

STRUCTURE: BUILDING A CULTURE OF COMMITMENT & TEAMWORK

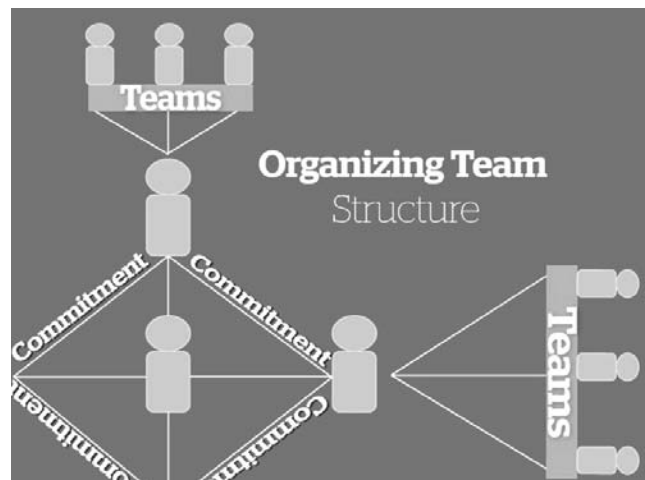
“How can we work together interdependently to achieve shared purpose?”

OBJECTIVES:

- Understand the core conditions of successful leadership teams
- Begin practicing building and refining those conditions in your leadership team: developing a shared purpose, clarifying team roles and responsibilities, creating shared norms and practices of coordination

WHY DO ORGANIZING TEAMS MATTER?

The most effective leaders have always created teams to work with them and to lead with them. Take for example Moses, Aaron and Miriam in the story of Exodus, or Jesus and the twelve disciples in the New Testament, or Martin Luther King, Ralph Abernathy, Rosa Parks, Jo Ann Robinson and E.D. Nixon during the Montgomery Bus Boycott or Alice Paul and Lucy Burns in their fight for women’s suffrage.



Leadership teams offer a structural model for working together that fosters interdependent leadership, where individuals can work toward goals together, with each person taking leadership on part of the team’s activity. At their best leadership teams recognize and put to productive use the unique talents of the individuals who make up the team.

WHY DOES TEAM STRUCTURE MATTER?

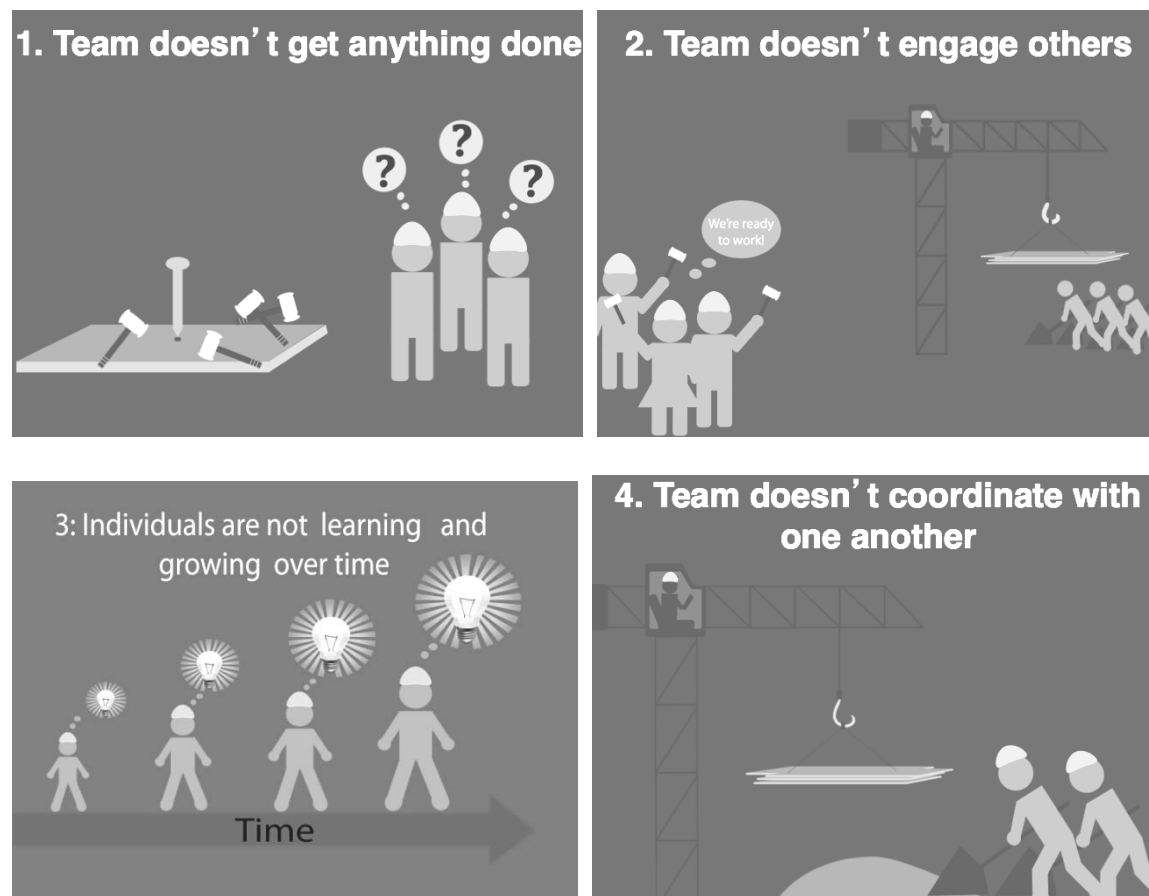
Team structures create strategic capacity—the ability to strategize creatively together in ways that produce more vibrant, engaging strategy than any individual could create alone. Movements are not built on command and control authority structures. But they can also be ineffective beyond the local level if there is no structure for coordination and no venue for creating shared purpose.

Strong movement structures enable local decision-making and strategizing by local leadership teams that are supported by regional or national leadership teams who provide strategic focus, common purpose and shared resources—our snowflake model of interdependent leadership. At every level, leadership teams require a clear mission with clear goals and the ability to strategize creatively together about how to carry out their mission and meet their goals. This

structure creates multiple points of entry for leaders at local, regional, national and international levels, and multiple opportunities to learn and to exercise leadership.

Leadership teams provide a foundation from which an organization can expand its reach. Once a team is formed, systems can be created to establish a rhythm of regular meetings, clear decisions and visible accountability, increasing the organization's effectiveness. An organization of 500 people is not created by one person alone. It is built by finding people willing and able to commit to helping build it, and creating relationships and a solid, transparent structure from which it can be built.

WHY DON'T PEOPLE ALWAYS WORK IN TEAMS?



We have all been part of teams that have not worked well. They fall into factions, they alienate each other, or all the work falls on one person. So many of us come to the conclusion: I'll just do it on my own; I hate meetings, just tell me what to do; I don't want any responsibility; just give me stamps to lick. There's just one problem: we can't become powerful enough to do what we need to do if we can't work together to build campaigns and take action.

The challenge is to create conditions for our leadership teams that are more likely to generate successful collaboration and strategic action. When groups of people come together, conflict is always present. Effective teams are structured to channel that conflict in productive ways, allowing the team to achieve the goals it needs to win.

What do good teams do?

1. Meet goals
2. Engage others
3. Learn and Improve
4. Coordinate

FIVE CONDITIONS FOR TEAM SUCCESS

Strong teams are deliberate about setting up conditions for success from the very beginning. Ruth Wageman and her colleagues at Harvard have studied leadership teams in many settings and have found that strong teams share 5 conditions for success:



Your team is made of diverse people. A highly effective team is made up of people from different economic backgrounds, race, ethnicity, political ideology, skills, and opinions. When there is diversity amongst your team members it can inspire robust conversation during decision-making, pushing your team to better thought-out outcomes. A good team will have a diversity of identities, experiences and opinions, ensuring that everyone is bringing the most possible to the table.



Your shared purpose is clear and it points you in an engaging direction. The work you have to do is readily understood, it's challenging, it matters to your constituency and you know why it matters. Team members should be able to articulate for others the "purpose" of your team. This is a brief statement that includes who the team is, what they do together and how they plan to do it.



Your team is stable, with clear boundaries. You can name the people on it, and they meet regularly. It's not a different, random group of people every time. Highly effective teams have 4 - 8 members. Membership of the team remains constant long enough that the team learns to work together better and better; each member is fully committed to be on the team and commits consistent time and effort to it.

FOUR Clear Roles

Your team works interdependently. Everyone should have a roughly equal share of the work based on the unique skills & resources they bring to the team, understanding that each part is necessary to adequately reach the ultimate goal. Thus, the success or failure of one will have an effect on all. One way to encourage interdependence is to have clear roles based on the work that the team needs to do to succeed. Interdependent teamwork includes: making decisions together, coordinating work together, serving as a consultative team, and sharing information. Good teams will coordinate and help each other accomplish collective goals. Good team members will communicate well when they need assistance. No one is carrying out activity in a silo that is secretive to others.

FIVE Ground Rules

Your team has explicit expectations. Your team sets clear expectations, community agreements or ground rules, for how to govern yourselves in your work together. How will you manage meetings, regularly communicate, make decisions, and maintain commitments? And, most importantly, how will you correct violations of your shared ground rules so they remain real and help you work as a team?

Teams with explicit shared expectations of each other have a much higher likelihood of achieving the results they are aiming for. Some team expectations are operational such as “how often will we meet?” “How will we share and store documents?” “Communicate with others outside the team?” Others address expectations for member interaction with each other. Initial group ground rules guide your team in its early stages as members learn how to work together as a team. They are set by the team, not one person, and can be refined through regular group review of how well the team is doing.

Without being explicit about creating these ground rules, you will find that habitual ways of interacting will form on their own, and it will be much more difficult for your team to address those habits that are not helpful to your team’s effectiveness.

THREE CRITERIA TO MEASURE YOUR TEAM’S EFFECTIVENESS

- **ACTION:** The action work of your team matches the goals you need to meet in order to win on your campaign.
- **CAPACITY:** The team is engaging others outside the team in action. The team’s capacity is growing, as you work better together over time.
- **LEARNING:** Teamwork supports individual growth and learning.

In short, the team is meeting the campaign’s interests by achieving goals, growing the community of people and resources it will take to meet the goals, and meeting each participant’s interests by giving them opportunities and support to learn and develop.

*Note: If your team isn’t meeting these criteria, return to the foundational blocks to re-evaluate and refocus.