?	Yes	No	?
4. Does your group generally work together without a lot of conflict or apathy?	Yes	No	?
5. Are you reasonably sure that the boss is not a major source of difficulty?	Yes	No	?
6. Is there a high commitment by the boss and unit members to achieving more effective team functioning?	Yes	No	?
7. Is the personal style of the boss and his or her management philosophy consistent with a team approach?	Yes	No	?
8. Do you feel you know enough about team building to begin a program without help?	Yes	No	?
9. Would your staff feel confident enough to begin a team-building program without outside help?	Yes	No	?

Scoring: If you have circled six or more "yes" responses, you probably do not need an outside consultant. If you have circled four or more "no" responses, you probably do need a consultant. If you have a mixture of "yes," "no," and ? responses, invite a consultant to talk over the situation and make a joint decision.

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and establish the degree to which he or she feels comfortable in trying out new and different things, the degree of knowledge about team building, whether the boss might be a major source of difficulty, and the openness of group members.

Basically, the role of the OD consultant is to work closely with the manager (and members of the team) to a point at which the manager is capable of engaging in team development activities as a regular and ongoing part of overall managerial responsibilities. Assuming that the manager wants and needs a consultant, the two should work together in developing the initial program, keeping in mind that (1) the manager ultimately is responsible for all team-building activities, even though the consultant's resources are available; and (2) the goal of the consultant's presence is to help the manager learn to continue team development processes with minimum consultant help or without the ongoing help of the consultant.

Thus, in the first stages, the consultant might be much more active in data gathering, diagnosis, and action planning, particularly if a one- to three-day off-site workshop is considered. In later stages, the consultant takes a much less active role, with the manager becoming more active and serving as both manager and team developer.

The Results of Team Building

The research on team building's effectiveness has produced inconsistent results. Some studies have reported positive results across a range of variables including feelings, attitudes, and measures of performance.³⁴ For example, one review showed that team building improves process measures, such as employee openness and decision making,

about 45% of the time and improves outcome measures, such as productivity and costs, about 53% of the time.³⁵ Another review revealed that team building positively affects hard measures of productivity, employee withdrawal, and costs about 50% of the time.³⁶

Other studies have shown less positive outcomes.³⁷ In general, the research supports a pattern of positive changes in attitudes or satisfaction. However, less powerful research designs and short time frames prohibit drawing strong conclusions linking performance improvements to team development efforts.³⁸ For example, one review of 30 studies found that only ten tried to measure changes in performance. Although these changes were generally positive, the studies' research designs were relatively weak, reducing confidence in the findings.³⁹ Moreover, team building rarely occurs in isolation. Usually, it is carried out in conjunction with other interventions leading to or resulting from team building itself. For this reason it is difficult to separate the effects of team building from those of the other interventions.

Buller and Bell have attempted to differentiate the effects of team building from the effects of other interventions that occur along with team building.⁴⁰ Specifically, they tried to separate the effects of team building from the effects of goal setting, an intervention aimed at setting realistic performance goals and developing action plans for achieving them. In a rigorous field experiment, Buller and Bell examined the differential effects of team building and goal setting on productivity measures of underground miners. The results showed that team building affects the quality of performance and goal setting affects the quantity of performance. This differential impact was explained in terms of the nature of the mining task. The task of improving the quality of performance was more complex, unstructured, and interdependent than was the task of achieving quantity. This suggests that team building can improve group performance, particularly on tasks that are complex, unstructured, and interdependent. That the advantages of combining both interventions were inconclusively identified in the Buller and Bell study suggests the need for additional studies of the differential impact of team building and other interventions such as goal setting.

Team building, like OD at the organization level, is a process over time, and OD practitioners need to be aware of the full range of reasons teams are effective. Research by Hackman and his colleagues have suggested that too much time may be spent trying to help teams that were designed and launched incorrectly. They argue that one of the most important tasks of the OD practitioner is to be sure that any team gets chartered and launched correctly.⁴¹ In a related study where the teams' launching was held constant, Woolley found that task-focused (as opposed to process-focused) interventions given at the mid-point of a team's lifecycle had the biggest impact on team performance.⁴²

The results of team building in virtual teams is still emerging, but shows that many of the lessons learned from face-to-face team-building practice can be transferred. For example, in a lab study of college students, researchers found that when communications technologies were augmented to include goal setting processes, team functioning and team performance improved.⁴³ Because virtual teams are usually geographically dispersed, they can also take advantage of a variety of asynchronous facilitation tools, such as bulletin boards and portals.⁴⁴ Hart and McCleod found that interpersonal closeness between members of a virtual team is created when one member proactively helps another member to solve a problem or address a concern, and that the closeness is maintained by frequent, short, but content-oriented (as opposed to process-oriented) messages.⁴⁵ Finally, Gibson and Cohen found that team performance was enhanced by initial face-to-face team-building meetings in the start-up stage of a team's work.⁴⁶

Finally, Boss has presented considerable evidence to support the effectiveness of personal management interviews (PMIs) in sustaining the long-term effects of off-site team building.⁴⁷ A PMI is a follow-up intervention that arrests the potential fade-out effects of off-site team building.⁴⁸ A team leader negotiates roles with each member and then holds regular meetings with each team member to resolve problems and increase personal accountability. Boss and his colleagues have amassed a large, longitudinal data set, mostly in public administration, hospital, and health care settings. When team building interventions have included PMI activities (compared to those that have not included PMI follow ups), they have found consistent and sustained improvement in measures of team functioning and operational performance.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, we presented human process interventions aimed at interpersonal relations and group dynamics. Among the earliest interventions in OD, these change programs help people gain interpersonal competence, work through interpersonal conflicts, and develop effective groups.

Process consultation is used not only as a way of helping groups become effective but also as a means whereby groups learn to diagnose and solve their own problems and continue to develop their competence and maturity. Important areas of activity include communications, roles of group members, difficulties with problem-solving and decision-making norms, and leadership and authority. The basic difference between process consultation and third-party intervention is that the latter focuses on interpersonal dysfunctions in social relationships between two or more individuals within the same organization and is targeted toward resolving direct conflict between those individuals.

Team building is directed toward improving group effectiveness and the ways in which members of teams work together. Teams may be permanent or temporary or traditional or virtual, but their members have either common organizational aims or work activities. The general process of team building, like process consultation, tries to equip a team to handle its own ongoing problem solving.

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