

UNIT 5

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## LECTURE 6

# Benefits of Strong Intercultural Teams

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The facilitator should emphasize the following:

- A. In addition to having effective communication skills, to interact in an interculturally competent manner in the workplace is the ability to build strong multicultural team relationships.
- B. In a rapidly growing diverse society multicultural team relationships are unavoidable. The majority of people entering the workforce in the 1990s (and into the future) will be people of color, white women, and immigrants. White non-Hispanics will comprise 49% of the net new entrants into the workplace between 1994-2005; minorities 51%, and women from all ethnic groups 62%. **Diversity is here to stay.**

We need to BUILD STRONG INTERCULTURAL Working Teams for:

### 1. Effective Marketing

Positive working relationships across cultures are an asset to an organization. Changing demographics in the United States are creating new customer groups and opportunities for niche marketing. In the United States in 1992, the total purchasing power of African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians was nearly \$600 billion. To understand the new markets, organizations need to draw on the services that diverse team members have to offer.

### 2. Having a Competitive Edge

It is necessary for organizations to keep a competitive edge through innovation and problem-solving.

### 3. More Creative Solutions

Heterogeneity in problem-solving groups produces more creative responses in an increasingly competitive global marketplace.

### 4. Attracting the Best Talent

Organizations with the best reputations for well-integrated teams and good working relationships will win the competition for the best personnel.

### 5. Cost-Benefits

Organizations with a culturally integrated environment, characterized by employees who work well together, will have a cost advantage over those who don't.

UNIT 5

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## LECTURE 7

### Strategies for Developing Effective Intercultural Teams

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#### *What is it?*

A team is made up of a group of people working together to achieve a common goal. An effective team has certain characteristics that allow the team members to function more efficiently and productively. A fully functioning working team develops ways to share leadership roles and ways to share accountability for their work products, shifting the emphasis from the individual to several individuals within the team. A team also develops a specific team purpose and concrete work products that the members produce together.

#### *How does it work?*

Effective teams will have open-ended meetings and develop active problem-solving strategies that go beyond discussing, deciding, and delegating what to do; they do real work together. When necessary, individuals in a team will set aside their own work to assist other members of the team. In a well-functioning team, performance is based not on an individual member's ability to influence other members, but rather is assessed directly by measuring the work products of the whole team. Rewards based on the whole team's effort help underscore the importance of team responsibility.

#### *How to use it:*

There are several ways in which a supervisor can help managers and staff develop into strong intercultural working teams:

- 1. Establish objectives together:** Define performance objectives with the team and make sure that all team members understand the objectives and what actions will need to be taken to achieve them.
- 2. Develop a participatory style:** Encourage staff to suggest ways to improve services. Listen to their ideas and acknowledge their points of view. Encourage team members to discuss issues and to find solutions together.
- 3. Focus on contributions:** Define objectives for having all team members actively contribute to the meeting. Introduce team members to the ways in which they can participate.
- 4. Organize meetings:** Hold meetings with the entire team when possible. Schedule a meeting time and place that is convenient and accessible for all team members.
- 5. Organize the team:** Define roles and responsibilities together. If everyone has a clear role, individuals will be less likely to become frustrated and will be more willing to work together. Agree on who will assume leadership roles for different team activities.

6. **Explain the rules:** Discuss all norms and standards that have been established for the organization. Explain the rationale for these rules and discuss their implications in day-to-day practice.
7. **Promote team responsibility:** Encourage members of the team to take responsibility for completing specific tasks and to solve problems as a team. Introduce rewards only if the entire team meets objectives.
8. **Establish time commitments:** Schedule when and how each team member will devote time to team work. Determine if team work will require other staff to take on extra work, and, if so, discuss this with all staff and obtain their commitment. Monitor actual vs. planned time carefully and clarify all adjustments in schedule

### **Seven Characteristics of a Fully Functioning Team**

1. Team members share leadership roles
2. Team develops own scope of work
3. Team schedules work to be done and commits to taking time allotted to do work
4. Team develops tangible work products
5. Team members are mutually accountable for work products
6. Performance is based on achieving team products
7. Problems are discussed and resolved by the team
8. Composition of the team reflects the diversity within the organization
9. Team members value and respect individual differences

## **Team Burnout: Twelve Defining Smoke Signals**

1. Cynicism, apathy and withdrawal; low morale and group helplessness
2. Pessimism and cautiousness; Bjorn Bored Syndrome; little staff turnover
3. Lack of initiative; heads in survival shells, e.g., staff tolerate lack of performance appraisal or lack of staff/team meetings
4. Fear of criticism and hypersensitivity, e.g., heaven's reward and fairness fallacies,
5. Unhealthy group alliances and destructive competitiveness
6. Staff mistrustful and resentful of leadership; family transference and dysfunction, e.g., leaders covering for "stress carriers"
7. Inability to work through or "let go" of resentments or rage
8. Compartmentalizing task focus from emotional or relationship focus at meetings
9. Selfish or secretive prioritizing of projects and sharing of resources- isolated flow of information, one-on-one sharing over group sharing
10. Savior Syndrome; rigidly customer driven; sacrificing staff for customers- no balance giving of yourself and to yourself
11. Feeling like pawns in a larger, dominating context or system not connected with your stressors and needs
12. Stretched too thin: more work with less people and resources: "Multiple and Simultaneous Demand Situation"

UNIT 5

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## EXERCISE 5

### Team Building

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- Objectives:**
1. To identify the characteristics of a fully functioning multicultural working team.
  2. To create a common vision of an effective multicultural team.
  3. To examine the behaviors that lead to becoming an open-minded and non-judgmental contributing member of a multicultural team.
- Time:** 30 minutes
- Materials:**
- Covered flipchart prepared in advance (see facilitator's notes)
  - Markers
- Procedure:**
1. Divide participants into small groups of three to four people.
  2. Ask each group to come up with a team motto and logo. (Explain that this activity offers team members the opportunity to examine their own perspectives in relation to diversity issues).
  3. Ask participants to brainstorm what a fully functioning team would look like, sound like, and feel like. Then, have them examine the "Effective Team Actions That Make a Difference" on the flipchart and discuss how those actions affect team performance. Participants should compare their list after brainstorming with the prepared list. Add any actions that might be missing.
  4. Ask each group to capture the values and behaviors necessary for a fully functioning team.
  5. Ask each group to report out.
  6. If the participants have missed any key characteristics, the facilitator should add them. Think of mutual respect, open-mindedness, climate of trust, win-win approach to conflicts, commitment, members who are allies and advocates for each other, established norms, etc.
- Debrief:**
1. Ask participants what they learned from this exercise.
  2. Ask participants to think about whether they have strong intercultural teams in their workplace.
  3. If they do, what characteristics are primarily responsible for these team relationships?
  4. If not, what do they think is lacking?
  5. If personal changes become necessary, will it be worth it? Are you willing to commit to making those changes?

- Learning Points:**
1. Strong intercultural teams provide a basis for working together towards organizational goals.
  2. As members of a team, each person has a special responsibility, and sometimes it takes extra effort to be a valuable member where diverse issues and perspectives are involved. There are no firm answers, but there is strong evidence that those people who are working toward being open-minded and non-judgmental are considered extremely valuable to a multicultural team.

**Facilitator's Notes:**      **Ahead of time prepare the flipchart as shown below:**  
**(Use this as a springboard for brainstorming and discussion. Have participants add on to this listing).**

**Effective Team Actions That Make a Difference**

- Looking beyond first impressions to judge a fellow team member.
- Understanding that diverse employees have different perspectives that can contribute greatly to the team.
- Being open-minded
- Being non-judgmental