Developing a self-managed team

- What can you do to help your team move towards being self-managing?
- Can you take the lead in moving towards being self-managing?
- Four areas in which you can help your team to become self-managing

In the BS2 session *Self-managed teams* you learnt that a key part of the team leader role in self-managing teams is to ensure that team members:

- become involved in the team and get high levels of satisfaction from their work
- meet the performance goals agreed, in terms of quality, quantity (of output) and productivity.

How do you do this? In this session we'll look at four ways of encouraging team members to become more involved, be more satisfied and to meet performance goals. These are:

- Multi-skilling
- Co-operative working
- Job enrichment
- High performance working

You may not be able to do this on your own. You will need to discuss these developments with your manager.
Multi-skilling

Multi-skilling is something we have talked about in other sessions. It is sometimes described as job enlargement, but that doesn’t really describe it so well. Multi-skilling means increasing the knowledge and skills of team members so that they are able to perform a wider range of tasks. The effect is to make the jobs they do larger (which is why it is also called job enlargement). This is needed because work patterns are changing.

The BS2 session How organisations are structured, describes mass production as ‘making standard items in very large quantities.’ It goes on to say that: ‘Costs were cut by buying parts and materials in bulk and by using people to perform simple, routine tasks. This meant they didn’t need to be highly skilled or have much training, so their wages were lower.’

Mass production was a very 20th century way of working. It made goods (and, later, services) cheap and plentiful. In the 21st century the move is towards greater flexibility and customer focus. This is because customers want to have the kind of product or service that they want, when they want it. People and organisations are not prepared to put up with second best, they are demanding something that specifically meets their requirements. Customer focus is all about being able to identify what customers’ requirements are. Flexibility is being able to deliver what is required.

Being flexible means that organisations are able to change what they do easily, and that means that they need flexible teams as well. Flexible teams have members who can do different things so that the organisation can respond efficiently and effectively to changing customer requirements. Low skilled team members are only able to do what has always been done. Multi-skilled team members can learn quickly how to do new things.

As a team leader your role is to encourage people to learn new skills and develop themselves. You should make sure every team member has personal development goals, with plans as to how they will reach them. You should train and coach your team as much as you can, and make use of your organisation’s training and development opportunities. You should also develop yourself and encourage the team to follow your example.
Multi-skilling (or job enlargement) focuses on the work tasks and the skills required to do them. Job enrichment is about the control that people have over their work. In the BS2 session Self-managed teams, there was a lot of focus on giving people more control over their work, being able to plan, organise and co-ordinate it. That is what job enrichment is all about.

Organisations need to move from saying to team members ‘This is how it must be done’ to ‘This is how we will judge what you have produced’. People are adults, able to take responsibility for so much of their lives, yet in too many workplaces they are treated like children.

**Case Study**

In a team made up of specialists, each person does their little bit. If one person is ill, on holiday or leaves, the rest of the team are stuck. By making the tasks simple, it’s not too difficult to train someone to take the missing person’s place. However, if the organisation needs to change what is being produced, everyone needs to be retrained and the way the work is organised needs to be changed.

In a multi-skilled work team, if someone isn’t there, the rest of the team can cover for the missing person. If the work changes, they re-arrange themselves and the workspace to cope. Flexibility is easy. However, individual members of the team aren’t so easy to replace. On the other hand, people get more satisfaction from their work and are less likely to be off sick or to leave for another job. Both the organisation and the individual benefit from developing people.

Investors in People (IiP) is a standard that organisations can measure themselves against to judge how well they invest in their employees, through training and development. IiPUK (the organisation that promotes the standard) has carried out research that shows that investing in people results in:

- Skilled and motivated people, who work harder and better.
- Employees becoming customer focused.
- Improved motivation, which leads to higher morale, improved retention rates (people don’t leave), reduced absenteeism and greater readiness to accept change.
- Skilled and motivated people constantly examining their work to contribute towards reducing costs and wastage.

**Job enrichment**

Multi-skilling (or job enlargement) focuses on the work tasks and the skills required to do them. Job enrichment is about the control that people have over their work. In the BS2 session Self-managed teams, there was a lot of focus on giving people more control over their work, being able to plan, organise and co-ordinate it. That is what job enrichment is all about.
Developing a self-managed team

Job enrichment depends on **trust** and **respect**. Organisations and managers must:

- trust teams and team members to do what they have agreed to do, without wanting to control every aspect of their work.
- show respect for teams and team members by asking for their advice and listening to their ideas.

As a team leader you can encourage people to take on responsibility and encourage them to put forward their ideas. Show the team you trust and respect them and they will also trust and respect you. You must show that you are worthy of trust and respect and then you will be better placed to ask your manager for the team to be given greater control over its work.

**Exercise**

- Is your organisation committed to more flexible working and greater customer focus? What does it do to create multi-skilled teams and job enlargement?

---

---

- Is your organisation willing to allow teams to have more control over their work? Do managers show trust and respect for team members?
Co-operative working

Co-operative working is all about how well the team works as a team. It reflects how much the team members rely on each other for help and support (how self reliant the team is). It is also determined by their ability to communicate effectively with each other, and the kind of relationships they have with each other.

Most important of all, it is about how much opportunity the team has to make decisions jointly. People who depend on each other, communicate well with each other, and make decisions together, are members of a team that is well on the way to being self-managing.

As team leader, you must work hard on creating the sense of being a team. In the BS2 session Working in teams you learnt about Tuckman’s four stages of group development (Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing). The four stages are useful in helping to build that sense of being a team. They emphasise how important it is that the team members:

- recognise that they belong to the team;
- have effective working relationships that are based on agreed goals; and
- understand each other and are prepared to share ideas and feelings.

The norming phase in particular, emphasises how important it is that team members have a shared culture. That means that they share values and attitudes about their work and the team’s role. Culture is ‘how we do things around here’ and if people don’t do things in the same way, then they will not be part of a team.

A shared culture helps team members communicate. They understand how other people think and feel and that makes it easier to understand each other. And a shared culture means that decisions will be based on the same core principles.

Exercise

How well does your team co-operate? Do they support each other, communicate well, and have effective working relationships with each other? Are they able to make decisions together, based on shared principles? Think of some specific examples to illustrate the team’s degree of co-operation.
High performing is when a team is able to solve problems together, in order to improve its own performance. In other words, high performing teams are driven by their own need to be better at what they do, and not by you or your manager trying to drive them.

What causes a team to be high performing? To a large extent it is the result of the other three elements we have looked at:

- Multi-skilling
- Job enrichment
- Co-operation

These three elements come together to create a team that is motivated to do better.

Your role in creating a high performing team is to show, through your own personal behaviour, that you are not willing to accept second best. Always strive to perform tasks as well as you can and not accept inferior work from others. You must set the standard that the team should follow.

Use what you have learnt from Building Success 2 to enable you to perform to the highest standards. In particular, use the BS2 session Creative, team-based problem-solving to lead your team to solve problems and improve the standard of their work. High performing teams need high performing team leaders.
Developing a self-managed team

Comprehension Check

Complete the following exercises. Refer back to the session if necessary.

A. List the four ways of encouraging team members to become more involved, be more satisfied and to meet performance goals.
   1. ______________________________
   2. ______________________________
   3. ______________________________
   4. ______________________________

B. Complete these statements. Circle the letter of the correct choice.
   1. Job enrichment is another name for:
      a. self-managing teams.
      b. co-operative working.
      c. multi-skilling.

   2. Flexible working is made possible by:
      a. people being multi-skilled.
      b. mass production.
      c. people being mobile.

   3. The stage in Tuckman’s four stage formation of groups and teams where groups develop a shared culture is:
      a. Storming
      b. Performing
      c. Norming

   4. Multi-skilling, Job enrichment and Co-operative working all combine together to encourage teams to be:
      a. competitive.
      b. creative.
      c. high performance.
Answer the questions following the case.

Leah is the leader of a team of community nurses and midwives in a rural county in the south-west of England. The team have responsibility for the care of people in the community. This is mainly women before and after their babies are born, and the newborn babies themselves, elderly people requiring nursing care at home, and some other house-bound patients. They also provide health education in local schools.

The team contains six other nurses with a wide range of skills, but most are specialists. Leah has suggested that they could provide training and development support for each other to widen their skills. They wouldn’t substitute for each other, but it would mean that they could help specialists when two people are needed and another specialist isn’t available.

At the moment the team is largely under the control of the local GP surgery and the Primary Care Trust which, together, set their priorities. Leah wants the team to have more say in what they do and how they do it, by agreeing targets with the GPs and the PCT, and being given more freedom to decide how they are achieved. But, most importantly, she wants the team to work together to decide how they do their work.

What examples does this case study show of:

- Job enrichment
- Multi-skilling.
- Co-operative working.
Developing a self-managed team

Think and Apply

How well do you use the skills in this session?

- Could you help your team to become a high performing team?
- Do you set an example to your team by being a high performing leader?

1. Read the list of skills. Tick the boxes to show your strengths and weaknesses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>strengths &lt;-&gt; weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I'm good at this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helping your team to become multi-skilled</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>looking for ways of enriching the jobs of your team</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encouraging your team to be co-operative</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creating a high performing team</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Do you want to improve any of these skills?

3. How do you plan to improve the skills you listed in question 2?
   (You might want to discuss this with your line manager or your tutor/mentor/coach.)