



What is a Team and the difference between Pseudo Teams, Real Teams and Groups

MODULE 1 - Teams and Teaming

People use the word 'team' very loosely to describe any group of people who work together. For example, they refer to a "top team" or a "leadership team", when it is clear that the members rarely exhibit much in the way of teamwork. Teams are very different from groups, in a number of respects, most notably:

- Having a shared purpose that requires collaboration and coordination (members of a group may have a *common* purpose)
- The degree of interdependence they have in the tasks they do
- The level of mutual support they provide
- The relative formality of communications and social structures (teams almost always exist within a larger social structure)
- The degree of responsibility they take for the collective endeavour

A group may *become* a team.

Consider the following definition of a team. The first half comes from US academic Jon Katzenbach; the second sentence is added by Peter Hawkins.

***"A small number of people with complementary skills,
who are committed to a common purpose,
set of performance goals and shared approach
for which they hold each other mutually accountable."***

- Jon Katzenbach

“...And which has ways of effectively meeting and communicating that raise morale and alignment, effectively engaging with all the team’s key stakeholder groups and ways that individuals and the team can continually learn and develop.”

- Peter Hawkins

What would be the result, if any of Katzenbach’s elements were not present?

What would be the result, if any of Hawkins’ additional elements were not present?

What is the difference between real teams and pseudo teams?

Professor Michael West (2012) has done extensive research in the UK, both in commercial companies and the UK Health Service (West et al, 2006; West and Dawson, 2012; West, 2013). He developed 3 simple questions for ascertaining the difference between real teams and what he terms pseudo teams:

- Do you have a few clear objectives that you need to achieve as a team?
- Do you work together to achieve these team objectives?
- Do you meet regularly to review progress and how it can be improved?

In his research on the health service he found that, of the total that were researched, 91% said they worked in teams, but only 40% could answer yes to all 3 of these questions.

He and his colleagues then went on to compare the 40% who worked in ‘real teams’ with the 50% who worked in what they termed ‘pseudo teams’, and found that those in real teams not only had much greater work satisfaction but also better clinical performance, patient satisfaction, health and safety records, less turnover and staff absenteeism, and lower patient mortality.

He calculates that if the number of staff working in real teams in the average hospital grew by just 5 per cent, that could decrease patient mortality by 40 people a year per hospital. He concludes that effective teamwork really can save lives!

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