

## Competition Driven Team Building

**Prof. Anil Kshatriya**

Assistant Professor, SIBM Pune

### Synopsis

Team building is often the key beginning of any project or task. A right person in right place with right co-ordination of his or her skill goes a long way in deciding the fate of organization's effort to put results in place. Traditionally teams are viewed as co-operative mechanisms. But the competitive spirit of teams, in the light of corporate performance, plays a crucial role in outcomes of a project. This paper is a predictive research for building a framework of Competition Driven team Building.

### Keywords

Team Building, Teamwork, Competition, Human Resources and Project.

### The Team Spirit

We are more efficient in teams than in our individual capacities. Teams bring out our collaborative abilities. These abilities may lay dormant unless a lever of co-operation nudges them. But as good teams help us deliver better and exceed our performance expectations, a not so good team can pull down our talents and deteriorate our skills. The question is how and when do we actually perform exceedingly well as a team? Does a team always strive to achieve stated goals by enriching experience and abilities of other players? Or is there any external force that drives a team towards excellence? Let's analyze commonly observed phenomena from a non- business context. Let's look at sports, Cricket for example. All the players in the team have to work in synchronized manner as the end result is not pre-dominant on good performance of a particular player alone. This makes it necessary for a team to persuade every player to act in the best interest of the group and put effort in that direction. No matter how good an individual performs, success of the game is measured in terms of success of team. All have to do well in practice sessions. But this doesn't drive success. This is because there is an external force that guides the actions of players in real world. This force is the force of competition against the rival team. We do better in teams but we do best when our team competes against a rival team. The phenomena that competition channelizes our energies in a focused goal oriented manner magnifies when ten players compete against another ten. Thus teams become more closely knit when an outsider is looking at them. Till then it is a loose bunch of individuals who may be passionate about teamwork in their individual capacities. But when an outsider is tracking their actions every member becomes passionate about his or her team. This is not so much about performance as it is about value. In such situations players look at their team with respect and in turn feel more proud about the identity that they develop with the team. To continue with our cricket match, Indian players may represent good teamwork in nets but when the same players go on for a match against Australian team, all that effort is converted to bring home a trophy for Indian Team. This force is the strength of outperforming organizations.

### Organizational Culture & Team

Successful organizations have culture that fosters teamwork. But this culture pre-determines how to generate strong current to churn the spirit of their teams and extract superior performance. These organizations have teams that not only strive to achieve unambiguous focused goals but also develop

attachment and bonding for outperforming several other teams that too have similar goal congruence. Thus we notice that more than just synchronizing internal moves these teams attune themselves to competitive pulse throughout the organization. Based on my observations at Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. an auto major in India, I summarized certain key contributions that a culture of intra-team competition makes towards the success of a learning organization. The company unlike other auto majors in the rest of the world survived the shock of recessionary trend in automobile business almost unhurt. It did undergo ups and downs of business cycle but the pace of bounce back was phenomenal. While auto industry was bleeding M&M was embarking on a powerful demand driven journey. It digested anomalies of raw material price rise and labor vicissitudes on real and permanent basis. The margins improved and so did the domestic demand for its vehicles. Given the fact that auto industry was under immense pressure to meet exceedingly complex expectations of Indian consumer, M&M re-organized its operations by creating CFTs (Cross Functional Teams) to take on market head-on. CFTs were very effective as there was adequate flow of information across the functions. But CFTs were delivering results not because the members were experienced and had bonding of sorts that made it possible. More than that was the pressing need to excel the actions of other CFTs who also had equal quantum of togetherness and passion for their results. One of the reasons why this strategy works almost always wins is that team players have enough knowledge about other teams who are a part of same organization. There are more facts than assumptions in team work. This creates positive feeling of control over information. Time and effort is not drained in discussing or deciphering information about competitors. Teamwork begins on an affirmative note and continues with high degree of trust among fellow players. Another reason why this pattern succeeds is that learning from rivals are adapted quickly and transformations are incorporated in timely manner. The best is just an extension of better which a team already brings out of an individual. All we need is a sneak peek of a competitor to make us conscious of ourselves. This makes dormant teams come alive, makes them feel and breathe.

### **Competency Mapping**

The essential question still remains unanswered and that is how to shape the competence of a team? To me a team should avoid thinking in one specific area and stop calling itself as a specialized group. I believe we should leave this specialization to individuals in the team. The question to ask here is how we collaborate and calibrate such specialists into synergic whole where aggregate is greater than the sum of parts. Therefore role of a leader is to enrich teamwork by encouraging all players to leverage their skills for sharpening competence of other players in the team. This goes a long way in building teams that are aware of their differentiation but they do not limit prospects of versatility which is the cornerstone of inter-team competency mapping. To me the word 'Focus' of a team should not be an inward looking notion. Rather it should reflect the outlook to understand how to assimilate forces exerted by outsiders i.e. other teams in the organization.

### **Asking the right questions**

Teamwork is a process of questioning and reasoning ideas. Exchange of ideas makes it possible for organizations to structure simulations and encourage criticism that is otherwise very difficult. Ability to ask right questions is a pre-requisite of sustainable systems. Not that the same team players in their own capacity have no scope for raising such questions. But just that there are fewer triggers to the thought process of questioning a given situation. To bring back this discussion to our primary premise of competitive spirit of teams, this questioning goes beyond narrow domain of a team and spreads into arena of a rival team. In order to understand how to combat the moves of rival team you need immense

knowledge about common philosophy shared by fellow team players. This in turn needs lot of reasoning within the team so that it settles with structured strategy.

### **Can teams absorb shocks?**

Can teams absorb the shock of cultural differences, unequal capabilities and self-oriented motives of their players? I think these three critical areas need a careful attention. Let's look at each of them separately. First to have a perspective on cultural differences, we know that diverse teams contribute to a rich mix of competencies. Thus diversity is welcome. However this cluster of diverse potentials is put to test in times when teams face differences on cultural front. Cultural shocks like outlook towards religious issues might jerk the pace of teamwork. Considerable amount of time might be lost in bringing back the acceleration. Similarly all players in a team may not be equally good. There may be a substantial amount of imbalance with respect to capabilities of fellow teammates. This needs acceptance by other players who indeed have to divert time and energy to motivate weak members in the team to work hard and contribute. Lastly a lurking threat always prevails about certain players being selfish to their individual motives. This can destroy the whole passion developed by other good players over a long period of time. If a team is willing and able to manage these aberrations well, we can say that it is built with shock-absorbing mechanism. It can take on a rough trajectory in a smooth manner.

### **Teamwork is self-sustaining**

Good teamwork breeds better teamwork. Players, who get accustomed to culture of caring, sharing and trust, seldom rely on their single handed actions and decisions in areas that need shared results. This phenomenon supports every area of business by generating willingness to co-operate and integrate skills to bring out some change in approaches of individual players. The snowball effect, if uninterrupted by change of leadership, bundles a lot of energy and enthusiasm to overcome hurdles of inter personal distrust. People who enjoy teamwork also enjoy team building. They do not allow teams to break. They prefer small teams. Teams like relationships take time to warm-up and concretize values that are eventually commonly accepted. This goes beyond discussions and meetings. It is more about understanding and less about words.

### **Conclusion**

Teams are consortium of people who work for a common goal. The sense of oneness becomes strong in a team while competing against another team. Well channelized completion of teams delivers faster and better results. It's like looking at a group photograph. The first thing you like to do when you look at it is you search for yourself in the photo. When a team nurtures this feeling of attachment it does work wonders.

