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# INTRODUCTION

**T**he effective use of teams has long been one of the hottest topics in business. Many metaphors have been invoked, from jazz bands and orchestras to sports teams, for how organizations can employ teamwork for better results. You will find a variety of viewpoints in this collection about this crucial subject, from the pages of the award-winning publication *Leader to Leader*. You'll hear from some of the country's most prominent writers on the subject, including Patrick M. Lencioni and Jon R. Katzenbach.

The concept of teams is multi-faceted and complex. It is also inherently more difficult and nuanced than individual development. Rather than building the effectiveness of one person, it requires lifting and coordinating the capabilities of multiple people. It is notoriously difficult to accomplish, as evidenced by the steady flow of books and other materials on the subject. Few causes can be as important as leveraging and combining the talents of everyone in your workplace. The material you'll discover here is varied and inventive. It will provide you with new ways to think about how you can create or improve great teams within an organization, business or otherwise.

As leaders, you need concise, cut-to-the-chase information about how the people you lead can work together better to create a sustainable future. You'll find ground-breaking research, examples from top organizations and best practices to guide you. These pieces are written by some of our top thought leaders on the topic, speaking directly to you as a fellow leader, keeping the concerns and priorities of leaders in mind. They are truly written *for you*.

A number of patterns and themes appear within. One particularly important theme is communication. This is especially true of Ichak Adizes' "Communication Strategies for Leading Teams," but also in the contributions from John Gallagher, Lisa Haneberg, Laurence Haughton, Howard M. Guttman, Jon R. Katzenbach/Douglas K. Smith and Carol Sturman. Another is decision-making, particularly in Don Maruska's "Making Great Team Decisions," but also elaborated on by Haughton, Guttman, Adizes and Jack Uldrich.

Team learning is an often elusive construct. The pay-offs are obvious but tricky to achieve. John Gallagher describes the Place and Space Model™, a creation for the Executive MBA program at the Fuqua School of Business at Duke University. Geographically-dispersed participants in "virtual learning teams" meet first face-to-face on campus, and then collaborate virtually for team learning projects, taking turns in leadership roles. The challenges of learning and producing in this environment also aid in the students' personal growth and leadership development. This model has important implications for organizations that must teach, train and develop their leaders in locations worldwide.

Making meetings productive has bedeviled many a manager and leader. Lisa Haneberg suggests that one answer is to strategically use the huddle: brief, highly-focused gatherings of people around a particular area of urgency. Huddles are a mainstay of not only sports teams, but also restaurants and entertainment companies. One corporate example is Walt Disney World, in helping keep its "cast members" apprised of crucial information about their shifts. She provides further examples from IT and consulting firms, and outlines many characteristics of huddles, including that they do not require a meeting room, and can be called by anyone, with leadership revolving by topic. Huddles can even improve your performance with vendors and clients.

Everyone wants teams that are energized and engaged in doing important work. Laurence Haughton describes hot teams, which have high levels of trust, enthusiasm and morale. He interviews Tom Kelley, CEO of the renowned design company IDEO, about

transforming ordinary work groups into hot teams. Haughton discovered key things that leaders must do to cultivate these teams: to personally like your people and listen to what they have to say, to make their work engaging, and let them make their own decisions. His research with IDEO also uncovered things you should not do: don't let your group become rule-bound and don't be mean. The right mixture of these do's and don'ts can mean great success for your hot teams.

Problems and conflicts on teams are inevitable. But that does not mean they can't be worked through and solved. Howard M. Guttman writes that leaders get promoted for a variety of reasons within their organizations, but managing conflict is not necessarily one of them. The smartest leaders help their teams become more effective by bringing in a partner; either someone from HR or elsewhere in the organization, or an outside consultant, to help channel this conflict into productivity. Guttman says that within teams "differences of opinion are healthy, beneficial, and necessary." But conflict that has gone underground and is suppressed causes damage. He shows how skilled partners can help teams in both working with individual members and in team dynamics.

Patrick M. Lencioni, author of such best-sellers as *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, says that teams are not always the answer, even if they are popular and even politically-correct. Team formation is a strategic choice, and is not necessarily a virtue in itself. If team members allow their individual (or even departmental) concerns to override that of the team, the results are counter-productive. One alternative to teams is the working group, as elaborated on in the book *The Wisdom of Teams* by Jon R. Katzenbach (see below). Like Guttman, Lencioni argues for the virtues of healthy conflict within teams. And he provides a list of questions to ask of yourself and fellow team members to determine if you really should form a team or not.

Jon R. Katzenbach and Douglas K. Smith discuss virtual teaming, somewhat similar to the Place and Space Model™ model elaborated above by John Gallagher. Katzenbach and Smith argue that team performance rests on leader, peer and self-imposed discipline. This

holds true for both in-person and virtual teams. The latter pose significant challenges, giving particular importance to such best practices as: convening early face-to-face meetings (as in the Duke University example above), distinguishing between single-leader and team disciplines, matching skills to collective work projects, holding additional face-to-face sessions as needed and shifting/sharing leadership roles. The group should learn how to define success by asking the question “How would you know you succeeded at this challenge?”

Fear destroys the ability of many teams to make great decisions, according to Don Maruska. It causes people to undermine each other and revert to what’s best for them, rather than the team: “Even in an environment of abundance, fear can cause people to see scarcity.” This sense of fear also creates as a mind-set of scarcity, rather than abundance. The antidote is a sense of hope, which taps into a person’s aspirations for the future, which can lead to a search for common ground. Hope also stimulates positive thoughts, affirmative behaviors and constructive relationship; the opposite of what happens when fear predominates.

Jack Uldrich provides a gripping account of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark’s Journey of Discovery, while drawing out lessons for contemporary leaders. The journey was 860 days long, and was preceded by careful preparation and decisions. Their display of considerable fortitude and courage in the face of extreme hardship helped shape the success of the endeavor. Uldrich’s account is worth reading for its story alone, but his comparison of historical issues to contemporary leadership problems gives it particular power. Lewis and Clark displayed such leadership qualities as respect, trust, persistence, and a willingness to admit mistakes. These qualities remain important in the organizational teams of today and tomorrow.

Ichak Adizes says that a diversity of managerial styles is needed in any team. Yet leading people with these different (and often conflicting) styles is not easy, and requires “exceptional communication skills.” Senior executives are asked to play a variety of roles, which he describes as “visionary, taskmaster, steward, facilitator.” Yet one person is unlikely to embody each of these qualities. Like Guttman and Lencioni, he says that constructive conflict is necessary for team success. Leaders should be aware of the cognitive steps that people go through in making decisions, including the gathering of thoughts, synthesizing the big picture, reconsidering doubts and seeking reassurance on decisions.

Carol Sturman provides a first-hand case study of Sturman Industries, where she is the president. Their workplace is based on fairness, flat hierarchies, open floor plans, a family atmosphere, self-managed project teams a sense of fun and shared purpose. You might think they were in some form of the arts, yet their “main product is a digital valve and system control technology that increases the efficiency of engines.” Sturman says that all this rests on a foundation of constant and open communication, while yearly goal-setting is not just for managers for involves every employee.

We hope that these ten articles form a kaleidoscope of ideas and inspirations for how teamwork can be improved in your organization. After reading each one, you’ll have a stronger sense of how team members think and act, as well as a blueprint for how to implement or change how your teams are constituted, and how they can communicate and learn more easily and effectively. You’ll even be better able to identify when forming or retaining a team is necessary and advisable in the first place.

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