Better Together: Relationships, Collaboration, and Outcomes

Teamwork is a major contributing factor to job satisfaction and work engagement. The investment in building strong team collaboration creates a win-win outcome for both the employee and the organization (Ogbonnaya & Valizade, 2018; Karatepe & Olugbade, 2016; Arnold et al., 2020). Employees who are given meaningful opportunities to work with others in order to meet organizational goals feel valued by their employers. This results in increased commitment to the organization and less disengagement (Ogbonnaya & Valizade, 2018). Moreover, being a part of a team prevents isolation, influences our sense of who we are and what our future career goals are, and contributes to an overall sense of well-being (Arnold et al., 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2000). So, we ask ourselves, "How can we strive to create a sense of community in the workplace that contributes to meaningful and effective teamwork?" Traditionally, the four facets of teamwork are (1) **Relationships**, (2) **Goals**, (3) **Roles**, and (4) **Processes** (Burke, 1982).

1. **Invest in Relationships**
    Healthy relationships are the foundation of effective collaboration. A collaborative mindset is essential as a starting point. Engaging in civil, collegial, and neighborly behaviors promote positive attitudes toward teamwork (Ogbonnaya & Valizade, 2018; Arnold et al., 2020). Teamwork that encourages employees to do things together beyond work engenders trust, respect, and influence, all indicators of a cohesive, collaborative relationship (Maxwell, 2013). When each member feels that their voice can influence and promote other members' voices, their voices combine to contribute to the group's direction (Arnold et al., 2020; Karatepe & Olugbade, 2016). When teams develop safe relationships that support successful risk-taking and disagreement, they can collaborate openly, activating creativity, which results in a more productive outcome (Karatepe & Olugbade, 2016).

2. **Set Goals**
    At the heart of every team is a common goal. The group should acknowledge how their work contributes to the organization's success (Arnold et al., 2020). Group interdependence exists when a shared goal transcends personal goals or when it is aligned with the goals of individual members (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). It is also important that goal alignment is clearly and consistently communicated so that in every project, the team understands the expectations of the organization (Ogbonnaya & Valizade, 2018).

3. **Identify Roles**
    Another key to team interdependence is for task-related knowledge to be distributed among the team members so that no one person does all the work on their own (Lerner et al., 2009). Even supposing that any member COULD achieve the organization's goals independently, choosing to share responsibilities across the group is an intentional way to build community within the

team. Logistically, this should be done explicitly through conversations about how the work can best be shared according to the team members' strengths, individual inclinations, and/or opportunities for development (Arnold et al., 2020). Skills are not the only factor to consider when assigning tasks and roles on a shared project. Belbin (1996) identifies three types of team contributors: (1) action-oriented, (2) people-oriented, and (3) thought-oriented. Maximum team efficiency is achieved when all three areas are addressed.

4. Establish Processes

Creating collaborative work communities is an essential process goal (Arnold et al, 2020). Some of the formal processes that directly contribute to improved teamwork have already been addressed: setting goals and establishing roles, planning, communication, and feedback processes are critical components. Communication is directly linked to commitment and connection, which work together to fuel action (Maxwell, 2013; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Effective teams talk to one another consciously and consistently. On the other hand, lack of communication fuels frustration, duplication of work, aimlessness, and distrust (Maxwell, 2013). Another important factor is feedback and accountability processes, which align with goal setting. Teams and leaders should agree on what success looks like. Having a clear picture of the desired outcome is essential in order for the team to move forward with authorship and responsibility for their work as they plan, make decisions, adjust, and reflect on the quality of their work (Maxwell, 2013; Ogbonnaya & Valizade, 2018). Professional growth should be a formal goal to which each individual and their leaders are committed (Arnold et al, 2020; Maxwell, 2013). When teams put their skills together to achieve professional growth and success, a positive work culture results (Ogbonnaya & Valizade, 2018).

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