

Organizational and Managerial Aspects of the Development of Multifunctional Teams

Ivaylo Stoyanov¹

Abstract In order for a multifunctional team to perform, efficient organization and management are required that cover various spheres of team work, as well as a rational approach to their implementation. A major part of the process is the structure of the team which must be formed according to the priorities of the company and the potential of its staff. The aim of this publication is to determine the configuration of the team and the stages it goes through in order to implement the strategy.

Index Terms: team, organization, management, team development.

I. INTRODUCTION

When designing a multi-level team, its structure must be determined so as to reflect the specifics of its work. This is a complex process which is influenced by various factors of the environment (for example, the type of the processes, number of units, the resources available at the company, etc.). The number of people in a multifunctional team *always varies – there could be more or less people involved depending on the nature of the company and the objectives of the project.*

II. THESIS

There are no strict criteria regarding the structure of multifunctional teams, yet the main configuration typically consists of (according Broza, G., Schwarz, R and Harvard Business Essentials):

● **Guarantor of the team**

Usually, this is a senior executive who is the linking unit between the objectives of the organization and those of the team. He must supervise the implementation of the strategy at an organizational level and its alignment at a team level. Major responsibilities of the team guarantor include:

- Providing resources;
- Presenting the team to senior executives;
- Structuring the scope of work;
- Supervising performance;
- Rectifying deviations;

¹ Ivaylo Stoyanov, Ph. D., D. A. Tsenov of Economics – Svishtov, Bulgaria e-mail: istoyanov@uni-svishtov.bg

- Appointing a leader of the team (under certain circumstances, for example when developing short-term projects, when crises occur, when there is a conflict between the leader and the team, etc.).

● **Team leader**

Team leaders play a crucial role to the development of teams, as they significantly influence team members. A team leader is the link between the team and the guarantor through whom necessary resources are 'negotiated'. Without his intervention and experience the team would not be able to achieve its goals. This is the person who must plan and organize the work of the team, coordinate team effort and be among the most active in the project implementation (the leader is not a boss but a fellow member of the team) (according Hadjiiev). Major responsibilities of team leaders include:

- Focusing on key priorities for the team;
- Determining the pace of work and team involvement;
- Motivating and encouraging team members;
- Guiding the team;
- Preventing potential conflicts within the team;
- Bearing responsibility for the performance of the team.

● **Team members**

Those are the people engaged with operational performance. Their effort and competences are the key to accomplishing goals. Major responsibilities of team members include:

- Participation in ambitious initiatives;
- Implementation of routine and specific goals;
- Coming up with proposals for improved performance;
- Contributing to management;
- Other commitments.

In order to operate in compliance with the goals and interests of the organization the team goes through several **stages of development** which could be summarized as follows (Fig.1.):

- Designing the team;
- Actual team work;
- Dissolving the team.

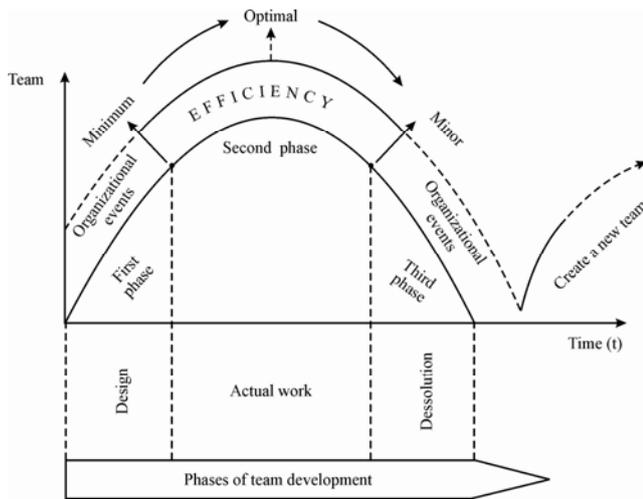


Fig. 1. Designing the team

Stage one. Designing the team.

This stage mainly includes organizational events for building the team. Necessary resources are provided (above all financial and human), and then the type of the team and number of team members are decided on (Hadjiev). After appointing team members and assigning their roles in the team (according to their qualifications), related activities need to be recorded in documents. The main objective is decomposed into smaller objectives and the schedule with tasks for the relevant period is designed.

In order for the team to perform efficiently, regular meetings are held at which team members get to know one another. The team leader is the key figure in this process since he acts as a buffer between team members and oversees performance. The main idea is to unite the team and to identify common grounds between team members and their potential to contribute to the project implementation. This requires effort not only on behalf of the leader but also on behalf of senior executives in the organization. Otherwise there might be discrepancies between the interests of team members, the team leader, and senior management. This is precisely what should be avoided at the first stage.

Stage two. Actual team work.

After going through the first stage of designing the team, actual team work begins. Its efficiency may vary and can generally be described as *minimum*, *optimum*, or *insignificant*. These depend on *the time for work which the team has at its disposal during the cycle of its development*.

The effect is *minimum* at the beginning of actual work, since team members and their leader do not have the training required and gradually begin to account for the specifics of their individual differences and competences. It is only natural that expected or unexpected difficulties will arise in the course of their joint work which may obstruct the team process (such as different views, interests, etc.). The accomplishment of project objectives is posed at a major risk when team members separate into

a new group. This affects team work as the principle of team unity is violated. Other predicaments to achieving at least minimum team work efficiency are some organizational problems such as ill-allocated resources, unreasonable interference on behalf of senior executives, inadequate behaviour of the team leader, etc.

Once team members get used to one another and become aware of their abilities and competences, they quickly begin to adapt to the situation. The work of the team is synchronized, and efficiency of performance steadily increases. There is *optimum* efficiency when team members ignore their personal differences and focus on their tasks with the motivation to achieve their goals. This is not a matter of coincidence but a well planned work process. The key figure is the leader who is supported by team members in designing team rules and procedures. The observance of these rules and procedures is a guarantee for work discipline and team efficiency.

Once the work of the team reaches its optimum, efficiency begins to decline (more or less dramatically at different points of time) until *efficiency becomes insignificant*. This is a natural phenomenon since the team gradually begins to exhaust its potential. Once it is limited in time, the first signs of poor results appear, which leads to conflicts between team members and the management. There are arguments between the team leader and team members since team work is inefficient and senior managers are dissatisfied with poor results. The immediate result is lack of team ideas or little tolerance between team members and occurrences if crises.

Stage three. Dissolving the team

When it is clear that the team *has exhausted its potential for development it must be dissolved*. It is irrational to allocate resources to initiatives which are futile or do not correspond to expected results. It is therefore best to *discontinue the work of the team and to dissolve the team*. This process is related to organizational events of different scale.

In the first place, having the potential of a team exhausted means that it must be exempted from its duties which means that a new team must be formed. This requires the same events as those at the first stage as well as activities related to passing resources and documents from the old team to the new one. Quite often the leader of the dissolved team and some of its members need to assist the members of the new one through advice and direction without being part of the new team. The objective behind this is to ensure continuity and a smooth transition to the new style of work and management of the new team.

Secondly, it is quite logical that a team in which resources and time have been invested should not be totally abandoned. If a team engaged in one project is dissolved, this does not necessarily mean that the same team cannot work on a different project (even if some of its members are different). Therefore quite often the inertia of the team is used further (even if the team is partially changed) for other projects or objectives. The following scenarios are possible (according Jay Ros):

○ *Shuffling team members*

Two or more team members can exchange their roles or the volume of their work. If their new role brings them greater satisfaction than the old one, they will probably feel better rewarded and team efficiency will increase.

○ *Increased flexibility of functions within the team*

The underlying principle of this approach is to identify those functions of team members which they will be most efficient in or most reluctant to commit to. Then some of the functions which they find difficult might be assigned to other team members if they are expected to perform better. Another possibility is to modify some functions which team members do not have the capacity to fulfill.

○ *Separating confronting members of the team*

When there is some confrontation between its members the team may be divided into smaller groups and each of them may be assigned with a specific project, goal, or stage of the same project. If this fails to produce the desired effect than meetings should be held to discuss problems and possible solutions.

○ *Moving team members to a different team or replacing the whole team*

People who cannot fit in the team or whose roles do not meet the objectives of the team may be replaced on a rotation basis. If a person or several people do not meet the requirements for work in a team, they can be moved to another team or vice versa. The aim is to strike the right balance between the roles of team members and their interaction.

○ *Recruiting new members*

A new member for the team may be recruited or even all members of the team can be replaced. This will depend on the situation, the effect achieved so far and the resources available. Whenever a new member or several specialists are to be recruited (but not all of them) it is important to ascertain whether they will be welcomed by the other members of the team. Obviously they should have the same (or higher) competences as those of the team members who have been dismissed. From a structuring perspective it is somewhat easier to model a situation when all members of the team are to be replaced. One problem is the adaptation period for team members as well as the effect that will be achieved with the actual work of the team.

III. CONCLUSION

Designing a team is a complex activity which is related to organizational and managerial aspects in terms of achieving optimum results. If they do not match the objectives of the team and the competences of team members, it will be very difficult to achieve results which will satisfy the managers of the organization. It is therefore necessary to design an adequate team structure and to plan the work of the team so as to meet specific goals at its separate stages.

This publication has achieved the following results:

- first, it proposes an up-to-date structure for multifunctional teams;

- second, it reviews the specific features of the separate stages of team work.

REFERENCES

Jay Ros, *How to Build a Great Team: Financial Times Management*; 3 edition (November 2002), Подберете хората според ролите. Изд. "Инфодар", 2001, с. 43-44.

Nadjiev, Хаджиев, К. *Самоуправляващи се работни екипи (теория и методология)*. Библиотека "Стопански свят", Брой 103. Издание на СА "Д.А. Ценов" – Свищов, 2010, с. 224-231, 232-267.

Broza, G. *The Human Side of Agile: How to Help Your Team Deliver*. Vantage Media Publishing, 2012, pp. 51-66.

Harvard Business Essentials, *Изграждане на ефективни екипи: Пълен набор от умения за изграждане на силни и работещи екипи*. Изд. "Класика и стил", 2001, с. 36-57, 84-90.

Schwarz, R. *Smart Leaders Smart Teams: How You and Your Team Get Unstuck to Get Results*. Jossey-Bass Publishing, 2013, pp. 143-175.