

Want to Improve Workplace Efficiency? Improve Your Team Dynamics First.



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Work productivity and efficiencies can't be improved just by looking at trends in sales or profits. Instead, productivity and efficiencies result from the improvement of specific soft skills. For example, one critical to the workplace environment is team-building. Unfortunately, though, it's hard to improve team dynamics without first understanding the primary components of a team.

How can you effectively build a team such that each member will grow and improve on your business expectations?

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The importance of social cohesion in business

The above title seems self-explanatory. Social cohesion is essential in business. It's necessary in all aspects of life. However, what is social cohesion? And what makes up group dynamics?

- **Social ties/bonds:** First, any group of individuals has ties, whether in the office or in private. These ties link an individual to other individuals in the group. They could be friends, colleagues, associates or a mix. The point here is that, without an association with all your teammates, there can be no interpersonal growth and improvement.
- **Social capital:** Social capital refers to what you bring to the table. For example, does your group have any experienced individuals? Or are all the members brand new? Are there multiple talents, opinions, thoughts, and perspectives represented in the group? More diversity means improved decision-making. Further, new employees who work closely with more senior colleagues have a better chance of overcoming any learning curves.
- **Social cohesion:** Social cohesion refers to the strength of the bond between the individuals in the group. For example, would you defend a group member against an angry customer or client? Would you snitch on them? Well-bonded group members have more instinctual trust in each other's opinions and decisions. As a result, work becomes streamlined, efficient and higher quality.
- **Social contagion:** Social contagion refers to the hive mind mentality of people. We are all emotional animals who are inherently affected by the world's emotions around us. So, placing a less successful employee in a

group with positive individuals who are succeeding, can alter that individual's perspective for the better. They can learn about their faults, see others' success, and grow in a better direction for the workplace culture. The premise is based on the idea that "happiness" can spread from those with it to those without it.

- **Social inclusion:** However, nothing can be created out of thin air. Your group dynamics must foster this positive and cooperative atmosphere, leading to personal improvements and growth. This is social inclusion. No one in the group should ever be sidelined. The best way to ensure that everyone feels included is to make them feel heard. Group dynamics should consist of open dialogue that is judgment-free. This may include the need to learn how everyone communicates. Verbal communication isn't the only form of outreach. If social cohesion leads to improved workplace cultures and productivity, social inclusion should be seen as the dynamic that creates those first social ties and bonds described earlier.

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The importance of group dynamics in business

So, how do the group dynamics of employees affect the larger community and help develop positive workplace cultures? Are group dynamics inherently positive, or do they need to be crafted like a clay bowl?

- **Nation-building:** Think of your business as a nation. You aren't building a company. You are nation-building. Eventually, every business in its growth curve starts to

include groups and staff that aren't concerned with the actual corporate product but instead hired to focus on the company's internal workings. Just like nation-building, you need to consider all aspects of corporate life and workplace culture. A poorly executed city plan will invariably lead to a loss of business. But, more importantly, you could lose your relevance in the market.

- **The common goal principle:** The lack of purpose is the number one issue that will kill a group's momentum and potentially all the social cohesion. A team without direction aimlessly wanders through the workday with little to guide them. Every group needs a purpose. The clearer the expectations, the more focused a group can be on the shared experience of success. When there is a shared experience from a clear goal, your team bonds. Furthermore:
 - Your team develops mutual accountability.
 - Your team members grow from shared contribution.
 - Your team learns to embody shared corporate values.

As you are nation-building, each team becomes a community that supports one another in the group's success. Creating these shared experiences allows the group to develop an intentional positive mentality towards the corporate goal they have been tasked with. Groups aid the individual members through:

As you think about your internal culture and how your corporate goals can be better achieved via smaller workgroups, make sure you understand the natural progression of the group's social cohesion. Most likely, there won't be an immediate success. But naturally, individuals improve their communication and cooperation as the social bonds, cohesion

and inclusion improves. There are five natural stages to the life of a group:

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1. Forming

The first stage of the group is technically the setup and paperwork stage. The members are formally introduced to each other, the purpose, the tools and the process. The members aren't creating yet – they are only learning at this stage. Don't skip this step. A shared understanding of the actual corporate goals is vital to the targeted completion of specific tasks.

2. Storming

Storming involves and references the natural tendencies of groups to develop a pecking order. Individuals may need to overcome interpersonal conflicts or issues. Members may need to be swapped out as needed.

3. Norming

Once a common understanding of the work and communication style is found, social cohesion can develop. Again, this isn't a forced stage but will naturally occur when the group finds its footing on how it will best cooperate and communicate.

4. Performing

The fourth stage, performing the group purpose, can only be achieved when the group is formed, cohesive and adequately communicating. Any group dynamic fault can and will derail the development of the product. Instead of developing a successful outcome, the group will waste time and money.

5. Adjourning

Nothing lasts forever. However, in the corporate world, that is a good thing. The life of a group should last only as long as the group is needed. After that, it can constantly be redeployed on a different project. However, make sure that before the group disbands, there is some type of closeout such that future audits have a clear path of the group's actions.

Creating a group is not just a paperwork exercise. It should be an intentional activity combining diverse perspectives and backgrounds such that each team member can both contribute and learn from the process. Trust your team. Give them a goal, and let them find their path to your success.

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