

Topic Learning Outcome:

Compare and contrast theories of leadership within diverse groups and teams in varied organizational contexts.

Why Teams and How Do They Differ From Groups?

Why have teams become a popular organizational tool for productivity improvement and empowerment of employees? Teams typically outperform individuals when the tasks being done require multiple skills, judgment, and experience. In their restructuring to compete more effectively and efficiently, companies have turned to teams as a way to better utilize employee talents. Teams have the capability to quickly assemble, deploy, refocus, and disband. Teams facilitate employee participation in operating decisions, and are an effective means for management to democratize their organizations and increase employee motivation.

It is important for individuals in positions of management to understanding the difference between teams and groups. A **work group** is a group that interacts primarily to share information and to make decisions to help one another perform within each member's area of responsibility. Work groups have no need or opportunity to engage in collective work that requires joint effort. Their performance is merely the summation of all the group members' individual contributions. A **work team** generates positive synergy through coordinated effort. The individual efforts result in a level of performance that is greater than the sum of those individual inputs.

Teams are everywhere: in business and industry, in government, in schools, hospitals, professional associations – indeed, almost anywhere people gather to get things done. There are executive teams, management teams, and teams within functional areas from R&D to customer service. There are also special-purpose teams, cross-functional teams, and even industry teams with members from different organizations. Indeed, the movement to collaborative teamwork has been one of the sea changes that have swept through organizations during the last two decades of the twentieth century.

A team is a unique type of group in two important ways; first, a team has an objective – a specific goal that the team is trying to reach. The goal is usually thought of as a performance objective – that is

something the team is trying to *do*, rather than something the team is trying to *be*. And the performance objective is usually concrete or tangible. Teams are groups of people who design new products, stage dramatic productions, climb mountains, fight epidemics, raid crack houses, fight fires or pursue an inexhaustible list of present and future objective. Reaching the goal requires collaboration-a coordinated efforts. Achieving the goal requires working together. Effective teams, then, are made up of members who are not only technically competent but also good at collaborating with one another to reach their common objective.

Vocabulary:

1. ***Work Group*** – a group that interacts primarily to share information and to make decisions to help one another perform within each member's area of responsibility.
2. ***Work Team*** – a coordinated effort by a group of individuals. The individual efforts result in a level of performance that is greater than the sum of those individual inputs.

Self-Assessment Questions:

1. Identify a work group that you participate in. How do you know that it is a work group?
2. Identify a work team that you participate in. How do you know that is a work team?