

Cross Functional Teams: Working with Allies, Enemies and Other Strangers

by Glenn Parker, 2003

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I. The World of Cross-Functional Teams

Types of Teams

- The functional team - the boss and his/her reports, good for hierarchal organizations - slow growth
- The self-directed team - get work done and manage themselves, startups and participatory management organizations
- The cross-functional team – also called interdisciplinary teams in educational settings
 1. “A standard cross-functional team is composed of those individuals from departments within the firm whose competencies are essential in achieving an optimal evaluation.”
 2. “It is important to note that the role in the cross-functional team in using the expertise of many different people is coupled with the task of enlisting support for the work of the team. This is critical for successful cross-functional teamwork.”
 3. “A group of people with a clear purpose representing a variety of functions or disciplines in the organization whose combined efforts are necessary for achieving the team’s purpose.”
 4. Best in organizations with fast changing markets – focus on responding to customer needs.

Working with Diverse Team Members

- Some are strangers – never met before
- Some are colleagues – worked together in the past
- Some are friends – know each other but never worked together
- Some are enemies – worked together in the past and it hasn’t gone well

Dimensions of Cross-Functional Teams

- Purpose – product, systems, quality, problem-solving, reengineering
- Duration – permanent or temporary
- Membership – diverse functions and levels in the organization, external partners
 1. “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts”
 2. “We’re all in this together”
 - Brings together many cultures
 3. Success on how well team members integrate information and perspectives
 - Clear team goal and a plan to achieve it
 - Gain the commitment of team members and stakeholders to the team goal
 - Emphasize collaborative efforts and team rewards
 - Provide training on how to work with a diverse group of people
 - Create policies and procedures that support a team-based environment

II. The Competitive Advantage of Cross-Functional Teams

- Speed (must have a clear goal, relevant functions present, do tasks concurrently, empower the team, keep on schedule, and involve key players)
- Complexity – solve complex problems (need a leader with creative vision, freedom from barriers, diverse opinions, openness to new ideas)
- Customer Focus – satisfy customers needs (quality improvement, clear understanding of customers, closely involve customer, training in team improvement, team rewards, empowerment)
- Creativity (culture supports problem solving, open and candid communication, fluid and open structure, risk-taking, innovation seems critical)
- Organizational learning – team and individual learning (training to stop barriers and learn about work lines, training informal and formal, members share information)
- Single point of contact – one place to go for information about a project (tight internal communications and with lay stakeholders)

III. Overcoming Barriers and Obstacles to Teamwork

Development Process

- Creation > formation > launch > development > initial success > cynicism > the zone

Obstacles to Success

- Limitations of team leader
- Confusion about team authority
- Goal ambiguity
- Stakeholder relations
- Performance appraisal (giving credit)
- Rewards and recognition
- Interpersonal dynamics
- Team size
- Lack of management support (4-6 people)

IV. Leading Cross-Functional Teams

New breed of leader – group specialist (group process skills - ask questions that bring out ideas and stimulate discussion, using paraphrasing and other listening skills to ensure effective communication), great communication, can obtain resources, technical, scientific, flexible, conflict resolution, good stakeholder relations, business knowledge, empowered, can set goals, co-leadership, facilitation and support

V. Empowering Teams to Do the Job

- Have the responsibility and authority to carry out their work

- Leaders need to:
 1. Coach not control
 2. Champion not command
 3. Advocate not abdicate
 4. Teach not preach
 5. Facilitate not obfuscate

Levels of Empowerment

1. Coach decides
2. Team has increasing input, coach decides
3. Team recommends with considerable input, coach decides
4. Team decides and informs the coach, prior to taking action
5. Team decides, implements decision, informs coach
6. Team decides, no further action required

Downside of Empowerment

- Overzealousness
- Perceived loss of status of management
- Empowered team as counterculture

Empowerment Issues

- Degree of clarity about authority
- Degree of authority

How Teams Become Empowered

- They act empowered
- They have a clear focus and plan
- They engage key stakeholders and communicate with them
- They are committed to something

Why Empowerment?

- Speed
- Ownership
- Creativity
- Respect
- Motivation

VI. Setting Goals for Shared Commitments

- Goals reduce conflict
- Goals build partnerships
- Goals provide incentive
- Goals establish a scoreboard
- Team's goals must be integrated into department goals

- Goals must be SMART
 1. Specific
 2. Measurable and observable
 3. Attainable
 4. Relevant
 5. Time-based

VII. Building Bridges Outside the Team

Key Stakeholders

- Functional department managers
- Customers and clients
- Senior management
- Support groups and service departments
- Supplies, vendors, and consultants

The Needs of Cross-Functional Teams

- Information (data, need, problem)
- Resources
- Support
- Awareness of impact

Barriers to Bridge Building

- Stereotyping
- Competition
- Differentiation (hard to integrate)
- Lack of information

Strategies for Bridge Building

- ID key stakeholders
- Look for commonalities
- Communicate information about your team
- Select boundary managers (ambassadors who handle key interfaces)
- ID potential barriers
- Prepare an analysis and a plan

Effective Stakeholder Management

- Walk around
- Be accessible
- Focus on their needs
- Be responsive
- Tailor your message (language of the stakeholders)
- Manage expectations
- Be creative

VIII. Appraising Teamwork and Team Members

Changes in Appraisal Process

- Changing performance criteria
- Incorporating team participation
- Keeping it informal
- Introducing team appraisals

Techniques for Appraising Performance on Cross-Functional Teams

- Incorporate team participation in the appraisal
- Include team player behavior in the appraisal
- Use a peer appraisal system
 1. Leader gathers data on individuals, prepare evaluation, performance discussion
 2. Leader facilitates group session with team to get individual information
 3. Leader gets group to come to consensus on performance assessment of the person

IX. Team Pay for Team Play

Types of Plans

- Team recognition – celebrating organizational objectives, reinforcing outstanding teams and players
- Project team rewards – project milestones, project completion, value added
- Organized unit incentives – product quality, customer service, employee safety, financial performance

Guidelines for Cross-Functional Team Rewards

- Reinforce the cross-functional team concept
- Bring the reward to the team level
- Reward individual team players too
- Use non-cash rewards
- Use informal methods
- Align rewards with business goals
- Create many winners and few losers
- Involve employees in the selection process
- Communicate and communicate some more

X. Learning as a Team Event

A Learning Community

- Technical learning
- Interpersonal learning
- Cross-cultural learning

- Cultural consideration in learning
 1. Reverence for hierarchy
 2. Individualism versus collectivism
 3. Task versus relationship
 4. Risk avoidance
 5. Long-term versus short term orientation

Cultural Considerations

- Professional culture supersedes national culture
- Not all cross-cultured, cross-functional teams are global
- People often adopt the norms of the local culture
- Corporate culture can be more powerful than national culture
- Check your prejudices at the door

How Teams Learn

- Directing knowledge or skills transfer from other members
- Observing other members in action
- Engaging in team problem solving
- Expanding prior experience and reframing new insights

Team Learning

- Team training – being a team player, developing an open climate and avoiding group think, resolving conflict, meeting management
- Team building
- Technical training

XI. Team Size – Small is Beautiful

An increase in Team Size (more than 10) (4-6 is best)

- Decreasing productivity
- Decreasing team member involvement
- Decreasing participation and trust

Team Size Strategies

- Play hard ball – limit the size of your team
- Use the core team approach (5-8 members)
- Divide into sub groups

XII. The Team Working Together

Internal Issues

- Conflict resolution
- Openness

- Meeting management
- Characteristics of team members
- Customers and suppliers
- Virtual teamwork

Communication Barriers

- Lack of appreciation of the contributions of others' functions
- Plain old-fashioned turf battles
- Some functions talk different languages
- Members of different functions may not share similar work orientations
- Some members have more interest in the team's purpose and more to gain from team success
- Some members mistakenly see harmony as the goal of cross-functional teamwork

Meeting Management

Meeting Malpractice

- Too many meetings
- Meetings too long
- Too many people at meetings
- Not enough gets done at meetings

Characteristics of Team Members

- Has technical expertise
- Is open to new ideas
- Is willing to ask tough questions
- Can see the big picture
- Is aware of cultural diversity

Issues for Virtual Cross-Functional Teams

- Hardware and software are not substitutes for people
- Building trust is more difficult but essential
- Team size is very important (under 10)
- Face to face meetings are needed
- Create a common team culture
- Select the right people (dependable, independent, empowered, strong communicator, technically adept)

XIII. Management's Role in Building a Team – Based Organization

The Challenge

Aligning the organization to support cross-functional teamwork

- Strategy
- Structure
- Culture (stories and myths)

- Systems (information, performance management, training and development, rewards)

XIV. Jump–Starting the Change to Cross-functional Teams

- Set the direction
- ID available resources
- Define reporting requirements
- Determine empowerment scope
- ID non-negotiables
- Clarify roles
- Get acquainted
- Establish team rules
- Agree on ground rules
- Provide orientation and training

XV. Resources for Cross-Functional Teamwork

- Fighting the forces of evil (a description of bad things that can happen to a team and ways to avoid it)
- Survey to gather information
- Case studies - Success factors
- Vision – say it over and over and over again
- Have a never-ending drive to success but don't forget the compassion
- Listen a lot and learn even more
- Create a values based organization
- Select the right leaders and keep training new ones
- Measure key operations and communicate the results against the plan
- Have a sense of humor and encourage fun