

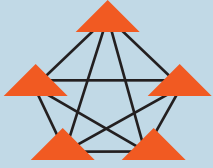
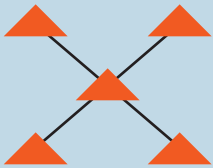
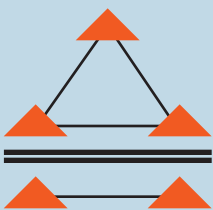
PATTERN	DIAGRAM	CHARACTERISTICS
Decentralized communication network Interacting Team		High interdependency around a common task Best at complex tasks
Centralized communication network Coacting Team		Independent individual efforts on behalf of common task Best at simple tasks
Restricted communication network Counteracting Team		Subgroups in disagreement with one another Slow task accomplishment

FIGURE 13.6 What Communication Networks Are Used in Teams?

Members of teams communicate and interact together in different ways. A decentralized structure is where all members communicate with one another. It works best when tasks are complex and the need for information sharing is high. When tasks are simple and easily broken down into small parts, a centralized structure works well. It coordinates members' communications through one central point. A restricted communication network sometimes forms when subgroups break off to do separate work or due to member alienation. Any lack of communication between the subgroups can create performance problems.

When tasks are more routine and less demanding, team members can often divide up the work and then simply coordinate the final results. This is best done with a **centralized communication network**, sometimes called the *wheel* or *chain* structure. It has a central “hub” through which one member, often the team leader, collects information from and distributes information to all others. This creates a *coacting team* whose members work independently and pass completed tasks to the hub. There, they are put together into a finished product. The hub member often experiences the most satisfaction on successful coacting teams.

When teams break into subgroups, either on purpose or because members are experiencing issue-specific disagreements, this may create a **restricted communication network**. Left unmanaged, this *counteracting team* environment can deteriorate to the point where subgroups fail to adequately communicate with one another and even engage in outwardly antagonistic relations. Although these situations create problems, there are times when counteracting teams might be intentionally set up to encourage conflict, increase creativity, and help double-check the quality of specific decisions or chosen courses of action.

The best teams use all three communication networks—decentralized, centralized, and restricted. But they use them in the right ways and at the right times. When the task is simple and routine, you should organize as a coacting team using a centralized network. When things are getting complicated and unclear, go with an interacting team and the decentralized network. And when there isn't enough critical discussion or you're worried that too much harmony is limiting team creativity, it may be time to form a counteracting team where subgroups in a restricted network engage in a bit of conflict.

In a **centralized communication network**, communication flows only between individual members and a hub or center point.

Subgroups in a **restricted communication network** contest one another's positions and restrict interactions with one another.