

TEAMS NEED THE RIGHT SETTING AND SIZE TO BE EFFECTIVE.

As you might expect, the *organizational setting* influences team outputs. A key issue here is how well the organization supports the team in terms of information, material resources, technology, organization structures, available rewards, and even physical space. Teams are much more likely to perform well when they are given the right support than when they lack it.

Team size also makes a difference. The number of potential interactions increases exponentially as teams increase in size. This affects how members communicate, work together, handle disagreements, and reach agreements. So, just how big should a team be? The general answer is five to seven members for creative tasks. The more members, the harder it is to engage in the interactions needed for good problem solving. And, when voting is required, teams should have odd numbers of members to prevent ties.

TEAMS NEED THE RIGHT PROCESSES TO BE EFFECTIVE.

Although having the right team inputs—membership composition, task, setting, and size—is important, it's no guarantee of team success. **Team process** counts, too. Think of it as the way the members of any team actually work together as they transform inputs into outputs. This **team effectiveness equation** is well worth remembering:

$$\text{Team Effectiveness} = \text{Quality of Inputs} + (\text{Process Gains} - \text{Process Losses}).$$

The process aspects of any team, also called *group dynamics*, include how members get to know one another, develop expectations and loyalty, communicate, handle conflicts, and make decisions. And, the simple fact is that group dynamics aren't always pretty. Haven't you been on teams where people seemed to spend more time dealing with personality conflicts than with the task? How often have you read or heard about high-talent college sports teams where a lack of the right "chemistry" among players meant subpar team performance?

A positive team process takes full advantage of group inputs to raise team effectiveness. These are process gains in the team effectiveness equation. On the flip side, it's all too common for team problems to create process losses that reduce effectiveness.

Team process is the way team members work together to accomplish tasks.

"YOU SHOULD TAKE OFF THE HEADPHONES IN THE OFFICE. THAT'S NOT THE WAY WE DO THINGS HERE."

QUICK CASE

Removing the Headphones to Show Team Spirit



Westend61/Getty Images

Sean has just started a new job on your team where everyone works in an open plan office. He's just out of college, acts happy, and is really getting into his new responsibilities. A music lover, he has been wearing headphones during

the day while working on the computer at his workstation. But yesterday an older colleague came over and offered him this unsolicited advice. "You should take off the headphones in the office," she said. "It's not the way we do things here. People are starting to say that you aren't a team player."

Now Sean has come to you as his team leader. He wants to know if he's in the wrong or in the right. "And by the way," he says, "I like music and it helps me to work better." There's no company policy against headphones in the office, but the "advice" he's getting suggests he's taken individuality a step too far in this team setting.

WHAT DO YOU DO?

Headphones are as common in some offices as they are on the streets. But, when someone puts the headphones on the message being broadcast, intended or not, may be: Don't disturb! What do you say to Sean, and why? What do you say to the teammates and team as a whole, and why? Is this an opportunity to build new norms with the team, or is it a case of "headphones on, team spirit off"?