

The Leadership Framework and Team Development

Introduction

Effective team working is an essential ingredient for organisational success. Successful teams can help transform an organisation, increase outputs and deliver on organisational objectives. The composition of teams, how they work together, how they are motivated and the quality of leadership within teams are just some of the elements that contribute to making a successful organisation.

Team Development

Team development relates to a wide range of activities designed to improve overall team performance within an organisation. Amongst other things, team development can be targeted at:

- Helping newly formed teams begin to work together as a unit;
- Assisting established teams evaluate where they can make improvements;
- Supporting teams experiencing problems, helping them to recapture their performance levels;
- Planning for new ways of working as a result of organisational changes.

The Leadership Framework can form the basis of most team development initiatives.

Team Development Initiatives

Team development initiatives can take various forms ranging from assessments of team preferences using different inventories or questionnaires, outdoor activities, simulations and team events. Team development initiatives can be targeted at ad hoc project teams, specialist teams, functional teams, departmental teams, cross-functional teams, matrix teams as well as virtual teams to strengthen and enhance their overall performance. Examples that illustrate the reasons for engaging in team development initiatives might include:

- Enhancing communication – Teams may be operating in a virtual environment and this might impact on their ability to operate as a cohesive unit. Typical problems that teams may experience when operating virtually include broken commitments, lack of trust and ineffective communication.
- Assisting team members to understand their preferences – Team members might be unaware of the personalities and preferences of individual team members. This may result in misunderstandings and impact on team cohesion. Team development can be targeted at creating an awareness of how individuals prefer to operate in teams and can help them to adapt their preferences to accommodate those around them.
- Motivating a team to perform – Teams may be experiencing difficulties that are impacting on overall performance levels. There could be a variety of reasons why the team is demotivated and it may be useful to identify strategies for improving motivation and performance levels.
- Establishing trust amongst team members - A new team might be at the early stages of team formation and team members may not yet have developed the ability to trust one another. Team development may be targeted at addressing this problem.
- Utilising the strengths of each team member – A team may have difficulties producing results or reaching its full potential. Identifying team characteristics, preferred roles and strengths of individual team members might be used to determine how best to assign activities and roles to team members.
- Aligning teams with organisational objectives – The organisation might be shifting its goals and strategy. This might require changes in how teams are required to work together, where they need to focus their efforts and how team leaders communicate these changes to them.

- Improving team productivity – A team might be required to perform a greater variety of tasks and be searching for ways to increase their outputs without increasing the size of the team. Exploring working practices, how time is managed, how tasks are allocated and how the team cooperates as a unit might help the team to identify how it can improve overall team functioning.

Use of the LF in Team Development

Team development initiatives can be targeted both at leaders of teams as well as individual team members. Some leadership behaviours relate more strongly to the role of team leaders and others to the role of team members. In practice all the leadership behaviours are likely to be linked in some way to the team. It is up to the team leader, with appropriate support, to prioritise which behaviours should form the basis of a team development intervention.

Detailed below is an illustration of how some of the leadership behaviours might be used to support team development:

Team Development Intervention	LF Domain	Illustration of Incorporating the LF
Enhancing communication	Working with Others	To help a senior team to work effectively together, a one day workshop might be designed around building an open, transparent and inclusive environment.
Assisting team members to understand their preferences	Demonstrating Personal Qualities	A senior team might complete a team profile which can be used to identify team roles and preferences. Sharing this information in a team environment can help build a greater awareness of individuals' emotions and impact on the team.
Motivating a team to perform	Working with Others	A senior manager might have an autocratic leadership style and benefit from one-on-one coaching to assist them with encouraging and supporting members of their team.
Establishing trust amongst team members	Working with Others	A team event might be held to assist a senior team build trust in each other. This might be an away day focusing on sharing information and forging partnerships for the long term.
Utilising the strengths of each team member	All Domains	A group of senior managers might undertake the LF 360° feedback process to understand where their strengths and development areas lie as a team. Using a composite report and sharing this information within the group, can help provide a holistic view of team strengths and development needs and form the basis for conversations around team roles and responsibilities.
Aligning teams with organisational objectives	Setting Direction	A workshop might be run to assist senior managers lead change through people, communicate better with their teams and gain the support of team members to change current working practices.
Improving Team Productivity	Improving Services	A half day might be set aside for a team and their leader to discuss and share team performance issues and generate ideas and solutions that are turned into an action plan around improving services.

Team development interventions can target multiple domains in the Leadership Framework or focus on a specific area as indicated in the table above. Team initiatives are set up for a variety of reasons and the content of an initiative might include a mix of tools and techniques. Such initiatives need to be tailored to the unique requirements of each team.

The NHS Leadership Academy has commissioned a register of 'Team Coaches' to help teams drive

performance tackle difficult governance issues and explore different development initiatives. To access the team coaching register please visit www.leadershipacademy.nhs.uk/coaching.

FAQ

Is it advisable to link a team development initiative to the Leadership Framework?

It depends on the purpose for which the assessment is being undertaken. For example, if a 360° feedback questionnaire has highlighted that each team member is finding it difficult to 'Work with Others' in a collaborative manner, then running a team development intervention that targets this domain may be appropriate. On other occasions it may be appropriate to focus team development on a particular issue with no reference to domains. The objectives and outputs of the team development intervention will help determine whether there is value in focusing the session around the Leadership Framework.

Which LF domains are most appropriate for inclusion in a team development initiative?

The majority of the LF domains can be linked to team working in some way. The specific areas that are chosen depend on the objective and outputs of the session. Each of the domains focus on different aspects of team functioning. Improving Services is focused on the outputs of the team, whilst Demonstrating Personal Qualities for example, is focused more on an individual team member understanding their own behaviour. Working with Others on the other hand focuses on the interaction between team members. The focus of a team development intervention depends on which aspect of team member or leader performance needs to be addressed.

What should a team development intervention look like?

The choice of team development activities, instruments, timings and venue will depend on what you are trying to achieve. The range of team development initiatives that can be constructed is considerable and can include a mix of exercises and activities, different questionnaires, be off-site, indoors/outdoors or class-room based. Each intervention should take account of factors such as the availability of team members, their level of comfort with the proposed intervention as well as what needs to be covered by the team in order to achieve a successful outcome.