

'Team Readiness' Training

The Situation

A large IT organisation had a history of fairly bureaucratic structures, and needed to facilitate a change to a more flexible, team-oriented business.

The Analysis

From discussions with the top management team and a 'diagonal slice' of people through the organisation (sampling all functions and all levels) it became clear that:

most people saw their role in cross-functional teams as being the spokesperson for their function

team leadership was seen as primarily "top down" with little room for flexibility

understanding of team processes was not widely spread across the organisation

skills in group problem-solving were limited, power relationships taking precedence

many teams had climates which were not conducive to effective team-work

The Solution

A training intervention was designed to meet the following criteria:

Participants experienced over a few days the development and operation of an increasingly effective peer team

The structured experiences on which the programme was based were interspersed with short inputs, explaining and clarifying the process

Extensive video-supported review followed each team experience, allowing participants to study their own behaviour as a team and their individual contributions to successes and failures

Facilitation of the team process supported mutual personal feedback, to promote individual learning

Insights gained from the process were applied in discussion to participants' real-life team situations

The Outcomes

Many direct reports came back from participants of practical successes in improving team processes at work

Groups met again formally after three to four months to share successes and failures, and to help each other maintain their development

Many groups continued to meet informally, promoting ongoing learning

Less rigidity of leadership enabled the organisation to use teams effectively on a more informal basis than in the past

When the company instituted a fundamental reorganisation based on large "resource pools" of staff, the teamwork skills required by this were widely spread in the organisation, reducing the learning curve costs of this change