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The Manager's Role in a Team-Based System

If people were always to speak their mind on issues both great and small, they would be considered in-subordinate by the average supervisor and a threat to an organization.

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Managers are no longer called on to direct people but to manage the systems that support people managing themselves. The unprecedented movement to point-of-service, multidisciplinary, and clinically-based team systems creates a significant demand for changes in the manager's function and role. The manager's role in a team-based system is that of a facilitator who stimulates teams to action in capable ways. This behavioral change creates a tremendous impact on the requisite abilities of managers to move from hierarchical models into team-based systems. The characteristics of a team-based system are summarized in Box 5-1.



WORDS of WISDOM

The biggest problem in health care organization today is not health care reform, but the human ego. We will fail in our efforts if we do not get out of our own way.



BOX 5-1

Traditional vs. Team-Based Organizations

TRADITIONAL	TEAM BASED
Management driven	Patient centered
Isolated specialists	Multifunction workers
Job descriptions	Performance competencies
Many layers	Flattened management
Department focus	Continuum focus
Management control	Team direction
Policy procedure driven	Value and process driven
Top-down appraisals	360-degree appraisals
Tightly organized	Sometimes chaotic

Adapted from Bergman TJ, DeMeuse KP: Diagnosing whether an organization is truly ready to empower work team: a case study, *Human Resource Planning* 19(1):38-48, 1996.

***Some Symptoms of Sick Organizations***

- *Decisions are based on rumor and whispers.*
- *Employees feel oppressed and vulnerable.*
- *Rewards are tied to "who you know."*
- *People are masters at avoiding risk.*
- *There is a strong undertone of anger and fear.*

MOVING TO A TEAM-BASED ORGANIZATION

A major problem facing American caregivers is not "burnout" from overwork but a crisis of constant and gross underutilization of worker potential (Ghashal and Bartle, 1996). Caregivers in realigned organizations cannot be made to feel valuable and empowered, they simply *are*. The behavioral context of work is experienced in the "feel" of the place. Does your organization feel fresh and crisp, with a certain eagerness to experiment? Or is it oppressive and polluted with anger, anxieties, and fear of the unknown? The former is invigorating; the latter will wear people down. The pathologies of our inherited conduct make this work challenging. Health care organizations come from a tradition of excessive control and compliance, which must be replaced in a team-based system with contracts, partnership, accountability, support, and stretching the limits.

WE REALLY HAVE NO NEED FOR MANAGERS ANYWAY; OR DO WE?

Organizations need management practices more than ever, but not in the old way. The manager in a team-based system is a designer, teacher, facilitator, and steward.

People can tolerate the uncertainty of today's environment, accepting both hard work and hard choices, when they have the systems and processes that support working and meeting challenges together.

The business rationale for teams is simple. Changes in the health care marketplace have led organizations to look at the implementation of team-based systems as work design and human resource strategies. Management teams that pursue this approach maximize organizational flexibility, attract and sustain highly skilled and responsive staff, and enhance the use of information in data-driven decision making (Jenkins, 1994).

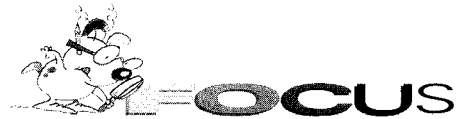
For people to move beyond the threats of downsizing, reorganized workplaces, or new relationships, management must create work environments where there is an emphasis on continuous self-renewal in the service of others. This requires significant trust. In a rapidly changing and competitive marketplace, trust in the workplace is essential because it translates directly into productivity.

The manager's role in team-based systems is different and much more challenging: to drive fear out of the workplace; hold sacred the values, beliefs, and goals of service; design processes that create a humane workplace; and look for opportunities to facilitate learning in the pursuit of outcomes.

PEOPLE ARE ENVIRONMENT

However, to maximize individual and team performance, strategies cannot be limited to simply revamping processes or changing organizational structures. *The most vital focal points for transformation are the actions and behaviors of individual people and groups.* Failing to understand this basic premise

The degree to which the context of work is exhilarating in health care organizations is a direct outcome of the invisible hands of managers.



What Managers Need to Handle for Teams

- *Workflow and timing problems*
- *Conflict vs. team leader and manager role*
- *Unclear authority*
- *Limiting amount of formalization (rigidity)*
- *Opportunities for reflection*

has led to the demise of many a change project. Managing behavior is central to the development of team-based systems. The behaviors of organization members not only shape the organization's internal culture but also the quality of the organization's external relationships.

The wise manager will consider several implications to this strategy before plunging ahead and developing teams.

Implication #1: The Gap

There is always a gap between how staff members and top management perceive the concept of moving to teams (Holpp, 1996). Staff members usually welcome the freedom that comes with teams: to implement controls over their own work and to have the authority to solve problems at the point-of-service. On the other hand, top management see the implementation of teams as a competitive strategy. Teams are expected to put the goal of the organization above the needs of the individual. Personal sacrifices will be made on behalf of the team. Also, the expectation that teams will create greater productivity may lead top executives to assume that there will be a downsizing of staff in the future. When these outcomes are not immediately apparent, executives may become disillusioned with teams and withdraw their support.

Closing the gap

This gap is the widest in early implementation. After the initial "honeymoon" period, staff members' behaviors may signal dissatisfaction with the team and anxiety about the possibility of layoffs. Executives may question the wisdom of moving forward. The amount of conflict generated by these two different perspectives can be minimized if, early on, teams make a valued contribution to the organization's goals and are assisted by managers who remove the obstacles that interfere with doing a good job.

If teams are not well supported, they will remain ineffective grafts to a hierarchical structure, fail to achieve outcomes, and be perceived as a drain on the organization's resources. Slowly but surely, parallel

processes will be created to get work done despite the teams. These duplicative methods operate outside the team structure and eventually overcome the team.

Staff members need to know what the human resources policy is should productivity improve and layoffs follow. Will people be afforded the opportunity to apply for other positions in the system? Will they be given the training to pursue different jobs? Following is an example of how managers react in a potential layoff situation.

One hospital provided a college-credited public health nursing course to associate degree nurses who wanted to avoid potential layoff by moving into the new home health nursing program (San Antonio et al., 1995). This approach signaled to the workforce that management valued their contributions to the organization and was seeking ways to maximize employment opportunities for the workforce in the face of declining revenues. Fixing the bottom line was not the only focus of this management team.

Managers typically believe that staff members will work more and harder because of commitment to team goals. Staff members typically believe that teams will result in work being easier. Shared definitions of the team's work must precede implementation.

If these issues are not anticipated and addressed, the gap between managers' and staff members' expectations will remain wide, and the behavior will be disruptive. People might agree on the *value* of a team-based organization but disagree about what a team-based organization is.

Implication #2: Imprisonment

Organizations must have the potential to learn, unlearn, or relearn based on their experiences. Many managers remain prisoners of outdated mental maps (Niccolini et al., 1995). Can every member of the management team draw the same process map for the organization? For organizations to be aligned with their internal and external environments, managers must learn, unlearn, and relearn their mental models of work in health care organizations.



WORDS of WISDOM

Beware of those who say that they support teams but fail to provide the necessary meeting time, schedule adjustments, or management of sudden increases in census or overtime.

These people do not support their teams!



Management defines the potential impact of layoffs on teams and the labor force before implementing such action.

There is agreement about how much work is expected of team members.



FOCUS

Perks from not Being in Charge All of the Time

- *Less critical of self and others*
- *Own work becomes more manageable*
- *Emphasis shifts to developing organizational capacity*
- *Able to act upon belief that workplace should be nourishing place to be*



WORDS of WISDOM

A most important consideration in the implementation process is your patience!



Sometimes managers are reluctant to leave the old for the new. This may be a defense against the anxiety that accompanies radical change. However, these defenses have to be overcome if team-based structures and processes are to be developed and meet the organization's need. In the transformation to teams, knowledge is constructed when people have the time and opportunity to reflect on their work, and when they have control over this reflection process. If managers are not assisted to value and perform this work themselves, necessary information-processing strategies are not developed or sustained.

Avoiding imprisonment

The social construction of new knowledge in organizations is a powerful management tool in the implementation of teams. It leads to shared knowledge, shared meanings, and a predominant definition of the way to be and do in the new order of things. If learning does not occur, the necessary new knowledge to do the new work is not created.

Implication #3: Power

The empowerment of teams cannot be directed by the executive level without a corresponding movement of power (O'Leary, 1996). Teams are effective in those workplaces where work requires a combination of expertise and when cross-functional problem solving is required.

The delivery of quality health care services demands the cooperation of many people. To successfully develop teams, you must recognize that the change process is more than saying "Let's just do it!" Some people erroneously believe the change process resembles the purchase of a piece of capital equipment or turning on a light. Strong project management takes care of the tasks. An understanding and a facilitation of the human side of change management takes care of the process side.

As the traditional doers and fixers in the organization, managers must now demonstrate the forbearance to wait 3 to 5 years for sustainable outcomes. In the meantime, all members of management must examine infra-

structure, policies, and procedures that focus on the individual, and modify them to support the team structure or eliminate the potential for individual power trips. There is more than enough management work to be done as teams take the time to fully develop their effectiveness.

Moving power

Before implementing teams, managers must be clear about the fact that some of their authority will indeed be transferred to teams. The examination of authority boundaries is a critical step. The team chartering process described in Chapter 8 assists with this process. For some managers, authority and accountability for the point-of-service care will be difficult to transfer to teams. This is because in team-based systems, managers are held accountable for exercising their authority in relationship to business operations. Some managers do not have such skill.

Implication #4: Communication

The quality of interactions in teams is higher than that in traditional work groups. The quality and level of team interactions are directly related to team effectiveness (Cashman, 1995). To successfully meet their objectives, teams must develop new and effective patterns of communication that did not occur when the manager made the decisions. This is a paradox for managers.

Managers are compelled to unlearn past ways of communicating and to encourage their replacement with team communication systems. Obstacles that have been built over time are often difficult to see. Therefore managers will participate in rather than lead team-building activities, so as to strengthen team communication systems. Team building, discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, is a prerequisite in the development of the peer-directed communication of teams if group decision making and consensus are to replace the decision-making role of the manager.

Effective lateral relationships are a hallmark of team-based organizations. These interaction patterns contribute to or detract from the effec-



Peer-Directed Communication

Feedback
Interpretation of events
Assistance
Respect for ideas
Quality exchanges
Role expectations
Modification and testing of present roles

Identifying the “types” of team behaviors is not the same as understanding the patterns of interaction within and between teams.



WORDS of WISDOM

A collision with the interdependent management style of team-based systems is inevitable, so be prepared to manage the politics!



tiveness of teams. Some teams, through their negative intrateam relationships, have efficiently fish-boned a problem while lessening the quality of the final decision,

Have you experienced times when you acted in a considerate fashion toward the team, but team members remained dissatisfied? Why? The explanation centers on the *quality of the interaction* between leaders and followers. Even the most effective manager can be confronted with dysfunctional teams who engage in stalling, quiet sabotage, communication failure, or poor decision making because of team relationships. Traditional management communication focuses on the economic self-interest of followers, while managers who focus on interactions seek to elevate partners to new levels of commitment, integrity, and quality. Although there are managers who can and do operate in the context of interaction and relationships, many corporate health care structures have continued to train and reward only the traditional command and control models of management.

Relationship-based management

Relationship-based management behaviors are central to successful management in a team-based organization. Management behaviors have a powerful impact on the culture of the organization. Teams reconstruct their beliefs, habits, or work rituals because they internalize the values of the organization. The manager is the organization's representative. Relationship-based managers transform themselves, teams of caregivers, and therefore their organizations through mutually empowering relationships (Sashkin, 1984).

Hence, relationship-centered management is an ethical process between leaders and followers. Instead of self-involvement, control, and power wielding, leaders' actions are not separate and distinct from followers' needs and goals. Such managers work with groups to develop mutually agreed-on goals, look at the actual work being performed, and put those who are performing the work into decision-making roles regarding their work. These strategies stress the importance of shared goals over the leader's desires.

Implication #5: Cost

Teamwork is not easy, nor is it without cost (O'Leary, 1996). Groups of individuals do not become teams because they are directed to do so. Building effective teams requires the provision of considerable resources such as formal management development for new roles, conflict resolution skills, management of group dynamics, and consensus decision-making tools (Box 5-2). Team skill development is a learning process that takes time and experience. Early ventures into team decision making may produce struggles and team frustration, and people can become disenchanted with teamwork.

Managers will need to “keep the faith” by reinforcing the value of teamwork to avoid low morale and loss of productivity. To act as cheerleaders, managers must believe that, in the long run, teams will produce better decisions and greater productivity. The following is an example of the effects of management decision making.

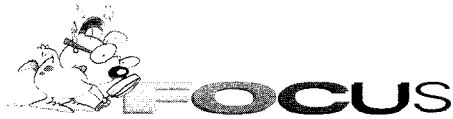
Executive management implemented self-managed teams as a productivity measure. Emphasis on the bottom line resulted in few resources being provided to assist people to work in teams. Decision making was laborious. Executives responded with “crisis” decisions outside of the team structure. Soon, the majority of organizational decisions were being made in this crisis mode. A consultant was then hired to develop the managers in team leadership practices. Halfway through the first leadership training session, the agenda had to be dropped because of angry participants. A large group intervention revealed that the participants were angry with top management for implementing the team concept and then not supporting it. They felt blamed for their teams' failures and constrained in their developmental work by fiscal limitations. The last thing that the participants wanted to hear was that they were to be cheerleaders. A management retreat produced consensus about definitions, accountabilities, outcomes, and the resources needed to support self-managed teams in the context of this organization's resources.

The essence of the manager-staff relationship is the interaction between differences in the goals, motivation, skill set, and influence potential of every stakeholder.

BOX 5-2

Resources Needed by Teams

- Team training
- Dedicated meeting time
- Personal space and office supplies (team room)
- A defined budget
- An active facilitator
- Library access to support data-driven decisions
- Management support



Questions of Cost and Feasibility

- *Are work processes compatible with teams?*
- *Are employees willing and able to make teams work?*
- *Can managers master and apply shared leadership?*
- *Is your market healthy enough to support increased productivity without layoffs?*
- *Do we really want teams?*



This ripple feels more like a riptide!



Anticipating cost

To help anticipate cost, managers should establish a budget for the project, establish budgets for teams and hold them accountable for outcomes, and approach the evaluation of cost-effectiveness from the value-added perspective.

Demonstrating the cost-effectiveness of team-based systems through traditional methods is difficult. Managers commonly err by trying to count the number of committees replaced or the time spent in meetings before and after implementation of a team-based system, but these are not useful measures because they do not measure contribution. Instead, it is useful to examine the value-added contributions made by teams when

1. Structures, systems, and processes are standardized.
2. Errors are reduced.
3. Productivity is enhanced.
4. High-volume, high-cost, problem-prone quality issues are improved.

Implication #6: Ripple Effects

Team decision making and team projects cause ripple effects across the organization. Shared decision making requires a major paradigm shift for managers and staff. The cultural and political impacts of moving to a team-based system should not be diminished.

There will always be people—executives, middle managers, and staff members—who do not welcome changes in control, autonomy, or accountability. If the implementation of teams is not managed well, these issues can build significant cultural resistance and will threaten the delicate imbedding of teams in the organization.

Reducing ripple effects

The ripple effect can be reduced by knowing who is “on board” and who is not. Anticipate the reactions of influential stakeholders in instances where the noise of change is high or when mistakes have been made. Act decisively to intervene. If possible, convert the circumstances to a win-win