

Groups and teams

Case duration (Min):

45-60

Organizational Behaviour (OB)

Principles of Management (PoM)

Groups and teams

Leading teams

Worldwide

Case summary:

Groups form a major part of any organisational activity. Using several short film clips we set out to explore why groups and teams are an important aspect of organisational activity and consider how such groups and teams are formed, their structure and associated performance issues.

Learning objectives:

Distinguish between the concept of a group and team.
Outline the nature of the dynamic processes that occur within groups.
Explain how groups can be made more effective.

Case problem:

Why do organisations make use of groups and teams?

First, if you are taking a taught management course then consult with your tutor and ensure that the case has not been scheduled into a teaching class or tutorial. If it has not:

1. Play/ read the media associated with the case. You may need to access the Internet and enter a URL to locate any video clips.
2. Attempt the Case study questions.

Consider attempting the case study as a group exercise; you could form a study group with fellow students.

3. Check the suggested answers - remember these are suggestions only and there are often many possible answers.

Discuss questions and answers with other students.

4. If you feel your answer(s) were weak then consider reading the relevant suggested readings again (also see the case study suggested references).

Title/ Media type

URL/ Media description

Barry Gilbertson States Teamwork is Essential To Most Professions :

<http://eclips.cornell.edu/themes.do?id=118&clipID=5606&tab=TabClipPage>

Film

Barry Gilbertson - Lecture - Ethics and Teamwork.

Barry Gilbertson is a partner in PricewaterhouseCoopers where he leads the real estate and hospitality & leisure teams within the Advisory practice. During this lecture to an undergraduate class at Cornell University, Gilbertson discusses his thoughts on teamwork (Arguments For A Team Approach).

Barry Gilbertson Discusses Team Dynamics.

<http://eclips.cornell.edu/themes.do?id=118&clipID=5607&tab=TabClipPage>

Film

Barry Gilbertson Discusses Team Dynamics.

Bill Weidlein Shares Thoughts on Team Dynamics.

<http://eclips.cornell.edu/themes.do?id=675&clipID=10945&tab=TabClipPage>

Film

Bill Weidlein has been with Trans National Group since 1987. In his current role as Vice Chairman, Weidlein has Board level responsibility for overseeing TNG's four majority-owned operating affiliates, as well as the Company's Real Estate and Investment activities.

Robert Felton Discusses The Importance of Recognizing Individual Strengths and Weaknesses on Teams.

<http://eclips.cornell.edu/themes.do?id=116&clipID=2940&tab=TabClipPage>

Film

Robert Felton co-founded the San Francisco-based Indus in 1988, as a provider of application software packages for customers in the electric utilities, petrochemical, heavy manufacturing, transportation and packaged goods industries. The company grew rapidly and, in 1993, was ranked third in Inc. magazine's list of the 500 fastest-growing privately held companies. During this interview, Felton discusses the founding of Indus - Leading a Team and Team Building Strategies...He discusses relationships within the team, and how some team members sometimes do not fulfil their team commitments (social loafing); this has a negative impact upon the whole team performance as other members start to offer less effort also.

Chau Sims Discusses The Advantages of Working On a Multidisciplinary Team.

<http://eclips.cornell.edu/themes.do?id=118&clipID=9462&tab=TabClipPage>

Film

Chau Sims Discusses Advantages of Working On a Multidisciplinary Team.

Kevin Warner States The Importance of Embracing Diversity within a Team:

<http://eclips.cornell.edu/themes.do?id=118&clipID=10327&tab=TabClipPage>

Film

Kevin Warner is the Senior Director of the Cisco Entrepreneur Institute. During this interview, Warner discusses his background and the development and growth of Cisco's Entrepreneurial Institute. He also shares thoughts on the most important lessons to take away from the undergraduate experience and discusses characteristics of strong leaders.

NOTES:

Case study questions...

Action	Pre/During/After class
1 ARGUMENTS FOR A TEAM APPROACH : Gilbertson states you could not do complex surgery on your own if you were a surgeon. 'You need all that vast range of back up, both in preparation, and in execution'. Discuss what is meant by group and team and the benefits of a group /team approach to work tasks and goals. Is a group a team and vice versa or do the terms have different meanings?	During
2 GROUP FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT : Groups do not simply come into automatic existence and there are several ways to form a group or team. From your own experiences, identify the different ways that groups or teams may be chosen; as an example, consider forming a study group within your class.	During
3 SOCIAL LOAFING : Felton goes on to identify a further challenge-SOCIAL LOAFING – define what is meant by social loafing and discuss why it may happen and its consequences.	During
4 STRUCTURAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE GROUP EFFECTIVENESS: MULTIDISCIPLINARY AND MULTICULTURAL OR DIVERSE TEAMS Diversity plays a large role in how effective groups and work teams are. Critically discuss diversity within groups and teams-how do you feel it will impact upon group effectiveness and efficiency?	During

SOCIAL LOAFING

the tendency for individuals to exert less effort when working as part of a group on an additive task, than when working alone.

GROUP

Any number of people who interact with one another, are psychologically aware of one another and who perceive themselves as being in a group.

TEAM

Implies a small, cohesive group that works effectively as a single unit through being focused on a common task.

GROUP COMMUNICATION

The patterns through which individuals within a group communicate with each other.

SOCIAL FACILITATION/AUDIENCE EFFECT

The improvement in performance in a particular task achieved as a result of the active participation of others; or the mere presence of others for the audience effect.

Question/ Answer

1 ARGUMENTS FOR A TEAM APPROACH :

Gilbertson states you could not do complex surgery on your own if you were a surgeon. 'You need all that vast range of back up, both in preparation, and in execution'. Discuss what is meant by group and team and the benefits of a group /team approach to work tasks and goals. Is a group a team and vice versa or do the terms have different meanings?

A Group is any number of people who interact with one another, are psychologically aware of one another and who perceive themselves as being in a group. Martin (2005) suggests a Team "implies a small, cohesive group that works effectively as a single unit through being focused on a common task." Many scholars including Martin (2005:210) consider groups and teams to be similar but different. Both definitions recognise the presence of more than one person, interacting and aware of each other, bound by a common purpose. However, the notion of a team implies a small group that works effectively together. Teams often have a closer affinity between members. The organisation or even a large department would be better labelled a group than a team. Arguments for a team approach include access to specialised skills and knowledge, greater creativity, better understanding of problems, Synergy, a need to have more than one person undertake the work, to socialise employees and provide support and enhance job satisfaction, Social facilitation/audience effect etc.

2 GROUP FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT :

Groups do not simply come into automatic existence and there are several ways to form a group or team. From your own experiences, identify the different ways that groups or teams may be chosen; as an example, consider forming a study group within your class.

Kelly (2008) suggests it is like selecting a football team, the coach (educator) or players (learners) may select the team (group members). Students may be given the authority to select their own group members (Blease 2006) or this activity may be undertaken for them by the tutor (Hernandez 2002). It is generally assumed that the former approach is more subjective, based on emotions, whilst the latter approach may be more objective. Tutors, possibly enabled by technology, may use heuristics (Koppenhaver and Shrader 2003 and Baker and Powell 2002), the alphabet or random (Sharan and Sharan 1992) approaches to selection. Whereas heuristics may use algorithms scientifically, to spread traits proportionately and thus create diverse groups, random selection is seen as a means to give everyone an equal chance of working together. Other scholars (Mahenthiran and Rouse 2000) have proposed hybrid approaches, distributing power and control of the process between students and tutors. The group allocation process has important consequences. Firstly and directly, it determines the distribution of various structural variables within the group i.e. how many males or females there may be, their age, ability and nationality. Secondly and indirectly it impacts upon group cohesion and cooperative structures– the extent to which group members pull together.

Gilbertson goes on to discuss team dynamics, recognising that common values bind us together and suggesting, "It's about having a common goal"... if you are working in a team, there is no escape; you can't not do it, because you will let other people down, even though it might be difficult. You have to be accountable for your actions.

3 SOCIAL LOAFING :

Felton goes on to identify a further challenge-SOCIAL LOAFING – define what is meant by social loafing and discuss why it may happen and its consequences.

Social loafing - the tendency for individuals to exert less effort when working as part of a group on an additive task, than when working alone.

As Felton suggests, 'sometimes team members don't make their commitments ... in the real world occasionally sometimes people don't come prepared or have not done what they're supposed to'. Social loafing is more likely to occur when individuals believe their work and output cannot be separately identified from the group; it is also more likely when the task is perceived as unimportant. Social loafing is also more likely to occur when individuals think that their team members are loafing. Felton recognises this in his comments, "However the team still has a goal and you have a deadline, and now, what do you do now? ... what I find in teams is that you can have a team of typically 8, or 10, or 12 people and if one person isn't performing, does the rest of the team, does this person get pulled off of the rest of the team? No, what happens is that everybody is making about the same money. People are saying, "Wait a minute, this person is just skating by". So, the whole performance of the team gets down." We may therefore argue that direct and indirect consequences of social loafing; ultimately team performance is eroded.

4 STRUCTURAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE GROUP EFFECTIVENESS: MULTIDISCIPLINARY AND MULTICUL

Diversity plays a large role in how effective groups and work teams are. Critically discuss diversity within groups and teams-how do you feel it will impact upon group effectiveness and efficiency?

“You have to identify everyone's role within a team and ... how important it is to function together and to communicate. Working in a multidisciplinary team made Sims realize he had a lot more to offer and that others have a lot more to offer as well”, Sims.

Kelly (2009:261) discusses diverse & multicultural groups. Citing Milliken and Martins (1996) who review the effects of different types of diversity in group composition and argue that diversity in the composition of organizational groups affects outcomes such as employee turnover and performance through its impact on affective, cognitive, and communication processes. Research on heterogeneity in groups suggests that diversity offers both a great opportunity for organizations as well as an enormous challenge. Diversity appears to be a double-edged sword, increasing the opportunity for creativity as well as the likelihood that group members will be dissatisfied and fail to identify with the group. A group that is diverse could be expected to have members who may have had significantly different experiences and, therefore, significantly different perspectives on key issues or problems. However, such differences can create serious coordination and communication difficulties for groups. Thus diverse and multicultural groups take longer to develop but are expected to be more creative ones in the performing stage.

Case study references

Cole, G A. and Kelly, P P. (2011) 'Management Theory and Practice', Ed. 7. Cengage EMEA.

Kelly, P P. (2008) 'Achieving desirable group-work outcomes through the group allocation process', Team Performance Management, Volume: 14 Issue: 1/2, p. 22 - 38.

Kelly, P P. (2009) 'International Business and Management', Cengage Learning EMEA.

Martin, J. (2005) 'Organizational Behaviour and Management', Ed. 3. Thomson Learning.