Effective Team Building: Panacea to Organisation Efficiency, Effectiveness, Togetherness, Employee's Development and Increase Productivity

Assoc. Prof (Dr.) Nwafor E. Simon

City University, Cambodia, Monrovia-Liberia Campus.

Corresponding author: *drnwaforsimon66@gmail.com*

Abstract

This paper look at the possibility that effective team building and team work can bring about organisation's efficiency, effectiveness, sustained performance, and or increase productivity ratio. Organisations activities are becoming too dynamic and competitive in recent times that the only strategy to actualise and or survive and maintain a competitive edge in this century is the ability to build formidable teams. To many industry experts, teamwork is a part of everyday life; whether it's at home, in the community or at work, we are often expected to be a functional part of a performing team. Team building involves a wide variety of activities, presented to organisations and aimed at improving team performance. It is a philosophy of job design that sees employees as members of interdependent teams rather than as individual workers. Team building is an important factor in any work community/environment, its focus is to specialise in bringing out the best in a team to ensure self-development, positive communication, leadership skills and the ability to work closely together as a team to solve problems. And, as a response to the prevailing and dynamic nature of change, companies and organisations are having difficulties in achieving sustained performance. They are forced to look for new management approaches to develop a cutting-edge process to deal with existing trends and developments. The effectiveness of organisations accepting and adapting to team spirit will determine the growth, development and the ability to understanding the workings of SWOT matrix for better job performance. In spite of many studies carried out by scholars and practitioners in the area of team building/team work over the years, much still need to be done about team building and factors inhibiting its successes. This paper, however, offers a balanced approach to the relevance of effective team building and or sustaining Nigeria organisations as well as finding ways that will enable it becomes a top-notch team performer in this century and beyond.

Keywords: Team Building, Organisation, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Togetherness, Productivity.

Introduction

> *"Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success"*
>
> *Henry Ford*

Have you ever pondered why some organisations perform more effectively and efficiently than others? Why are some groups of individuals in an organisation working and doing things in common unlike others? The profitable and sustainability of a functional organisation however, is dependent on the calibre of human resources working together in oneness to achieve the organisational goals and objectives. Team building involves a wide

variety of activities, used in organisations and it is aimed at enhancing team performance. It is a philosophy of job design that sees employees as members of interdependent teams rather than as individual workers. Team building is an important factor in any work community/environment and its focus is to specialise in bringing out the best in a team to ensure individual's self-development, effective communication, improving leadership skills and the ability to work closely together as a team to solve problems. According to Beer (1976), Dyer (1977), Buller (1986), Sundstom, De Meuse and Futrell (1990), Robbins, et al (2008), team building comprises of four fundamental elements: goal setting, interpersonal relations, problem solving, and role clarification. However, Wheelan (2005) is of the view that team building activities include; goal setting, interpersonal relationship and feedback relating to participant's performance and group development. Be that as it may, goal setting, problem-solving and interpersonal relations were invariably the most common driving force for businesses, and or leaders selecting team building as an organisational development tool.

A team, however, is a group of individuals who work across space and organisational boundaries with links strengthened by webs of communication technology. Members have complementary skills and are committed to a common purpose, have interdependent performance goals, and share an approach to work for which they hold themselves mutually accountable. At the same time, geographically dispersed teams allow organisations to hire and retain the best people regardless of location. An e-team does not always imply telecommuters, individuals who work from home. Many virtual teams in today's organisations consist of employees both working at home and in small groups in the office, but in different geographic locations.

As noted by Purcell et al (1998), team supply the 'elusive bridge between the aims of the individual employee and the objectives of the organisation......teams can provide the medium for linking employee performance targets to the success of the business'.

Team Building Defined

Increasingly, a team may be composed of people drawn from different functions, departments and disciplines who have been brought together for a specific project. Team building begins with the effective selection and grouping of team members. It includes the encouragement of good working relationships and practices, which enable the team to steer and develop the work and reach their goals. A team however is more than just a group of people who happen to work together. It is a group of people working towards achieving predetermined goals and objectives and sharing responsibility for the outcomes.

According to Simon Nwafor (2017), one of the most critical aspects of the duties of effective leadership is the ability to recruit, select, train and at the same time, develop a functional team to achieve the goals and objectives of the organisation. Falker (1970) however, looks at leadership as the moral intellectual ability to visualise and work for what is best for the organisation and its employees through effective teamwork. Team building is the process

of carefully gathering the right people and getting them to work together for the benefit of a project or the organisation. In this context, therefore, it is pertinent to stress here that a good team builder (leader) takes into cognisance the following attributes of the employees: technological, managerial competent, clear thinking, ability to retain the confidence, and also, the ability to communicate with enthusiasm.

Fajana (2002) defined teamwork as an integration of resources and inputs working in harmony to achieve organisational goals where roles are prescribed for every organisation member, and that challenges are equally faced and incremental improvements are sought continually. Katzenbach and Smith (1993) defined teamwork as a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals and approach for which they held themselves mutually accountable.

Today, teams have become a common feature of organisational life. Workplace teams are used to carry out projects of various kinds and can make a significant contribution to organisational success, but the development of good working relationships is vital to team performance. Organisations, and or a manager that takes the time to invest in building effective team reaps the benefits of improved morale, better performance, cooperativeness, and the successful completion of projects. A closer look at the works of Beer (1976), Dyer (1977), Buller (1986), Sundstom, De Meuse and Futrell (1990), Robbins, et al (2008) sees team building as comprising four fundamental elements: goal setting, interpersonal relations, problem solving, and role clarification. However, Wheelan (2005) is of the view that team building activities include; goal setting, interpersonal relationship and feedback relating to participant's performance and group development. In this paradigm therefore, it should be understood that goal setting, problem-solving and interpersonal relations are invariably the most common driving force for leaders selecting team building as an organisational development tool. Good leadership is a key to team performance and team leaders have a vital role to play in ensuring that team members work well together and can achieve the goals which have been set. Their role is that of facilitator. They need to understand the nature of the task/jobs at hand as well as the broader organisational context. They need to assess the knowledge, skills, and experiences of each team members and what motivates them. They need to engage individuals and help them to find their place in the work of the team.

According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, a team is defined as several persons associated together in works or activity. Teams are formed for many purposes. Examples include project teams, ad-hoc teams, quality improvement teams, soccer team, task forces, etc. Sometimes, the team is formed to work on a goal as an adjunct to a traditional hierarchy in an organisation. At other times, the team is designed to replace the hierarchy.

The Characteristics of Effective Teams
According to Katzenbach & Smith (1993) in Michael Armstrong (2009), the following are the characteristics of teamwork;

- Teams are the basic units of performance for most organisations. They meld together the skills, experiences and insights of several persons.
- Teams applies to the whole organisations as well as specific teams. It represents 'a set of values that encourage behaviours such as listening and responding cooperatively to the points of view expressed by others, giving others the benefit of the doubt, providing support to those who need it and recognising the interests and achievements of others'.
- Teams are created and energised by significant performance challenges.
- Teams outperform individuals acting alone or in large organisational groupings, especially when performance requires multiple skills, judgments and experiences.
- Teams are flexible and responsive to changing events and demands. They can adjust their approach to new information and challenges with greater speed, accuracy and effectiveness than can individuals caught in the web of larger organisational conventions.
- High-performance teams invest much time and effort exploring, shaping and agreeing on a purpose that belongs to them, both collectively and individually.

In the same vein, and as noted by Purcell et al (1998), a team supply the 'elusive bridge between the aims of the individual employee and the objectives of the organisation......teams can provide the medium for linking employee performance targets to the success of the business'. However, scholars in modern organisations have discovered the importance of teams building and team work and its relevance in 21st century organisations. Thus, Dunphy & Bryant, (1996), states that teams are not in themselves a panacea and are not infallible, yet mainstream management theory suggests that when teams are introduced in the right way and nurtured as part of a wider organisational philosophy and strategy, they outperform individuals and collaborative groupings.

The Phases of a Team's Development

Employee's development means the total growth of an individual on the job. How do we ensure an effective team development? It is by laying solid phases in its life cycle. However, a team is a living and dynamic entity. It could progress from an early to a matured phase, independent of the nature of the team or the task it must perform. Tuckman, Bruce (1975) in his scholarly model proposed the following typical phases in team development:

- **Forming:** This is the initial orientation period. The team is unsure about what it is supposed to do, members do not know each other well or are not yet familiar with the way the team leader and the other members function and it is complete when the members begin to see themselves as a part of the group.
- **Storming:** This is a sorting out period where members begin to find their place as team members with the expectation to succeed. The team members now feel more comfortable giving their opinion and challenging the team leader's authority and recommendations. Some members may become dissatisfied and challenge not

only the tasks of the team and how these will be carried out, but also the leader's role and style of leadership. This is the start point of intragroup conflicts. Though, this is subject to occur as human beings.

- **Norming:** Team members begin to use their past experiences to solve their problems and pull together as a cohesive group. This process should result in the team establishing procedures for handling conflicts, decisions, and methods to accomplish the team projects.

- **Performing:** In this phase, the team has achieved harmony, defined its tasks and jobs, worked out its relationships and has started producing results. Effective leadership is provided by the team member's best suited for the task at hand. And at this stage, therefore, team members have learned how to work together, manage conflict and contribute their resources to meet the team's purposes.

- **Dissolving or re-orientating:** The team dissolves when the team has successfully completed the project. It may be reoriented to continue on a next phase of the project.

How to Successfully Develop and Sustain Team Effectiveness

The concept of team effectiveness arises from an attempt to account for observed regularities in the behaviour of individual persons. The quality of employee's teamness, therefore, is judged from the observable and evaluative responses that are made while one might consult one's inner experiences as evidence of one's own attitudes toward teamwork. In this paradigm, however, team effectiveness means the degree to which the team achieves the expect end-result(s) of the teamwork in the available period. Organisation effectiveness is the art of adopting and influencing people (employees) to follow in the achievement of a common goal by aligning their personal objectives with the company's objectives. The effectiveness of a team is dependence on the closeness and corporative system adopted by the team builder/manager.

The following aspects are most relevant to maintaining short and long term team effectiveness; clearly stated and commonly held vision and goals; team goals are developed through a group process of team interaction and agreement in which each team member is willing to work towards achieving these goals, role clarity particularly at the beginning. Leadership is distributed and shared among team members and individuals willingly to contribute their resources as needed.

Furthermore, team norms are defined, workload sharing during the team's lifespan to facilitate the accomplishment of tasks and feelings of group togetherness.

- Team decision-making involves a process that encourages active participation by all members during the team's lifespan, and also helps to build commitment.
- Problem-solving, discussing team issues, and assessing team effectiveness are encouraged by all team members.

- Team leader has good interpersonal skills and is committed to team approaches. Each team member is willing to contribute their maximum to the success of the team.
- Performance monitoring: the team members need to monitor each other's task execution and gives feedback during task execution. Feedback is freely given as a way of evaluating the team's performance and clarifying both feelings and interests of the team members. When feedback is given, it is done with a desire to help the other person.
- Team self-correction is the process in which members engage in evaluating their performance and in determining their strategies after task execution. When the group is not working well together it devotes time to find out why, and makes the necessary adjustments.

At this juncture, therefore, the social environment is open and supportive with a focus on learning. Conflict is not suppressed. Team members are allowed to express negative feelings and confrontation within the team which is managed and dealt with by team members. Dealing with and managing conflict is seen as a way to improve team performance. Team member resources (e.g. talents, skills, knowledge, etc.) and experiences are fully identified, recognised, and used whenever appropriate. Risk taking and creativity are encouraged. When mistakes are made, they are treated as a source of learning rather than reasons for punishment. Clear understanding of the team's relationship to the greater organisation is maintained, and an underlying feeling that the team will be successful in accomplishing the goals they have set is an essential part of the social surrounding. Team members develop a mutual trust and know how to examine team and individual errors without personal attacks. A variety of educational tools, including experts in the field should be readily available to assist the team in problem solving. Reward is given in such a manner that promotes team cohesiveness. If given in the correct manner also it can increase potency or may encourage the team to perform effectively in the future (for instance in cancer control, rewards may be in the form of the certificate of appreciation, or public recognition of their work).

Why Teams Fail?
Some teams fail from the beginning and some deteriorate over time. In general term, however, the success and failure of an organisation depends on the calibre of the individuals that managers employed. Thus, below are some of the most relevant external and internal barriers to team's success. These may help to identify the development and support needs of members that may impact on the success of teams.
- External barriers to teamwork (Adapted from Interaction Associates, 2001)
- Work load: members are often required to work on their team assignments in addition to a full workload or are given more work than they are capable of

handling. Team does not model the norms of behaviours that support teams in being successful.

- Inadequate recognition for individual team members. Team leaders do not control or release the team members adequately.
- Teams are not given adequate resources. When teams are not given the necessary work tools to perform their commissioned task, it will be difficult to accomplish effectively and efficiently their task, thus, they are bound to fail.
- Frequent changes in team membership. One of the major obstacles confronting most organisations today is the frequent changes in organisation goals and objectives.
- Team members resist taking responsibility for tasks expected of them.
- Team's charter is not well written.

The Benefits
- Team building improves productivity and motivation.
- Teams will gain and increase ability to solve problems.
- Team building helps break down personal and political barriers and allows for rapport building.
- The process can help level the playing field between outgoing and shy team members.
- Participating in team building can help teams overcome performance problems.

Summary and Conclusion

One of the key aims of the team building exercise is to change the behaviours and attitudes prevalent in the organisation, which are almost independent of who actually works there. Team building doesn't just mean getting the team together, it is more than generic activities imposed upon teams without any real consideration for what the team wants or needs. No wonder B. Babington Smith, as quoted by John Adair, described a team as group in which the jobs and skills of each member fit in with others as to take a very mechanical and static analogy in a jigsaw puzzle, pieces fit together without distortion and together produce some overall pattern.

There is therefore, the need for a more considered approach and above all, something where the objectives are clearly stated and can be met. It is necessary to take into account specific issues that need to be addressed and the sorts of personalities involved in the team. Dianna (2006) affirms that teamwork is a form of collective work that might involve individual tasks but usually involves some kind of collective task where each member is contributing part of a collectively written document that is supposed to reflect the collective wisdom of the group.

In this paradigm, therefore, team building is seen as an organised effort to improve team effectiveness. All members of the team must be committed to the idea in order for the effort to be effective. Team building can be indicated for any team or for a work team that

is considered to be" in trouble". It implies hard work that continues on after the initial training session. The greater the loyalty of a group toward the group, the greater is the motivation among the members to achieve the goals of the group, and the greater the probability that the group will achieve its goals (Rensis Likert).

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