

GLOBAL
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Making the Team

A Guide for Managers

FIFTH EDITION

Leigh L. Thompson

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MAKING THE TEAM: A GUIDE FOR MANAGERS

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will be rewarded. For turnover to have positive effects, it must outweigh the substantial benefits that group members derive from working together.¹³¹ In one investigation of turnover, teams worked on an air surveillance task over 2 days.¹³² On both days, specialists monitored changes in plane information (e.g., airspeed and altitude) and transmitted it to the commander, who integrated this information and assigned threat values to the planes. At the beginning of day 2, there was turnover: in some teams, one of the specialists was replaced with a specialist from another team; in other teams, the commander was replaced with a commander from another team. Teams performed better when newcomers had high rather than low ability; this was particularly pronounced when newcomers had high status (commander) rather than low status (specialist).

In a study of high-tech joint ventures in information technology and manufacturing industries, newcomers were more likely to help the team and perform better when supervisors offered developmental feedback.¹³³

There are several “newcomer” roles: visitors, transfers, replacements, and consultants.¹³⁴ **Visitors** are people who are expected to remain on the team for a short time and not viewed as instrumental to attaining long-term goals. Because they are viewed as lacking in commitment, their ability to change the team is muted.¹³⁵ **Transfers** have recently belonged to a similar team and have expertise. **Replacements** take the place of former members. **Consultants** join the team to observe its work practices and suggest improvements.

Turnover and Reorganizations

One of the most frequently occurring but daunting challenges for teams is personnel turnover, defined as the entry of new members and/or the exit of old members.¹³⁶ Turnover represents a change in team composition that can have profound consequences for team performance, because it alters the technical knowledge of the team, as

¹³¹Argote, L., & Kane, A. (2003). Learning from direct and indirect organizations: The effects of experience content, timing, and distribution. In P. Paulus & B. Nijstad (Eds.), *Group creativity*. New York: Oxford University Press; Hollenbeck, J. R., Ilgen, D. R., LePine, J. A., Colquitt, J. A., & Hedlund, J. (1998). Extending the multi-level theory of team decision making: Effects of feedback and experience in hierarchical teams. *Academy of Management Journal*, 41, 269–282.

¹³²Levine, J. M., & Choi, H.-S. (2004). Impact of personnel turnover on team performance and cognition. In E. Salas & S. M. Fiore (Eds.), *Team cognition: Understanding the factors that drive process and performance* (pp. 153–176). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

¹³³Li, N., Harris, T. B., Boswell, W. R., & Xie, Z. (2011). The role of organizational insiders’ developmental feedback and proactive personality on newcomers’ performance: An interactionist perspective. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(6), 1317–1327.

¹³⁴Arrow, H., & McGrath, J. E. (1995). Membership dynamics in groups at work: A theoretical framework. In B. M. Staw & L. L. Cummings (Eds.), *Research in organizational behavior*, 17, 373–411. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

¹³⁵Gruenfeld, D. H., & Fan, E. T. (1999). What newcomers see and what oldtimers say: Discontinuities in knowledge exchange. In L. Thompson, J. Levine, & D. Messick (Eds.), *Shared cognition in organizations: The management of knowledge*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum; Gruenfeld, D. H., Martorana, P., & Fan, E. T. (2000). What do groups learn from their worldliest members? Direct and indirect influence in dynamic teams. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 82(1), 45–59.

¹³⁶Levine, J. M., Choi, H.-S., & Moreland, R. L. (2003). Newcomer innovation in work teams. In P. B. Paulus & B. A. Nijstad (Eds.), *Group creativity: Innovation through collaboration* (pp. 202–224). New York: Oxford University Press.

well as the interpersonal dynamics. As might be expected, turnover disrupts group performance, especially when group members are reciprocally interdependent;¹³⁷ when the group has high, rather than low, structure;¹³⁸ and when the task is complex rather than simple.¹³⁹

The decision to leave a group depends upon opportunities that exist outside the group as well upon threats that occur in one's current group. In short, a group member may ask himself or herself, would it be easier to simply leave this group or should I stay with the team but argue about our differences? When people place a high level of esteem in their group, they are more likely to stay with the group and argue about their differences, but when they place a low level of esteem in their group, they are more likely to leave.¹⁴⁰

Chapter Capstone

Teams have their own personality, moods, and emotions. We examined how people develop a group or team identity, and the nature of how group and individual identities interact. Members of teams differ in terms of how attached they feel to one another, and these attachment styles can affect the behavior and performance of the team. Teams feel and express emotions and, over time, team

members develop similar chronic emotions due to the process of contagion. We've focused on how to build cohesion in teams, and we've examined the types of trust that characterize relationships. Finally, we explored the socialization process by which teams admit newcomers and how time may be studied in teams.

¹³⁷Naylor, J. C., & Briggs, G. E. (1965). Team-training effectiveness under various conditions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 49, 223–229.

¹³⁸Devadas, R., & Argote, L. (1995, May). *Collective learning and forgetting: The effects of turnover and group structure*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Midwestern Psychological Association, Chicago, IL.

¹³⁹Argote, L., Insko, C. A., Yovetich, N., & Romero, A. A. (1995). Group learning curves: The effects of turnover and task complexity on group performance. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 25, 512–529.

¹⁴⁰Martiny, S. E., Kessler, T., & Vignoles, V. L. (2012). Shall I leave or shall we fight? Effects of threatened group-based self-esteem on identity management strategies. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 15(1) 39–55.

Sharpening the Team Mind

Communication and Collective Intelligence

On June 9, 2012, Children's Memorial Hospital of Chicago moved 126 patients, many of whom were critically ill, 3 ½ miles from their location in Lincoln Park to the newly constructed Ann and Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital in Chicago's Loop. The move had been carefully planned for over 3 years. Each patient was taken by private ambulance with their own medical team and each with its own police escort. Police closed routes to traffic along the chosen route, and a team of officers and traffic aides set up posts along the route to direct traffic. A dozen ambulances at a time drove between the two hospitals. On moving day, the hospital ran two full-service hospitals with two inpatient wards, two pharmacies, and two emergency departments. After 14 hours of moving patients, the old Children's Memorial Hospital officially closed its doors. Even though moving day was stressful for both patients and staff, the 3 years of careful, painstaking preparations were the key to the successful operation.¹

Moving 126 patients from hospital to hospital in 1 day took 3 years of planning and lots of rehearsal. There were multiple points of failure that were all thoughtfully avoided. As teamwork grows more specialized, teams and their leaders must deal with overcoming communication obstacles and integrating knowledge. The question of how to

¹Frost, P. (2012, May 30). Patients, prep work crucial in move of Children's Hospital. *The Chicago Tribune*. articles.chicagotribune.com; Haggerty, R. (2012, June 9). Children's Memorial Hospital officially closes after all patients in new facility. *The Chicago Tribune*. articles.chicagotribune.com.

collect and assimilate data, analyze it and transform it into knowledge, and collaborate with other teams and groups is often left to intuition rather than science.

This chapter examines how team members communicate and develop team intelligence. We discuss communication within teams, the problems that can occur, and how to effectively treat them. We describe the information-dependence problem—the fact that team members depend on one another for critical information. After this, we build a model of team-level collective intelligence. Mental models are causal structures that influence how teams solve problems. We explore the team mind in depth and the nature of **transactive memory systems (TMS)**, which are the ways in which teams encode, store, and retrieve critical information necessary for doing their work. Next, we undertake a case analysis of the effects of different types of training on TMS. Finally, we make some recommendations for team development and review some evidence pointing to the effects of group longevity, particularly in creative teams.

TEAM COMMUNICATION

Communication among team members is subject to biases that afflict even the most rational of human beings with the best of intentions (see Exhibit 6-1).

In a perfect communication system, a sender transmits or sends a message that is accurately received by a recipient. There are at least three points of possible error, however: The sender may fail to send a message; the message may be sent, but it is inaccurate or distorted; or an accurate message is sent, but it is distorted or not received

- A breakdown in communication can make even the largest retailers blue. All Frank Maurer wanted was some fresh blueberries from a Port Richey, Florida, Walmart Supercenter. But when the store ran out of the blueberries advertised at \$2.50 a pint, the 65-year-old local resident found himself in a fight over rain checks. When a customer service rep told him that Walmart doesn't have rain checks, Maurer pointed to the fine print in the advertising circular that spells out Walmart's long-standing policy: "If an advertised item is out-of-stock at your Walmart, upon request, we will issue you a rain check so that you can purchase the item at the advertised price when it becomes available." Despite the evidence, the rep didn't budge. Maurer asked to talk to someone in management. The assistant manager didn't budge, either. A frustrated Maurer began stopping shoppers and telling them of Walmart's "fraud" and "false advertising." Walmart called the police. They threatened Maurer with a trespassing arrest if he didn't leave the store. They then talked with him in the parking lot. Maurer left and tried another Walmart in nearby Hudson, which also echoed the "no rain check" mantra. "I was right. But they bullied, then humiliated me in public for 45 minutes in the parking lot." When Maurer called up the *St. Petersburg Times* with his story, Walmart realized it had a serious breakdown in communication. "We screwed up," said Dan Fogleman, spokesman for the world's largest retailer. "We are taking this very seriously." In the wake of the blueberry bungle, all Florida district managers were told in a conference call to be sure workers understand rain checks are available for any advertised special that is out of stock. Reminders to ensure the policy is understood in stores were made part of the weekly corporate instructions dispatched to all store managers coast to coast.
- The mobile device market is one of the most competitive industries on Earth. In 2011, BlackBerry did itself no favors in the market when users in several parts of the world were without messaging service or Web browsing for 2 days and were not exactly sure why. In online forums, subscribers took parent

company Research In Motion (RIM) to task. “Arrogant and disrespectful to its customers,” wrote one user in an online forum. What caused the greatest furor was the slow response from RIM during which users were kept in the dark for more than a day. That followed a failure of the Blackberry Messenger Service the previous month. When the company got around to explaining that a switch failure was to blame, damage had been done in markets such as India and England, where the device remained popular despite the rapidly growing competition from iPhones and Androids. Adding to the company’s misery was a backlog of undelivered data that created further service delays.

- Misery beyond belief awaited passengers and crew on a JetBlue flight stranded on a Connecticut runway for 7 hours without food, water, and functioning bathrooms. When the flight from Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, to Newark, New Jersey, was diverted due to weather conditions, the passengers and pilot were left to wonder what came next. As afternoon turned to evening, passengers began to demand to be let off the plane due to a 3-hour passenger bill-of-rights, but the pilot told them they had to remain on board. Meanwhile, the pilot begged for assistance from airport officials, including a tug to a gate and noted that he couldn’t “get help from his own company.” For the next 4 hours, passengers were told that the airport had only one tow bar to bring the planes in off the tarmac and that international flights were the priority. Finally, between 8:30 p.m. and 9 p.m., a paraplegic man began to complain of intense pain. According to passengers near him, he had not been moved for leg circulation or been taken to the bathroom since before boarding the plane in Florida. State police, Emergency Medical Services, and an ambulance were called in for him. Other passengers were then allowed to leave the plane. JetBlue released a statement that likely earned no repeat customers: “We apologize to the customers impacted by this confluence of events, as it remains JetBlue’s responsibility to not simply provide safe and secure travel, but a comfortable experience as well.”

EXHIBIT 6-1 Communication Failures

Source: Albright, M. (2010, February 23). Man vs. Walmart in blueberry battle; Fight for cheap berries brings clarity on policy from HQ. *St. Petersburg Times*, p. A1; Katradandjian, O., & Schabner, D. (2011, October). JetBlue flight pilot pleaded for help during tarmac ordeal. *ABC News*. abcnews.go.com; Austen, I. (2011, October). Blackberry point to equipment failure. *The New York Times*, p. B6.

by the recipient. In a team environment, the complexity grows when teams of senders transmit messages and teams of recipients receive them. We examine some of these biases and then take up the question of how to effectively deal with their existence.

Message Tuning

People who send messages (e.g., “I have no fuel”; “I did not receive the attached file”) convey their messages in a way that they think best suits the recipient. **Message tuning** refers to how senders tailor messages for specific recipients. For example, people give longer and more elaborate street directions and instructions to people whom they presume to be non-natives or unfamiliar with a city.² Also, senders capitalize on the knowledge that they believe the recipient already has (e.g., “Turn right when you see that big tree that the city pruned last week”). For this reason, team members send shorter, less complete messages to one another because they believe that they can capitalize on an existing shared knowledge base. However, team members often overestimate the commonality of information they share with others. Consequently, the messages they send become less clear.

²Krauss, R. M., & Fussell, S. R. (1991). Perspective-taking in communication: Representations of others’ knowledge in reference. *Social Cognition*, 9, 2–24.

Message Distortion

Message senders present information that they believe will be favorably received by the recipient and, therefore, distort messages.³ For example, when people present a message to an audience whom they believe has either a pro- or anti-stance on a particular topic, they err in the direction of adopting the audience's point of view. Because senders who bring bad news are not welcome, they often modify the news. Unfortunately, message distortion can wreak havoc on effective teamwork. Consider how the sexual abuse details in the Jerry Sandusky case were distorted. Former Pennsylvania State University staff members were put on trial in 2011 and were charged with perjury for purposely understating the severity of the child abuse allegations against football coach Jerry Sandusky, brought to their attention by a former assistant coach, Mike McQueary. Mr. McQueary apparently sanitized his version of the witnessed abuse when relaying the details, thereby leading to the staff members' distorted recount of events.⁴

Saying Is Believing

The saying-is-believing (SIB) effect occurs when a speaker tunes a message to suit an audience and, in the course of tuning the message, the speaker's subsequent memories and impressions about the topic change.⁵ The SIB effect is even more pronounced when the audience validates the communicator's message.⁶

Biased Interpretation

Senders are not the only ones who distort messages. Recipients often hear what they want to hear when receiving messages, especially ambiguous ones. For example, when people are given neutral information about a product, they interpret it in a way that is favorable toward their own position. Furthermore, they selectively attend to information that favors their initial point of view and ignore or misinterpret information that contradicts their position.

Perspective-Taking Failures

People are remarkably poor at taking the perspective of others. For example, people who are privy to information and knowledge that they know others are not aware of still act as if others are aware of it, even though it would be impossible for the receiver to have this knowledge.⁷ This problem is known as the **curse of**

³Higgins, E. T. (1999). "Saying is believing" effects: When sharing reality about something biases knowledge and evaluations. In L. Thompson, J. M. Levine, & D. M. Messick (Eds.), *Shared cognition in organizations: The management of knowledge*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum & Associates.

⁴Miller, J. W., & Maher, K. (2011, December 10). Sandusky accuser testifies McQueary tells of encounter in shower; Ex-Penn state officials face perjury trial. *Wall Street Journal*, p. A.3.

⁵Higgins, T., & McCann, D. (1984). Social encoding and subsequent attitudes, impressions, and memory: "Context-driven" and motivational aspects of processing. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 47(1), 26–39.

⁶Hausmann, L., Levine, J., & Higgins, E. (2008). Communication and group perception: Extending the "saying is believing" effect. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, 11(4), 539–554.

⁷Keysar, B. (1998). Language users as problem solvers: Just what ambiguity problem do they solve? In S. R. Fussell & R. J. Kreuz (Eds.), *Social and cognitive approaches to interpersonal communication* (pp. 175–200). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum & Associates.