



Developing an Extraordinary Mission Team—Part Seven

Transforming Groups to Teams

Many mission leaders remain unclear about how to develop a real team. A team is not just any group working together. Committees, councils, and task forces are not necessarily teams. A group does not necessarily become a team simply because someone calls it a team. The workforce of any organization—such as a cluster of missionaries, a district advisory board, a local church board, or an NMI council—becomes a team by prayerful intention, united expression, and mutual collaboration. Organizations talk about teamwork, but talk about teamwork is different from actually becoming a team.

Most work units experience three phases. They pass through these phases at different rates and exhibit different patterns of interaction at each phase. The initial phase is a **collection of individuals**. This phase tends to be individual-centered with individual goals rather than group goals, with little shared responsibility, avoidance of change, and failure to deal with conflict.

A **group** is the second phase. In a group, members develop a group identity, define their roles, clarify their purposes, and establish norms for working together. Groups tend to be leader-centered. The leader provides direction, assigns tasks, reviews performance, and is the primary focus of communication.

Groups typically undergo different stages of development in their life cycles. In *Organizational Behavior*, Schermerhorn, Hunt, and Osborn describe these stages as forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. They believe that certain developmental processes occur in building **teams**.

Team-building requires evaluating the functioning of a group and then initiating changes to improve teamwork and group effectiveness. Both groups and teams must master challenges in the early stages of development. The entire team-building process is highly collaborative. Everyone is expected to participate actively in evaluating group operations and in making decisions about what needs to be done to improve the team.

Not all groups are teams. How can we detect the difference? Perhaps a simple, comparative list from Katzenbach and Smith will help to illustrate the difference:

Single-Leader Group

- Strong, clearly focused leader
- Individual accountability
- Purpose = organizational mission
- Individual outcomes and results
- Efficient meetings based on leader's agenda
- Measures effectiveness indirectly by influence on others
- Discusses, decides, and delegate

Real Team

- Shared, collaborative leadership roles
- Individual and mutual accountability
- Specific purpose that team delivers
- Collective outcomes and results
- Open dialogue, active problem-solving
- Measures performance directly by assessing collective outcomes
- Dialogues, decides, does real work

In *The Wisdom of Teams* Katzenbach and Smith define the third phase of group development as follows: “A **team** is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.”

How can your local mission leadership group become an extraordinary team? Could you begin by discussing small number, complementary skills, commitment, common purpose, performance goals, and mutual accountability? We will continue to show how to develop extraordinary teams around this definition next month.



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