

# A Review of the Role of Interpersonal Interactions in Team Building

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**Abstract:** *The working environment in today's shrinking globe is marked by the expanding connectivity. As businesses flourish organizations are entailed to set targets and thrive to achieve it without compromises. Timely completion of quality work has become an integral part of today's work scenario. In this context team spirits and team building assume greater importance. The paper contends that among various factors, interpersonal interactions play a crucial role in initiating and promoting team building. The paper by reviewing the researches on the role of interactions establishes its indelible role in team building*

**Keywords:** working environment, team spirits, interpersonal interactions, team building

## 1. Background

Organizations today demand its workforce to possess ability to execute hard as well as smart work in achieving targets. Hard work encompasses working with the same level of energy and interest marked by the presence of perseverance and diligence. Smart work includes being resourceful in tapping the best of the facilities and the man power available in the organization. In this context effective team work becomes a mandatory.

Teams become valid and result producing with the prevalence of team cohesion within the team. Among various factors that contribute to the team building, interpersonal interactions play a crucial role and the paper attempts to review the researches on the role of interactions in team building.

## 2. Team Building – Literature Review

Working as a team is the most preferred option than completing a work alone (Anderson, Ones, Sinangil, & Viswesvaran, 2001; Bell & Kozlowski, 2002; Borman, Ilgen, & Klimoski, 2003; Buvik, 2006; Jex, 2008; Salas & Fiore, 2004; Salas, Rosen, Burke, Goodwin, & Fiore, 2006). When teams work for in an organization, it has to be admitted that not all teams are result producing and effective (Hackman, 1990; Hopkin, Garland, & Wise, 1999; Salas, Sims, & Burke, 2005). Proclaiming the components that contribute to the effectiveness of a team is debatable (Duel, 2010) as researchers don't have a consensus on declaring components that impact the team building. Researchers and scholars in recent years consider teamwork as "a multidimensional construct that is characterized by a set of flexible and adaptive behaviours, cognitions and attitudes that interact to achieve mutual goals and adaption to changing internal and external environments" (Duel, 2010, p. 23; Hoegl & Gemuenden, 2001; Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006; Salas et al., 2000, p. 344).

Salas et al. (2005) has framed the "big five of teamwork" that categorize the teamwork into five core components. Team leadership, team orientation, mutual performance

monitoring, backup behaviour and adaptability (Salas et al., 2000) are the components of an effective team work. The authors further posit that mutual trust, closed loop communication and shared mental models also play a vital role along with these coordinating mechanisms.

The teams' approach to the "big five of teamwork" components and their coordinating mechanisms is not static but evolutionary Salas et al. (2005). It should also be acknowledged that team building approach of teams vary from team to team (Salas et al., 2005), in addition importance given to components also differ from team to team.

## 3. Researches on Team Building

### Deloitte's 'Business Chemistry'

Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited or Deloitte as it is popularly known is one of the "Big Four" accounting organizations. Deloitte with the backup of being the largest professional services network in the world in terms of revenue and professionals has formulated 'Business Chemistry'. 'Business Chemistry' based on the work styles, classifies the work force into four groups, namely, Pioneers, Drivers, Integrators, and Guardians. According to 'Business Chemistry' people adopt different work styles in their process of achieving the common goal. Deloitte in its official website has proclaimed that the focus behind the 'Business Chemistry' is to improve the effectiveness of interactions among people of different work styles and thereby build the team.

### Research article of Suzanne M. Johnson Vickberg & Kim Christfort

Suzanne M. Johnson Vickberg, a social-personality psychologist and Deloitte's lead researcher on the firm's Business Chemistry system and Kim Christfort, the national managing director of Deloitte Greenhouse experiences have made a research on implications of personality traits and interactions on team building. They coauthored an article, "Pioneers, Drivers, Integrators, and Guardians" in the March-April 2017 issue of Harvard Business Review, which focused on the ways of improving the effectiveness of

interactions among the four types of individuals and also the combinations of those types in teams. One of their areas of research touches upon the varying role that the interactions play among the team mates. The following excerpts from their article articulates how interpersonal interactions lead both to misunderstanding (excerpt -1) and accomplishment of goals (excerpt -2)

**Excerpt -1:** *In our work, we've clustered thousands of groups by style and asked them to list the things that energize and alienate them in the workplace. The lists vary greatly—what motivates one group can suck the life out of another. Some of the differences have to do with how people interact. For instance, Integrators abhor anything that feels like conflict, but Drivers love to debate. This can create tension and misunderstanding.*

**Excerpt -2:** *Our discussions highlighted team strengths, such as an openness to sharing perspectives and voicing concerns and a commitment to generating innovative ideas and supporting the business. The team brainstormed strategies for accommodating individuals' differing styles and taking advantage of the value that each brought. A month after we met with them, members indicated they had been actively hypothesizing about one another's styles and were developing a better understanding of the team. Even more important, they reported a greater sense of shared purpose, an environment that better enabled them to contribute at their highest levels, and an improved ability to accomplish goals.*

(Suzanne M. Johnson Vickberg & Kim Christfort, 2017)

### MIT Research

Researchers admit that the interactions within the team strengthen the team building and improve the efficiency of the work. MIT researchers identified similar teams with varying performance and included innovation teams, post-op wards in hospitals, customer-facing teams in banks, backroom operations teams, and call center teams in their research. MIT's Human Dynamics laboratory used little electronic badges to record interactions of team members - who interact much and how much, even the stress and intonation patterns and body language were also recorded. Through the recordings done by the little electronic badges that were given to the team members the MIT researchers quantified the attributes like energy, creativity, and mutual commitment that the high performing team exhibits.

The data collected affirmed that the communication plays a crucial role in building results yielding teams. Patterns of communication found to play a crucial role along with individual intelligence, personality, skill, and the content of discussions

Researchers in their examination of communication pattern of the successful teams have found that the team's success lie not in what they communicate but how they communicated. It has to be admitted that little research has been done in analyzing the pattern of communication within

the team. The pattern of the communication explains the reason behind variance in the performance among teams of identical teams. Alex "Sandy" Pentland, April 2012. The analysis of the researchers Taemie Kim, Daniel Olguin, and Ben Waber at Sociometric Solutions that communication established outside the formal meetings contributed greatly to the team's performance.

Based on these findings implementation of certain practices in an organization could be carried out. The following excerpt establishes how gains in productivity could be achieved by increasing 'the team building characteristics identified by MIT researchers':

*"For example, the researchers advised a call-center manager to change up his employees' coffee break schedule so that every member of a particular team had a break at the same time. "That would allow people more time to socialize with their teammates, away from their workstations," the researchers wrote. It worked: average call handling time dropped by 20 percent among the lowest performing teams, and by 8 percent center-wide."*

Alex "Sandy" Pentland, April 2012

### Google Research on Effectiveness of a Team

Google always shows keen interest in understanding its work force. Google assigned its People Analytics team the Project Oxygen to find out what traits or managerial skills that earmark a manager as a great manager at Google. Encouraged by the Project Oxygen's success, Google launched Project Aristotle. The prime focus of the project was to trace the factors that propel certain teams forward and pull certain other teams downward. Project Aristotle analyzed interviews and data from more than 100 teams at Google and declared that the emotional bonding and free flow of interactions within the team as the contributing factors of an effective team. ( Charles Duhigg)

### Anita Williams Woolley *et al* Research on Interactions within a Team

In a research on group behavior of a good team, Anita Williams Woolley and her team of researchers traced two common behaviours that were generally shared by all good teams. The first is the equal distribution of speaking among the team mates and the other is social sensitivity of the team mates. Woolley delineates the significant role of interactions in team building when she contends that "As long as everyone got a chance to talk, the team did well," Woolley further adds "But if only one person or a small group spoke all the time, the collective intelligence declined." (Anita Williams Woolley)

## 4. Conclusion

The review of the researches on team building reveal that team building is more than an art and could be well put into the frame work of science. MIT's Human Dynamics Laboratory has proclaimed that dynamics of a good team like the energy, creativity, and shared commitment are observable, quantifiable, and measurable. Even the ways of strengthening it is feasible (Alex "Sandy" Pentland). The reviews too contend that teams turn great by the personalities of the team mates rather than by their skills.

The paper concludes that team building is both art and science (Joshua Spears) and interpersonal interactions play an indelible role in team building.

[17]Pioneers, Drivers, Integrators, and Guardians

[18]Suzanne M. Johnson Vickberg & Kim Christfort(2017)–*Pioneers, Drivers, Integrators, and Guardians*, Harvard Business Review

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