

Study Guide: Self-Directed Work Teams Study Guide

Before discussing the qualities of a Self-directed work team, let's start with the basic elements of a team.

The importance of an effective team



What is the significance of creating a good team?

- Stimulate creativity
- Encourage engagement
- Establish strong relationships
- Boost Productivity
- Spark Innovation

What are the market conditions that drive us to build a great team?

- Agile development
- Speed of delivery

- Knowledge exchange
- Customer Demands
- Technology Advancements
- Market Disruptions
- Top-down structure can't last

4 things to consider when evaluating your team:

1. Is the team doing project work or operational work?
2. Is the team doing traditional development or agile development?
3. Is the team serving a global market or a local market?
4. Does the team do creative work or structured work?

5 common organizational team structures:

1. Functional structures for sales, marketing, and operations teams
2. Product-based structure. The work is segmented by product.
3. Market based structure. For example, in real estate, you have a commercial side and a residential side.
4. Geographic structure. As the name suggests, the team is arranged based on location.
5. Process-based structure. The team is formed based on a specific process. For example, you can have a team for sourcing leads, and a team for closing such leads.

What are the 4 Building blocks of a team?

1. The length of the chain of command. Is it long or short?
2. Span of Control. Wide or short?
3. Centralization type. Centralized or decentralized?
4. Level of specialization. High or Low?

How to set up self-directed teams?



Self-Directed Work Team

- A highly trained group of 6-18 people
- Responsible for turning out finished work
- A wide-range of cross functional skills
- Access to information to make decisions
- Plan, set priorities, organize, coordinate, measure and take corrective action.
- Solve problems, schedule and assign work.
- Make personnel decisions.

Self-directed teams, also known as self-managed teams, are groups of individuals within an organization who work together with a high degree of autonomy and responsibility for their tasks. These teams are empowered to make decisions regarding their work processes, problem-solving, and task execution. The goal is to promote collaboration, innovation, and a sense of ownership among team members.

In a self-directed team, each team member contributes their expertise and all learn from each other and they meet regularly to discuss the status of the project.

Characteristics that a self-directed team requires to succeed:

- Joint responsibility (fully invested)
- Interdependence. All team members must rely on each other (trust to deliver)
- Empowerment (proceed without approval)

- Common goal

Setting up self-directed teams involves several key steps:

Define Clear Goals and Objectives:

Clearly articulate the purpose, goals, and objectives of the team. Team members should have a shared understanding of what they are working towards.

Select the Right Team Members:

Choose individuals with diverse skills, expertise, and a willingness to collaborate. Consider each member's ability to work independently and contribute to the team's goals.

Training and Development:

Provide training on relevant skills and tools, and ensure that team members have the knowledge and capabilities needed to perform their tasks effectively. This may include training in decision-making, conflict resolution, and communication skills.

Establish Guidelines and Boundaries:

Clearly define the scope of the team's authority and responsibilities. Establish guidelines for decision-making, communication, and conflict resolution to ensure a smooth functioning of the team.

Create a Supportive Environment:

Foster a culture that encourages open communication, trust, and mutual respect. Team members should feel comfortable expressing their ideas and opinions.

Provide Resources:

Ensure that the team has access to the necessary resources, including tools, information, and support, to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

Implement a Feedback Mechanism:

Establish a system for regular feedback and performance evaluation. This can include self-assessment, peer feedback, and evaluations from higher management.

Encourage Continuous Improvement:

Foster a culture of continuous improvement, where the team regularly reflects on its processes, identifies areas for enhancement, and implements changes accordingly.

Monitor Progress:

Although the team is self-directed, it's essential to have mechanisms in place to monitor progress and provide support if needed. This may involve periodic check-ins or reviews.

Celebrate Successes:

Acknowledge and celebrate the achievements and successes of the self-directed team. This helps boost morale and reinforces the value of the team's efforts.

By following these steps, organizations can establish self-directed teams that are capable of taking on responsibilities and making decisions independently, leading to increased efficiency, employee satisfaction, and innovation.

How to lead a self-directed team



Self-directed teams have been on the rise due to the proliferation of methodologies such as agile and the increase of collaboration tools available.

Common questions leaders of self-directed teams have:

- How do you lead the team if you are the head of the organization?
- What role do managers and executives play in this setup?
- How do you measure the team's success?

To answer these questions we have the following guidelines:

- Avoid managing or imposing external processes on a self-managed team
- As the team still works within an organizational structure, it is necessary that the team members understand what are the expectations under such a structure.

How to lead a self-managed team?

- Use communication and feedback to foster buy-in
- Have the team define their metrics of success (promotes accountability)
- Have the team present their outcomes regularly promoting feedback loops with other teams that they have to interact with
- Track metrics to ensure accountability

- Leverage their success for the good of the business
- Things to watch for while leading self-directed teams:
- Avoid team initiatives that do not align with the corporate strategy
- Lack of accountability from team members
- A culture of no results
- Immunity from the rest of the corporate structure or organization

Conclusion

Leading a self-managed team requires a different approach compared to traditional hierarchical leadership. Here are some key principles and strategies to effectively lead a self-managed team:

Clarify Roles and Responsibilities:

Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each team member. While the team is self-managed, it's important that everyone understands their individual contributions to the overall goals.

Establish a Shared Vision:

Communicate a compelling vision for the team and ensure that all members understand and align with the team's purpose and goals. This shared vision helps in guiding the team's efforts.

Facilitate Open Communication:

Encourage open and transparent communication within the team. Foster an environment where team members feel comfortable expressing their ideas, concerns, and feedback.

Provide Support and Resources:

Ensure that the team has the necessary resources, tools, and support to carry out their responsibilities effectively. This includes addressing any obstacles or challenges that may impede their progress.

Promote Decision-Making Autonomy:

Empower team members to make decisions related to their work. Trust the team's ability to solve problems and make informed decisions, and be available for guidance when needed.

Cultivate a Culture of Accountability:

Establish a culture where each team member takes ownership of their tasks and is accountable for their contributions. Encourage self-accountability and responsibility.

Encourage Collaboration:

Foster a collaborative atmosphere where team members work together to achieve common goals. Emphasize the importance of sharing knowledge and skills to enhance overall team performance.

Provide Continuous Feedback:

Establish regular feedback mechanisms to help team members assess their performance and make improvements. Encourage self-reflection and peer feedback as part of the continuous improvement process.

Facilitate Skill Development:

Support the ongoing development of team members' skills. This can involve providing training opportunities, mentoring, or encouraging self-directed learning to enhance individual and team capabilities.

Promote a Positive Team Culture:

Foster a positive and inclusive team culture where diversity is valued, and team members feel a sense of belonging. Recognize and celebrate achievements to boost morale.

Adapt Leadership Style:

Be flexible in your leadership style. Recognize when to step in to provide guidance and when to step back and allow the team to take the lead. Adapt your leadership approach based on the team's needs and the situation.

Monitor Progress and Results:

While giving the team autonomy, it's important to monitor progress and results. Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) and regularly assess how well the team is meeting its objectives.

By embracing these principles, leaders can effectively guide and support a self-managed team, fostering an environment of collaboration, innovation, and high performance.